

Donor Spotlight: For Candy Geeter, the mission is personal.

Growing up, Candy Geeter’s parents stressed the importance of education, which resulted in her passion to learn. She had witnessed how her father struggled with reading and the difficulty it presented in his everyday life.

“I didn’t understand how an adult could go through life and not know how to read,” she says. “My father was so smart, especially when it came to numbers. Unfortunately, like so many others, he hid the fact that he struggled with reading.”

Perhaps this was why her parents encouraged her and her sixteen siblings to further their education. Candy eventually earned a master’s degree in education, and she has spent the majority of her career at



“Donating is a way to let everyone I know I still believe,” says former board member Candy Geeter.

Oakland Community College.

“I love to read,” she says. “I love to write. I can’t imagine someone not having that same opportunity. That’s why I believe in the mission of Oakland Literacy Council.”

When the opportunity came to join the Council’s board of directors in September 2016, Candy was delighted. She served on the board until early 2019, during which time she was impressed by the shared commitment to literacy.

As a board member, Candy served as a liaison between the Council and Oakland Community College, where many Council students go on to further their education. Candy also oversaw the Council’s participation in Bookstock.

Candy still uses her creativity behind the scenes to support Council projects. She assists with student testing and continues to donate to the Council. “Donating is a way to let everyone I know I still believe.”

Thank you to our Ex Libris Benefactors

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New Language for a New Life

From getting ready for childbirth to getting ready to speak at this year’s Ex Libris, this new mom and her tutor have shared a special year together.

Imagine a woman giving birth for the first time in a country where she doesn’t speak the language well.

The thought scared Elena Andreeva, an immigrant from Russia, whose mother was far away in her homeland.

Thanks to your support, Elena didn’t have to face the experience alone.

Like many tutors, Elena’s tutor, Irene Sinclair, tailored her lessons to meet Elena’s individual needs. Elena wanted to know what to expect in the months leading up to and during the birth of her son.

Lessons in reading, writing, listening, and pronunciation revolved around the topic of pregnancy and labor and delivery. With her tutor, Elena studied medical terms like contractions, dilation, and epidural. She read about the stages of labor, and she and Irene discussed breathing techniques and breastfeeding. Irene, who has three children of her own, shared her personal experience.

“Irene became like a family for me,” Elena says. She even sought Irene’s advice on baby names. After she chose Zachary, Irene helped her pronounce the word perfectly.

(continued on next page)



Elena, an immigrant from Russia, with 5-month-old Zachary, named with the help of Elena’s tutor, Irene.

Inside this Issue

| | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Tributes | Page 2 |
| Student and Tutor Inspire | Page 3 |
| Donor Spotlight | Page 4 |

(continued from Page 1)



Elena and tutor, Irene, plan their presentation for the Ex Libris fundraiser.

As Elena's knowledge of English and pregnancy expanded, she became comfortable going to doctor's visits.

Then came the big day.

Giving birth at a hospital went so smoothly that Elena didn't realize until much later that she had been speaking in English the entire time. She recalls, **"I didn't have any trouble speaking with the**

doctors and nurses, and I was able to explain my feelings."

Of course, there are only more doctor visits after a baby. Like all new moms, Elena has had a lot of questions as Zachary moves through each stage of infancy. She is so relieved that she can talk easily with her pediatrician. "It is important to communicate with the doctor, and she explains [to] me everything... like a regular mom."

Elena and Irene also worked on English for the workplace. Elena has a master's degree in computer science and wants to go back to work when Zachary is older. Meanwhile, with Irene's encouragement, she began volunteering as a way to practice English.

Elena now sings in a community choir, and she and Zachary cheer on her husband's volleyball team. **She wants to learn everything she can about American history and someday become a citizen.** Says Elena, "I want to learn all [the] American Presidents. I've learned the first ten!"



Elena with OLC President Judy Lindstrom at her graduation in May.

Gifts of Stock: A Win-Win for Donors and Our Adult Learners

It is the time of year many of us think about charitable donations and tax planning.

A gift of appreciated securities (publicly traded stocks, bond, mutual funds) is a smart option for donors to consider. With these gifts, you receive tax benefits and maximize the value of your contributions.

When you donate a gift of appreciated stock (owned more than one year), you won't pay capital gains tax and the full market value is tax deductible.

Did you know?

If you are aged 70 ½ or older, a charitable donation of up to \$100,000 can apply toward an IRA Required Minimum Distribution.

Also, by donating the asset before it is sold, the organization receives the full before-tax value and won't pay capital gains when the asset is later sold.

Oakland Literacy Council can now accept your gift of appreciated stock or other securities.

Contact Lisa Machesky at lisa.m@oaklandliteracy.com. She

will provide you the brokerage account information you need.

TRIBUTES

We are honored and grateful to these community members and families who have chosen this year to leave a legacy of literacy. We extend our heartfelt condolences to their loved ones and gratitude to all who contributed in their memory.

DONALD BREEN
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Student and Tutor Inspire Metro Detroit

On a Monday, Robert Prosser, at the age of 84, received his first library card from the Bloomfield Township Public Library. On Tuesday, he was on Detroit's Local 4 News with his tutor, Janet Twomey, sharing his story.

Robert never learned to read beyond his first and last name. He worked as a painter, managing around his lack of reading skills. Robert explained, "When you are traveling, you learn how to pick out a building, a tree, or something that is familiar."

Finally, at the age of 79, he had a special reason to learn. He wanted to be able to read a passage at his church.

Robert found the Oakland Literacy Council and began working with Janet. They have been meeting together every week since then.

In the interview, the joy that reading brings Robert came shining through. **"It's a whole new world. People wouldn't believe how beautiful it [reading] is."**

And, yes. Robert read the passage at church. Said Janet proudly in the interview, "They clapped and they clapped. Can you imagine?"



Robert browses the shelves at Bloomfield Township Library. He had a message for viewers who might struggle like he did:

"I wish I could tell people who don't know how to read to just do it [reach out for help and learn]!"



Sorting for Dollars

Your time means money to help our students. Sorting books and media for Bookstock, the big spring book sale, starts now. Every hour you give earns money for Oakland Literacy Council. Wednesdays 10 am – 2 pm at Congregation Beth Ahm, 5075 West Maple Road, Bloomfield Hills. E-mail Sue Klunk at sue.k@oaklandliteracy.com.

Mock Interviewing

We are pleased to be partnering with the Troy Adult Education and Careers (TRAC) program to help adult student meet their employment goals. OLC volunteers are conducting mock phone interviews with students in their programs to help them build confidence and learn job vocabulary and professional phone etiquette. If you are interested in being an interviewer, e-mail Lisa Machesky at lisa.m@oaklandliteracy.com.

"Shop" for Literacy

This holiday season, your shopping can make a difference. Simply name "Oakland Literacy Council" as your charity of choice at Kroger.com and Amazon.com.