

WINTER 2020

Literacy Now



35 years of Life-Changing Work

Michele Erikson's Story

It was thirty-five years ago when I signed up for a tutor training session and then met my first student, Bill, a welder who was recently laid off. He needed to learn the shapes and sounds of letters to find a new job, to get his driver's license back and to help his son in 3rd grade who also struggled with reading. I quickly realized the cyclical and cascading nature of literacy challenges and was all in to help Bill learn to read and move on with his life.

I couldn't stop there. There were others like Bill who needed the life-changing impact of literacy.

As I reflect on Wisconsin Literacy's 35th anniversary, I realized this occasion coincided with my own introduction to this "life-changing" work. While "life-changing" is a pretty powerful and lofty description, it is reflected every day in Wisconsin Literacy's, our

members', and students' success stories. Literacy can bring so many different things from starting to decode letters to helping your own children with homework, to receiving a post-secondary degree, or to landing that job that turns into a life-changing career.

The work of Wisconsin Literacy, Stateline Literacy in Beloit where I began, and every other literacy organization within and beyond our membership is truly life-changing! If you get involved as a tutor, donor or literacy advocate, you will experience how this work, that captured me and a whole field of adult and family literacy providers, is changing lives in big and important ways.

Come and see for yourself at the Celebration of Literacy on April 29 at the Windsor Country Club.

(Details on page 2)

Join the conversation at bit.ly/WLshareyourstory.



Adults Find Trustworthy Health Information Online Thanks to Your Support

“You’re never too old. At 91 years old, I’m still learning and try my best,” said a library patron during the “Health Online: Find Health Information You Can Trust” workshop.

Thanks to you and the support from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine - Greater Midwest Region (NNLM-GMR), Wisconsin Health Literacy (WHL) successfully implemented a new digital health literacy program.

Together, we raised awareness of the importance of finding **credible** health information online and how to **access and navigate** online resources to 566 people.

Thanks to overwhelming interest from libraries statewide, **NNLM-GMR will continue funding a**

second phase of the project allowing us to help more people this year learn how to find trustworthy health information online.

We are partnering with the National Institute of Health’s (NIH) *All of Us* program to **implement the workshop on a national level**. If you are interested in attending a training or learning more about the program, email Caitlyn Mowatt at cmowatt@wisconsinliteracy.org.

Save the Date for the Health Insurance Literacy Forum that will take place in Madison, WI on August 6, 2020. Help your members make the most of their health benefits.

SAVE THE DATE!
Celebration of Literacy
Be a Literacy Superhero
April 29, 2020

wisconsin literacy 30 YEARS
wisconsin health literacy

#ShareYourStory

This year’s luncheon will honor adult learners, volunteers and member agencies with outstanding literary achievements.

We will hear from Shawn Robinson, PhD, who learned to read at 18 after being diagnosed with Dyslexia, and wrote a children’s comic book called, [Dr. Dyslexia Dude](#). Guests will also participate in an innovative dyslexia simulation experience led by the Children’s Dyslexia Center-Madison.

Community Collaboration at the Heart of Social Change

The Menominee Indian School District (MISD) faced numerous challenges—schools were not meeting expectations, they had a 16% chronic absenteeism and the high school was considered a “drop-out factory.”

Wendell Waukau, Superintendent of MISD, knew that something needed to be done. With his brother Jerry Waukau, Clinic Administrator of Menominee Tribal Clinic, and key partners, they added a dental chair at the elementary school; attendance and success mentors in the community; and career readiness opportunities in the high school.

“We didn’t just do school reform. We did community reform,” stated Wendell. Thanks to their efforts, school suspension rates decreased from 8.2% to 6.2% and graduation rates increased from 60% to 90%.

Their story inspires us. As Peter Waite, former Vice President of ProLiteracy, said, **“Without literacy, a lot of social and work-related initiatives are doomed to fail.”**



With your help, we’ve increased support for community-based literacy to partner and improve communities across Wisconsin. We’ve added **two new positions** focused on fostering vital community and workforce connections.

Help us welcome Shannon Mason Young, Northwest Regional Community Coordinator (RCC), and Cassie McLain, North Central RCC.

Welcome Shannon Mason Young and Cassie McLain



“The ability to read is a right that should be available to everyone,” says Shannon Mason Young.



“I believe literacy is critical not just for an individual but for the community as well,” says Cassie McLain.

Shannon comes to us with a wealth of experience in nonprofit organizations, from serving as a board member, leading finance and fund development committees, recruiting volunteers and building strong community relationships. Shannon previously worked as the American Indian Education Coordinator for the Eau Claire Area School District.

Cassie has spent most of her working life in the healthcare field as a health educator and outreach coordinator in public health, the hospital setting, long term care and even sales. She has experience putting people together to achieve the best for the communities they serve.



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SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 3, 2020



The Big Share is a 24-hour online giving event for non-profits working for social justice, women and children, and the environment. On March 3rd, your donation to Wisconsin Literacy will be doubled by matching donors.

Find us at wisconsinliteracy.org/the-big-share.