

OUR MISSION: is to provide an array of literacy services that allows Racine County residents to attain their full potential and to be engaged citizens.

OUR VISION: is that every person in Racine County has the literacy skills and confidence to live the life the dream.

Lifting Literacy

Racine Literacy takes a whole family approach

It's Saturday morning and the doors to the Racine Public Library open to a cluster of parents, children and volunteers who head for a day of family-building and learning. In its inaugural year, RLC's Family Literacy program endeavors to increase family strength and opportunities for Racine-area parents and their children. Aside from the Saturday morning program in Racine, the program also stretches to Burlington on Tuesday evenings. There is room for more families in each location, and RLC expects to work with families at the Robert Quintanilla Community Policing House later this year.



Tutors and families get to know each other in the first session of Racine Literacy Council's Family Literacy program. Here, Tutor Brooke Kovara (front left) chats with Elisa, Victor and Tania Mejia (left to right).

On this day, Family Literacy Coordinator Karen Tillis distributes an activity in three languages to the families gathered. Among those in the program are Spanish, Ukrainian and English learners. In these first few weeks, families will discover more about themselves, their likes, their values, their dreams. Then, they separate – parents from children – for individual learning.

Parents participate in parent presentations and discussion topics that help them develop more understanding about such things as parenting, child development and the resources available to make life more fulfilling. Afterward, they work on individual goals with their tutors. Melissa, a parent, aspires to pass the exam to become a registered nurse. Her tutor, Cynthia Tovar, is a nurse helping her to reach her goals. Other parents, some of them resettling from war, seek to learn English so they may secure better jobs and make a new life here. Tutors work with them to acquire those skills.

Meanwhile, children participate in group activities to grow their academic skills, then work with individual tutors on schoolwork, reading and math.

Families who wish to participate in this free program should contact the Racine Literacy Council to apply. All members of the family must participate. Many more tutors are needed. The goal is to match each member of the family with a personal tutor. To volunteer, contact the Council.

Tutor Gail Armstrong (center) gets to know Hillary (left), Ivette and Gisela Ruiz, while Coordinator Karen Tillis facilitates discussion.

Family Literacy Coordinator - Karen Tillis is a fierce advocate for education, community and equity, and is excited to bring these values to her role as RLC's Family Literacy Program Coordinator. Karen's passion for reading began as a preschooler obsessed with LeVar Burton's Reading Rainbow, but it was further fueled by the desire to help others achieve their full potential. She received her bachelor's degree in Family Studies followed by a post-baccalaureate degree in education. She taught 4K, 5th grade, and was a school secretary. At RLC, Karen works closely with parents, children, tutors and partners in the Family Literacy program.

A yearning for time with friends becomes a unique way to give

Over the summer, an odd email landed in the in-box at RLC. It asked if we were interested in having a group of friends raise money for the organization. Nonprofits are always raising money for survival, but in this age of scams, the initial inquiry was almost sent to the trash. But after scrutinizing the sender and discovering it was a real person in Racine, we decided to answer it.

We are so glad we did!

John Powilaites explained that he and his friends, Charles McDonald, Lisa Thielke and Brenda Dowhower, were dreaming up ways to gather their friends – old and new – over the Thanksgiving holiday. That led to another thought – could they gather to have fun while raising funds for a nonprofit? Friendsgiving was created.



This year, the foursome chose to benefit RLC with Feed Your Noodle FUNdraiser, 6-10 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 18 at Uncorkt, 240 Main St. The evening will include a pasta dinner, wine tasting, 50/50 raffle and silent auction. Tickets are \$25 and are available at Racine Literacy Council, 734 Lake Ave., and Uncorkt.

We are definitely thankful this season to the group for their generosity. Having served on the boards of several nonprofits, they said they knew how much time and attention it takes to raise money and that's why they decided to merge the gathering and giving.

A legacy continues as RLC nears 60 years

The compassion of a single Racinian blossomed into a mission that has taught thousands. When the late Margaret McIntosh encountered Missionary Frank Laubach who inspired her with the phrase, "Each one, teach one," she began tutoring immigrants in her home. Soon, she had other members of the former Church Women United join in the effort, and together they founded Racine Literacy Council in 1965.

By 1998, this organization was seeking a permanent home. With a tremendous groundswell of public support, the Council launched a capital campaign to buy its current building at 734 Lake Ave.



That was 25 years ago, and while the building is sound and provides a perfect space for tutor-student and small class teaching and learning, its age is beginning to show. The flat roof needs to be replaced, which is an expensive endeavor. As RLC looks to celebrate its 60th birthday in two years, we are hoping to raise enough money to keep the building in good condition to house students for years to come.

Please consider making a contribution toward our Capital Fund to cover these repairs. Simply note that this is where you would like your donation to be used.

If you have been involved in RLC during the last six decades, also consider joining our Birthday Celebration Committee. Contact Laura Sumner Coon for more information about the planning committee at (262) 977-2871. We will start meeting in the new year. And, keep your eyes peeled for Birthday events in the near future!

2022-2023 Year in Review

Racine Literacy Council's fiscal and program year begins July 1. We would like to take a moment to reflect on what we experienced, celebrated, and learned in 2022-23. With the help of more than 50 dedicated and passionate tutors, RLC was able to teach 194 adult students, the majority were English Language Learners. RLC also launched a new Adult Basic Education program led by a team of retired teachers. During the summer, we took some field trips and ventured to learn beyond the books. Here are some snapshots of the year in review.



August – RLC creates a new Adult Basic Education program that assists students hoping to brush up academic skills or work toward a high school diploma.



September – English Language Learners on the west end of Racine County gather at the Burlington Public Library on Tuesdays.



October – Students and tutors share culture and family during a remembering service on El Dia de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead).



January – With community partners, RLC hosts Avoid the Chills Winter Health Fair.



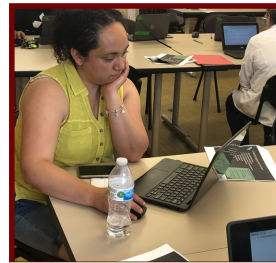
March – More than 200 people gather for the first Scrabble for Literacy event to raise more than \$15,000 for RLC.



April – After an eight-week course taught by volunteers Connie Syslack and Mike Kania, students are prepared to take the U.S. Citizenship test.



May – Job placement agencies and tutors gather to assist students and friends with resumes & job searches at a spring job fair.



June – A five-week summer basic computer class makes technology more accessible for students.



June – Learning sustainability through gardening is another form of literacy. RLC made community garden plots available and furnished plants for students.



July – A growing number of Ukrainians resettling in their new home in Racine. They come to RLC to learn English and get assistance in making their new lives here.

Meet our Staff



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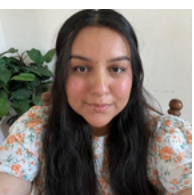
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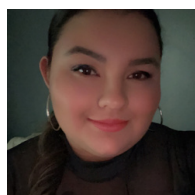
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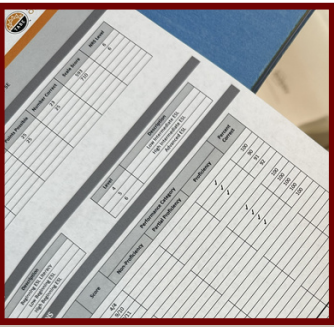
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Driver's Education Instructor

Our Fall experience – the start of a New Year

This year brings new endeavors to RLC, and the first three months have been busy. By the end of September, RLC was serving 118 students with 60 volunteers and 30 more students eagerly on the waiting list. Our Fall session ends at the beginning of December, but we will be hosting training sessions to develop more tutors. We also will be focused on growing our Family Literacy Program in Burlington and Waterford. Here's what the first quarter of our program year has brought to us.



August - In order to know where to place students in our program curricula and in order to gauge their progress, RLC uses a standardized test, called TABE test. August is a time to test students.



September - RLC engaged experts from CESA #1 Cooperative Educational Service Agency- formed for to teach about language acquisition and the Science of Reading



September - We started the Fall Session with a festive ceremony in the parking lot, where we welcomed tutors, students and board members.



September - Every Saturday, approx. 30 parents and their children gather at the Racine Public Library for RLC's Family Literacy program.



October - Halloween offered our team an opportunity to meet with more students and parents during Trunk or Treat.



October - RLC's Family Literacy team attended a three-day conference sponsored by the National Center for Family Learning.



November - Our guests tested their trivia wisdom earlier this month at Supper with Smarties Trivia Night.



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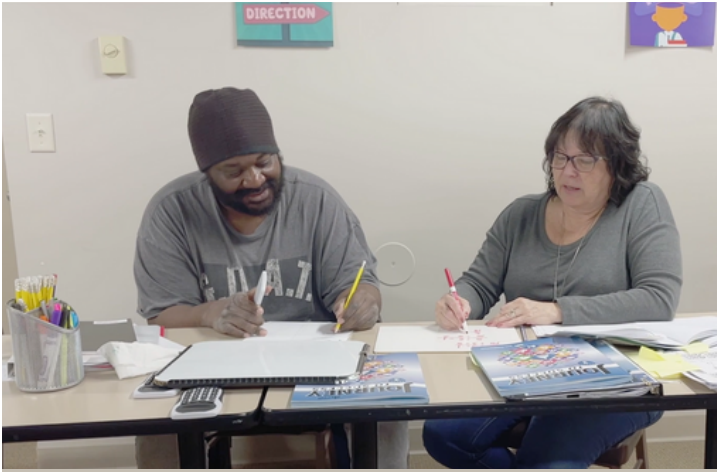
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A little bit of math, and a new opportunity

Marco has big hopes and dreams, and at the top is his determination to become a welder. He is on the path after finding success at Racine Literacy Council.



Marco, an adult basic education student, works with Tutor Polly Jahnke to brush up his math skills. He successfully mastered math to enroll in the welding class of his hopes.

In January, Marco sought help at RLC. He heard about our Adult Basic Education classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. A high school graduate, Marco explained that he needed some help strengthening his math skills so that he could enter Gateway Technical College's welding courses.

Marco braved the Wisconsin winter and a frigid bus ride two times a week to attend classes with RLC's team of volunteers. He worked most closely with volunteer tutor Polly Jahnke, who coached Marco through the math that gave him trouble.

Along the way, he picked up other skills. He practiced reading and writing with his fellow students and even attended a summer basic computer skills class to stretch his abilities.

In August, he returned to RLC with good news and a broad smile. He passed the Accuplacer test needed to enroll in the welding program.

Nearly 30 adults are enrolled in RLC's Adult Basic Education classes this fall, including several English Language Learners who have acquired enough English proficiency to allow them to pursue their education and work toward a high school equivalency diploma. We are excited to support all of their hopes and dreams.

Discover how rewarding tutoring can be!

Neighbor teaching neighbor. That's really what the Racine Literacy Council is all about. We recruit, screen and train people who wish to become tutors. We listen to their skills and interests, as well as their time availability, and then we match them with a student or a class. There are so many options where RLC needs assistance. In return, our tutors find new friendships. They develop a deeper understanding of different cultures and economic hardship. Learning here is mutual.

We invite you to become a tutor in our Spring Session, starting the week of January 16th. We are seeking tutors for adults in our English Language Learning and Adult Basic Education programs. We're also looking for tutors in Family Literacy for either parents or children.

Tutor training will be 6 p.m., December 13 and at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. January 4 at the Racine Literacy Council, 734 Lake Ave. We are also looking for tutors in Waterford and Burlington. If you are interested, please contact Laura Sumner Coon and we will arrange a training for you.

Our Spring Session Starts January 16th, 2024
Citizenship Classes start February 13rd, 2024
Register Now!



Cultivating Understanding:

RLC makes a commitment to teaching everyone with strategic partnerships

Many learners seek the help of Racine Literacy Council, and among them are people with varying intellectual abilities.

As one participant lamented when she enrolled at RLC, “I am so happy to have this. There is not much for me to do, and I am tempted to sleep all day.” Since early summer, this student has filled her days with computer class, reading, writing and math. Her passion for learning is contagious.

She is not alone. About a half-dozen adult students with varying intellectual abilities and challenges have been attending various RLC classes. Some hope to find a job and some want to read and write to have a more fulfilling life.

Across town, Lakeside Curative Services, another nonprofit, provides training and job coaching for their participants who also wish to find jobs. Executive Director Alison Hoffman says some LCS clients also have a desire to read and write.

Last month, Racine Literacy Council and Lakeside Curative Services teamed up to better serve this community of learners. A gifted special education teacher, Christine Espinoza, makes this partnership possible. Christine, a retired teacher, volunteers once a week to lead a two-hour class, Cultivating Understanding. She and a team of two volunteer tutors and an LSC staff member have been working with students to set academic and life goals. They meet weekly with students to build their skills to reach those goals.

With this pilot program, RLC can gauge how to better serve the community of learners who have some obstacles to overcome but who also have much untapped potential to discover.



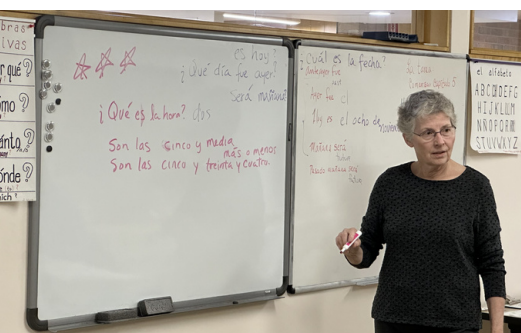
The new Cultivating Understanding team: (from left to right) Shannon May (Lakeside Curative Services staff), Ann Zogg, Christine Espinoza and Dawn Anich (RLC volunteers), works with a blended class of learners on Wednesday mornings.

Spanish classes at RLC

According to the 2020 US Census, roughly 10 percent of the Racine County population speaks a language other than English at home. The majority of those households speak Spanish

If literacy encompasses the skills it takes to navigate the modern world, then it is also incumbent upon many of us to learn to communicate with our coworkers, employees, neighbors and friends

In that spirit, Racine Literacy Council has a Spanish class, taught by volunteer instructor Janet Ware. The first class began in the summer and continued to strengthen its skill throughout the fall session.



“I have always enjoyed teaching but there is something magical about teaching Spanish to adult students who love languages. And that is what I have found here at the Racine Literacy Council. There is a real eagerness to learn and such a lively spirit throughout the hour and a half of our class time. I am grateful to RLC for providing the opportunity to share the Spanish language. It has been a delight!”
Volunteer Instructor Janet Ware

In an exchange of English mastery and cultural awareness, magic happens between RLC tutors and students

Tuesdays for Debbie Lancour have become a ritual. As a newly retired person looking to make a difference, Debbie ventured to Racine Literacy Council to become a volunteer tutor. It's a role she had not pursued before. She never taught. She carried some memories of her high school Spanish class. But she made the decision that volunteering was important in her life and that she would give it a try.



Tutor Debbie Lancour (standing) instructs English Learners at the Burlington Public Library on Tuesday afternoons.

She traveled to Burlington Public Library to observe a large class of English Language Learners who were focused on another RLC tutor, Laura Freeburn. Debbie thought she would be comfortable with teaching a new student one-on-one.

Now, Debbie heads a class of a half-dozen advanced English speakers with co-tutor Peggy Dosemagen. She confesses, "I just love this group!" Every week, her students reveal what they want to know more about, and Debbie revels in finding real-life scenarios for them to practice their English and heighten their vocabulary.

One of the students, Selene, says: "I am happy doing this class and learning new things like directions, making an appointment with doctors. The meeting time is good because we can do it after work."

Debbie says her students are so eager to learn and work so hard to increase their understanding. And Debbie's knowledge has expanded, too. She works to learn more Spanish to foster deeper communication and has discovered more about the cultural customs and traditions of her students.

Hers is a typical story of people who seek to tutor at RLC. People in all stages of life come to put their knowledge to work for others.

This Fall, there are 60 adult students in the English Language Learning program in Racine and Burlington. Another 30 students await tutors. They come from all over the world. Some have been Racine-area residents for years and now can devote some time to learning. Others are refugees of war and danger who come from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Cuba, Honduras and Guatemala, among other places.

RLC is always seeking new tutors. Discover the magic that can happen in this rich human exchange of language and friendship. Contact Laura Sumner Coon for more information.



Tutors are honored at RLC's Lifting Literacy celebration to kick off the Fall 2023 Session.

Upcoming Events

Know Your American Government

Literacy includes any skill a person needs to live a full life in their community. That includes knowing your rights under the U.S. Constitution and how government is organized to ensure those rights.

In January, Racine Literacy Council is hosting a three-session educational seminar about American government. The sessions will walk through the US Constitution and the three branches of government, as well focus on the different levels of government.

The sessions are free and open to the public. Instructors Connie Syslack and Michael Kania, retired history teachers, offer this class for those who are still learning about U.S. government and those who need a refresher civics course. The sessions are 6-7:30 p.m., January 16, 23 and 30.

To attend, RSVP to RLC at (262) 632-9495.



Ready for fun ... And Scrabble?



Racine Literacy Council

Scrabble for Literacy

March 9th, 2024
5:00 pm-10 pm

Roma Lodge Racine
7130 Spring St
Racine



It's back! The Racine Literacy Council's Scrabble for Literacy night will be at 5 p.m., Saturday, March 9 at Roma Lodge. The event is free and is an opportunity for us to raise new tutors and funds for our programs. Scrabble for Literacy includes dinner, a silent auction, a 50/50 raffle, entertainment and a mini Scrabble contest at your table.

If you would like to be a Table Host, please let us know! We are looking to top last year's event and fill Roma Lodge with 300 participants.

Giving Tuesday November 28th, 2023

Join the RLC mission.
Make your donation
Tuesday online.



We are grateful for our partners

