

# Literacy *lines*

Newsletter of the Portage County Literacy Council

1209 Fremont Street, 209 Nelson Hall, Stevens Point, WI 54481 · 715-345-5341 · [www.pocolit.org](http://www.pocolit.org)

Fall 2011

## ***PCLC Welcomes New Executive Director***

Hello, my name is Mary Kneebone, and I am the new Executive Director of the Portage County Literacy Council. I am thankful for the opportunity of getting to work with such a fantastic organization, and I look forward to meeting each and every one of you through your interactions with and support of PCLC. I have an extensive background in the non-profit sector and a passion for reading that drew me to this position and makes it a great fit for me.

After only a short time in my new position, I realized the PCLC is faced with the most difficult and unique problem of not being able to reach the very people we are here to help. How can someone who cannot read, write or speak English fill out a new learner application or even read a poster advertising our services? I then realized that getting in touch with us must be the least of their worries. Imagine how hard a trip to the grocery store must be if you cannot communicate in English, or how difficult parent-teacher conferences at your child's school are. How about trying to explain to your family physician what exactly is ailing you? These are all reasons why the PCLC needs to continue our efforts of spreading literacy in Portage County, and why I am dedicated to expanding our programming to reach even more learners than ever before.

As a part of these efforts, I have been working closely with members of the board to start a PR committee dedicated to finding new and efficient ways of recruiting learners and maintaining a solid group of volunteers. I also have Kelly Stolpa, an intern/administrative assistant who came to our organization the same time I did, helping me generate new outreach materials and methods.

Some of the goals I have for our organization include breaking into the local farming communities as well as any manufacturing and production companies in the area in order to improve their workers' literacy and help them be more successful in their employment and as members of their community. I would also like to see increased attendance at our weekly classes, and more learners on their way to becoming economically self-sufficient.

Although I will try my best to achieve these goals, I know the success of the PCLC depends on the continued support of our network of volunteers, employees and friends. You all are the reason we are able to do what we do for Portage County, and I hope I can count on your support for years to come. Look for our new and improved communication efforts, this newsletter being one of them, and please feel free to offer any suggestions or creative ideas you may have that can further our efforts!

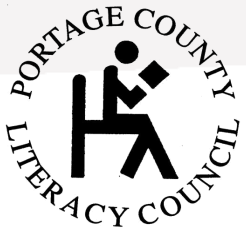
Sincerely,

*Mary Kneebone*



## ***In this issue:***

National Family Literacy Month, PCLC on the web, Health Literacy grant, and *more!*



## November is National Family Literacy Month

September celebrated National Literacy Month, and November is National Family Literacy Month, with the official National Family Literacy Day celebrated on the 1st. The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has found that children who are read to at home have a higher success rate in school. Also, parent involvement in reading at an early age helps children develop lifelong habits of literacy. According to studies, 26 percent of children who were read to three to four times in the past week recognized all the letters of the alphabet, compared to 14 percent of children who were read to less frequently. This statistic, when coupled with another that says more than 94 million adults in the U.S. can speak, but not read, the English language, illustrates why literacy is important for the whole family.

Throughout the month of November, and every other month of the year, remember to promote reading in your family. And what better time than National Family Literacy Month is there to start volunteering to help other adults in Portage County bring the joy of reading to their homes and their children?

## "Like" Sentry Insurance on Facebook to help United Way

Sentry Insurance teamed up with the United Way for the "Live United" campaign. For every "like" Sentry Insurance received on their corporate Facebook page, they donated \$1 to the United Way of Portage County. The campaign, which started in mid-September, runs through November 30, so if you have not visited Sentry Insurance on Facebook, there is still time. All you have to do is click the "Like" button on the Sentry Insurance page, and you will be helping raise money for the United Way of Portage County.

So far Sentry Insurance has donated over \$1000. The more "likes" they get, the more they will donate, up to \$10,000.

A link to the Sentry Insurance page is available on the Portage County Literacy Council Facebook page, so visit us on the web!

## Okray Grant to Help Promote Health Literacy

The PCLC received a grant from the Edward J. Okray Foundation to promote health literacy among at risk adults in Portage County. The Institute of Medicine defines health literacy as the degree to which individuals are able to obtain, process and understand information and services needed to make decisions regarding their health. Studies have shown a strong link between adults' literacy level and their health status. The council's goal is to improve people's ability to make sound decisions when it comes to their own health, and the health of their families, by improving their literacy.

Health literacy programming will cover topics such as where to get health care, how to talk with medical professionals, the differences between preventative, emergency and non-emergency care, reading and following medication and home health care instructions, and more. A special effort will be made to help low income residents with low literacy levels and the elderly, who will benefit due to their more frequent need for health care services. Programs and classes schedules are currently being worked out.

The council's Executive Director, Mary Kneebone, believes teaching people basic literacy skills will give them the ability to better manage their own health care, and that of their family. "We want to give people the tools to make their own health care decisions," said Kneebone, "and that starts with things like being able to read the labels on medicines, or talk with your doctor about your health concerns."

## Progress and Achievements

As a supporter and friend of the Portage County Literacy Council, we are sure you would like to know about the work we are doing and what exactly we are getting accomplished. That is why we will be providing regular updates on the number of individuals involved with our organization. Please look for these updates in future newsletters and on our website: [www.pocolit.org](http://www.pocolit.org).

Number of learners served last year: 150+  
Number Active Volunteer Tutors: 80  
Number of online supporters/followers: 149

Thank you for your continued support!

## PCLC says “Thank You” and “Good Luck” to Desiah Melby

The Portage County Literacy Council would like to extend a huge “Thank you” to Desiah Melby for her hard work and dedication to the organization. Desiah had been involved with the literacy council for many years before becoming Executive Director in 2010, and her work with the Rural Literacy Program, among many of her other efforts for PCLC were a great success.

Desiah’s successor, Mary Kneebone, would like to thank Desiah for leaving her and PCLC with all the tools they need for continued success and a bright future.

Desiah stepped down as Executive Director to take a teaching position at Amherst High School, but is open to continuing her involvement with PCLC in the future.

## PCLC Strives for Greater Online Presence

Recent technological advances and the rise of social media have created a wealth of online tools available for non-profit organizations. In an effort to increase outreach and support, the Portage County Literacy Council is striving to present a greater presence online.

After a year-long lull in activity, the PCLC Facebook page is once again up and running. Anyone who “likes” Portage County Literacy Council on Facebook, can now receive newsfeed updates from PCLC as well as connect with other supporters and friends. In connection with the Facebook page, “Support Portage County Literacy Council” is a cause that Facebook users can join which then allows them to recruit more supports and donate to PCLC.

The Bookmark blog, [pocolit.wordpress.com](http://pocolit.wordpress.com), has also been resurrected. The Bookmark is a place for friends of PCLC to find even more updates and interesting literacy related news.

As always, [www.pocolit.org](http://www.pocolit.org), will still be the main source of PCLC news, but connecting on these other social media outlets will give our supporters even more interaction than before. PCLC is an organization that depends on support from the community, and building an online community is something that will ensure a successful future for the organization.

Please visit our website, [www.pocolit.org](http://www.pocolit.org), for links to both the Facebook page and the blog. The Cause, “Support Portage County Literacy Council,” can be easily navigated to from the Facebook page.

## *Save the Date: Un-Scrabble 2012*

Mark your calendars! The upcoming fundraiser has been scheduled for:

**Thursday, April 12, 2012**

It is never too early to start getting your team together! Watch [pocolit.org](http://pocolit.org) and

Facebook for more information about participation and sponsorship opportunities.

## PCLC 2011 Board of Directors

President: **John Leek**,  
JHL Mail Marketing  
Treasurer: **Scott Meyer**  
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K-12 Reading Specialist, Retired

**Approximately 1 million Wisconsin adults qualify for adult literacy and English language services (U. S. Census 2000 and NALS 1992). Only 75,000 (less than 10%) of adults in need of services are currently receiving them.**

According to Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

PCLC is currently helping over 130 adults in Portage County improve their literacy skills. Help us increase that number with a donation. Simply print and detach the bottom of this page, and mail it along with your donation to the address below. Secure donations can also be made online at our website: [www.pocolit.org](http://www.pocolit.org).

Donations can be sent to: Portage County Literacy Council, Inc.

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### I want to support the Portage County Literacy Council in the following way:

Sponsor one tutor/learner pair for six months	\$350
Sponsor one recognition event for learners and volunteers	\$275
Purchase work books for ten students for one ten-week class	\$150
Sponsor annual pre- and post-testing for one learner	\$ 50
Other	\$ _____

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support!*

Please make checks payable to Portage County Literacy Council

