



The Literacy Alliance

Literacy News

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Judith Stabelli
executive director
judith.stabelli@fwliteracyalliance.org

Brian Schlichtenmyer
editor
brian.schlichtenmyer@fwliteracyalliance.org

709 Clay Street, Suite 100
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

Phone: (260) 426-7323
Fax: (260) 424-0371

www.fwliteracyalliance.org

Father of Nine Is Learning to Read

Tall and lean, J.D. Williams is quick to smile and nod hello. For many months, he has been coming to The Literacy Alliance office to work in the computer lab and one-on-one with his tutor, Ramona.

On this particular day, before Ramona arrived, he shared his story with *Literacy News*. While being interviewed, he called home for an answer to one of the questions and got his daughter. He gave the phone to his interviewer who explained that J.D.'s story was going to be featured in the next issue of The Literacy Alliance newsletter. She answered the interviewer's question and was handed back to J.D. From the phone across the table, the interviewer heard, "Congratulations! We're so proud of you! You're doing so well!"

J.D. has nine children. Devion is three and likes to be read to. He goes to day care half-day at church then half-day at East Wayne Street Center.

When he saw how much Devion liked reading, J.D. wished he could read to him. He felt embarrassed because he couldn't read and write. Urged by the pastor of his church and his fiancée, Shenecko, he contacted The Literacy Alliance.

Devion "motivated me to learn to read and write," J.D. explained. "And I want him to have what I didn't have."

Originally from Brent, Alabama, J.D. was a child of the south. Though promoted to the second grade, he could



Literacy Alliance student J.D. Williams attends one-on-one tutoring sessions and works on KeyTrain every week.

only go one or two days a week. He had to work to help support his grandparents who raised him. Eventually, he quit school. From seven or eight years old, he worked on the farm. By fourteen or fifteen, he worked in a saw mill. About 1966, he came to Fort Wayne to work at Fort Wayne Foundry.

Now, J.D. and Shenecko cook at their church, The First Redeemed By the Blood, for fundraisers, parishioners, and visiting parishes. He likes to barbeque and would like to open a place of his own someday.

When Ramona arrived on this particular day for their one-on-one session, they talked about what J.D. has been working on. He has developed his vocabulary and an understanding of the vowels. He has learned to read and write common words such as days of the week, months of the year, and family members' names. He can now write his own name and address. They are currently working on words of the kitchen --foods, appliances, and cookware. They have been developing sentences with these words.

In April, Ramona had selected a couple of children's books, *Noah's Ark* and *I Hate To Be Sick*. With the books and Ramona's help, J.D. was able to strengthen his reading. He read them to Devion for the first time on Father's Day.

Another Step Ahead...



This bookshelf with books will be the first donated to a Habitat for Humanity family. The family of six, single mom with two sets of twins and a two year old, will receive the shelf and books on September 1 when their new home is dedicated. It is part of a new Literacy Alliance program to promote reading in the home.

Habitat builds about 12 homes annually, and The Literacy Alliance intends to provide a small library for each. The library includes basic family reference books, leisure reading for the grown-ups, and age-appropriate children's books. The Literacy Alliance will invite service clubs and other community groups to help by collecting the books and shelf for a Habitat home.

Tutors report on their students' accomplishments. (Student names have been changed to respect their confidentiality.)

Anita: Harry's employer has named him employee of the month.

Mary: Anjali has improved in the comprehension of spoken English. She now understands the news on TV.

Susie: Mark has become more engaged and relaxed during tutoring sessions. He now initiates questions.

Christine: Ivan has improved in grammar and phonetics.

Barb: Julio has improved his reading comprehension.

Jean: Clara is able to halve and double recipes.

Susie: Jane processes math formulas without using her fingers.

Jean: Bill writes about his garden and vegetables.

Ramona: Steven can now write his name and address.

Sean: Gary now identifies and correctly pronounces the letters of the alphabet and words signifying numbers up to one hundred.

Allison: Win has passed the citizenship test.

Mary Anne: Cheryl has become more active in her church.

Volunteer Corner

Vanessa Beasley, Program Director for Precious Angels Day Care, had no idea what to expect when Mary McDonald and Ward Miller offered to do paired Story Friends readings at her day care center. In very short order, she and her staff had the opportunity to see the phrase "two heads are better than one" put into action.

Mary and Ward have been reading for a little over two years at Precious Angels on E. Pontiac. When they came to The Literacy Alliance, they wanted to provide service as a couple. Both enjoyed children, and volunteering to be Story Friends together seemed to be the right fit. The small group setting allowed a greater intimacy between the children and the books.

The advice they would give to potential Story Friends is "Dive in!" They point out how deeply gratifying it is to help small children learn and explore while being read to. The Literacy Alliance provides an essential service to the community, they add. There is nothing more fundamental to gaining self-sufficiency and success than the ability to read and write, and Read to Me's Story Friends program works to ensure these abilities develop early.

Mary and Ward's volunteer work and hobbies keep them busy. In addition to Story Friends, Mary is on The Literacy Alliance board and serves on the committees for board development and marketing. She is involved with the American Association of University Women, co-chairing the community outreach group which develops mentoring programs for teenage girls. Ward serves on their condominium board and likes the outdoor life which includes hunting for water fowl. They enjoy bridge and traveling. They have an old lake cottage where boating, reading, relaxing, and entertaining are at the top of their activity list. Two weeks during the summer, they host Ward's Colorado nieces and nephews.

Thank you, Mary and Ward, for your dedicated service.

Literacy Weekend Returns

A weekend to entertain families, promote literacy, and raise funds will be September 22 - 23.

Barnes and Noble's Literacy Alliance Bookfair

Barnes and Noble's Literacy Alliance Bookfair begins at 9:00 a.m. on September 22 at Jefferson Pointe. The daylong event features story times at 1:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. WANE-TV reporters Megan Stembol and Alyssa Ivanson will read, Megan at 1:00 p.m. and Alyssa at 4:00 p.m. Literacy Alliance Story Friend Jill Clodfelter-Mason will read at 7:00 p.m.

Throughout the Bookfair, customers who present a special voucher at the cash register will garner a donation from Barnes and Noble. Ten percent of their pretax purchase amount will be given to The Literacy Alliance. Folks interested in helping can print a voucher from The Literacy Alliance website or receive one from Brian at 426-7323.

Get Caught Reading at Rally to Read

From 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on September 22, the

third annual Rally to Read is happening at the Hanna-Creighton Campus. Over twenty organizations make it happen. This free family event promotes reading with activities and entertainment, free food, and a chance to win one of three reading rooms.

The Wizard of Oz on Embassy Theatre's Big Screen

There's no place like The Embassy Theatre on September 23. Turner Classic Movies and Comcast present *The Wizard of Oz* to benefit The Literacy Alliance.

The fun begins when the doors open at 1:30 p.m. Dorothy and Scarecrow will be on hand to greet the audience. A little before 2:00 p.m., dancers from the Fort Wayne School of Dance will perform "He's the Wiz" from the Broadway hit *The Wiz*. During intermission, members of the Fort Wayne Children's Choir will sing.

Children 12 and under will be admitted free while general admission tickets are \$4, available at The Literacy Alliance and on the day of the show.

Volunteers Help with Literacy Alliance Fundraiser

With a word from instructor Miss Kim, thirteen students filed into the classroom at Fort Wayne School of Dance, sat on the floor, and gave her their full attention. She briefly talked about why they were there then started them on stretching.

"Nice and loose," she said as they worked on head and neck, arms and legs. This was the first practice for "He's the Wiz" from the musical *The Wiz*.

The Fort Wayne School of Dance is one of the organizations helping The Literacy Alliance with its third movie event fundraiser. On September 23, Turner Classic Movies and Comcast will present *The Wizard of Oz*, the 1939 Judy Garland classic, to benefit The Literacy Alliance.

The dancers from Fort Wayne School of Dance will perform just before the movie. Members of Fort Wayne Children's Choir will arrive in time to sing during intermission. Target volunteers will help with ticket sales and costume characters.

They have three practice sessions. During this first session, Miss Kim said, she takes them step by step through the choreography. Subsequent sessions include cleaning up the performance and a final practice the week before the event.

Though it sounds like a short time to learn a dance, Miss Kim, a Fort Wayne School of Dance teacher for five

years, explained that the students are used to learning quickly, plus the teachers work to make the choreography a lot of fun.

"And the students like the chance to perform. They're all donating their time, and it's nice to see the dancers and parents' excitement."



Dancers from the Fort Wayne School of Dance listen to Miss Kim as she guides them through the choreography for "He's the Wiz." All are volunteers who will open the show at the September 23 screening of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Thanks to Individuals & Organizations for Their Generous Support

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Announcement

In an effort to minimize expenses, The Literacy Alliance has posted its Annual Report for 2005-2006 online at www.fwliteracyalliance.org. Click on the "Donor Information" button. The second paragraph provides a link to the most recent annual report.

Annual Reports are still available in print. To receive a copy, contact Brian at The Literacy Alliance, 260-426-7323.

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Many people, even highly literate people, often have trouble understanding their healthcare coverage. PHP makes it simple, and is dedicated to improving the lives of our neighbors and friends in Northern Indiana.

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. . .for the **Movie Event Fundraiser**



The Musson Family

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The Fort Wayne School of Dance



Fort Wayne Children's Choir

From the Director's Desk

Don't let recent news about the decline in pleasure reading by American adults cause you to think that being able to read is less important in today's world. While I personally think that those folks are missing one of the great pleasures in life, I experience the same pressures of the information age.

The information that I read just to stay current in the field of adult literacy is overwhelming. That doesn't include my search for information in areas where this organization wants to move ahead—especially new technologies that I try to understand. It sometimes takes deliberate effort to make a trip to the library for pleasure reading.

All of this is to say that being able to read is more important now than ever. While those of us who enjoy leisure reading may feel sad for those who don't take the time, reading isn't just about books. Reading instructions for new procedures on the job; understanding the latest health and nutrition information and weighing it against current common "knowledge" about what is "good" for you; sorting through competing advertisements for banking services and home utilities; searching on line for tonight's movie schedule—all of these activities require the ability to read. Several require the "new" literacy skill of being able to use an online computer.

We celebrate reading in September with literacy weekend—September 22nd's Rally to Read and September 23rd's *Wizard of Oz* at the Embassy. Our adult learner J.D. will celebrate by reading to his young son. Join us in celebrating by enjoying a book or two!



Judith Stabelli, Executive Director



709 Clay Street, Suite 100 · Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

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