



No Place Like Home

By: Holly McCoy, Executive Director

When I first started my career in adult education, I was a Program Coordinator at Milwaukee Achiever's Silver Spring Center located on 69th and Silver Spring. That is where my commitment to adult literacy was solidified. Each year, I witnessed firsthand the dedication of more than 500 students working toward their academic goals. I felt the kindness and talent that over 100 volunteer tutors invested into their lessons each week. A couple of years prior to Milwaukee Achiever's merger with LSW, our Silver Spring location was consolidated into our current Layton location. I remember standing in the empty Silver Spring Center as the last piece of office furniture was loaded onto the truck and feeling overcome with incredible gratitude for the experiences that I had there. I also left that location knowing that the opportunities for neighbors to access community services on the northwest side were limited already, and a large gap was opening up again. I was not in a position of leadership at that time. I honored the direction of our organization and made the move. During that transition, our nonprofit neighbor, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center (SSNC), reached out to see if there was a way to continue 5.09 HSED programming in collaboration with their Adult Education program. I was delighted to retain this connection to the northwest side, to continue to offer programming, and to be responsive to the needs of the Milwaukee community. I was very transparent with staff and with LSW throughout the merger process that, if ever given the opportunity to expand services to the northwest side, we should take it!



(left to right) SSNC Executive Director Devin Hudson and LSW Executive Director Holly McCoy bring expanded adult education programming to the northwest side of Milwaukee.

Silver Spring Neighborhood Center

offers programs under four major pillars:



- Adult and Youth Education
- Adult Employment
- Health & Wellness
- Youth Development

Services at Silver Spring Neighborhood Center are provided through the Early Childhood Center, Youth Social Development, Emergency Food Pantry, nursing clinic, and employment programs. SSNC provides adult education programming in Adult Basic Education, English Language Learning, and GED/HSED preparation. They have a strong reputation for delivering quality instruction. This effective programming has been

delivered and maintained by a staff of one, which has limited the capacity and contributed to the gap in adult literacy services on the northwest side since Milwaukee Achiever's departure in 2015.

SSNC has been a phenomenal partner with LSW. So when LSW had an opportunity to expand that partnership and move

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The Syllabus

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

The Syllabus is the quarterly newsletter of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Literacy Services of Wisconsin.

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Volunteer Photographer

Sara Risley

Founded in 1965, Literacy Services serves adult learners with quality education programs - Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) test preparation, 5.09 High School Equivalent Diploma (HSED), English Language Learning (ELL), Workforce Training and Career Pathway Bridges, and integrated and personalized Functional Literacy instruction.

Literacy Services of Wisconsin is grateful for the broad support of our community, including over 500 volunteers and financial support from 1000 individuals; 196 foundations, corporations and organizations; The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County; and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. We are grateful for our partnerships with ResCare and Milwaukee Public Schools.

555 N. Plankinton Avenue
 Milwaukee, WI 53203
 (414) 344-5878

www.literacyservices.org
info@literacyservices.org



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(right to left) From our Layton Center, Mai Lee is now Program Director for SSNC. Betsy Kerns, from our Downtown Center, will add support to the site as Assistant Program Director/Instructor.

programming back to the northwest side, we did not hesitate to do so. Starting in January of 2020, LSW will provide comprehensive adult literacy programming to help increase capacity at SSNC. LSW is always intentional about who we partner with and why, and we know that SSNC will be a great space to work together to grow and increase

educational opportunities in our city. LSW and SSNC's expanded partnership is one that we hope sets the tone for the greater impact that can be made when nonprofits work together to benefit their missions and find new and innovative ways to complement one another's services.

Devin Hudson

Executive Director, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center



I've worked for the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center since 2014, first as the Director of Development, and now I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director. People who utilize the services offered by SSNC should be able to access our programs easily. More importantly, the time they spend in our programs should be meaningful, and should impact them in a way that carries them to the next phase of their lives, no matter their age or background. I also realize that making true impact and change takes strong partnerships. Our work with LSW is one of the strongest partnerships we've developed, and the benefits to the residents on the northwest side are tremendous. I'm both proud and excited to be partners with LSW.



www.ssnc-milw.org

5460 N. 64th St. Milwaukee, WI 53218



Adult Literacy Is My Jam

By: Bianca Johnson-Ortiz, ABE Program Director - Downtown

My perspective of adult literacy is rooted in my relationships with adult learners in my family. I have witnessed firsthand the impact on individuals, families, and communities to which adult literacy grants access. I did not plan for a career in adult literacy; however, my journey here has made it clear I'm in the right place. I am sharing my story to honor all of the adult learners that remind me of my mom. I recently shared a part of this story at the Student Honors Celebration because I believe it is essential our learners know their hard work not only pays off for themselves, but also deeply impacts their families.

My mom attended South Division High School in the late 1970s, but had to drop out to help support her ailing mother. Later, she realized low-paying, entry-level positions would not support her own growing family. She decided to pursue her GED followed by Paralegal Studies at Concordia University. Her plan changed the course of my life, as I had access to what my mom didn't in her youth. My mom shares a similar story with many of our learners. Oftentimes, adult learners we serve had to decide to stop attending school in their youth because they fell behind and couldn't catch up, or they had to leave due to tough family circumstances. Literacy Services provides services at South Division High School because the community needs support. I'm unable to spend much time at that location, but it holds a special place in my heart because I know LSW is supporting other parents making better choices for their families.

Our communities are stronger when we provide access to skill-building for those who have no place else to turn. We are not only supporting individuals in building their basic skills or obtaining a secondary credential, but also ensuring their children and grandchildren don't end up in a cycle of illiteracy. The ripple effects are endless.



(clockwise from top) Betty Fernandez, Howard and Bianca Johnson-Ortiz

I see myself in the children that accompany our learners when they don't have any other choice but to bring them along. I remember the endless hours that I would spend at the library with my mom, wondering why we couldn't just go home. I recognize the sacrifices that the learners make to attend a consistent schedule, and the sacrifices their families make as well. It's a tough journey, but there are people in our community that care enough to lend support as long as you maintain your commitment.

It's clear to me I was destined to be at Literacy Services to say to my learners, "I know what you are going through and don't give up." I remind them their hard work will bring them and generations to come success that they deserve. I've observed these successes countless times, including at home with my husband. He dropped out of high school in Racine, WI, but once he realized he would be stuck without a high school credential, he completed a high school equivalency program at Gateway Technical College. I'm proud to say he's now a mechanic at Milwaukee County Transit System. It's my duty to give back to the community that gave my mom and husband a chance.

Tiny Updates, Big News!

"I have received a small raise because I can communicate more in English now."

- **Pedro**

"I got a job working with kids."

- **Chevarrie**

"Recently, I became a supervisor."

- **Silvia**

"I had guests from New Zealand and I could talk with them for four days in English." - **Karyna**

"I got my 10-year green card." - **Edgar**

"I have been able to open my own cleaning/drywall business thanks to the English I have learned in classes."

- **Edna**

"I graduated from nail tech school."

- **ChuChee**

"I help my granddaughter with her math homework." - **Ruthie**

"I have advocated for my children to be placed in the best school program possible this year." - **Denesha**

"I was able to talk to my boss about a work problem and make a change for the better." - **Juana**

"I just received a raise and new position." - **Felicia**

"I helped my dad fix his basement using skills learned in construction HSED class." - **Ameer**

"I'm starting to learn English and it fills me with emotion." - **Dunia**

"I got my CPR/First Aid certification and my driver's permit." - **Hadori**

"I paid off my car before the established time." - **Miguel**

Keep up the good work!

Event Calendar

Winter Break

All sites closed Dec. 23rd - Jan. 3rd

January

7th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30 am - Downtown Center

20th - All Sites Closed

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

22nd - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30 pm - Downtown Center

February

5th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30 am - Layton Center

20th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30 pm - Layton Center

March

3rd - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30 am - Downtown Center

18th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30 pm - Downtown Center

April

6th-10th - No Classes

Spring Break

7th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30 am - Layton Center

21st - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30 pm - Layton Center

24th - Spring Into Literacy Volunteer & Staff Training

Save the date!

May

5th - Inspiration Awards Dinner

Save the date!

7th - Volunteer Orientation

9:30-10:30 am - Downtown Center

20th - Volunteer Orientation

5:30-6:30 pm - Downtown Center

25th - All Sites Closed

Memorial Day



Follow local media announcements for weather-related closings, call our office, or check our website to verify if we have canceled classes due to inclement weather.



Volunteer of the Month

By: Corrie Kennedy, Volunteer & Development Coordinator

November

Join us in congratulating Pamela Lardinois as LSW's November Volunteer of the Month and achieving 10 years of volunteer service with us. Pamela's first experience with LSW was through her previous employer's "Week of Giving," where she volunteered at one of our book sales. Pamela organized her heart out and realized she wanted to become involved with LSW and the work we do. She began tutoring in our ELL program at our location on Wells ten years ago, tutoring in small groups and going over things like writing a check, talking to a doctor, and navigating transportation. Over the years she has had students from around 12 different countries including Ethiopia, Turkey, Poland, Russia, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Burma.



Pamela has a background in imagery and printing and is currently working in e-commerce on a website migration organizing thousands of images through lots of spreadsheets and a database. When not working or volunteering, she has a passion for creating. Pamela loves to garden and sew, sharing vegetables with her students and repurposing donated fabrics to make clothes for her niece. Pamela also serves on the board of the Milwaukee chapter of the American Sewing Guild and is the creator behind their website and newsletter! A walking sewing guide, she has tips and tricks for whatever project you may be working on. Pamela has an innately giving and creative spirit. She donates mittens and hats during the colder months, jumped right in to help us clean up at our annual appreciation dinner, and came up with a wonderful way to reuse our leftover fabric.

What Pamela loves about tutoring at LSW is she can see how it helps. Her students have become comfortable interacting with others, going to the doctor, discussing medical questions, and communicating with their children in English. In addition to helping students learn English, Pamela enjoys helping students navigate American culture and what Milwaukee has to offer. She learns what her student enjoys and introduces them to museums, music, food, and something they can do outside of work. While volunteering at Literacy Services, she has found that students want to be here, that they are appreciative, and they say thank you. She knows people don't have to be here as volunteers or students, and each individual's desire to come back, learn, and improve further helps our community to become stronger. Thank you, Pamela, for your enduring, dedicated service and support to SO many of our students!



Thank you!



December

We are also happy to announce LSW's December Volunteer of the Month, the one and only John Rodahl! John has been a passionate educator for almost 30 years. He taught history, AP history, and coached cross country at Milwaukee High School of the Arts and Carmen High School. That is where he serendipitously met Adriana Vazquez, one of our beloved program directors. Adriana was his student-teacher at Carmen and after observing her teaching her first class, he was blown away. He immediately went to the school administrator and told them if they didn't hire her, they would be making a huge mistake because rarely is there such a natural, engaging teacher connecting history to their students lives.

In 2015, Adriana began the next chapter of her career at Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services (MALS merged with Literacy of Services of Wisconsin in 2017) and recruited John to become a citizenship tutor. John tutors a group of 3-4 students every week in U.S. History, preparing his students for their citizenship tests. John has a giant folder of lesson plans he has developed from teaching for so many years. He has taught over 4,500 students with these materials! John has his students reference maps and a constitution timeline, watch films, analyze political cartoons, and discuss current events and elections. He adapts his lesson plans to engage learners by connecting the materials to his students' heritage, making history relevant to their lives.

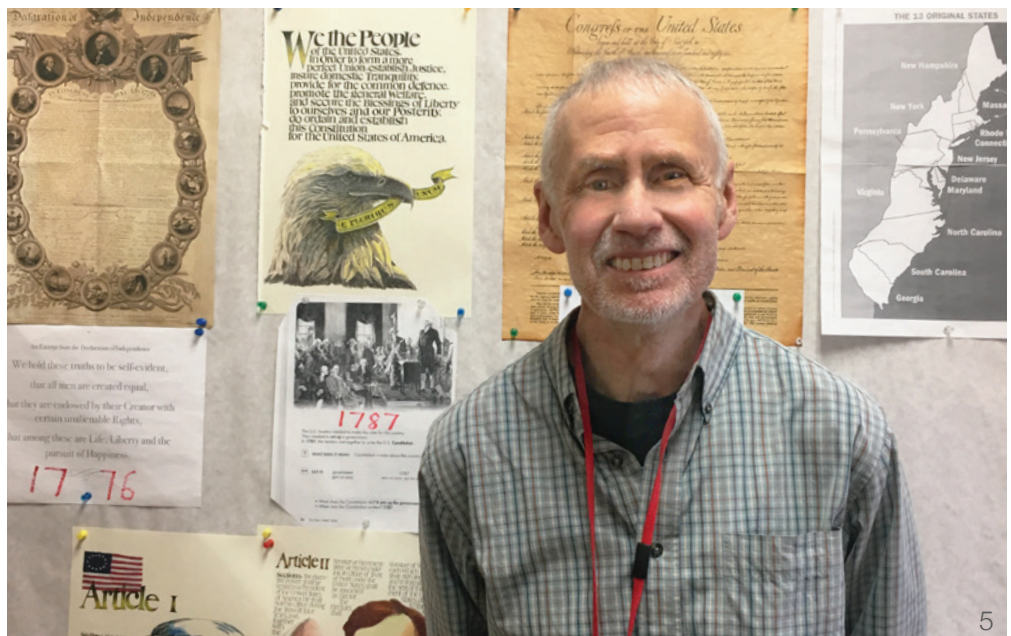
John speaks very highly of his students and how incredibly kind and hardworking they are. He encourages them to be proud of how much they've accomplished. John and his wife both tutor at our South Division High

School site. One of their students, Angie, is married to Jaime Gonzelez, the owner of Botanas Restaurant. John and Jaime have known each other for years, because John used to bring his cross country team there. When Angie passed her citizenship test, they all went down to the Federal Court House, took pictures with the judge, and spent the day together. John has plenty of pictures to remember the day and they stay in touch on Facebook. This is just one of John's stories about his delightful and determined students.

Although he understands a number of students come and go because of the many distractions that can take away from students being present and fully committed, he believes any time they are together learning and sharing knowledge is a positive experience for them both. During our conversation we discussed what makes an engaging teacher and how the current state of standardized education interferes with the learning process. Caitlin Petersen, the Program Director of South Division, sums it up perfectly: "There

is no substitute for learning from someone who is genuinely passionate about the subject they teach. John provides our learners with the opportunity to engage in this kind of stimulating educational environment, something they may have missed out on during their experiences in secondary education. When a teacher is truly passionate, it motivates learners, and motivation is essential."

The feeling of admiration and appreciation is mutual. John "can't say enough about the staff. [They] really have the heart for it and pour themselves into their work. They have your back." John feels supported in his work with Literacy Services, and he appreciates the opportunity to teach history to our students because this is how he "gets his fix." It all came full circle and proved how connected we all are when John mentioned he taught Holly McCoy, our Executive Director, American History. In her words, "John is a phenomenal educator," and we are grateful for his passion and commitment to our students!



Thank You!

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 - *Ginger Duiven*

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- Amy Monahan, volunteer tutor, on why she and her husband choose to give recurring donations.



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The Syl·la·bus

Winter 2019

Literacy Services of Wisconsin Newsletter

In this issue:

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