



THE LITERACY COUNCIL  
OF LANCASTER-LEBANON

# The LiteracyLine

Spring 2015

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## The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

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### The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon Receives 2015 Outstanding Tutor Award

**- Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator**

At the 2015 PAACE Conference, The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon Tutor, Linda Johnson, received the Outstanding Tutor Award. Here is an excerpt from her nomination.

“Where do you have the most need?” These were the words uttered by Linda Johnson on April 11, 2009 when asked about a volunteer assignment at The Literacy Council. Linda’s first experience was with an ESL student who wanted citizenship, which he achieved. Before he took the test, Linda offered to take him to visit Washington, D.C. When Linda arrived at Manuel’s home, the entire “Farkel” (Rowen and Martin Laugh-In) family marched out the door. Fortunately, Linda drives a large van.

“Do not give me a student who needs help with math.” Her second student was working toward her GED. Math was the greatest challenge. One Sunday afternoon I received an email from Linda. She was stressed because she was unable to figure out and solve a math problem. She was meeting her student the next day and needed help. I connected her with Marcie, one of our math instructors. On a Sunday afternoon, they worked out the problem through email and a phone conversation.

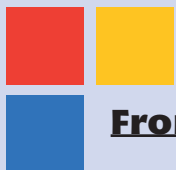
“Give me more! I love doing this!” In September, 2013, Donna Dencler, Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 Family Literacy Teacher, asked if I could place a tutor in her classroom. With a background in elementary education I felt that Linda would be a perfect fit for the Family Literacy class. When I approached Linda, she said yes immediately, even though she would be driving 20 miles one way. As Donna states below, Linda continues in this capacity.

“Don’t you ever have anyone who needs help close to my home?” Elena, a Russian immigrant, who lives close to Linda was looking for help with vocabulary, reading and grammar. The high level ESL student’s goal is to be a translator in hospitals, courtrooms and schools. Their focus is reading, grammar and idioms as well as the vocabulary necessary to meet this employment goal.

“Where do have the most need?” Volunteers like Linda Johnson make me want to come to work. My work is easier because of Linda. She deserves and has earned this recognition.



*Congratulations, Linda!*



## **From the Executive Director - Cheryl Hiester**

In adult literacy, we are always looking to the most current research and data to help inform the programs and operations in our agencies. The newest report on adult literacy comes from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, of which, the U.S. is a member nation. OECD recently released international data from adult basic skills assessments conducted around the world. The findings are contained in the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies Report.

### **What did we learn?**

When you look at how the U.S. is doing in comparison to the other nations in the assessment, it doesn't look so good. When you rank the U.S. by the percentage of adults scoring at each level in literacy, the U.S. ranks 16th - falling behind Japan, Finland, Netherlands, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Canada, Korea, England, Denmark, and Germany. There were 32 nations assessed in total.

In many countries, there are large portions of the population who lack the skills to use computers and smart phones. Only 3-8% of adults demonstrate the highest level of proficiency in problem solving. As is the case with many things, practice [in using technology] can greatly impact the knowledge and comfort level of a student, so it is no surprise that access to technology will help improve skills.

In all the nations assessed, individuals who score at lower levels of proficiency in literacy are more likely than those with higher proficiency to report poor health, believe that they have little impact on the political

process, and not participate in volunteer activities. In most countries, people with lower proficiency are also more likely to have lower levels of trust in others.

We cannot afford to leave anyone in our community behind. The good news is that skills can be learned at any age, and here at The Literacy Council, adults are learning the skills they need to achieve their goals. The U.S. Department of Education recently released, "Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the U.S." This guide identifies seven strategies that we can embrace to achieve a collective impact approach with shared goals to strengthen the skills of our community.

1. Create joint ownership of solutions.
2. Expand opportunities for adults to improve foundation skills.
3. Make career pathways available and accessible.
4. Ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers and programs.
5. Align policies and programs to integrate services for adults.
6. Increase the return on investment in skills training and engage business and industry.
7. Commit to closing the equity gaps for vulnerable sub-populations.

Here at The Literacy Council, we are committed to responding to this call to action.



## **An Evening of Matched Pairs 2015** **- Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator**

On Sunday evening, March 1, 2015, The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon (LCLL) hosted the second annual Evening of Matched Pairs at the Lancaster Marriott. Despite the winter weather which consisted of frigid temperatures, snow, sleet, and freezing rain, faithful supporters of LCLL braved the elements to come out and enjoy the evening. Events of the evening consisted of both silent and live auctions with over 50 items, live music, and tastings. Fifteen (15) restaurants donated their time and delicious food, which was paired with fantastic wines and beers by sommelier Dave Diffendal. Even though

the number of attendees was significantly impacted by the late winter storm, LCLL still raised over \$12,800 that will help support the adult education services provided in both Lancaster and Lebanon counties. Our hope is that next year, the weather will be fantastic, and we can double the funds raised. If so, we will be able to help even more adults in need of our services, as they strive for success in meeting both educational and life goals.





## Student Spotlight: David Ruiz's Story

- Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator



***"I want to be able to use my story to inspire others."***

As a young child, David Ruiz moved to Lancaster from Puerto Rico with his mother and three siblings. David's family was homeless, and he talked about "sofa hopping," living with relatives and at the Water Street Rescue Mission until they had to leave. When they lived at the mission, David walked across the street to go to school. "I was always worried about what others thought—if they knew I was homeless," David said. David and his family continued to move around, staying with various relatives until they finally got a home on Beaver Street in Lancaster.

"My mom worked very hard," stated David. She is one of his biggest influences in David's life; as a single mother, she stopped her education to work and support her four children. "I admire her for doing what she did. She gave up things she wanted for her kids. Her dream was to be a lawyer." David talked about his mother's childhood, and how she grew up in an abusive household, which was also her motivation to leave and search for a better life.

When the family first moved to the home on Beaver Street, life was extremely challenging. David's mom had no work at the time, and she had a boyfriend who was abusive and sold drugs. Although he was only about 8 years old, David remembers drug busts at his home, and his mother "getting rid of" large amounts of drugs before the FBI could confiscate them. The family continued to struggle, and people made it clear that David and his family were not welcome in the neighborhood, by defacing the property. In addition to the challenges already facing David and his family, his oldest brother fell off of a third story building, and was pronounced dead—but, he is still alive! When doctors removed life support, he was able to survive on his own. "I thank God for that (blessing and miracle)—it gave us unity as a family," said David.

David and his family moved from Beaver Street after a couple years, and his mom had broken up with her boyfriend. David was a good student in high school, getting all A's and B's. "We were struggling, and I had to give up school to help my mom and family pay the bills and continue to have a place to live. I had to put my future on hold. I dropped out in my senior year, only needing six more credits to graduate with my class," said David.

After working for a company for 14 years, David decided he had enough, and couldn't do it anymore. "I was determined to get my GED," stated David. Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator, called David about coming to class—"it was a Godsend," said David. David had taken a couple tests while he was still working, but had stopped coming to class due to his work schedule which also required daily travel. "Jane called me and said, 'Are you ready, what's taking so long, where are you?'" David stated, "I needed that push. I didn't have the support in a father figure, and had limited support from my mother. Jane gave me the push I needed."

David mentioned that the impact of getting his GED didn't hit him until the graduation ceremony. "It was my first feeling of success and accomplishment, and I thought, if I can do this, I can do more. The possibilities are endless. It was the first time my mom said she was proud of me."

David is now a student at HACC, pursuing a pre-health professional degree. David stated, "I want a career that gives me many options. I'm thinking about becoming a physician's assistant. I have the drive, and I have the faith that I can get there." David continues to come to The Literacy Council for tutoring with math. He has worked with Steve, who is a retired doctor. David feels this is a great benefit to him because he can not only learn math, but can also ask Steve questions about the medical field.

Every now and then, David says he runs into someone with whom he went to high school. "Some are quick to judge, but they don't know my journey. This was my path—where I was destined to be to get me where I am today. I'm taking one day at a time," states David. David has the support of his fiancé, who also went to HACC, and works for Lancaster General in radiology. Most importantly, David mentioned that he is also doing this for his kids. "I want to give them what I didn't have," said David.





## **ESL Spring Training – Linda Cullen, ESL Services Coordinator**

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If you are a new volunteer teaching English as a Second Language, you will want to mark May 20, 2015 on your calendar. You are invited to observe an ESL class from 9-10:30 AM at Bright Side Opportunities Center or attend 6-7:30 PM at The Literacy Council. Both training sessions will introduce you to the basics of teaching ESL. You'll learn helpful techniques, drills, activities, and get lots of handouts to use with your students. Trainers are also available to come to your location if you have several teachers that would like to take the training as a group. For more information or to register, call Karey at The Literacy Council in Lancaster at 717-295-5523.

**ESL Tutor Tip:** Be sure that your student, no matter what level, knows how to call 911. Our local 911 answers the calls like this, "Lancaster County 911. Do you need police, fire or ambulance (students answer with just ONE choice). The next question is, "What's the address?" Students should be able to say their address CLEARLY and if they can't say it CLEARLY, they should spell their street immediately and they should say every number separately. Discourage saying two hundred forty-five or 2-forty-five. Instead they should say 2-4-5. I teach the students to say Lebanon or Lancaster City if they are from the city. Or Columbia Borough if they are from a Borough. To avoid the next question which is, "What township, city or borough?" That question usually throws students. I tell

them to then say, "I speak Chinese, or I speak Amharic, or I speak \_\_\_\_\_."

The operator will then say, "Hold on one moment... transferring to the Language Line. This takes a minute or two...Do not hang up." Stress to the students that in an emergency, they will be extremely nervous. All of the English that they know may just fly out the window. They need to practice and practice so it is in their memory like saying the ABC's or 1-10. Also impress on them that they should not hang up the phone even if it seems to be taking a long time to get the language line because 911 is tracking the phone number to their location. Calling 911 is easy. Adults that are relying in their children to call in an emergency need to step up when they are alone or when their child is the one who needs an ambulance. The Language Line has 150 languages on it and it will take a minute or two to transfer the call and many foreign speakers hang up because there is silence and they think that they have been disconnected. Please explain that they have to wait for the translator to get on the line. The operator will remind them, "DO NOT HANG UP!" As a teacher, 911 dispatchers welcome your calls. Writing down your local 911's exact words is helpful to the beginning students because they can practice with you and hear the same phrases in the same order that they will hear during an actual emergency.

## **Life Beyond the New GED – Bobbi Hurst, Student Services Coordinator**

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With the advent of the PA Department of Education's Career and College Readiness Standards for Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs, emphasis is now placed on helping students transition to post-secondary education and training to obtain gainful employment and earn a "living wage." In a nutshell, adult education for GED preparation is transforming into a different design model, namely, adult education for employment, advancement, and post-secondary admission. In this model, the GED is just one step on the career pathways and learning ladder.

For many Literacy Council students, there is still a lot of living to do after getting a GED diploma. The time to start thinking about the quality of that life is before, not after the diploma is framed and hanging on the wall. When I ask students why they are here, most say, "to get a GED." Then I ask, "For what?" The answers are, "to get a job" or, "to get a better job" or, "to go back to school." This is good! Now students are thinking about life beyond the GED and

they've defined their primary and secondary goals – GED, employment and/or preparation for post-secondary education and training.

By design, preparing for the new GED requires students to develop basic skills both for work and post-secondary/training programs. Reading, writing and math proficiency is evaluated at two different levels and with two different score requirements. Students can "pass" the GED with a score of 150 or higher for that critical work credential of having a diploma. In addition, students can "pass" the GED with a 170 or higher for post-secondary academic readiness. By supporting students on the GED rung of the ladder, we are directly assisting them in achieving their goals – pass the GED test, work, education, and training.

In addition to academic preparation, tutors and teachers can also help students to develop a career and educa-

*continued on page 6...*





## Literacy Council Co-hosts Student Showcase Breakfast - Jenny Bair, Program Director

On March 27, The Literacy Council, in collaboration with Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU13), hosted a student showcase breakfast. Representatives from the offices of eight Pennsylvania Legislators were in attendance along with program administrators, teachers, and students. In the morning, we highlighted the successes of four students from our adult and family literacy programs. Two students spoke of spending more than a decade in refugee camps. When they arrived in the US, they had limited English skills. By attending free classes with The Literacy Council and IU13, they have been able to meet their goals. We also heard from a student who got her GED through IU13 classes and is scheduled to graduate with her associate's degree in Allied Health in May. Finally, we heard from a student who, displaced from his job of 25 years, found the academic support he needed in adult education's pre-LPN classes, to pursue a new career in healthcare. These are just a few of the many success stories that adult and family literacy tutors and teachers get to be a part of every day.

Our work and success stories like those mentioned above can only continue with appropriate funding. Late in February, the governor presented his proposed budget

for the year with a 38% increase in funding for adult and family literacy education. Funding for adult education programs in Pennsylvania has decreased significantly over the past few years. In 2009, programs across the state were funded at \$48,036,734 and served 52,795 adult students. In 2014, programs were funded at \$26,786,465 and served 22,468 adults. With the proposed increase, adult education programs can reclaim some of the funding that was lost. There are an estimated 55,000 adults just in Lancaster and Lebanon counties who lack the basic skills to fill out job applications on their own, participate in their children's education, or land a job that pays life-sustaining wages.

The Literacy Council along with adult education agencies across the state are encouraging staff, tutors, students, family, and friends to write letters to their legislators, urging them to support the increase in funding to adult and family literacy education programs.

To find your legislator visit:  
[www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator](http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator)

For a sample letter on the LCLL website, go to:  
<http://tinyurl.com/pnvl32d>

## Imagination Library Program

The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon will be participating in three local community fairs (see dates below), promoting the services provided by The Literacy Council, and also introducing them to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Through the Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library offers parents and families and opportunity to help them read and learn together. Through The Literacy Council, parents can register their children, ages birth to 5, to participate in the program if they live in 17520, 17003, or 17512 zip code areas. Children registered will receive one new book each month, mailed directly to them at their home. Books will start arriving eight to ten weeks after a child has been registered in the Imagination Library program.

We encourage you to spread the word to any parents who live in the above zip code areas. Tell them to stop by

The Literacy Council booths at the community events listed below, and enroll their children in the Imagination Library program for free books. It's a great start for a life-long love of reading, and a wonderful way for parents to read and learn with their children.



### Community Events

- Saturday, June 13 - Old Annville Day
- Saturday, June 27 - Columbia Arts and Crafts Show
- Saturday, September 19 - East Petersburg Days

For more information about the Imagination Library Program, administered through The Literacy Council, please contact Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator at [ilsa@getliterate.org](mailto:ilsa@getliterate.org).



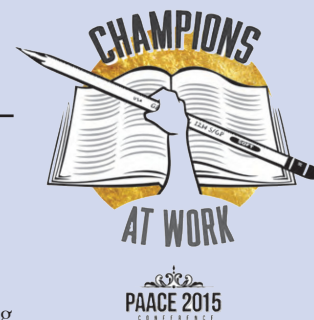


## **PAACE Conference 2015** **- Cathy Roth, Student Services Coordinator, Lebanon**

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In March, 2015, the staff of The Literacy Council attended the PAACE Conference. I always return with new techniques to add to my repertoire of teaching strategies. I went in the hope that I would be more skilled in applying CCRS within my ABE and ESL classes. As usual, I came back with some excellent resources. Many of them required technology. A favorite was using

authentic documents with CCRS. An example of this was analyzing the Declaration of Independence, comparing it to a Dear John letter, paraphrasing it by substituting synonyms and then summarizing it in a tweet. Now I have to learn how to tweet!



## **Sharpening Skillsets for Employment** **- Cathy Roth, Student Services Coordinator, Lebanon**

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Every Tuesday morning, folks come to PA CareerLink in Lebanon for a Prep Meeting they are required to attend because they receive Unemployment Compensation. Until I meet with these participants and talk about the services offered through The Literacy Council, they are unaware that programs like ours can help them. Our responsibility is not to find a job for them, but to help them make sure they have the skills needed to research job opportunities, write their resume and cover letter, submit them via e-mail or through the Company's website, and prepare to communicate their unique skillset to a potential employer. Many of the participants in this

program are not aware that basic skills testing is now part of the job search, and some don't understand why a high school diploma is not enough "proof" that they will be able to be successful in today's workplace. I begin a discussion that may include asking them if they remember square roots, the value of pi, the sum of the angles in a square, the parts of speech, and a few other bits of high school knowledge. If these are things they are not familiar with or do not remember, they begin to understand how the services provided by The Literacy Council may be helpful in updating their knowledge and skillsets so that they become more marketable for employment.

## **New GED (continued from page 4)**

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tion plan with curriculum entitled, Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and ESL Classroom. This career planning model systematically guides the student through self-exploration and occupational exploration, culminating in a documented career and education plan. The curriculum is available online at [www.collegeforadults.org](http://www.collegeforadults.org) and can be printed or completed electronically. Using this website would also be a very good way to integrate the use of technology in the student's instruction.

Finally, in support of a student's life beyond the GED, The Literacy Council is now providing for individualized career pathways sessions for students wanting to transition

to post-secondary education or develop career and education plans. Navigating the bureaucratic post-secondary maze can be difficult, especially for students with foreign diplomas and degrees that sometimes must be translated and evaluated before applying to a post-secondary or training program. Tutors and teachers with students who need an individual session should contact The Literacy Council at 717-295-5523, or email [bobbi@getliterate.org](mailto:bobbi@getliterate.org).

Remember, there is life beyond the GED for which students must think about and plan for at the very beginning of the learning process. It is both a journey and a destination.



## The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

We serve the people and communities of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties; working in partnership with multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, business and industry employers, governmental staff, and organizations. Key to our success is a network of highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, and a supportive community.

### Vision

Adults have skills to transform their lives, sustain their families, and strengthen their communities.

### Mission

Promote lifelong learning and provide effective personalized adult education services.

### Values

- **Quality** – Our high-quality programs and services are rooted in evidence-based practices and offered in an encouraging and caring environment.
- **Goal-Driven** – Our programs and services demonstrate results that support the education students need to successfully transition to the next step of obtaining their life goals.
- **Respect and Integrity** – Our compassionate and caring approach and interactions are highly respectful of diverse backgrounds and differences. Our integrity rests in our word, all deeds and actions that ensure trustworthiness and confidentiality.
- **Leadership** – Our staff, board members, volunteers, and students are engaged and are actively advocating for adult education. Our responsibility to continually enhance our own leadership skills will keep us prominent in the field.
- **Innovative** – Our effective partnerships, strategic approaches, and being open to possibilities allow us to respond creatively to our work.
- **Collaborative** – Our willingness to build strong relationships and alliances with others that support our mission ensures commitment to serving our community and the betterment of society at large.



**The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon is a partner agency of the United Way of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties.**

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### Volunteers Needed

Do you want to make a difference in someone's life and in your community? Please consider tutoring an adult student. Tutors are needed to teach basic education skills including reading, writing, mathematics, English language, and GED preparation. We provide training, all materials, and technical support. For more information in the Lancaster area, please call 717-295-5523. For more information in the Lebanon area, please call 717-274-2554.