

Student Spotlight: Dani

My name is Destiny; most people know me as Dani, a nickname I've lived with longer than I remember. I was adopted at a young age and soon after, relocated to Indiana. I have six brothers and four sisters, but only remain close to my little sisters. I want to teach them responsibility and hard work as young women in a difficult world. Growing up, my adopted parents did what they could to make sure I had a good life and knew where I came from, and this resulted in me growing up half in Indiana and half with my mother in New York. My dad was one of my closest friends; he passed away suddenly in the summer of 2018 from natural causes and left my family a mess. I was pregnant with my daughter during that time, and she was the brightest light we needed. In November of 2018, my Elliana Rose was born. After my daughter was born, I worked two jobs, waitressing most nights and working as a residential assistant during the day. After practically missing the first year of my daughter's life, I knew I wanted and would do so much more for us.

After moving to Fort Wayne we had to deal with a new house, new routine, and a pandemic all at once. We made some friends and moved again. Soon it became harder and harder to find work and find work that paid. Most of those jobs required a form of a diploma and some college. I researched many places before being referred to The Literacy Alliance by a friend at work. My experience with school has always been negative due to learning difficulties, bullying, harassment from teachers, and constant moving. I gave up on myself early and assumed what I thought was the "real world" would be much more fun and easier. My friend explained that the program at The Literacy Alliance was tailored to our own pace, with teachers and staff always ready to help and a class of people who all wanted to see each other succeed. After putting it off for a little over a year, my fiancé encouraged me again to apply, and in February, I did! By attending The Literacy Alliance, I've drastically improved my knowledge and gained skills I can use for future career opportunities.

My experience at The Literacy Alliance has been incredibly uplifting. From the first day, I was met with encouragement in my classroom. For the most part, the class is independent, which allows us to focus on the areas in which we find ourselves struggling. If we need extra practice, we can ask for and receive extra work we can



Dani and daughter

use to study outside of class. If someone in the class has a harder time, we have our teacher and tutors in the room as well. Alongside them, our career coordinator is always available to help us with things we need to prep to further ourselves after the high school equivalency exam. The environment is always very positive, and I think it helps all of us as students stay motivated and want to continue to progress and see each other progress.

After passing my HSE exam, I plan to start college. This will help me make career decisions and open opportunities that I now know are available. I haven't decided my major, however, I am interested in multiple

things such as healthcare, design, and business. Ideally, my major will incorporate all the things I find important and allow me to find or create a job based on that.

I'm confident in my future, and that's something some people don't get to feel. I'm grateful for the people who pushed me, encouraged me, and stuck by my side while I got there. I'm thankful to The Literacy Alliance for giving me the chance to better myself and my life. My advice, whatever you're holding yourself back from, just go for it: the HSE exam, the career, the life, anything. Just try! Push away self-doubt and fear, and know that all great things take time, and we're all on our way.

Dani achieved her first goal and passed the HSE exam in late March 2022. We can't wait to see what she will accomplish next!



Your gifts are helping more of our neighbors like Dani. You can read more stories on our blog.

literacyalliance.org/blog

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Mission

The Literacy Alliance strives to end illiteracy by teaching students through learning centers, literacy programs and tutoring services that empower individuals to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

Coming July 2022!

SILENT SKY

by Lauren Gunderson

A Joint Production of
Arena Dinner Theatre and The Literacy Alliance

The true story of 19th-century astronomer Henrietta Leavitt explores a woman's place in society during a time of immense scientific discoveries, when women's ideas were dismissed until men claimed credit for them.



Volunteer Spotlight: Linda

Linda joined the Project READS team in 2017 after retiring from teaching. She still wanted to work with children, so it was a good fit. With the challenges faced in the past year, students have fallen behind on their reading skills. Linda believes that Project READS gives those students that extra boost and that being involved in the program is rewarding for both the students and volunteer tutors.

"Allow students to build confidence, enjoy the time together, talk to other tutors for tips, and make it fun!"

This year, Linda joined the incredible team at Haley Elementary as a site coordinator, assisting the students and volunteer tutors. Linda enjoys seeing students become more relaxed and willing to try new things as they begin to delight in reading. She notes that students developing confidence and thriving through the relationships built in that hour a week is rewarding to witness.

Interested in joining Project READS as a volunteer? Linda advises, "Allow students to build confidence, enjoy the time together, talk to other tutors for tips, and make it fun!"

Do you have time to invest in your community? The Literacy Alliance has volunteer opportunities in Allen, Adams, and Wells counties.

Visit literacyalliance.org/volunteer or give us a call at (260) 426-7323.

Advancing Literacy

THE DIFFERENCE YOU ARE MAKING FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

SPRING 2022



TLA GRADUATE
DANI

Team Training at Bridge of Grace

During February, TLA led a training course at Bridge of Grace Compassionate Ministries Center (BoG). TLA provided free Certified Business Professional instruction at BoG for two hours per day over two weeks, and BoG provided financial incentives for its employees to participate.

The course was a new approach for TLA to help adults succeed through employability skills instruction. Using its International Business Training Association

credentialing, TLA brought training to incumbent employees at their place of business. "We value this partnership with BoG," said COO Brian Schlichtenmyer. "Helping their staff grow in their company is very rewarding."



Back row: Erickson Fisher, Antoine Scott, Gentel McGhee, Patrick Williams, Dan DeArmond
Front row: Francine Liebhauser, Stacie Harvey, Prentis Moore, Javier Mondragon

Instructor Francine Liebhauser noted that the Certified Business Professional courses provided BoG employees an opportunity to earn internationally recognized certifications in Business Etiquette and Business Leadership, enhancing their resumes while learning valuable employability skills. One Bridge of Grace employee remarked, "The trainings allowed for team building and more intentional conversations about how we present ourselves and how we managed things. We all benefited from the collaborative in-house training from a skilled instructor."

In the end, seven participants took the Business Etiquette and Business Leadership certification exams, and 86% passed at least one exam.

We're All in This Together!

The first quarter of 2022 has been a whirlwind for TLA staff, volunteers, and board as we continue to make sure that our students reach their educational goals.

To meet the growing need in our community, we've added a new English Language Learners teacher, Anne Gaunt, who is teaching ELL classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. She's also teaching a beginner-level ELL class on Friday evenings.



Anne Gaunt

Our administrative staff is in transition as COO Brian Schlichtenmyer prepares to retire in 2023. Luckily for us, we are using the interim time to train Francine Liebhauser, who has served as an HSE teacher since 2018, in all things operational. Francine finished her MBA in 2021 and we look forward to having her in the office as our associate operations manager.

We are pleased to again partner with Arena Dinner Theatre this summer to produce the play "Silent Sky" July 7-16, 2022. This play about women's empowerment through education will be presented in person at their

facility as a joint fundraiser. Watch your inbox and mailbox for details in the coming weeks!

The TLA board of directors has been hard at work creating a new strategic framework that will guide the agency through the next several years. This plan's priorities include increasing participation in our core adult education programs, considering early literacy and community resource programs that meet defined criteria, and increasing individual and corporate support in order to diversify our revenue and funding streams.

As people feel more comfortable returning to public spaces, I invite you to contact me if you are interested in a tour of our office and classrooms. I love to showcase our students, staff and facilities. It's always great to be in class when we have a pop-up graduation. Guests are always welcome to be a part of the celebration!

Drew Dunlavy has been a long-term supporter of The Literacy Alliance in many ways. As a volunteer, a board member and now the chair of the resource development committee, Drew is the epitome of putting belief into action. As a subscription giver (also known as Perfect Attendance at TLA!), Drew knows that his regular giving helps sustain TLA every month of the year. Over

Student Spotlight Update: Jhenna

You may remember TLA graduate Jhenna from a Student Spotlight in December 2020. After earning her high school equivalency (HSE) diploma with The Literacy Alliance,



Jhenna quickly started on her next lifelong goal by enrolling in a culinary arts program. In January 2021, Jhenna started on that journey at Ivy Tech in Fort Wayne. On Friday, October 14, 2021, Ivy Tech announced the student winners of the 24th annual European Competition. Jhenna was named one of eight students who will travel to Italy and France on a culinary arts study trip this spring! Jhenna is getting ready to leave for her trip in May.



Save the Date

Friday, September 30, 2022

The Funniest Fundraiser in the Fort is coming back for 2022! The Literacy Alliance will again host The Second City at the Embassy Theatre.

If your business would like to sponsor this event, we'd love to have you join the fun. Contact Melinda for details at (260) 423-0001 or melinda.haines@fwliteracyalliance.org.

Project READS is preparing for next year. Let your school know that you would be interested in having Project READS tutors available for your students in 2022-23.



Project READS Summer Program

Information will be coming soon about our summer program in partnership with the Allen County Library. Stay tuned!

the years, Drew has made sure that his networks are aware of TLA's programs and students by inviting staff to speak at the local organizations of which he is a part. Most recently, Drew made TLA aware of a potential grant opportunity at Horizon Bank, where he is a vice president and senior loan officer. This introduction led to a \$2,500 gift for general operating support from the Horizon Cares Charitable Grant Program in January 2022.

What an amazing surprise and honor to learn that The Literacy Alliance was named one of the five Community Foundation of Greater Fort Legacy Partners!

On Thursday, January 27, CFGFW president Brad Little and board chair Heather Schoegler presented TLA with a \$20,000 check at a press conference to celebrate the foundation's 100th anniversary.

This unrestricted gift is above and beyond the CFGFW's annual operating support. We



Michael Jackson, Drew Dunlavy, Laura Weldon, Melinda Haines, and Brian Schlichtenmyer



Brad Little, Melinda Haines, and Heather Schoegler



Josh Dommer, Melinda Haines, Terry McDonald, and Mandy Baker

are so grateful for this extra support of our programs and students!

In March, we had the honor of attending the check presentation ceremony at the New Haven Community Foundation, which has been a terrific supporter of Project READS over the years. The New Haven Community Foundation supports education and youth programs that improve the quality of life in their community. We are grateful for their continued support of Project READS, which serves students at New Haven primary.

We can't do it without your support! Thank you for continuing to provide your time, talent, and treasure to The Literacy Alliance.

Melinda

Melinda Haines | CEO
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Volunteer Spotlight: Danielle



As a long-time peer tutor and a Project READS tutor in high school, Danielle Peterson had always wanted to volunteer with The Literacy Alliance. She is passionate about learning and recognizes the opportunities and

benefits education offers to the individual and society in "every part of life." Her schedule finally allowed her to join the TLA team a year ago when she became an assistant professor of social work at St Francis.

Danielle finds it inspiring to see the willingness of students to learn and feels pride for those who obtain their diploma and meet their personal goals. To her, the New Haven classroom feels like a family filled with compassion and encouragement. As a volunteer, she found that the students are "the ones teaching you." When you don't know something, "That is a teaching moment of humility and demonstrates your willingness to learn as well," she says.

Do you have time to invest in your community? The Literacy Alliance has volunteer opportunities in Allen, Adams, and Wells counties. Visit literacyalliance.org/volunteer or give us a call at (260) 426-7323.

2020-2021 Annual Report Is Now Available to Download

The Literacy Alliance is pleased to share its 2020-21 annual report with all stakeholders. We invite you to learn how we impacted our community in the last fiscal year. Thank you for your support of our programs and students. Visit literacyalliance.org/Annual to download your copy today.

Did You Know?

There is no cost to students for our programs! It is one of the many ways you are helping remove barriers for learners in Allen, Adams, and Wells counties. Please consider investing in the future of our communities by visiting our website, literacyalliance.org/donate, or by using the enclosed return envelope to give the gift of literacy.

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