

The Learning Connection

YOUR IMPACT REPORT | SPRING 2024

20 Years of Community English

As Literacy Network celebrates 50 years in 2024, we also mark another milestone: our Community English (CE) program's 20th anniversary! **2023 was CE's biggest yet, with 538 students participating.** 97% of students surveyed reported an increased confidence communicating in English.

CE partners with community organizations throughout Dane County, including schools, libraries, and community centers, to offer English classes to the partners' existing audiences. Classes are typically taught at that partner's location, making them more accessible.

CE classes are also unique because they:

- **Usually meet once a week** and may offer drop-in spots, while our other classes meet twice a week and require preregistration. This allows more flexibility.
- **Are often multilevel.** This creates a different type of community building and learning, including peer mentorship.
- **Teach curriculum tailored to students' specific goals.** Students choose to study topics like school conferences, helping children with homework, making phone calls, and using community resources.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY:

"I got a new job and went to the doctor's for a vaccine by myself. Thank you for this class. It's very important."

"I am able to talk to my daughter's school. She is starting her senior year and making plans for college."

"I found a job cleaning houses and I need to understand clients. The English class helped me with my confidence."



Getting a library card is a class highlight for many CE students



A CE class at Sauk Trail Elementary School

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Partners conduct program outreach, offer ongoing classes, and support a portion of instructional costs. Additional support is provided by grantors, United Way of Dane County, the City of Madison, and Literacy Network.

- Bayview Community Center
- Goodman South Public Library*
- Meadowridge Public Library
- Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District**
- Middleton Public Library
- Nuestro Mundo Community School*
- Vera Court Neighborhood Center
- Verona Public Library*
- Waunakee Public Library
- Westside Elementary School**

*Have partnered
5+ years

**Have partnered
10+ years

"I have seen families build relationships with others and find a support network. I have seen students develop the necessary English skills to broaden their employment options." —Joshua Forehand, Principal of Nuestro Mundo



Scan or visit the link below to read Anna's story, a favorite memory from longtime CE partner Stacy Darga!

litnetwork.org/community-english-annas-story/

Waldely Advances Her Medical Career While Encouraging Others



Former student Waldely has been busy since she enrolled in our English classes five years ago!

As an OB-GYN in Venezuela, Waldely used English to read technical medical articles. However, when she arrived in the U.S., she did not feel comfortable with conversational English. "It's not the same to read and speak," she explains.

She enrolled in Literacy Network's group ESL classes and individual tutoring program in 2018, and then became a student in the inaugural semester of our Transitions program. Literacy Network awarded her a scholarship funded by Altrusa International of Madison, which she used to have her Venezuelan credentials validated and to study for the exam to become a medical assistant. **"That scholarship and the support from the teachers helped me to start all my work here in the United States, to obtain a better job, better income. I think that was the door for other things."**

After working as a medical assistant for a year, Waldely then worked in COVID-19 prevention, providing

education about, as well as administering, vaccinations. When talking with Spanish-speaking patients, they would often ask her, "'How do you obtain this job?'" And I say, 'Well, you need to learn English first.' I always recommended Literacy Network. Classes were so helpful because I can understand and I can communicate with others. All the time I use English, all the tests I took [for my licenses] were in English."

Waldely continued her education and obtained her license to be a medical sonographer. She started working in a clinic this year. "I love it," she says. "It's something that's really close to my work in Venezuela." She plans to keep advancing and wants to become a licensed medical interpreter.

When Waldely studied with Literacy Network, she says her teachers would tell her, "Yes, you can!" Now, many of her current patients are Spanish-speaking and look to her for assistance with the language. **"All the time I encourage people to take Literacy Network classes,"** she says. **"Sometimes they say, 'No, I can't learn. I'm old,' or 'I'm working a lot,' and I say, 'You can do it!' ■"**

Literacy Network: Learning for Life

Being student centered is a top Literacy Network priority. In 2021, we rewrote our mission statement, with student input, to better reflect this value. This year, we updated our tagline to be more student centered. We are proud to share our new tagline: "Learning for Life."

Our goal was to create a short, memorable phrase encompassing the heart of our mission and purpose. Staff brainstormed ideas that were then shared with our Student Leadership Council (SLC). SLC members reviewed these ideas and voted for "Learning for Life," which was also the top staff pick!

SLC member Monica shared, "In addition to learning

English, **you can also learn effective ways to build relationships in the country you are in. This can help you adapt to your new life."**

We are excited to kick off our 50th year with a tagline that better reflects our students, mission, and organization as a whole. Associate Director Jennifer Peterson explains, "As we continue to grow, we know that **agency decisions should always remain student-centered, and that changes and improvements must be directly informed by the people we serve."**



Literacy Network.
LEARNING FOR LIFE

Meet Tino and Dolores!

Student Tino and tutor Dolores have worked together in our Community Literacy tutoring program for more than two years. They reflect on their time together below.

TINO

Where are you originally from?

I'm from Oaxaca, Mexico.

What do you like about your class, teacher, and tutor?

It's a very good program, everyone is nice people, nice teacher, very professional. Dolores teaches me. Grammar is very important for English. It's hard. I always say, "Dolores, can you repeat this?" How to spell, the pronunciation. She supports me a lot.

Describe your experience as a Literacy Network student. How has it helped you in your life?

I have had a very good experience with this program. **That's helped me a lot in my job, my life, in different things I'm doing every day.**

Sometimes in my workplace I want to say some words or new vocabulary. After that I make a note, "This word I don't understand, can you explain to me?"

I bought a house in 2019. The English help me to talk to [neighbors] about this, about that. It's great conversation.

What's next? What plans do you have for the future?

I'm working at TruStage, 18 years. I use English with my coworkers. I'm using the computer to send emails, inventory, supply orders, talking to people. My plan is to learn more computer programs. Now I practice myself and my manager helps me too. I'm taking computer classes online every Sunday.

My other goal is to improve my English and start to learn more about management, my job, how to lead with my coworkers, how to work with a big group, with different people. I started cleaning, after that promoted to lead, after a couple years, now supervisor. Now it's time to jump another step, to manager, but I need to improve my English.



Outside of work and studying, Tino plays in the popular mariachi band Mariachi Corcel de Madison

DOLORES

Why did you decide to become a tutor with Literacy Network?

I've always enjoyed helping people of any age reach their educational goals. I was a teacher for math and reading intervention. **I just love small groups or one-on-one, because you can make such an impact and see positive changes happening right in front of you.** It's rewarding.

What do you like about tutoring with Literacy Network?

I love hearing all the students' stories. Tino's only my third student; we've been together a while. I love to hear their journey, how they got here and getting to know more about them. I love the dedication they have to improving themselves, their life situations. They inspire me.

How has tutoring with Literacy Network impacted your life?

It makes me feel privileged to help people improve their life situation and themselves. I'm inspired by the dedication of my students. They are sometimes working a job or two, they're going to school, they come to tutoring every week. I'm just inspired by how hardworking and dedicated they are.

Why is adult literacy important for our community?

Literacy is key to a healthy democracy, being able to be well informed, make good decisions, be able to critically think about things around you.

What are you most proud of from your work with Literacy Network?

Seeing the improvement of my students. I just like to see the impact I can make on helping them reach their goals. Like with Tino, he always asks really good questions. He had a report to write and he wasn't sure how to say it, and we talked through it and he went and was more confident about it. I can see every week that he has more confidence and I love to see that growth. ■

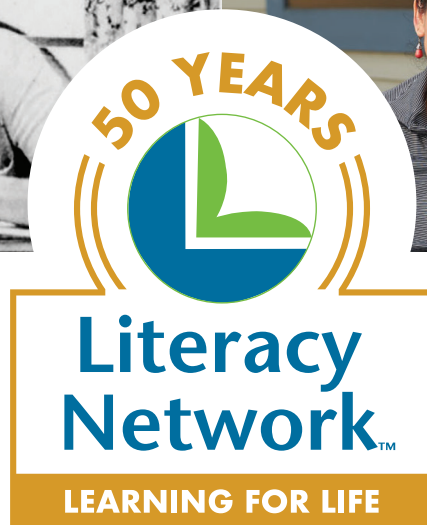


Dolores has been a tutor since 2021

50 YEARS OF LITERACY NETWORK: Toasting the Next Half Century



A Literacy Network tutoring pair in the 1970s
Photo credit: Wisconsin State Journal



A current Literacy Network tutoring pair

Literacy Network is turning 50! Join us as we celebrate our first 50 years of free adult literacy education as well as look forward to the future. Register to participate in the online auction, attend the event, or both! **Registration and more information is available at litnetwork.org/50thcelebration**

LET THE BIDDING BEGIN!

ONLINE AUCTION: April 11 to April 25

This year's auction includes tickets for great family outings, gift cards to local stores, a wide range of art, and more!

Also, don't miss our \$20 wine pull, featuring bottles ranging from \$15-\$40 in value.

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF LITERACY NETWORK AT THIS AFTER-DINNER COCKTAIL PARTY!

Thursday, April 25, 2024, 7:00-9:00pm

Boardman Clark, 1 S. Pinckney St
(US Bank Plaza on the Square)

Tickets: \$50

Online registration: litnetwork.org/50thcelebration

- Includes samples of our three signature cocktails (one nonalcoholic), hors d'oeuvres, and a book of student stories
- Cash bar available
- Social time will be followed by a brief program
- Registration closes April 18 at 5pm

SPONSORS



2023 at a Glance:

2023 was a record-breaking year! Check out some of our initial numbers below. Watch for our full annual report this summer.



1,445 students enrolled in classes – our most ever and a 37% increase from 2022

53 students became U.S. citizens – the most ever in one year

*Felicitas was one of 2023's
53 new citizens!*

Students came from **85** different countries – six more than in 2022

29 of **48** students studying for a GED/HSED reached their goal – a record completion rate

108 students obtained new jobs or promotions

170 refugees participated in programming – the highest number ever



Expanded Space to Meet Growing Need

BEFORE



AFTER



Thanks to generous contributions from supporters, Literacy Network has additional space at our learning center on South Park Street to serve our growing student population. The ongoing renovation project includes a student resource center, workspace for increased staff, and exterior improvements. The highlight of our renovation is a much-needed classroom expansion that allows more students to enroll in popular group classes.

Funding for the expansion and remodeling project is generously provided by:

City of Madison Community Facilities Loan Program

DeAtley Family Foundation

Findorff

Irving and Dorothy Levy Family Foundation

Irwin A & Robert D Goodman Foundation

Marvin Levy

Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation

Steve and Patti Lucas





MISSION:

Literacy Network helps adults in Dane County build skills, reach goals, and connect communities.

Thank You, Donors!

Our programs would not be possible without the support of generous donors. We are grateful to everyone who has said, “Yes!” to **free adult literacy education with a gift**. Support students’ dreams with your donation today: www.litnetwork.org/donate. We offer a variety of giving options. Monthly, one-time, planned—find what’s right for you!

WHY I’M A MONTHLY DONOR:



Siri Carpenter, photo credit Beth Skogen Photography

A few years ago, my family decided to focus our holiday gift-giving on donating to various nonprofits. We had a special interest in supporting immigrants and refugees and decided to donate to Literacy Network, where I’d just signed up to be an ESL tutor. **After seeing firsthand the impact of Literacy Network’s free adult literacy education programming, I knew I wanted to provide regular support and signed up to be a monthly donor.** I love knowing I am helping sustain programming that helps my Dane County neighbors achieve their goals!
— Siri Carpenter

Join Us for a Donor Appreciation Concert

SUNDAY, APRIL 7 • 1:00-2:30PM • 701 DANE ST

Stop by Literacy Network’s learning center for a free donor-appreciation concert! The Ancora String Quartet (including Executive Director Robin Ryan!) will perform works of Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Janáček. Appropriate for the venue, the program includes a literary tie-in — Janáček’s Quartet No. 1 was inspired by Leo Tolstoy’s novella “The Kreutzer Sonata.”

Light refreshments will be served.



Ancora String Quartet, during a performance on WPR’s Midday with Norman Gilliland. Photo credit: Tom Blain