

Spring 2011

Literacy Partners update

Everyone deserves a chance to read.



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New Partner in Literacy – The Doe Fund

Last year, The Doe Fund, which provides transitional work and job training through its “Ready, Willing & Able” program, approached Literacy Partners about the possibility of classes at one of the organization’s residences in Harlem. Seeing merit in the plan, an anonymous Doe Fund donor stepped forward and funded the program into existence with a \$50,000 award spread over two years, matched by an equal amount from Literacy Partners. The classes, which began in March, are now helping Doe Fund program participants to realize their dreams of moving up to new and productive lives in the mainstream workforce.

Barbara Kravitz, Director, Education and Computer Skills Training at the Doe Fund commented, “It became clear, especially in these difficult economic times, that our trainees needed high school diplomas or GEDs to be competitive in this market. Therefore, we formalized the educational component to our program, but needed a partner to help meet the massive demand. We turned to Literacy Partners because of its experi-

ence and stellar reputation.”

The Doe Fund is committed to helping a diverse population break the cycles of homelessness, addiction, and criminal recidivism. The Adult Basic Education and Pre-GED programs that Literacy Partners teaches on site at The Fund are filled to capacity with 20 men in each class. They range in age from 21 to 52 years old.

“Collaboration with others is what Literacy Partners is about, and our feeling about this is so strong that the concept of partnership is built into our name,” says Susan McLean, Literacy Partners executive director. “That The Doe Fund would approach us is especially meaningful, since both of our organizations exist to help others determined to change the course of their lives. We cannot imagine a more satisfying working relationship.”

Jasmine Acosta, Literacy Partners instructor at The Doe Fund, discovered in conversation with her students that “one dropped out in second grade, one in fifth, one never went to school at all.” And they were homeless. Today, however, every

one of them is motivated to learn to read and write, attending class twice a week from 6:00 to 9:00 in the evenings. Homework assignments add to their time commitment.

Jasmine is the ideal teacher to lead these men on their voyage to literacy. “I enjoy helping people,” she says. “Many of my students have never had anyone to motivate them before.” Jasmine earned her Bachelor Degree from Hunter College, where she majored in English with a psychology minor. This background plus her experience teaching special education classes for children soon brought her to Literacy Partners where she worked for a year as a volunteer, donating her time to the underprivileged men and women who come to us to improve their lot in life.

Recently one of Jasmine’s students wrote to her in fluent text-message lingo, “I actually love goin to school now and im learning i believe im going to get my G.E.D.” We wish him and his classmates the greatest success.

About Literacy Partners

For nearly 40 years, Literacy Partners has helped thousands of New Yorkers learn the basic reading, writing and math skills needed to succeed in day-to-day living. Through successful collaborations with major corporations, community partners and benefactors, Literacy Partners offers small, welcoming classes taught by credentialed teachers, supported by enthusiastic, highly trained, volunteer tutors. Literacy Partners is the only nationally accredited adult literacy program serving New York City. For more information, visit www.literacypartners.org



The Teachable Moment for Financial Literacy is Now

Susan A. McLean, *Executive Director*



Susan A. McLean

Each and every one of our adult literacy students faces personal concerns, frustrations and even fear when they approach the economic issues of their daily lives. Crucial personal financial tasks—such as planning family budgets, tackling overwhelming debt, understanding bank products and dealing with confusion about credit, credit reports and credit card statements—can be

particularly overwhelming for new readers. (For just a moment, try imagining yourself as a new adult reader, facing the challenge of learning to read and write while simultaneously trying to foster the skills required to manage personal finances.)

I think we can all agree that the recent economic crisis has made the need for financial literacy even greater than ever before. In fact, nearly four in five adults (78%) agree that they would benefit from professional advice regarding everyday financial questions, and close to one-third (31%) strongly agree. Indeed, almost 77 million Americans give themselves

a grade of C, D, or F on their knowledge of personal finance!¹

Clearly, the need to understand the often confusing world of money is shared by many Americans, especially new adult readers. This need has escalated in recent years because the responsibility for financial security has been transferred, for the most part, from institutions to individual Americans. The burden of carrying this new responsibility has come within a relatively short time, causing confusion and anxiety among members of the public. We now have to deal with issues including increased out-of-pocket medical expenses, planning for higher education and retirement, and doing all of this wisely and safely in an era sometimes marked by harmful consumer fraud.

Literacy Partners has learned that education can help people change their behaviors, and this certainly applies to financial literacy. With the right instruction and support, financial literacy can be accessible to everyone. In the current financial environment and with the lessons learned in the past few years, this is a prime “teachable moment.” People are motivated to learn how to better manage their personal finances now and are likely to become less inclined as the economy improves.

At the core of our mission is providing free adult literacy services; and from the beginning, partnerships have played a key role in expanding the quality of services, providing additional support to our mission. Literacy Partners has important partnerships with Dow Jones and McGraw Hill, which have allowed us to offer financial literacy programs in all of our centers. No one agency can get the job done — the power is in the winning combination of strong partnerships and effectively designed programs. We endeavor to continue cultivating partnerships in the future for there is so much more that we can do.

While nonprofits, like Literacy Partners, and public corporations, like Dow Jones and McGraw-Hill, can effectively work together, it must be noted that federal and state governments are the biggest employers in the United States. They too should join the collaboration. At a time when governments are reducing education funding, it is crucial that they continue their support of adult and financial literacy. Government support of initiatives like union education programs, private employer programs, and partnerships with nonprofits can help empower and educate us all. Now is the time to strengthen the financial literacy skills of our workforce. Having a knowledgeable, confident adult population that can manage its finances without fear will help prevent another recession. Let's hit the books.



Sustaining Literacy Partners

- To support Literacy Partners on line, including “In honor of” and “In Memory of” gifts, and for information about other types of support, please visit us at www.literacy-partners.org.
- For inquiries about planned giving, please contact David E. Nathanson at 646.237.0123 or at davidn@literacypartners.org.
- For all other fundraising and external affairs matters, please contact Nicholas L. Grimaldi at 646.237.0122 or at nickg@literacypartners.org, Director of External Affairs, 30 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016; 646.237.0122.

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¹ The National Foundation for Credit Counseling – April 2010

THE LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE

Many of us share a compelling desire to make a difference and leave a lasting impact on the people dearest to us and the world we live in. What better way than ensuring that the gift of empowering knowledge – reading, writing, and numeracy – is available to millions of needy adult New Yorkers who turn to Literacy Partners for the help they need to improve their lives?

A charitable bequest to a qualified exempt charity, a directive written into a will or trust, accomplishes this. A key benefit of a charitable bequest is that it enables the donor to direct support in her/his estate to the good work of an organization following death and may help to save on estate taxes by providing a charitable deduction to the estate for the gift's value.

There are several ways that a bequest may be made:

- A **specific** bequest – specify a sum of money, piece of property or assets in your will
- A **residuary** bequest – specify a percentage of your estate or a percentage of the residue after making provisions for family and friends
- A **testamentary trust** – a *lead trust* saves estate taxes by providing annual payments to Literacy Partners in lieu of taxes; the remaining amount goes to your family or friends. A *remainder trust* provides payments to your surviving family members or friends for life or a set term, with the remainder going to Literacy Partners.

Take Your Place of Honor With the Literati

The following language may be included in a will or trust to make a bequest to Literacy Partners:

I hereby give, bequeath and devise to Literacy Partners, Inc. of 30 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016, (please insert one of the two following options) the sum of \$xx,xxx or xx% of the residue of my estate.

If you would like to inform us of a planned gift, please let us know that you have included Literacy Partners in your will or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy. That is all we need to welcome you as a member of Literati, our planned giving recognition society. Enrollment in Literati is Literacy Partners way of saying “thank you” for remembering Literacy Partners in your estate plans.

We would also be pleased to provide you with additional information on leaving a bequest to Literacy Partners or on other planned giving options. David Nathanson our Director of Finance may be reached at (646) 237-0123 or davidn@literacypartners.org

LITERACY PARTNERS VOLUNTEER PROFILE - Darrell Hucks, Ph.D.



Darrell Hucks still treasures the gift his Literacy Partners students gave him in 1997, a plaque that says, “In appreciation for the work you have done for us. You planted the seeds and now the tree is growing. Our lives will never be the same again. Love, The Guiding Light”

Credit: Matthew Ragan

Illiterate people are not lacking in intelligence They fell through the cracks repeatedly.

Fifteen years have passed since Darrell Hucks first came to Literacy Partners as a volunteer to teach basic English literacy to adults. At the time, he worked in the fashion industry in sales and design. “Literacy Partners was an experience that changed my life,” Darrell says, and so it would seem: Today he is Dr. Darrell Hucks, an assistant professor at Keene State College, NH, who teaches students aspiring to become elementary school teachers. A recent profile in *The Equinox*, Keene’s student newspaper, was brought to our attention, and prompted a reunion and a backward glance.

I forgot my glasses

From 1995 to 1997, when Prof. Hucks was teaching at Literacy Partners, many of his students were immigrants from Haiti and the Dominican Republic who were illiterate in their native tongue as well as in English, their adopted language. “I was overwhelmed by trying to understand what life would be like not knowing how to read,” Darrell says.

Today he still recalls that one of his students managed the messenger department of a large corporation. “How do you dispatch messengers if you can’t read the addresses where you’re sending them?” Darrell asked his student one day. The answer was that he told his employees, “Read this to me; I forgot my glasses.” His student was eager to learn and always arrived at class early Darrell reports, “and by the time I left Literacy Partners, he was reading, and so were the other students in the class.” The class named itself *The Guiding Light*.

Today I teach the teachers

By 1998, having found his calling, Darrell was at Teacher’s College, Columbia University getting his Master’s in Education and from there it was on to a Ph.D. at New York University. “Today I teach the teachers,” Darrell reports, “because that way I can reach more students.”

“Literacy Partners set me on course,” Dr. Hucks says. “It taught me about the positive impact I could have on peoples’ lives. Illiterate people are not lacking in intelligence,” he adds. “Most of my students were lacking in resources and access. They fell through the cracks repeatedly.”

LITERACY PARTNERS STUDENT PROFILE - Mourad Dahmoun



Mourad Dahmoun (right) holding the "Outstanding Teacher Award" given to his Literacy Partners English teacher, Victor Edrosolan (left) by the New York Association for Continuing Community Education, in May 2009. "He was so proud of me," Victor says of Mourad.

Mourad Dahmoun left his home in Algeria three years ago, and soon found his way to his first Literacy Partners English class for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with Victor Edrosolan, a credentialed ESOL teacher.

"My English was so bad I could not explain that I had the wrong address on the papers I brought with me from Algeria. So I just left it wrong," says Mourad speaking of his first moments on United States soil with the immigration officials who cleared him for entry.

Three native languages

Mourad explains that his native language is French, still spoken throughout Algeria as a result of its colonial past. On thinking about it more, however, he adds, "but you could also say that my native language is Arabic," so that makes two, but there's still one more. At home with his family, he speaks his "mother tongue," BerBer, the indigenous language of North Africa, which makes English Mourad's first encounter with a foreign language. Although he had been studying at Literacy Partners for only five months in June 2008, he took center stage at the Annual Student and Volunteer Recognition Celebration and read a cheerful poem about the great coffee his teacher Victor brews before all his English classes.

And on to the language of chemistry

With English in hand, Mourad's journey is now taking him to yet another language, one with far fewer speakers than any already in his command – the language of chemistry. He was recently accepted as a full time chemistry major at Queens College, a senior college and jewel in the crown of the City College of New York.

Victor, Mourad's ESOL teacher, provided the extra help that enabled him to pass the writing exam required by the college for applicants who are speakers of other languages. During admissions counseling, the college recommended a private English school, which Mourad could not afford; but Victor came to his aid, and developed a plan of daily writing assignments. Mourad made consistent gains on his BEST Plus exam for ESOL students and successfully jumped the hurdle that landed him in college this past January. One thing has not changed: Mourad continues to come to Literacy Partners weekly to improve his language skills.



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Literacy Partners, Inc.

30 East 33rd Street, 6th Floor
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www.literacypartners.org

Everyone deserves a chance to read.

Save Wednesday, June 1, 2011 for Erica Jong

the fourth and final offering in this year's
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Erica Jong is the author of 21 books including the groundbreaking *Fear of Flying* and her most recent work, *Love Comes First*.

WHERE: Le Cirque, 151 East 58th Street,
New York, NY

WHEN: 12 O'Clock Noon, Wednesday,
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For ticket information, please visit www.literacypartners.org or call 646.237.0105.