



The Literacy Alliance

Literacy News

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Angela Carver and Penny Hopper prepare for the GED exam at WorkOne. They are students in The Literacy Alliance's new fast-track learning center for high level learners.

Family Benefits from New Fast- Track Learning Center

Penny Hopper and Angela Carver take care of each other. Penny's son, Scott, and Angela have a daughter, Charity. Angela explained, Penny's "like my mom. She's helped me through a lot."

Penny and Angela were among the first students served by The Literacy Alliance's new intake procedure and fast-track learning center in WorkOne at Rudisill Plaza.

Last May, Penny called about GED classes. She registered for an intake session in June and contacted Angela, telling her "At my age, if I can go and do this, you can too." Four days later, Angela registered for the same intake session.

At the intake sessions, adult students learn about what's expected of them in Literacy Alliance programs and take a preliminary assessment test. Based on the test's results, they are placed in small group tutoring, one of The Literacy Alliance's four current learning centers, or the fast-track center.

Fast-track fulfills a Literacy Alliance goal to become an integral part of the job readiness effort in Allen County. Partnering with WorkOne brings students nearly ready to take the GED exam to WorkOne's facility. Since the majority of Literacy Alliance students seek GED preparation as a next step to college or career, WorkOne is a logical connection. In fast-track, students go over what they need to succeed at the GED exam and have access to WorkOne's services.

The day Penny and Angela took a break from their studies was bright and cheery. Sunshine poured into WorkOne's spacious office.

"Band was the only reason I went to school," said Penny as she described the circumstances that kept her from finishing high school. She played the clarinet and had won medals for solos. During her junior year, certain factors kept her out of band, and she had no desire to continue.

The circumstances that keep Literacy Alliance students from graduating vary from student to student. In Angela's case, her mother was having a baby so she withdrew Angela from the seventh grade. "I had to stay home and take care of him." A year later she got work in fast food and moved out on her own.

Family Benefits from Fast-Track, continued on page 2

Family Benefits from Fast-Track, continued from page 1

After years in their respective fields, customer service for Penny and fast food for Angela, both worked in management positions and got a sense that they were not getting anywhere. Angela wanted a better life for Charity. Penny wanted to work in health care as a registered nurse.

Just as they went through intake and fast-track together, Penny and Angela will take the GED exam together. They are scheduled for the October 7 and 8 exam sessions at Anthis Career Center.

Describing their mutual support, Angela said, “Whether getting off drugs or going back to school, everybody needs a support system.”

With each backing the other up, they are confident they will pass. When they do, they will go to Ivy Tech and study nursing.



Candidates for The Literacy Alliance's adult instruction programs take a preliminary assessment test at the WorkOne office in Rudisill Plaza.

TLA Eliminates Waiting Lists

In June, The Literacy Alliance began a new intake procedure.

In the past, The Literacy Alliance put students on a waiting list. As students left learning centers and space became available for new students, site coordinators scheduled intake sessions at their learning centers. Letters were sent to the people on their waiting lists, and frequently, as a result of the month or two delay between the students' initial calls and the intake letter, many students were no longer accessible or interested. They may have moved, gained employment, lost interest, or experienced any number of other changes in circumstances.

Intake now occurs during sessions at the WorkOne office and neighborhood branches of the Allen County Public Library. Prospective students must register for a seat in a session where they hear about learning center expectations, ask questions, and take a preliminary assessment test. Based on the assessment, adult students are placed in a tutoring center, learning center, or fast-track center.

The new procedure has been “well received by all,” says Adult Programs Director Karen Limkemann. “So far, it meets all objectives.” Those objectives include eliminating waiting lists and placing students in centers according to their skill levels. Since June, 208 adult students have attended intake sessions.



Borders bookseller, Jason, loads books donated to Read to Me-Reach Out and Read. The retailer conducted a book drive in August, urging their customers to buy books to donate. The customers' generosity yielded twenty-seven boxes, over eight hundred books.

In addition, Borders kept track of the dollars spent on the books that were donated and donated 5% of that amount to Reach Out and Read-Indiana.

The Borders staff “were pleased and excited about how generous our community was during the book drive,” said General Manager Nancy Alexander. In fact, the staff contributed as well.

The donated books will be distributed to five local medical clinic waiting rooms through The Literacy Alliance's Books for Kids program. Children who visit the clinics will be able to select books to take home.

Announcements

Support literacy in Fort Wayne beginning at 6:00 p.m. October 24 at Latitudes, 538 E. Dupont Road behind the Dupont Branch Library. Executive Women International is hosting *Setting Sail for the Stars*, a wine tasting to benefit in part the Rally to Read. Emceed by Barb Richards of Majic 95.1 FM, the event offers stellar wines, new fall beers, and delicious hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are \$40, two for \$75. For ticket and sponsorship information, call Tina at 969-2516.

The next set of tutor training workshops will be held 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. on January 24 and February 7 at the main branch of the Allen County Public Library. For more information, call Laura at The Literacy Alliance, 426-7323.

The Literacy Alliance continues to have intake sessions for its adult literacy programs. Morning and evening sessions are available. Each session lasts about two and a half hours. Adults interested in strengthening their basic skills or preparing for the GED exam must register for one of the sessions by calling The Literacy Alliance, 426-7323.

The Literacy Alliance welcomes Laura Taliaferro, new Volunteer Coordinator. Laura has a long history with the Literacy Alliance since she has been a long time board member. She is retired from Fort Wayne Community Schools where she served as a teacher and administrator.

Volunteer Corner

Literacy Alliance staff, students, and volunteers were saddened by the recent passing of three volunteer tutors. Melaine Innocent Schreiber, Ray Gilbert, and Sister Laura Banet exemplified the spirit of volunteers at the agency. Their willingness to help, empathy, and patience endeared them to the adult students.

Like many Literacy Alliance volunteers, Ray donated his time and talent to a number of organizations including Blue Jacket and Matthew 25. Though at St. Hyacinth Learning Center for just two months, he left a positive impression. "Students enjoyed working with him," said Site Coordinator Deb Hetrick. He was encouraging and upbeat all the time.

Melaine tutored for a little over a year at Fellowship Learning Center. Born in London, she spoke with an English accent. "Whenever she spoke at tutor training," said former Literacy Alliance Volunteer Coordinator Kathleen Benson-Chaney, "all eyes were on her. She was an amazing woman." Fellow tutor Cathy Scott-Slayback remembered how the students loved working with Melaine. She was patient and comfortable with them. Even when they needed help with something she wasn't sure about, algebra for example, she got right in there with the students and worked with them till they got it.

According to Deb Hetrick, Sister Laura demonstrated the same willingness to help. "Whoever needed help, even if it was with higher level math, she'd hang in there with them." Her specialty was reading and English. She had been with The Literacy Alliance's longer than most, beginning in 1993. Very down to earth and positive with the students, Sister Laura made them all feel at ease. "She had a great sense of humor," said Deb. Her dedication to the students was remarkable. "You could count on her to be there all the time."

Web Site Gets Interactive



Screen shot of The Literacy Alliance's home page.

Regular visitors to www.fwliteracyalliance.org have seen recent changes that make it more interactive. What used to require printing and mailing forms or linking to the agency's general email can now be done through link-and-submit processes. For example, visitors interested in volunteering can click "view the training schedule, requirements, and expectations" link on the Volunteer Opportunities page where they can "click here" to complete the Workshop Registration Form.

The interactivity was accomplished with very little expense through a contract with FormSpring. FormSpring allows The Literacy Alliance to create secure forms that can be linked to the web site for visitors to use. The form data is password protected in the agency's FormSpring account. In addition to registering to volunteer, visitors can purchase tickets to fundraising events and donate directly to The Literacy Alliance.

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Hundreds attended Rally to Read again this year. The three hour event to promote literacy was September 27 at the Hanna-Creighton Campus, corner of Hanna and Creighton Streets, of ACPL-Pontiac Branch, CANI-Head Start, Citilink, and Fort Wayne Urban League. Participants enjoyed free books, entertainment, food, and fun. Reading rooms were given at the end of the event.

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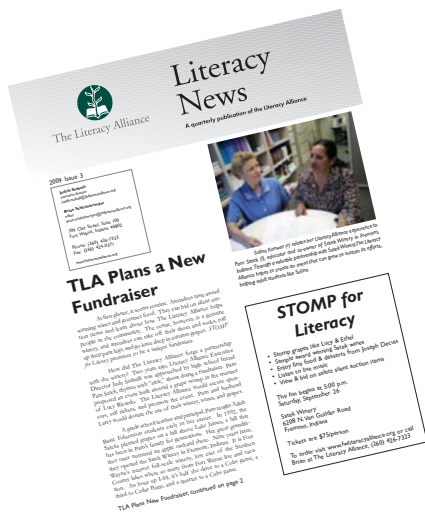
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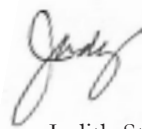
In our twentieth year, The Literacy Alliance has added new programs and procedures to improve service. Our new partnership with WorkOne has brought positive results. Collaboration with the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne and South Bend has improved our work with Burmese families.

You read about Penny and Angela in the cover story. They are among the first in our fast-track learning center at WorkOne, placed there through a new intake procedure. Last June, they attended one of our first intake sessions where they took a preliminary assessment test. The results indicated they would be best served by the fast-track program where they brush-up on weak areas, be it math, language, or composition, and review the rest. As its title indicates, the fast-track learning center gets students through the GED exam and closer to their next step, college or career, as quickly as possible.

In addition to the new intake and fast-track sessions, we have created two, one morning and one evening, tutoring centers, designed to enhance the one-on-one program and help low level learners in a group setting. The morning tutoring center meets at Fort Wayne Urban League, the evening at the Main Branch of the Allen County Public Library. Both provide extensive computer facilities that include internet access, allowing students to build their computer skills.

Finally, the Burmese initiative has succeeded due to the dedication of our volunteer tutors along with a collaboration with East Allen County School's Neighborhood Action Center which provided space in Autumn Woods Apartments. Thanks to the Catholic Diocese involvement, larger space has now been provided at St. Henry's in the former Benoit Academy facilities.

As we enter our twenty-first year of operation, The Literacy Alliance continues to help people like Penny and Angela achieve their goals. Volunteers like Sister Laura, Melanie Innocent Schreiber, and Ray Gilbert make that possible, as do valuable partners like WorkOne, the Urban League, the library, and the Catholic Diocese.



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