



Washtenaw Literacy

LEARNER PROFILE:  
Karen Fivenson



WONDERFUL CHANGES result from literacy tutoring. Karen Fivenson has been working with her tutor Monica since 2002. Through her work with Monica, Karen has gained the skills and confidence not only to enroll at Washtenaw Community College, but also to become a public speaker for Washtenaw Literacy. We are proud to share with you a reprint of Karen's presentation at Washtenaw Literacy's annual World in a Basket benefit auction.

**From Karen Fivenson,  
Washtenaw Literacy Learner**

Hello—

I feel very proud to be standing here to say a few words about Washtenaw Literacy. This stage is thousands of miles away from the sugar plantations of my homeland of Trinidad. As a young girl growing up in the small village of Esperanza, my grandmother, mother and I worked very hard in the sugar cane plantations to provide for our family the very best in life. Education was hard for me because the schoolteacher would beat me with a stick for mistakes I made and at home there was no support. I decided no more school when I was in the 5th grade.

My first steps off the island were November 2000 when I arrived in Ann Arbor with my four children to marry my fiancé.

Washtenaw Literacy became a "lifeline" for me in this dark world of education. Meeting Blair for the first time and hoping I would be eligible, his words of encouragement gave me the courage to succeed, and I felt a ray of hope. At the same time I was afraid of what people would say about me. I had to overcome my fears and the voices in my head to have the confidence. "I can do this."

We all have challenges we face in life – mine was to read and write. I can't find the words to express my gratitude to Washtenaw Literacy for what they have provided for me. I am proud to say I am now taking two classes at Washtenaw Community College. My advice is to have the courage to take that step to Washtenaw Literacy and your "world" will become brighter as mine has.

I'm here tonight to thank my community for supporting Washtenaw Literacy. Good night.

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[www.washtenawliteracy.org](http://www.washtenawliteracy.org)

