



**THE LITERACY COUNCIL  
OF LANCASTER-LEBANON**

# The LiteracyLine

Spring 2017

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## The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

24 South Queen Street  
Lancaster, PA 17603  
717-295-5523

Lebanon CareerLink  
243 Schneider Drive  
Lebanon, PA 17046  
717-274-2554

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



### The True Value of Education -Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director

Education is one of the strongest indicators of employment, income, attitudes and wellbeing. Education is the foundation upon which we build our lives. The ability to read, write, use technology, understand and apply numeracy all determine the course of our lives. Education is an investment that pays.

In 2015-2016, the total community investment for adult education through The Literacy Council was \$635,000. These funds were invested in programs and services such as adult basic education instruction, English language instruction, High School Equivalency preparation and career pathways support.

#### Return on Investment

##### Jobs

- 232 students got jobs.
- The average wage \$9.67/hour.
- 232 X \$9.67/hour X 40 hours X 52 weeks = \$4,666,355 per year

##### Increased Tax Revenue

- PA Tax Rate = .0307
- \$4,666,355 X .0307 = \$143,257

### Combined Cost Savings of Each High School Diploma or High School Equivalency

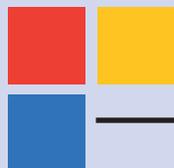
The combined cost for Pennsylvanians without a high school diploma or HSE Diploma of Cash Transfers (unemployment benefits, worker's compensation, social security payments, SSI, TANF, veteran's payments, survivor's benefits, other disability income, Earned Income Tax Credit) and non-cash transfers (food stamps - SNAP, Medicare Insurance, Medicaid insurance, housing subsidies, school lunch subsidies, energy assistance) are minus \$683 annually while a worker with a high school diploma or HSE enrich the State by \$6,067 annually through taxes despite transfer payments and other benefits. So, the benefit of moving someone up educationally to a diploma is \$6,067 + \$683 or \$6,750 gain each year.

Multiply the # high school diplomas or GEDs granted times \$6750 =  
14 GEDs x \$6,750 = \$94,500 per year gain of cost savings

- Total = \$4,998,612
- Total amount invested in the community through The Literacy Council = \$635,000

For every dollar invested in adult education services, the community gets back \$7.87.

Telling our story through data is compelling. The personal stories of the lives that have been changed through the power of education is priceless. We hope you enjoy the personal stories of our students in this edition of our newsletter.



## Student Success Stories



### **The Way They Were -Linda Cullen, ESL Student Services Coordinator**

*No children. No education. No country. No possessions. No job.*

In 1996, after witnessing the torture and death of hundreds of their fellow Burmese citizens, SoeReh and SehMeh ran for their lives. After three days of walking, they joined 11,750 other Burmese and waited years in a refugee camp along the Thai border; they were waiting to be granted refugee status and to be assigned a country and a resettlement agency.

To further understand the background of this amazing couple, please take a moment to learn what they endured by watching the video titled, "Burmese Refugees/Refugees SG" at:

<https://refugeesg.wordpress.com/about-the-refugees/>

#### **How Far They've Come (2007-2017)**

*A new start. A new country. A new name (immigration split name in two).*

2007- According to Jeff Hawkes of LNP, caseworkers, sponsors, and teachers alike, "marveled at their (Soe Reh and Seh Meh) resilience." Hawkes was writing an article about their son, Peh Reh, a shy student who arrived in November and "had never seen a pencil sharpener." By the end of the school year, he had transformed into an honor student. (This spring, Peh Reh will graduate from McCaskey and has been accepted to Thaddeus Stevens College). Church World Service (CWS) registered Soe Reh and Seh Meh for their very first ESL class at our old office at 38 West King Street. We have been told that they have "very good memories of classes at The Literacy Council."

They continued to study with Connie O'Connor, from Westminster Presbyterian Church. Connie thinks that "those first months of ESL gave this couple a strong desire to continue studying which is now bearing fruit." The LNP article by Jeff Hawkes also quoted a CWS volunteer who commented, "I've never seen (a family) more determined to make sure the kids go to school and do homework. Even though the mother can't read or write in any language, she's sitting with them, making sure (homework's) being done."



Connie O'Connor reports she has been tutoring Soe Reh and Seh Meh steadily twice a week since August 2015. She spent the first year working through Hooked on Phonics. "That seems to have been a breakthrough," she said. Both husband and wife are now reading on a third grade level. This is amazing progress for students who are illiterate in their native language!

Connie is also helping Seh Meh and Soe Reh practice the answers to the citizenship test, for which they have begun the application process.

In 2007, Soe Reh was offered a job as dish-washer at an upscale restaurant. Ten years later he is a chef at that same restaurant, John Jeffries, which is a clear testament to his strong work ethic and tenacity. This is just one more example of the result of successful education combined with hard work and determination. It is also a beautiful illustration of how immigrants and refugees, even when coming from dire circumstances, can turn their lives around and valuably contribute to our community.

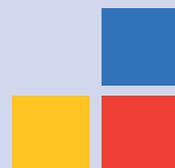


#### **Old Annville Day**

June 10, 2017

9 AM - 2 PM

Downtown Annville



## **Annette Uffner's Success Story -Jonile Miller, Office Manager, Lebanon**

*Annette Uffner: AARP SCESEP Employment Specialist, formerly Literacy Council math Student/SCESEP trainee*

In October of 2015 Annette interviewed with us and was accepted as an AARP SCESEP trainee. The goal of the SC-SEP program is to retrain unemployed seniors to re-enter the job market with updated skills. Annette's personal goal was to learn office and computer skills, and to gain better math skills. She had previously worked in manufacturing and retail, and wanted to work in an office environment.

Annette proved to be a quick learner and a dedicated worker. She joined Ron Ludwick's afternoon math group in October, ending the 2015/2016 program year with a three level gain. She assisted in the morning ESL class, leading a small group in vocabulary and reading skills. In preparing for her group, she learned how to develop PowerPoint presentations to better aid the students' learning. The students appreciated her patience and the extra time that she gave them.

No job was too big or too small for Annette to tackle. No matter what was asked of her, she joyfully threw herself into the task. As a result, she learned many office duties, including filing, copying, computer skills and proper message taking. Her confidence grew as she performed her many and varied duties.



*Left to Right: Cathy, Sandy, Jonile, Annette, and Jenny*

As Annette neared the end of her allotted time training with the Literacy Council, the Employment Specialist position opened. Because of the skills she had gained and the dedication she showed through training with the Literacy Council, she was awarded the position without having to interview for it. Since starting that position in June 2016, she has placed about 30 SCESEP enrollees at training sites around Lebanon County. That's 30 people who will have a better chance at finding a job, thanks to Annette's assistance!

## **Milton Cruz's Success Story -Cathy Roth, Student and Volunteer Services Coordinator, Lebanon**

Milton Cruz came to The Literacy Council in the summer of 2016, hoping to volunteer in the evenings after work. Since he came to the United States in 2013, he had moved up the employment ladder from a food production worker to his present job as a maintenance technician at PPCP. He wanted to give back to the community as a tutor. Normally we don't test volunteers; his general conversation skills seemed fine. But his degree in engineering was from the Dominican Republic and we wanted to make sure we didn't overestimate his abilities. The results more than qualified him to teach math, but his reading vocabulary and writing skills while adequate, could be improved. How could we utilize his math skills while helping him to improve his English communication? There was a large multilevel evening ABE class at this time. Students needed more in depth practice with math than I could provide, alone. We would spend the first half of the class on math and split the group into two levels. Milton



would teach fractions and percentages, and I'd teach multiplication and division. Then we would reconvene for reading and Milton would join the class as a student. We have been doing this since July 2016 with great success. Students really seem to appreciate the extra math help, and Milton says he sees a big improvement in his vocabulary acquisition in reading and his writing abilities.

Recently, Milton consented to serve on a United Way Focus group to help United Way understand the needs of the community. He proudly reported to the class the topics that were covered at the focus group. He let everyone know how important adult education is to individuals who are given the opportunity to continue their learning, as well as the positive impact it has on the community. Over the last few months, Milton has attracted other potential students to our program. He is truly an advocate for our program and adult education.

## Making an Impact -Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator

One day, as I was taking a break to get a cup of coffee, I saw two women on the corner outside our building, and one was crying. They asked if I could help, and realizing that they spoke no English, I managed to direct them to their destination. Gaby, along with her mother, arrived in the United States three years ago as refugees from Cuba. Gaby left behind a husband, father, and sisters. When I found Gaby and her mother on the corner outside our office, I had no idea how their future would unfold.

Shortly after my first meeting with Gaby and her mother, I saw Gaby in Linda's ESL class. She had been resettled through Church World Services and sent to the Literacy Council to learn English. Realizing how important it was to learn the language, Gaby attended regularly and was soon transitioned to a higher level class—mine. She continued to improve, got a job, a driver's license, a car, and a new apartment. She saved enough money to

help her sisters come to the United States. Having been a teacher in Cuba, Gaby was determined to get employment in a school. In September 2016, while continuing to work at her full time job, she accepted a part time teacher's aide position.

The Literacy Council impacted Gaby's life by helping her with the skills she needed to become a productive member of the community, and she is now making that impact. Recently, through the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), some of the students who immigrated to this country and continued their education through The Literacy Council were featured in online interviews. To read about the success of these students, and learn more about how immigrants and refugees are vital and contributing members to our community, visit: <http://www.lancasterchamber.com/event.aspx?eid=2857#.WO-TU002zmJ>

## Literacy Council Staff Witness an International Message of Peace, Education and Empowerment -Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director



The Literacy Council staff was honored to be part of a surprise assembly at JP McCaskey High School that featured a visit from Malala Yousafzai. Malala is a UN Messenger of Peace, former Pakistani activist for female education, and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate.

Malala and her father were in the United States for a short visit where she spoke at the UN prior to heading to Canada to meet with Prime Minister Trudeau. In between, she visited Lancaster where she participated in a community breakfast held by Church World Service

before heading to McCaskey. The audience, made up of mostly high school students showed deep appreciation for Malala and her message, giving her a standing ovation three times during her presentation.

I had the chance to attend a brief gathering with Malala, her father and 30 McCaskey students and administrators. Malala told the students that she has seen the worst and that she is not afraid to speak out on behalf of others. She reminded the students to stay strong in adverse situations and to celebrate our diverse community. The students were inspired and touched by her visit and her words; she left them with feelings of hope and encouragement.

I met the students' teacher, Katereyna Tarasenko. Ms. Tarasenko is an immigrant from Ukraine and she has been teaching her students about Malala, making this visit especially meaningful. It turns out that Ms. Tarasenko's parents have recently immigrated to the United States and they are learning English through The Literacy Council! What a great example of peace, education and empowerment.

## The Impact of Case-Management on Student Self-Sufficiency

-*Bobbi Hurst, Student Service Coordinator*

For the diverse population of students at The Literacy Council, life's road to a high level of self-sufficiency can be uneven and inconsistent. The differences in life experiences, strengths and barriers, is far-reaching and may include one or a combination of the following situations:

1. Lack of a high school diploma
2. Dislocated workers returning to school
3. Returning to work after a long absence
4. Immigrants lacking English proficiency
5. Prepping for placement tests for post-secondary education/training
6. Retired seniors returning to the workforce

The list could go on and on, but the one common denominator is the fact that most students are facing change, and in some cases very dramatic change. How can we support students going through these life changes beyond the basic classroom instruction?

At The Literacy Council, this support comes in the form of case-management, the process of meeting clients where they are as unique individuals and facilitating a supportive path to increased self-sufficiency. This process is comprised of numerous elements such as, interviewing and building rapport, identification of strengths and barriers, assessment of skills and goals, instructional placement, follow-up assessment, and transitioning, career and

education planning, and linking to supportive services.

Every new student begins the process with an interview, during which valuable information is gleaned regarding education background, work history, barriers to employment, reasons for participation (goals), pertinent medical history, availability for instruction, and resources like transportation and childcare. After the interview, students take both formal and informal basic skills assessments in one or more of the following:

1. English as a second language – reading, writing, listening and speaking
2. Tests of Adult Basic Education – reading comprehension, math and language
3. Reading Horizons – phonetics, word analysis, word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension

The assessments are evaluated and students are placed into a class, small group, computer-assisted or one-to-one tutoring, depending on their individual goals, academic needs, availability and resources. Students continue their instruction until one or more goals are met and/or, until they are ready to transition to a higher level class, post-secondary education or training, employment, or a career pathway.

All this occurs as part of an organized process to make positive change happen; in essence, movement toward empowerment and self-sufficiency.

## An Evening of Matched Pairs: #4 is a Huge Success!

-*Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator*

On Sunday, April 2, 2017, the Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon hosted the 4th annual *An Evening of Matched Pairs*. This fund raiser includes food tastings with wine and beer pairings from about 15 local restaurants who dedicate their time and resources to support the Literacy Council during this event. The evening also includes both live and silent auctions, games of chance, music, and dancing. It is truly a fun event for the approximately 250 people in attendance.

This year, we had generous sponsors, an increase in ticket sales, and an increase in the overall revenue from



the auctions and games of chance. All of the dollars generated will go back into programming, and will help the Literacy Council continue to provide free adult basic and literacy education services to students in Lancaster and Lebanon counties. It is a wonderful feeling to see the support and dedication of the community showered on our organization. We extend a huge THANK YOU to everyone who made this event such a success! And THANK YOU, also, for helping us continue our critical mission of promoting lifelong learning and learning for life!

## The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

We serve the people and communities of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties; working in partnership with multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, business and industry employers, governmental staff, and organizations. Key to our success is a network of highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, and a supportive community.

### Mission

Promoting life-long learning and learning for life.

### Vision

Adults have skills to transform their lives, sustain their families, and strengthen their communities.

### Values

- **Quality** – Our high-quality programs and services are rooted in evidence-based practices and offered in an encouraging and caring environment.
- **Goal-Driven** – Our programs and services demonstrate results that support the education students need to successfully transition to the next step of obtaining their life goals.
- **Respect and Integrity** – Our compassionate and caring approach and interactions are highly respectful of diverse backgrounds and differences. Our integrity rests in our word, all deeds and actions that ensure trustworthiness and confidentiality.
- **Leadership** – Our staff, board members, volunteers, and students are engaged and are actively advocating for adult education. Our responsibility to continually enhance our own leadership skills will keep us prominent in the field.
- **Innovative** – Our effective partnerships, strategic approaches, and being open to possibilities allow us to respond creatively to our work.
- **Collaborative** – Our willingness to build strong relationships and alliances with others that support our mission ensures commitment to serving our community and the betterment of society at large.



**The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon is a partner agency of the United Way of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties.**

### Board

The Literacy Council is governed by a volunteer board of directors. 2015-2016 board members:

Richard Frerichs, President  
 Ashley Garcia, Vice President  
 Eric Luckenbaugh, Secretary  
 Dave Diffendal, Treasurer

Scott Cole	Mary Edith Lechliter
Martha Guaigua	Sandy Strunk
Cheryl Hiester*	Marlene Usdin
Sreeni Jakka	Bonnie Young

*\*(Non Voting)*

### Staff

Jenny Bair, Program Director  
 Linda Cullen, ESL Services Coordinator  
 Karey Getz, Program Assistant  
 Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director  
 Roberta Hurst, Student Services Coordinator  
 Jonile Miller, Office Manager, Lebanon  
 Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator  
 Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach & Resource Coordinator  
 Cathy Roth, Student Services Coordinator, Lebanon

### Volunteers Needed

Do you want to make a difference in someone's life and in your community? Please consider tutoring an adult student. Tutors are needed to teach basic education skills including reading, writing, mathematics, English language, and GED preparation. We provide training, all materials, and technical support. For more information in the Lancaster area, please call 717-295-5523. For more information in the Lebanon area, please call 717-274-2554.