



## A Critical Time to Stand Up In Support of Adult Literacy Funding

Sometimes a significant moment in history can come and go without us really stopping to think we are in the middle of it, or that our work has a direct impact on outcomes. In July of 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law, changing the way adult education and workforce development organizations work together. We in the trenches of literacy and adult education have waited since 1998 (15 years) for the reauthorization of this federal law that provides formula-based funding to states to address adult and family literacy efforts.

In Wisconsin, this federal adult education money is directed to our Wisconsin Technical College System office (WTCS), which disseminates funding via a competitive grant process to its 16 technical colleges and a small number of literacy agencies and community-based organizations that are members of Wisconsin Literacy.

Under the new law, the Department of Workforce Development and WTCS will work more in sync so that local employers will be able to find a more qualified and prepared workforce for high demand industries. We are finally moving into a labor environment where middle-skilled jobs are in demand. Our state's demographics, however, are working against this increased opportunity for employment as more and more Baby Boomers retire, and literacy and high school graduation rates remain stagnant and far too low. In order to meet employer demands with a shrinking population, EVERYBODY COUNTS! This means we need a strong investment in those currently aged 24-50 who are coming to community-



Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services Warehouse Worker Training

based literacy agencies to improve their skills so that they might succeed in a technical college classroom or job training program. These are adults with limited and low literacy skills who otherwise have no other clear pathway to employment. Our literacy agencies served almost 18,000 of these adults last year!

As we look toward implementation of the new WIOA legislation, ***a law that asks us to do things differently in adult education and workforce, it is our hope that community-based literacy is at the planning table.*** This will be important if we are to better feed both workforce development initiatives and technical college classrooms with better prepared adults, equipped with the foundational literacy skills that employers say are still missing from the current labor pool. Please advocate to your legislators and local funders for support of community-based literacy!

## Still Growing After All These Years Wisconsin Literacy Turns 30!

It all started in the early 80s with a small dedicated group of passionate directors from adult and family literacy agencies. Coming from Eau Claire, Green Bay, Milwaukee and other parts of Wisconsin, they committed to meet periodically and work together to keep their local programs growing and to share ideas and best practices. Their programs were the only option to help adults desperately in need of literacy services throughout the state.

Fast forward to 2015. The commitment and dedication of these literacy advocates has morphed into a 30th Anniversary Celebration for Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. (WLI) and its agency members, now numbering 73. Last year, at our member agencies, more than 3,300 volunteer tutors provided over 190,000 hours of tutoring to 17,722 adult learners. This includes instruction in reading, writing, English language learning, computer literacy, health literacy, citizenship classes, and worker readiness training. The community-based literacy program model WLI's member agencies follow is a cost-effective way for professionally-trained volunteer tutors to empower adult learners to meet their goals. We look forward to the next 30 years of growing. Please join us as a friend, tutor, student or advocate – it will change lives!

New Members Added in 2014: Burnett County Family Literacy | Casa Guadalupe Education Center, Inc. | Northcott Neighborhood House | Silver Spring Neighborhood Center | UMOS, Inc. | Social Development Commission | YWCA Southeast Wisconsin

You can find out more about our members in the "Find a Program" and "Success Stories" sections at [www.wisconsinliteracy.org](http://www.wisconsinliteracy.org). You'll also find news about our regional 30th Anniversary Celebration events, such as:

### 30th Anniversary Family Frozen Fête

Sunday, March 15, 2015 3:00-6:00 p.m.  
McKee Farms Park, Fitchburg

### 30th Anniversary Music Sampler

Sunday, July 12, 2015, 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
Cottage Winery, Menomonie



## Tutor Training Success

A total of 743 new volunteer literacy tutors are opening new possibilities for adult learners across Wisconsin in part because of Wisconsin Literacy's 1200 Tutors in 12 Weeks volunteer tutor recruitment and training campaign. We raised \$13,390 to distribute directly to the 30 participating agencies with amounts based on how many new tutors were trained at each location during the 12-week initiative.

Special thanks to the following sponsors:

- Alliant Energy Foundation
- American Family Insurance
- Dollar General Foundation
- Green Bay Packers Foundation

### MORE TUTORS NEEDED!

If you are willing to volunteer your time to help adult learners reach their full potential, visit [www.wisconsinliteracy.org](http://www.wisconsinliteracy.org) to find a program near you.

wisconsin  
literacy



Michele Erikson (left), Executive Director of WLI, and Kathy Cornell, WLI Board member and Executive Director of Literacy Green Bay, accepted a donation from the Green Bay Packers Foundation for WLI's 2014 tutor recruitment and training campaign.

## Let's Talk About Medicines

Thanks to grant awards from Security Health Plan (SHP) and the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation (WMSF), we will implement workshops statewide to help adults (especially seniors) learn to more safely and effectively use medications. These grant awards allow us to expand upon the original pilot project, which was funded by WMSF.

We are seeking to partner with community-based organizations to help us implement these workshops. Topics include understanding the main parts of a medication label, types of containers for medications, dosage instruction and strategies to remember to take the medicine, understanding special label instructions, interactions with over the counter medicines, basic storage techniques, and more.

A stipend will be provided to each partner organization to help cover costs, and sites will be selected based on interest level, date availability and geographic location. Facilitators trained by WHL will deliver the workshops.

If you are interested in partnering with us, or for additional information, please contact Kari LaScala, Health Communications Specialist for WHL, at [kari@wisconsinliteracy.org](mailto:kari@wisconsinliteracy.org) or (608) 257-1655, Ext. 5.

Let's Talk About Medicine Workshop Participant



## Health Literacy Summit Focuses on Communication



Summit details are available at [www.bit.ly/hlsummit](http://www.bit.ly/hlsummit).

An early bird discount is offered through March 17.

Reduced registration fees are available for WLI member agency staff.

“Better Health through Better Communication” is the focus of the 2015 Wisconsin Health Literacy Summit, hosted by WHL, April 13-15. This conference will be held at Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison and is offered every other year.

Six general sessions, three pre-Summit programs, and a poster presentation offer information to improve health and wellness through improved communication. “Literacy and Health” is one of the subject tracks. Twenty-five different breakout workshops include how a literacy program can promote health, how to develop health literacy partnerships and understanding adults as learners. Among plenary presenters is Jackie Taylor, President of the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE).

Special thanks go to our Summit sponsors: Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Dean & St. Mary's, EPIC, Gundersen Health System, Home Health United Visiting Nurse Service, Hospital Sisters Health System, Marshfield Clinic, Meriter & Physicians Plus, MetaStar, Quarles & Brady LLP, Security Health Plan, UW Health and Unity, Wisconsin Health Information Organization, Wisconsin Hospital Association Foundation, Wisconsin Medical Society, and WPS Health Insurance

## Bringing Literacy and Health Closer Together

Through an identity rebranding effort, WLI is better aligning the work of our division, Wisconsin Health Literacy (WHL), with WLI as its parent organization. The logos tie the two together both in name and visual recognition. Both feature a book to symbolize the role of literacy. Inside the WHL book is a heart/apple, combining medical knowledge and healthy living. Inside the WLI book are pages resembling a bird taking flight, symbolizing the exploration of new horizons through reading.

In addition, we launched a new website in December of 2014, combining the WLI and WHL websites under one umbrella, making website management and promotion of our work much easier and more efficient. We're feeling a bit more “in alignment” these days and we hope you like our new look! Special thanks to the Hiebing agency in Madison for its assistance in this rebranding.



**Kari LaScala** has joined our staff as Health Communications Specialist. Prior to joining us, Kari worked at the Waunakee Public Library, where she organized and implemented the majority of public programming for adult patrons. Kari is also a freelance writer and holds a B.A. in journalism and psychology from Northern Illinois University and a J.D. from Northern Illinois University College of Law. She practiced law at a legal aid clinic and law firm in Chicago before moving with her family to the Madison area.





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Adult learners from International Learning Center, a program of Neighborhood House of Milwaukee, met with legislators at the State Capitol on Feb. 10, 2015 to advocate for expanding a key college aid program for minorities.