



Literacy Matters

Opening the World Through Words!

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BY OAKLAND LITERACY COUNCIL SUMMER 2016

✧ Summer Time ✧

“One benefit of summer is that each day we have more light to read by.”

Jeanette Walls, The Glass Castle

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER ARE HERE!

Despite the summer heat, the Oakland Literacy Council is abuzz with activity. We are in the throes of some major housekeeping, enlarging our amazing resource library, introducing a new staff member with her unique duties to our devoted tutors, creating a new tutor training module and crossing all the “t’s and i’s” with our updated Strategic Plan. You’ll find details for many of these activities within this newsletter.

Just for fun, and since Ma Nature will continue her “gift of heat” for the next month or two, we thought we would let you know where the phrase “dog days of summer” came from.....Many people believe the phrase stems from the fact that dogs tend to be a bit on the lazy side during the hottest days of summer. While true, who wouldn’t be with all that fur, it actually stems from the ancient Romans who called the hottest, most humid days of summer “diēs caniculārēs” or “dog days.” The name came about because they associated the hottest days of summer with the star Sirius. Sirius was known as the “Dog Star” as it was the brightest star in the constellation Canis Major (Large Dog). Sirius is so bright that the ancient Romans thought it radiated extra heat toward Earth.



“Summer Slide”

A cute name for an ever increasing problem....

Summer slide is the tendency for students to lose some of the achievement gains they made over the course of the year. Most recent studies have focused on children. Local libraries have stepped up to assist by offering reading challenges (and of course access to books) to children of all ages.

Often overlooked is the adult population. Three easy steps to curb the tide is to: A. Read everyday--newspapers, road signs, online resources B. Read aloud-- this helps with comprehension and pronunciation and C. match your reading interests with your summer activities!

A Few Words.....by Judy Lindstrom



Happy Summer!
 Sometimes, though not often enough, I reflect upon the good fortunes of our organization. We have so many inspiring moments, stories and successes all generated by people power. One group of volunteers often overlooked is our Board of Trustees. This year in particular I have called on these men and women for guidance and direction. And while my space is limited I want to thank each and everyone of them for a job well done! Please join me in thanking: **John Almstadt, Judy Bryce, Robert Gaylor, Julie Hoensheid, Ann Manning, Harry Manza, John Randle and Mary Rosenbusch.** Our success is a true reflection of their dedication!

The Motor City Wine and Food Festival Recap

Una Notte in Italia
 (A Night in Italy)

The “glow” is still red hot for “team MCWFF” after another successful event bringing together the very best in food, music, wine, cars and literacy friends.

Our hardworking leaders, **Robert Gaylor** and **Russell Moore** had a check list a mile long to make sure that guests enjoyed this special evening.

Grazie to: Judy Bryce, Debbie Castelli, Ellie Couch, Robert Gaylor, Cathryn Hallisy, Greg Haynes, Carol Herbst, Judy Lindstrom, Russell Moore, Claire Rewold and Michele Thorstad for their hard work and long hours.

The OLC loves fund raising ideas. If you have one please let us know.



A new feature celebrating our student's many milestones!

Congratulations to Xuefen Gwo, Riad Khayat, and Haifaa Saras! They have recently become citizens of the United States!

Xuefen is from China, and has been living in the United States for more than four years with her husband and son. She has worked with her tutor, Kathy Boudry since May of 2015. Xuefen has more to celebrate than her newly-gained citizenship. In August, she will give birth to her second child.

Riad and Haifaa left Syria three years ago because the civil war made it such a dangerous place to live. Their daughter lives in Oakland County, so they settled here, leaving behind Riad's successful dental practice. Rick Johnston has worked with Riad for about two years and with Haifaa about nine months (she previously had another tutor). Through hard work and Rick's guidance, they were well prepared for the citizenship exam. Riad and Haifaa were strongly motivated by the desire to visit their family. Traveling back to Syria has been nearly impossible for them, but a U.S. passport will enable them to travel freely.



Xuefen Gwo with her tutor, Kathy Boudry

Haifaa Saras
 and
 Riad Kyayat



From the desk of our Executive Director

Hello all! As many of you know there have been many internal changes that have happened over the past year here at the Oakland Literacy Council. We have said goodbye to long-term staff members and have welcomed many new faces both at the staff level and at the Board level. But rest assured the changes will make the organization stronger and more robust.

Approximately 250 students and tutors meet each week to work on their literacy goals, and each and every month we hear about the progress that is being made. Our most recent graduation ceremony shows that many students are prepared to find jobs here in our community and many others have secured citizenship because of the wonderful work of our tutors and students.

The Board has been busy behind the scenes planning for the future of this important organization.

Over the past several months the board and some other key stakeholders came together in a series of four sessions to prioritize the work of the organization. They currently are working on an action plan that focuses on the following four goals:

- Building a network of partners to enhance our reputation and improve

our ability to serve our mission

- Ensuring that our resources are meeting the most important literacy needs of Oakland County
- Acquiring the tutors we need to serve our mission and making them as effective as possible
- Growing and diversifying revenue to support expansion of staff and services.

The board and staff are committed to strengthening and growing this organization. As part of this action plan, I will be networking with the community to better spread awareness of our mission, partnering with organizations that serve our basic students in order to boost basic student enrollment, and spending time developing funding relationships.

We also have recently hired Suann Darmody as the Tutor Coordinator to better support and prepare our tutors (see the full story on page five). Suann will be responsible for tutor-to-tutor events and the new online tutor training portal that will be launched in the fall.

Our eligibility criteria for new students have recently been revised to better focus our efforts on those

students who will be in our community permanently. We will still serve all students (short-term residents and permanent residents), but those here for a short-time will be “graduated” at the high intermediate ESL level rather than the advanced ESL level (see student eligibility statement).

Finally we know that this organization has operated with a skeletal staff for too long. We are developing plans to increase funding in order to increase our staffing levels so that our students and tutors can be better served.

This organization has done incredible work for the last thirty years, and we strongly believe these plans will help strengthen and build the organization so that the work can continue for the next thirty years.

Feel free to contact me at 248.253.1617 or lisa.m@oaklandliteracy.com if you have any questions or concerns or wish to volunteer your services. I look forward to working with you all as we work to eliminate illiteracy here in Oakland County.



Oakland Literacy Council

Student Goal Achievements

May - June 2016



The roots of true achievement lie in the will to become the best that you can become.

Harold Taylor

AL was able to read several children's books to her kids.

JB is now understanding the health insurance process.

NA is working on familiarizing herself with the vocabulary used in everyday situations, such as shopping, the doctor's office and items around the home.

SJ is learning US neighborly customs and expectations (she moved into a new home), as well as learning American humor.

NM worked on the "100 words that make up about 50% of all printed material".

YJ is feeling more confident about communicating with her daughters' teachers, both verbally and in writing, as well as communicating with medical professionals.

JY worked on vocabulary found on menus and how to order meals at a Subway restaurant.

KK succeeded in speaking with post office employees to resolve a problem with her mail, as well as city employees to resolve a garbage problem.

ML improved in conversation, reading ability, vocabulary and grammar.

LZ learned vocabulary for paying traffic fines and renting an apartment.

HO reads American news online each day and watches American films to improve her English and broaden her vocabulary.

YK showed improvement in sentence structure.

KK wrote a letter to her son's teacher at the end of the school year, after having never spoken with him/her before.

CU is now feeling very confident with her English and is in the process of looking for a part-time job for the fall.

JK is becoming more secure in speaking with her colleagues at work.

MM finished reading a book of short stories.

ML brings in news articles to read and discuss on topics such as parenting styles and medical advice.

Have you Heard?.....Great News for Tutors!



We are pleased to announce some new resources, starting with a new staff member. **Suann Darmody** is a familiar face taking on a new role. She has been an active tutor, led conversation groups, and is currently a tutor trainer. She now has joined the OLC staff as a dedicated **Tutor Coordinator**. Her expertise and passion will enable us to provide more much-deserved support to tutors. In addition to recruiting and training, she also will be offering continuing learning opportunities such as workshops and breakfasts. Please welcome Suann to her new role, and be sure to share with her any ideas you may have for workshop topics.

In addition to a new tutor coordinator, we also recently have acquired a lot of new materials that hopefully will be a great resource for tutors. The wide variety of new resources includes:

- Materials to help our ESL students practice conversation;
- Pleasure-reading materials (biographies, adult fiction, and American-themed nonfiction);
- Workforce development materials (job interview resources, vocabulary in the workplace, and some industry specific materials);
- Challenger writing curriculum that coordinates with the Challenger reading materials;
- A new work and life curriculum series that directly aligns with our testing;
- An assortment of other materials focused on phrasal verbs, idioms, health care, using computers and shopping.

Stop by and browse through the materials, and stay tuned for a detailed inventory of library resources that we'll be posting online soon. You are welcome to borrow or purchase any of the materials.



New Tutors – OLC Needs Your Input

If you graduated within the past twelve months, OLC would appreciate your valuable input into the design of a new online training program.

Tutor Trainer **Joan Allesee** recently finished her Master's Degree in Instructional Design. She is heading up a team designing an eLearning Orientation for people who are interested in becoming tutors. This eLearning program will enable new tutors to complete part of their training online prior to attending the workshop at the OLC Office.

Before launching this training module, she would like some recently trained tutors to help test it and provide feedback. A date for testing is not yet available, but it will be in the near future. If you are interested in helping, please contact the Literacy office

A bit of this and a tad of that!

Oakland Literacy Council (OLC) hosted its first Tutor Happy Hour on Friday, June 24 at the Moose Preserve. Tutors shared news, networked, and just relaxed at the end of a busy week. OLC provided yummy appetizers for all.

Fifteen tutors took part in the festivities on that beautiful summer evening, enjoying the camaraderie. We discussed ways to work with our students. **Harry and Bonnie Manza**, a husband and wife tutor team, attended and shared lots of ideas. **Eric Nagler**, who is a computer specialist as well as a long-time tutor, shared ideas on apps that tutors can use in working

with their students. **Molly Renwick** shared her experience from an ESL conference she attended in Florida.

Stacy Peper reported on the good results she has achieved using the Orton-Gillingham approach. This form of reading instruction was developed in the early 20th century. It is language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative, cognitive and flexible. We all



agreed that these characteristics are needed when working with adult learners. The method accommodates and utilizes the three learning modalities, or pathways, through which people learn: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Turesa Lewis thought this Tutor Happy Hour was the perfect end to a workweek. "I thought about coming to the Breakfast a few months ago," she said, "but that was way too early on a Saturday." A good time was had by all. Hopefully, this will be the start of a fun new OLC tradition.

Shopping for Literacy

Did you know that you can raise money for Oakland Literacy Council just by shopping?

Buying groceries at Kroger and shopping at Amazon are easy ways to earn much-needed funds for us. Every purchase you make adds to their Oakland Literacy Council donations.

Register for the Kroger Rewards program by visiting <https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow>. Registration must be renewed each year, so even if you participated in the program last year, please revisit the site.

Make your Amazon purchases at www.amazon.smile.com, which offers all the same products and prices as the regular Amazon site.

Barnes and Noble also is supporting Oakland Literacy Council. They will hold fundraising bookfairs for us at their Troy store on September 11 and December 11. A portion of all sales that day, including online sales, will be donated to us.

Eligibility Statement: Basic Literacy and ESL Students

It is the policy of the Oakland Literacy Council to accept as priority students those adults who have the greatest barriers to literacy and who meet the following criteria:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Long-term English as a Second Language (ESL) students -- function at CASAS Reading and Listening Levels equivalent of grades 1-8
- Short-term ESL students -- function at CASAS Reading and Listening Levels equivalent of grades 1-5
- Need one-on-one or small group instruction
- Need to increase employment opportunities, achieve citizenship, or improve reading skills

Individuals who do not meet these criteria will be considered for tutoring on a case-by-case basis. Whenever possible, individuals who do not meet the criteria or are not accepted on case-by-case basis will be referred to other appropriate agencies.

Oakland Literacy Council does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, age, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or family status.

File this under "Did you Know"

About 50 percent of the 2 million immigrants who come to the U.S. each year lack high school education and proficient English language skills. This severely limits their access to jobs, college, and citizenship and increases their vulnerability to living in poverty.

Of adults with the lowest literacy levels, 43 percent live in poverty, and 70% of adult welfare recipients have low literacy levels. There is a clear correlation between more education and higher earnings, and between higher educational scores and higher earnings.

Children of parents with low literacy skills have a 72 percent chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. These children are more likely to get poor grades, display behavioral problems, have high absentee rates, repeat school years, or drop out.

An excess of \$230 billion a year in health care costs is linked to low adult literacy. Nearly half of American adults have difficulty understanding and using health information. Lack of understanding impedes adults' abilities to make appropriate health decisions and increases the likelihood that they'll incur higher health costs.