Washtenaw Literacy

ANNUAL REPORT 2006–2007

Washtenaw Literacy

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FAMILY LITERACY

- 50% OF CHILDREN BORN TO ILLITERATE PARENTS GROW UP ILLITERATE. (NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY)
- THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S HEALTH IS TO RAISE THE LITERACY LEVELS OF THEIR MOTHERS. (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION)

Illiteracy: A National and Local Crisis

IN WASHTENAW COUNTY over 27,000 adults lack the literacy skills needed to succeed in our society. Nationwide, 43% of adults lack these skills. For every adult who can't communicate, we lose an opportunity for better schools, workplaces and communities.

National statistics reinforce what we are seeing in Washtenaw County: illiteracy persists even when area education levels are high. In 1992, the last year for which local statistics are available, 12% of our county's adult population was at the lowest literacy level. If gathered together, these adults would fill a quarter of Michigan Stadium.

Community Literacy: A New Plan

Despite the individual successes of adults in literacy and adult education programs, our system as a whole is not working. In late 2005, the National Assessment of Adult literacy revealed that illiteracy levels were virtually unchanged from 10 years prior. The cycle of illiteracy has not been broken. A new approach is being developed throughout the country called community literacy. Community literacy focuses on bringing service providers and funders together to provide a lifespan of comprehensive literacy services to a geographic area. The National Institute for Literacy hosted a national summit on this emerging approach in 2006.

Locally, we have begun our own community literacy efforts with the Washtenaw County Literacy Initiative. Led by County Administrator Bob Guenzel and approved by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners in July 2007, this initiative will bring together the partners needed to make a real and lasting impact on our community. Washtenaw Literacy is providing leadership and support as a founding member of this initiative.

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HEALTH LITERACY

- LITERACY SKILLS ARE A STRONGER PREDICTOR OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S HEALTH STATUS THAN AGE, INCOME, EMPLOYMENT STATUS, EDUCATION LEVEL, OR RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP. (AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION/AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION)
- OLDER ADULTS WHO CANNOT READ AND UNDERSTAND BASIC HEALTH INFORMATION HAVE A 50% HIGHER MORTALITY RATE OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD THAN THOSE WITH ADEQUATE READING SKILLS. (ARCHIVES OF INTERNAL MEDICINE)

Washtenaw Literacy: A Literacy Leader

FOR 36 YEARS, Washtenaw Literacy has changed the lives of illiterate adults in our community through our free tutoring programs. Adults in our programs apply their literacy skills to get better jobs, maintain safe homes for themselves and their families and prepare their children to succeed in school. We have heard from local employers and educators that their organizations are improving as a result.

Washtenaw Literacy has a long history of working with other agencies and education providers. We have cross-referral programs with social service agencies and provide tutoring on-site at Washtenaw Community College and the MichiganWorks! Service Center as well as Dawn Farm, Delonis Center and the Washtenaw County Jail. We encourage our adult learners to pursue every available educational opportunity and subcontract our services to Willow Run Adult Education and Employment Training & Community Services.

Washtenaw Literacy fine-tunes our services each year to better meet the literacy needs of our community. We work with nearly 700 volunteers and a large network of community educators, employers and human service agencies to make this happen. In 2006-2007, over 1,300 men and women participated in our tutoring programs and contributed to a better community for us all.

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WORKPLACE LITERACY

- 34% OF JOB APPLICANTS LACKED THE BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY TO PERFORM THE JOBS THEY SOUGHT IN 2000. (AMERICAN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION)
- AMERICAN BUSINESSES LOSE OVER $60 MILLION IN PRODUCTIVITY EACH YEAR DUE TO EMPLOYEES' LACK OF BASIC READING SKILLS. (NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY)

Highlights 2006-2007

- Low-income seniors learn English for independent living at a new ESL group at Parkway Meadows apartments. (sponsor: Dollar General Literacy Foundation)
- Teen parents improve their reading skills, practice reading to their children, and take home new books in a 12-week pilot program. (sponsor: Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation)
- Washtenaw Literacy's third annual Power Tutoring one-day workshop series educates over 150 tutors and learners from across Michigan. (sponsor: State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth)
- Literacy Connections for Women addresses the gender gap in our basic literacy program through women-focused recruitment efforts and tutoring support. (sponsor: James A. & Faith Knight Foundation)
- A weekly ESL reading lab begins on Washtenaw Community College's main campus.
- The Partners in Reading program at Ypsilanti District Library recruits new volunteers and hosts a weekly ESL book club.
- Six tutor training series train 118 new one-on-one tutors. (sponsor: Comcast)
- Washtenaw Literacy provides staff sensitivity training and learner referrals at the MichiganWorks! Service Center. Tutoring support continues at the pre-GED program at the WCC Harriet Street Center. (sponsor: Washtenaw County)

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In Review

Revenue Sources

Businesses	$53,171
Events	$57,074
Feeds	$1,780
Grants	$67,850
Individual Gifts	$74,910
Interest	$1,205
Organizations	$63,593
Health Care Co-Pays	$3,935
Subcontracts	$11,834
Total	**$335,352**

In-Kind Support

Advertising	$18,193
Benefit Auction	$47,500
Books, services, supplies	$10,039
Office, tutoring & storage space	$26,265
Volunteer Service	$1,003,876
Total	**$1,105,873**

Cash v. In-Kind Support

Cash	$335,352
In-Kind	**$1,105,873**

Learners by Program

BL 1:1	201
ESL 1:1	224
Group learners (BL and ESL)	898
Total	**1,323**

Five Year Program Growth

Year	Learners Served
2002-2003	539
2003-2004	711
2004-2005	925
2005-2006	1,401
2006-2007	1,323

Volunteers by Type

1:1 tutors	387
Group tutors	136
Mentors	15
Fundraising/Administration	153
Total	**691**

Learner Accomplishments

Reported in our year-end survey:

100% I have achieved at least two of my goals

100% I am improving my literacy or English skills

90% I feel more confident

43% I am more involved in the community

59% I am more successful at work

67% I feel better about family life

41% I understand information from my doctor better

25% I read more to children

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Mission Statement

Washtenaw Literacy is a volunteer-based organization providing free literacy instruction customized to the needs of adults throughout Washtenaw County. Volunteers provide individual and group tutoring in reading and writing skills and in English as a second language so adults can improve their personal, family and community lives.

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