

## Timely and Engaging

*The 2017 Wisconsin Health Literacy Summit*

Wisconsin Health Literacy (WHL) held its 7th biennial Health Literacy Summit and a preceding first-time-ever Medication Label Summit on April 3rd – 5th. The topics were timely and engaging – exploring unconscious bias in health care, discussing the voice of the patient, using plain language in health care, and building health literacy in organizations -- to name just a few. As one attendee commented, “I learned a lot, met many new people working in the field of health literacy, and feel loaded with information to help improve my program!” Another attendee mentioned that the conference brought her to tears in the beginning and left her in tears of laughter at the end.

Keynote speaker Anne Fadiman, author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, set the tone for the event. Her humble storytelling resonated with those in attendance -- how even with the best of intentions we can fail to successfully communicate health care issues. Patients understanding their healthcare providers and healthcare providers understanding their patients are “what the two-way street of health literacy is all about.” She illustrated how the cultural perceptions of immigrants and refugees can impact how they view and understand their health.

The Summit had record attendance with over 400 people attending the Health Literacy Summit and the Medication Label Summit from 29 states and even one other country (New Zealand). If you missed the Summit, you can soon view most of the plenary sessions and many breakout sessions on the WHL website. Many thanks to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for recording them.



“Our healthcare system provides challenges to **all** of us”

Anne Fadiman,  
keynote speaker

### *Thank you to our Sponsors and Host Partners*

#### **MAJOR SPONSORS**

**PLATINUM** · Gundersen Health System · Healthy Dane

**GOLD** · COABE · MetaStar · Marshfield Clinic/ Security Health Plan · WHA Foundation

**SILVER** · Humana · McGraw Hill Education · Epic · WPS Health Solutions

**ADDITIONAL GOLD** for Medication Label Summit (April 3) · Bristol-Myers Squibb · Lilly · Merck

**HOST PARTNERS** · MetaStar · Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin · ProLiteracy · The Joint Commission · University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine and Community Health · Wisconsin Association of Health Plans · Wisconsin Healthcare Public Relations and Marketing Society · Wisconsin Hospital Association · Wisconsin Medical Society · Wisconsin Nurses Association

Funding for this conference was made possible [in part] by grant number 1R13HS025303-01 from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

**For a complete sponsor list, see**  
**[WisconsinHealthLiteracy.org](http://WisconsinHealthLiteracy.org)**.

# A Tale of Two Sisters:

## How to Spread Volunteerism



Judy Sytsma (on the right) and June Brown

The path to volunteerism isn't a solitary one. The act of volunteering can inspire others. Before you know it, the donation of your time and energy has grown exponentially as others take up the banner and help in their communities. Judy Sytsma and June Brown, two sisters, are such examples.

Judy worked as a nurse with Janet Glime, director of Marinette and Oconto Counties Literacy Council (MOCLC), in Coleman, Wisconsin. When Janet approached her about joining the board, Judy's respect for her caused her to immediately say yes. June, her sister, retired two years ago and was concerned about staying busy. Judy was very passionate about her board and the more June heard about it the more she said "Wow, this sounds very rewarding and would be interesting to do!" She then got in touch with Portage County Literacy Council in Stevens Point and is currently tutoring a Hmong woman where every success - big and small - is something to get excited about.

The student success stories really drive home the impact of volunteerism. At MOCLC's annual recognition dinner, students share their stories. "We're just a small community," Judy said, "but we've had a student that started a seamstress business after she finished her training and she is now a member of the board." Another woman came to the council because she wanted to be able to read a book to her grandchild and accomplished that goal. "Just hearing those success stories, why wouldn't you be involved? It's so worthwhile," Judy said.

June is currently encouraging other friends to tutor in their communities – even at the local grade school. June said about her decision to tutor, "I needed to do something productive not only for myself but to help someone else. It doesn't get much better than that."

Judy and June shows how volunteerism at literacy agencies spreads across communities through families and friends.

**Look for our Literacy Can't Wait tutor recruitment campaign in the spring of 2018.**

*A special thank you to last year's sponsors:*

Major Sponsors:



Additional Sponsors:



## Teach the Parent and Reach the Child

*A mother's education level is one of the strongest predictors of a child's success in school.*

Adult literacy challenges are often cyclical. Many adults find the courage to walk into literacy agencies once they have children because they want to be able to help their children do well in school. To end the cycle of low literacy, family literacy programs focus on both the adult and child learner needs and how they can grow together as a family.

Literacy Green Bay's program, Children First Family Literacy GED Program, works in

partnership with the YWCA and Northern Wisconsin Technical College. They offer classes for adults and children morning or evening three times a week. For Alma Vera, a student there, knowing that her children were well taken care of while she prepared and studied for her GED helped her to obtain her GED in November 2016. This step puts her closer to her long-time goal of becoming the first college graduate in her family.

*continued on next page*

*continued from previous page*

She entered the program at Literacy Green Bay to show her children that education was important and that “anything is possible as long as you put your mind to it.”

Literacy Chippewa Valley in Eau Claire works in coordination with the Eau Claire School district to teach English Language Learner parents. The program takes place in the school from 4-5 two nights a week - about the time parents pick their children up. The comfortable environment and convenient time bring great results. The word is spreading to the larger community. One parent brought her sister, her mother, and even a family friend to participate in the program.

Family literacy programs were first developed to integrate early childhood education, adult basic education, parent classes, and combined parent-child learning sessions. Although funding has significantly decreased due to cuts in the Even Start program, family literacy programs across the state



Alma Vera from Literacy Green Bay with her four children

continue to provide an important service. These adult learners want what every parent does, a better future for their children, and that better future comes from increasing their own literacy skills.

---

## Growing Workforce Development Board Partnerships across Wisconsin

While Wisconsin Literacy member agencies assist people with low literacy and low English language skills throughout the state, Workforce Development Boards promote career pathways to improve the skills of Wisconsin’s workforce and to help move dislocated workers and unemployment compensation recipients back to productive employment. Connecting adult learners with regional workforce development boards is a priority for Wisconsin literacy.



Danica Nilsestuen at the South Central/Southwest Regional Meeting in March

As James M. Golembeski, Executive Director of the Bay Area Workforce Development Board, states, “English proficiency is key to an individual’s access to jobs in higher paying careers. The increased ability of immigrants, refugees, and new Americans to engage with others in Northeast Wisconsin will add to the cultural diversity of our community that is so important in a global economy and connected world.”

During the South Central/Southwest regional meeting in March, members learned about ways to connect and collaborate with the local workforce development boards. As Danica Nilsestuen, South Central Workforce Development Board representative, stated, “There is a lot of opportunity for organizations to start enhancing their partnerships moving forward and combining our efforts so that we can better serve people holistically. If we start serving similar people in different ways, we will see a better product in the end.”

Through the literacy agency’s work and their connections to these workforce development pathways, people at all literacy levels can achieve their workforce goals.





211 S. Paterson Street  
Suite 260  
Madison, WI 53703  
(608) 257-1655

[info@wisconsinliteracy.org](mailto:info@wisconsinliteracy.org)  
[www.WisconsinLiteracy.org](http://www.WisconsinLiteracy.org)  
[www.WisconsinHealthLiteracy.org](http://www.WisconsinHealthLiteracy.org)



Irma Cristina Aguayo Palafox (featured with her son Abraham) succeeded thanks to Literacy Green Bay's family literacy program.