



The Literacy Council
of Lancaster-Lebanon

The Literacy Line

Summer 2023

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Literacy & Learning
Success Centers

Lancaster | Lebanon

**The Literacy Council of
Lancaster-Lebanon**

407 Lafayette Street | Lancaster, PA 17603
717-295-5523

400 Locust Street (rear) | Lebanon, PA 17042
717-277-5682

www.literacysuccess.org

The Literacy & Learning Success Centers, a service of
The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon.

Summer

Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director

While Summer may be winding down, the Literacy & Learning Success Centers are getting started in our 38th year of service! This program year is off to a great start. I just learned that our program has hit an unprecedented enrollment of 54% of our contracted number, and we are only in the second month of the program year.

The demand for our services is high. The need for our services is clear. The impact of our services is priceless.

In this issue, you will:

- Meet Shawn, the newest member of the Success Centers team.
- Hear about our first golf fundraiser, Links Fore Literacy 2023.
- Read Amanda's update on our new Lebanon Center.
- Understand challenges and celebrate the successes of adult learners with Kat, Rita, and Deb.
- Be inspired by our amazing volunteers, Chad and Marlene, who bring our mission to life.
- Learn about the impact of a language barrier from Megan.
- See how teachers and students celebrate success.

End of the Year Celebration

**Lauren Swartz,
ESL Instructor**

This year, we celebrated all our accomplishments with an end of the year picnic. Each student received an award to highlight the strengths they bring to the classroom. The students also brought in food from their countries to share, and we played Food Bingo and bonding games.

Level Up and Launch Grant

United Way of Lancaster County is investing \$5,000 in The Literacy Council through Level Up and Launch. United Way will match dollar for dollar (up to \$5,000) every donation to support this project. Learn more and donate at: <http://literacysuccess.org/level-up-and-launch-grant>.





Volunteer Spotlight: Marlene Usdin

Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator



As I was updating tutor files for Program Year 2023-2024, I came across the following note from long time tutor and former board member, Marlene Usdin.

“Can you imagine if you were unable to read a street sign, directions on a bottle of medicine, even a note from your child’s teacher? Have you ever wanted to make a real difference in the life of an area adult? By volunteering with The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon, I have experienced the joy of helping to change the lives of adults who want to

come to realize that the human activity of reading is a fundamental expression of man’s ability to shape his/her life’s course. Reading is the vehicle that enables a person to adapt to his/her environment, to change, and ultimately do more than just survive.... flourish! The inability to read in our society is as disastrous and crippling as the inability to express thoughts or love.

My tutoring experience has provided me with a meaningful, purposeful way to make a difference in the lives of others. The need for volunteers to work with adult learners is immense and imminent. These students are in our communities, eager to learn and become contributing members of society. The Literacy Council has enabled me to touch and change lives, not only the lives of those who have received my help, but my own life.”

“In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us.” *-Flora Edwards*

Marlene has been a volunteer since 2009 and has made a difference in the lives of over 15 students. She has served on our board, worked tirelessly on our fund-raising events, and is currently an aide in an ESL classroom. Thank you, Marlene, and thanks to all our dedicated volunteers who are critical to the success of The Literacy Council.

develop the basic reading, writing, and English skills necessary to be successful members of our communities. Through my experience as an ESL tutor, I have

The Lebanon Literacy & Learning Success Center is on the Move

Amanda Ruth, Lead Instructor



At the beginning of the summer, we started transitioning to a new space at 400 Locust Street in Lebanon. We extend a very special

thank you to The Lebanon Church of the Brethren for welcoming us! The Success Center is leasing classrooms and office space in the church’s education wing. We are very grateful to Pastor Jeff, members of the building committee, and the

congregation for supporting our mission. With our new location, we added a dedicated tutor space and additional classroom space!

We have been hard at work moving things from one office to another, sorting and storing books and resources, and finding new furniture for our space. Over the past few weeks, we have had some construction bumps, some wildlife (that’s a funny story), and a few internet glitches, but we are settling in and enjoying our new space.

The next step for our new location will be adding signs to welcome students and visitors. In the meantime, please contact our office at 717-277-5682. We will be happy to show you around and tell you about all the ways we support success through lifelong learning and learning for life.



Married Couple Earns U.S. Citizenship

Kathryn Ludlow, Student Services Coordinator and Rita Nutter, Instructor



Christianie Denis has been taking English Classes through The Literacy Council for three years. Christianie moved with her family from Haiti to America over 10 years ago with her husband Rolland and their five children. The Denis family came to America so their children and grandchildren would have more opportunities for education and employment.

In Haiti, Christianie had her own boutique that sold clothing, jewelry, hats, and shoes imported from Miami. In addition to having raised her five children, she is currently employed at GXO Logistics where she scans and picks merchandise.

Christianie began English classes with The Literacy Council three years ago. On March 16, 2023 she passed the Citizenship Test, meeting her goal to become a U.S. Citizen so that her voice could be heard and she could vote!

When asked how her English Classes helped her obtain her goal of Citizenship, Christianie stated, "My English classes helped me to learn to listen in detail to the questions asked on the exam and to answer correctly. The classes also have helped me to study for the exam. The classes motivate me to study with the

book, with YouTube and practicing with my grandchildren, at work and at church."

Christianie has the drive and dedication to learn. Her community has grown because of that drive and dedication, as well as her participation in classes and services offered through The Literacy Council.

On July 7, 2023, Christianie's husband, Rolland Denis passed his Citizenship test on his second try. Most people don't realize that our students must pay \$700 each time they take the test.

Like Christianie, Rolland was born in Haiti. He never finished school because his mother died, and he had to work to support his family. He worked for Shell for many years as a truck driver, a mechanic, and a dispatcher. He would visit family in the United States occasionally while working for Shell. He met his wife, Christianie, in Haiti. They have been married for 28 years and have five sons who are also U.S. citizens. Four sons live in Lancaster with Rolland, and one son lives in Florida. Today, Rolland is working at Sensible Portion, a frozen food company. Rolland is a dedicated student who attends beginning English classes every day. And, because he is in the beginning English class, think how difficult it was for him to study the citizenship questions. He said, "I study every night, many hours!" When we asked him why he became a U.S. citizen, he said, "I want to vote!"

Congratulations to Christianie and Rolland as they demonstrate to their family how perseverance and dedication to learning goals can positively impact individuals, families, and communities.



Student Success Story: Jennifer Ramirez

Deb Linton, Adjunct Instructor

Jennifer Ramirez was forced to quit high school. She contacted the Literacy & Learning Success Centers in 2014 to find help in preparing for her high school equivalency exam. The Literacy Council helped her find a tutor for English, which was a huge help. She then passed the GED English, Science, and Social Studies exams. She also took the Math exam but didn't achieve a passing grade.

Jennifer was then faced with some health challenges and also lost her father, so she set aside her goal of getting her high school

equivalency diploma for several years. But her goal was very important, so she never forgot about it. She tried taking the Math portion of the exam several times but didn't pass it, so she contacted the Success Centers again for help. They helped her find a math teacher, and after a seven-week session, she felt as though she was prepared and confident enough to take the exam again. In July 2023, she passed it and is very grateful for the help of the Literacy & Learning Success Centers and the staff because she doubts that she could have passed it without their help.

70 Languages to Go and Unlimited Lives to Change

Megan Goerner, Student Advisor

“Benvenuto in Italia!” they said as we entered our Venice hotel room. We had just arrived in Venice, Italy, where my husband and I had dreamt of and saved for over two years to visit. We had given up Christmas presents, birthday presents, and little luxuries for this opportunity, and we were here. The excitement mounted, and although tired from the flight, we entered the streets. We saw the canals, the gondolas, and the tiny shops. We sat in the Campos, tried on some masks, and enjoyed the cuisine. It’s amazing to be in a new place, with new opportunities and experiences, but then we became lost. We looked around and the quaint little streets turned into a maze of dead ends. We looked for landmarks, prayed for a street sign that made sense, and some Wi-Fi to tell us where to go. After roaming for what seemed like hours, we reached out for help from a Gondolier.

The Gondolier was easy to approach. He was smiling and waiting for customers. He spoke four languages, one being English, and he gave us step-by-step directions back to our hotel. The day exhausted us, but that little bit of help made us feel confident in exploring another day.

Now, my journey on vacation to Italy does not compare to the journey that many of our students endure. They leave their home countries, where they were well established, with homes and friends and careers, and they come to America for the opportunity to make a life. When they arrive, most are excited, but their lack of English language can quickly make them feel a little lost.

The Literacy & Learning Success Centers are often one of the first stops students make on their journey in

America. They come to our agency seeking staff with a smiling face and a common language. However, it was reported by LNP/Lancaster Online that Lancaster County’s 17 school districts had 70 different languages spoken in 2018-2019. Each of those students represents a family, with an adult, that we probably serve and support in one of our programs. So, our small but mighty staff is at a slight disadvantage when it comes to giving all our students a common language they can speak.

At the Literacy & Learning Success Centers, we believe in overcoming barriers. Our entire staff looks for ways that students can access not only our help but also the help of partner organizations. We help with job searches, interviews, employment, resumes, going to college, job training, etc. So, when a barrier looks at us, we look for solutions.

This year, we will embark on a journey to create tutorials in various languages so that our students have a smiling face matched with a common language. These videos aim to help students access our programs and the important information we share about our partners. It will help them feel a greater sense of direction, support, and belonging to our community. It will also help our tiny but mighty staff understand the goals of our students and use their gifts and talents to help them become the best workers, parents, and versions of themselves in America.

We are privileged to start this project in collaboration with The United Way and aideM Media Solutions, and we hope to continue and expand these efforts because we have 70 languages to go and an unlimited number of lives to change.

SUPPORT OUR ORGANIZATION

On November 17, donate online at [ExtraGive.org](https://www.extragive.org) and your generous gift will go even further thanks to the Stretch Pool and prizes from the Community Foundation and many extraordinary sponsors.

LET’S GO THE EXTRA MILE TOGETHER!

**EXTRA
GIVE™**

NOVEMBER 17

EXTRAGIVE.ORG



Welcome Shawn!

Jenny Bair, Program Director

We are so pleased to welcome Shawn Gaffney to the Success Center staff. Shawn helped us kick off our summer session as an adjunct instructor for beginning ESL at our Lebanon Success Center.

A recent transplant to Mount Joy from New York, Shawn brings a varied and interesting background. Read on to learn more about our newest staff member.



Hometown: Woburn, MA

Childhood Dream Job: Ninja. It didn't work out.

First Job: Washing dogs at a dog groomer. Not a fun job.

Education: BA in Linguistics, BA in Philosophy. BS in Geology, MA in Linguistics, MA in Language and Literature, MA in Egyptology, currently enrolled in programs in English language and program in ancient languages

Movie: Lord of the Rings; Encino Man; Rushmore

Book: Good question. I read every day. I have lots of books I like but no specific book. Alastair Reynolds, a science fiction author, is one of my favorites.

Guilty TV Pleasure: I can be pulled into any TV show.

Hobbies: Playing with my son, learning and taking classes, ancient world and dead languages, reading, mushrooming, caving, triathlons, and role-playing games.

Music of Choice: Music from my teen years: alternative, punk, ska.

How do you live The Literacy Council Mission?: I spend a significant amount of time learning new things, either for work, play, to teach to my son, or, most often, because I think it is fun and enjoy learning new things. Learning, taking classes, and pushing forward are essential for our well-being and success. Whether it be through reading or going out into the community and meeting new people, I try to learn more about the world around me. There's no age where someone stops learning and because of that, every day is an opportunity to become a better person.

Do You Know About Imagination Library?



Did you know that The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon has partnered with the Dollywood Foundation as an affiliate organization to provide this program in selected zip codes in Lancaster and Lebanon Counties?

Click here to hear from Dolly about Imagination Library:

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/letter-from-dolly>

Click here to see if your child lives in an eligible zip code:

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability>

“

We just wanted to share how much we appreciated all of the books sent to our daughter over the past few years. Thank you for blessing our family with this program! Our daughter is an avid reader and she looked forward to getting mail each month. We've read every book over and over again during the past five years. We will miss them!

”

—Imagination Library Family

Links Fore Literacy a Big Success



On Monday, May 23, The Literacy Council held the first Links Fore Literacy fundraising event. It was a perfect day at The Lebanon Country Club. Twenty-one teams played to support the programs at the Success Centers, raising more than \$30,000. The course was in great shape, and everyone had a great time. The Literacy Council would like to thank our sponsors for making Links Fore Literacy 2023 a success. Thank you to all the players, donors, and the Success Centers staff! Please look for information coming soon for our Links Fore Literacy 2024 event at the Conestoga Country Club.

Big Swing Sponsor



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Eagle Sponsors



Links Fore Literacy (continued from page 6)

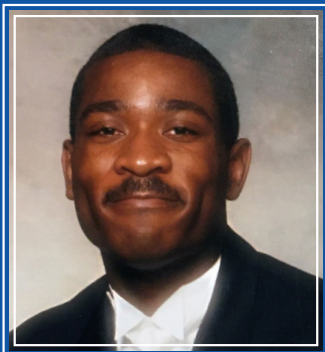
Birdie Sponsors



Foursome and Logo Sponsors



Meet Our New Board President: Chad Burgess



Giving back to my community has always been important to me. In 2020, my former boss asked if I would be interested in volunteering at The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon. His wife was volunteering as a tutor and board member, and the organization was actively seeking

volunteers. After learning about the mission, I immediately volunteered to help and serve.

Initially, I thought The Literacy & Learning Success Centers primarily focused on teaching English and reading skills. While teaching those skills is important, so much more was going on at the Success Centers. I quickly learned that the Success Centers teach immigrants and refugees essential cultural knowledge to thrive in the United States. In addition, they help students become U.S. citizens, improve health literacy, prepare for employment, and support many other necessary skills for success.

Over the years, I've been impressed with the staff, who work tirelessly so their students can succeed and allow the organization to support the basic education needs of so many people. I appreciate

the outstanding people who help others by working at a non-profit instead of making more money in private industry.

When I think about how my involvement with The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon impacted me, it has made me more compassionate in understanding the challenges those with more limited opportunities face and how they can succeed with the proper support. New opportunities open for them as parents, employees, and members of their communities.

Sometimes, I feel like our past board president, who had mixed emotions when asked to serve on the executive committee because he didn't feel prepared for a board leadership position. Like him, my desire to help outweighed my concerns. As a board, we all learn together.

The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon is fortunate to have a strong board of directors who provide oversight, strategic guidance, and policy direction to sustain the organization's mission. I am fortunate to serve on this board; it has made me a better person.

Meet Our Full 2023-2024 Board of Directors at <https://literacysuccess.org/about-us/board-of-directors>. Thank you to our Board for all you do to support the mission of success through lifelong learning and learning for life!

The Literacy Line

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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.

Mission

To promote success through life-long learning and learning for life.

Vision

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

Values

Empowerment – Our programs empower adult learners to set and meet goals to become the best version of themselves.

Success – Provide an environment of collaborative learning experiences, community partnerships and education innovations that allows our students to acquire the deep skills required to achieve the next step in their life goals. Our volunteers, staff, and board members are empowered to recommend changes that will foster the success of all our stakeholders.

Respect and Integrity – Our compassionate and caring approach and interactions are highly respectful of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Our integrity rests in our word, our deeds and actions to ensure trustworthiness and confidentiality.

Sustainability – The Literacy Council will make sound governance, program and fiscal decisions that honor the organizations ability to grow and thrive so that more adults in need can access our services. Our volunteers, staff, and board members are encouraged to actively advocate for adult education, lead by example and continuously refresh their skills to provide the highest quality experiences for our students.

Staff

Jenny Bair, Program Director
Brittany Foose, Program Coordinator
Darrill Ersery, Program Coordinator
Megan Goerner, Student Advisor
Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director
Mitchell Hiester, Program Assistant
Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Rita Nutter, ESL Instructor
Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach and Resource Coordinator
Amanda Ruth, Lead Instructor
Monica Shannon, Receptionist/Program Assistant
Lauren Swartz, ESL Instructor
Taylor Thomas, Program Coordinator
Debra Totten, Digital Navigator

Adjunct Instructors

Meredith Aul
Shawn Gaffney
Steven Hess
Deb Linton
Cathy Roth

Board

The Literacy Council is governed by a volunteer board of directors. 2023-2024 board members:

Chad Burgess, President
Erik Cianci, Vice President
Scott Cole, Secretary
Philip Heckert, Treasurer

Ashley Garcia
Martha Guaigua
Cheryl Hiester*
Stephanie Stauffer

*(Non Voting)



STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon is accredited under the PANO Standards for Excellence®

Volunteers Needed

Take action today and join us. We need volunteers to teach basic education skills.

To get started, contact:

Jane Myers,
Lancaster and Lebanon
Success Centers
jane@literacysuccess.org

The official registration and financial information of The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon, LVA, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

"When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal; you do not change your decision to get there."

–Zig Ziglar