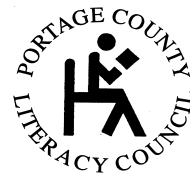




Literacy Lines



Portage County Literacy Council, Inc.

Spring 2007

From Tom's Desk

For the past 20 years PCLC has been working with adults who feel their reading and writing skills are inadequate. National assessments done in 1993 and 2003 indicate that twenty percent of the American public function with reading skills below fifth grade levels and that another twenty to thirty percent would have difficulty balancing their check book, using a bus schedule, or writing a short letter to their credit card company explaining an error. Many of the folks in this group have jobs, raise families and are essentially undetectable in the community. They would come to the Literacy Council for help so they can find better jobs, help their children in school or simply read to their children. Most of them try, often successfully, to keep their literacy problems a secret.

Recently it is becoming clear that low-literacy is a barrier to effective health care not only for the individuals but also for their children. Wisconsin Literacy, Inc, the statewide organization of community based literacy providers like PCLC, has joined with Dr. Paul Smith of the Family Practice Residency Program at the UW-Madison Medical School to address issues related to low-literacy and medical care. They report that although doctors recognize the problem, it is significantly underestimated. The issue is that medical communication seems to be provided at 10th grade literacy levels while significant numbers of patients function below eighth grade. Research over the past several years has concluded that low-literacy is commonly accompanied by poor health. There is abundant literature, web information, and media attention given to chronic health conditions like diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure) and the health risks of smoking. Unfortunately, most written material is out of the reach of up to forty percent of the Wisconsin public. Consequently many adults do not understand their disease, its symptoms or its treatments and have difficulty following treatment plans.

For the past several years two thirds of PCLC's resources have been devoted to developing literacy skills among new English language learners. It is apparent that a new initiative is necessary to address health literacy issues in Portage County. This initiative will involve partnering with health provider community to develop appropriate teaching materials; finding new ways to inform those who would benefit from health language awareness that a program is available; enlisting the help of the medical community to adjust the level of health communication to make it accessible to a wider cross-section of county adults.

In order to develop a new initiative without abandoning the new English language learners (who are among those with weak health literacy tools), PCLC must increase its resources. To that end, PCLC had its Third Annual Un-Scrabble fundraiser on March 29 at the Stevens Point Holiday Inn. Community support always precedes foundation and government support.

Tom Parker, Executive Director

Annual Un-Scrabble Fundraiser

On the last Thursday in March the Portage County Literacy Council held its Third Annual un-Scrabble Fundraiser. With forty teams of four and a cadre of volunteers more than 175 people attended. The Holiday Inn generously provided the space and food for the entire crowd as Scrabble was played fast and furiously during three timed rounds. The un-Scrabble event was a successful fundraiser yielding \$15,475.00. This revenue will provide opportunities for many adults in Portage County to improve basic reading, writing and math skills. Many others will learn and develop English language skills necessary for steady employment with funds raised through the un-Scrabble event.



On behalf of Literacy Council adult learners, I sincerely thank and acknowledge Worzalla Publishing Company for being the Primary Event Sponsor for the third consecutive year. Thanks also to continuing Triple-Word Sponsors: AIG/Noel Group, Delta Dental, Ministry Health Care, Worth Company, and new Triple –Word Sponsors: Sentry Insurance, Holiday Inn and Community First Bank and fourteen Double-Word Sponsors. PCLC is also grateful to the participants who collected team registration fees and pledges before gathering for a few hours of fun on that late March evening.

To the more than twenty volunteers who helped with the event, please know that I and Literacy Council adult learners appreciate your time and effort!

Maria Completes The Circle

When Maria joined the PCLC ESL class in 2003 she was living at the Family Crises Center with her two children. Her immigration status was uncertain. She spoke no English and did not have a car or a driver's license. For the next several years she rarely missed a class. Her tutor, Holly Hassle, UW-Marathon County English professor soon realized that Maria had only gone to school through 6th grade in Mexico and began mixing Spanish and English grammar into the weekly lessons. Suddenly Maria began learning English much more quickly.

With the help of friends Maria was able to get her drivers license and Green Card. Soon she found a job caring for a two year old and teaching her Spanish. Maria's new income allowed her to move with her children out of subsidized housing into her own apartment. By then she had little time to study English in class or with her tutor, but she continued to improve.

When her employers moved to California she quickly found another job with another family. After a year of working for the new family she returned to class in January 07. She now qualified to study in the highest level ESL class PCLC offered but was unable to attend due to personal commitments.

Because she was free when the beginning and intermediate ESL classes met, she was asked to return to the beginning class. This time she was hired to be the interpreter for the new Spanish-speaking, English learners. In four busy and difficult years she had overcome many obstacles to move from student to interpreter. To continue her progress she has a new tutor who meets with her up to two hours each week.



Maria wanted her story to be told so others would know it can be done.

PCLC Opens Endowment Fund with Community Foundation

In December 06 a generous gift to PCLC of \$1500 was designated for the purpose of establishing a literacy endowment fund with the Portage County Community Foundation. This fund will provide another means by which individuals and foundations can help ensure continued local literacy services. As mentioned before, PCLC has been addressing adult literacy issues for twenty years with the United Way as the only consistent funding source. It is hoped this fund will grow to the point of providing some annual operating capital from its earnings.

Two other donations were received to initiate this fund. Karen Fadner, retired reading specialist has offered her expertise and energy to PCLC as a board member, tutor trainer, fundraiser and reading consultant since PCLC was founded in 1987. After twenty years of service on the Board of Directors, Karen has resigned to make time for personal and other volunteer activities that include grandchildren and work for the Red Cross and Lincoln Center. Each year Karen Fadner does a volume of custom hand knitting and donates her earn



Karen Fadner

Tutor Training Scheduled

Interested in impacting others' lives in our community? Become a tutor with the Literacy Council! Sign up on our website www.pocolit.org or call 715-345-5241

Please plan to attend training on the following Mondays from 6-8 pm:

May 7, May 14, May 21, May 28, June 4



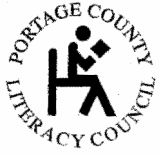
ings to the Literacy Council. In 2006 she donated one thousand dollars from knitting earnings and designated it to the new fund.

In recognition of her years of service and her interest in the future of the Literacy Council, the individuals remaining on the board gathered and donated an additional \$750 to the new fund in her name.

Anyone interested in more information and/or making further contributions to this fund should contact: Tom Parker (pclc@pocolit.org or 715-345-5341) or the Community Foundation of Portage County (715-342-4454).

I want to support the Literacy Council in the following way:

Sponsor one tutor/learner pair for six months	\$350.00
Sponsor one recognition event for learners and volunteers	\$275.00
Purchase work books for ten students for one ten-week class	\$150.00
Sponsor one ESL teacher for one week of classes	\$153.41
Purchase 3 classroom textbooks	\$106.00
Sponsor annual pre- and post-testing for one learner	\$ 50.00
Sponsor one ESL class child care worker for 1 week	\$ 32.00
Other	\$ _____



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The Portage County Literacy Council mission is...

To help Portage County adults develop basic math and English skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency and community integration.

Visit www.pocolit.org to:

- *View pictures of un-Scrabble 2007*
- *Find English Learner class schedules*
- *Sign up as a PCLC tutor*
- *Access English as a Second Language (ESL)resources*
- *See where the PCLC is located*
- *Research the history of the PCLC*