



2022-2023 Annual Report

Literacy changes lives. Our mission is to empower people and strengthen community through education.

Project Reads
K-3 Reading Program

Project Build
Adult Basic Literacy Program

Project Connect
English Language Learners Program

Project Graduate
High School Completion Program

Project Aim
Corporate Training



Dear Friends,

Reflecting on this remarkable year at The Literacy Alliance fills us with immense excitement! Your unwavering support has empowered our dedicated staff and volunteers to bring impactful programming to 485 individuals in our community.

Throughout this past year, our foremost strategic priority—to bolster enrollments—has been at the heart of our efforts. Project Reads, our beacon for nurturing young readers, has blossomed to encompass 15 sites, addressing the timely need for mentors who offer personalized tutoring to 122 K-3 students grappling with reading challenges. We take pride in embracing Project Reads within our family of literacy programs, fostering academic growth and curbing early school dropout rates.

The fervor for Project Graduate classes has surged, with our six classroom sites across Allen, Adams, and Wells Counties welcoming and guiding 217 students this year. Notably, 56 individuals achieved their high school equivalency, while a staggering 63% showed remarkable academic progress. Witnessing these students move towards better opportunities in jobs, college, and brighter futures is truly heartening.

Project Connect is on an exponential rise, having served 123 students in English language learning classes last year—a 145% surge. Our Project Connect students hail from diverse corners of the world, calling Fort Wayne their new home. Their dedication to improving English skills speaks volumes about their pursuit of better employment and an enhanced quality of life.

However, with increased enrollments comes a financial toll. This year, 82% of our expenses were programming related. To meet the escalating demand, we dipped into reserves. Strategic priority number two, focused on boosting individual and corporate donations, along with fundraising event revenue, has been our ongoing focus. Many of you have admirably rallied alongside us, aligning with our mission to empower people and strengthen our community through education. Your support is deeply appreciated.

With heartfelt gratitude,


Corey Porter
Board Chair


Melinda Haines
Chief Executive Officer



Student Spotlight: Axton

It's always heartwarming to hear about students who have overcome challenges and achieved great success. One such story that comes to mind is about Axton who came into Project Reads reading at a level that was about a year behind his benchmark level. Initially, he was not very interested in participating in the program activities and was hesitant to read with his tutor. However, with the help of his dedicated and caring tutor, he was able to overcome his reluctance and start engaging more with the material.

The tutor took the time to get to know Axton and discovered his interests in taking things apart and learning how they work. With this knowledge, the tutor was able to find books that catered to the student's interests and helped him discover the joy of reading. Axton became more and more engaged over time, and eventually, he was able to not only catch up to his peers but exceed his benchmark reading grade level by 15 levels!

It's truly inspiring to see what can be achieved with a little bit of dedication and personalized attention.



Student Spotlight: Pavisa

My name is Pavisa, I am 36 years old, and I am from Laos. I moved to the US in 2010 to follow my husband, who has been living in Fort Wayne for quite some time.

I enjoy living in here, and one of my favorite memories is the first time I saw the snow. I remember that it was so pretty but so cold! It was so different from what I was used to in Laos.

Before moving to the US, I attended high school in my home country, and I was working on a farm. Since I moved, I have been working at a local factory. When I have some free time, I love spending it with my two kids.

I was taking some English classes before, but a friend suggested joining TLA, because she thought it could be a good fit for me. I followed her advice, and I started taking classes here. I have been attending for about a year, and I enjoy coming to class and seeing my classmates.

My goal is to improve English: I want to be able to understand everything and be understood by everyone. English can be challenging for me since it has more words than my native language, but I don't give up! I am determined and I am willing to work hard to achieve my goal. I also want to get my HSE and go to college. I would love to become a nurse, and my dream is to work with newborns.



Student Spotlight: Lance

Lance's essay won 1st place in IAACE's 2023 student essay contest.

It's never too late to complete your high school diploma and enter higher education. I'm a native of the Hoosier state, raised in California. I was born a month before John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, that November. Growing up, I can't remember when I didn't have a horse. We lived on the Old Rolling Ridge Ranch, twenty-seven acres of rolling hills in the middle of southern California. The very last of the undeveloped land, in a sea of homes, at night, the city lights twinkled like so many stars in the sky from our hillside home.

I lived with my family on the ranch. I had chores to do before and after school. As I grew, so did my duties—each year, another candle. Then came my sixteenth birthday, complete with a cake, candles, and a song. I'm sure there was more, but the only other thing I remember is my father setting me down for “the talk.” No, it wasn't about the “birds and the bees,” which greatly relieved me!

He simply asked, “Do you know how to read, write, add, and subtract?” “Yes,” I replied.

“Can you write a check and balance a checkbook?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied.

“Then you don't have to go to school anymore,” he answered. “Yes, oh, yes!” I replied.

The very next day, my father enrolled me in a new school he affectionately called “the school of hard knocks.” Soon I began working my fingers to the bone, and the ranch pay was...

Visit literacyalliance.org/blog to read the rest of Lance's essay.



Student Spotlight: Javier

My name is Javier; I am 48 years old and from Mexico. I have been living in the US since 1992. Before moving to Fort Wayne, I worked in vineyards in California for eight years. I then moved to Fort Wayne, looking for better opportunities, and I have lived here ever since. I like the city and believe it is a good place to live in.

When I first arrived in the US, I took some English classes, and that's how I started learning the language. Years later, I enrolled at TLA and am taking more classes to improve my English.

I learned about The Literacy Alliance (TLA) through my current job. The factory I work for collaborates with TLA to offer on-the-job English classes (Project Aim). I started attending, and I enjoyed them. I had been thinking about going back to study for a while, and it was a sign for me to take the opportunity and go back to school. Once the classes at the factory ended, I signed up at TLA and have been enrolled in Project Connect since then. I enjoy my classes. They are interesting, and I like the community at TLA.

My goal is to keep improving my English skills, attend more classes, and eventually enroll in the high school equivalency program to obtain my diploma. I want to learn as much as possible and am excited to have more opportunities.

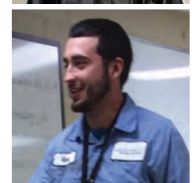
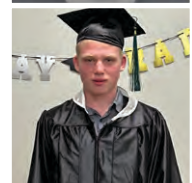
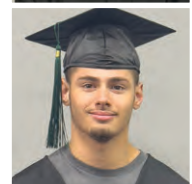
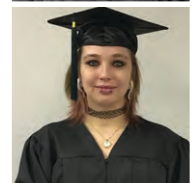
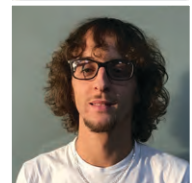


2022-2023 Graduates

We are extremely proud of our graduates and can't wait to see what they will accomplish next!

Daniel Alvarez
Ashley Ayala
Nasjee Bennett
Stephanie Benson
Ember Bliss
Esperanza Cantu
Nicholas Carpenter
Christian Carter
Mayona Cole
Madison Collins
Jemal Cooper
Andrew Dehmiri
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Miriam Rodriguez
Nathaniel Ross
Caleb Rush
Htishee Sai
Brayden Scherer
Trenton Schlatter
Alex Schlatter
Lance Shepherd
(Juan) Luis Silva
Juan "Jose" Silva
Gianni Slayton
Katherine Staggs
Rian Steed
Shania Sutton
Efrain Tecaxco
Ekue (Samuel) Teko
Lindsey Todd
Jai Vaught
Christian Wallace
Adriana Weiland
Saykri Ya
John Yoder





2022-23 Program Outcomes

485

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
SERVED IN 2022-2023

217

PROJECT GRADUATE STUDENTS SERVED

63%

OF PROJECT GRADUATE STUDENTS
MADE OVERALL ACADEMIC GAINS

25%

OF PROJECT GRADUATE STUDENTS
EARNED THEIR HSE DIPLOMA

123

PROJECT CONNECT STUDENTS SERVED

122

PROJECT READS STUDENTS SERVED

94%

OF PROJECT READS STUDENTS IMPROVED
4 OR MORE READING LEVELS

184

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
2022-2023 PROGRAM YEAR

6,355

SERVICE HOURS BY VOLUNTEERS



Volunteer Impact

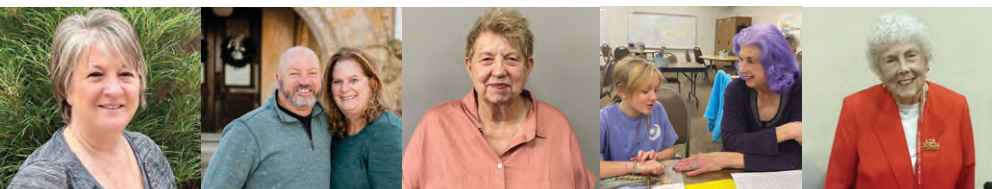
For the 2022-2023 program year, volunteers contributed 6,355 hours to The Literacy Alliance. Project Reads volunteers spent 2,342 hours working with elementary students, resulting in 94% of the students improving by four or more reading levels. Project Graduate volunteers spent 4,013 hours working with adult learners, helping them reach their education goals. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6,355 hours of volunteer time equates to a value of \$202,089*.

The Literacy Alliance volunteers give more than time. They are actively involved and interested in our students' success. They encourage students to reach their goals and celebrate every milestone along the way. Our volunteers view their time as an investment in the community and in themselves by building relationships with others, developing new skill sets, and enriching their minds and bodies.

"I have learned that working one-on-one with a child just an hour a week can make a big difference in their life - as well as mine. I saw my student last year grow and mature in her abilities, and I'm seeing the same progress in my student this year. They, and the other students and tutors, enrich my life and help an 81-year-old woman feel vital and part of a positive project," said Project Reads volunteer Katherine Smith.

The Literacy Alliance volunteers serve numerous roles: office assistance, one-on-one tutoring, classroom tutoring, or board service. In addition, TLA has partnered with area high schools to provide volunteer opportunities for seniors needing service hours for school requirements and colleges for work-study opportunities.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at TLA, please visit literacyalliance.org and click Get Involved.



*According to the State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates on the Indiana US Bureau of Labor Statistics website, an adult tutor's median average hourly rate is \$19.00 an hour. The current estimated national value of each volunteer hour is \$31.80.

Our volunteers support our efforts, staff, and students. There are a lot of ways to volunteer. Whether it's in the classroom or in the office, we can use your skills. We can't do what we do without our volunteers.

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

55
VOLUNTEERS

4,013
SERVICE HOURS

PROJECT READS

129
VOLUNTEERS

2,342
SERVICE HOURS

2022-2023 PROGRAM YEAR ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS

184
TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

6,355
TOTAL SERVICE HOURS



2023 Volunteer Awards

The *Gordon Cole Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award* was awarded to Evert Mol. Evert has been with the program for three years. He volunteers with the adult education program three days a week in the Summit AM class. Evert was nominated due to the generosity of his time and talent. He is greatly gifted with a math mind and willing to work with any student until their brain is full to the brim. He also has an incredible way of connecting with the students. Evert does a great job getting to know the students by sharing tales from his world travels and life experiences with them. Staff and students say that he brightens the atmosphere with his unique sense of humor that brings laughter to the classroom. His unique prepping style challenges the student to reach their goals, not to take no for an answer, and encourages them to go big. Evert is deeply committed to helping the students achieve their goal of getting their diplomas.

The *Toma T. Davis Volunteer of the Year Award* was awarded to Sally Thomas. Sally has been with Project Reads for 10 years as a volunteer tutor. To Sally, being a volunteer is more than tutoring for one hour a week. She researches subjects she thinks her students will be interested in and then brings in related articles, stories, and activities for her students to work on. If Sally's student is repeatedly absent, she will reach out to the parents or caregivers and offers to drop off Project Reads materials to help keep her student up to date and on track. She is always willing to lend a hand whether it is helping set out materials, putting materials away, wiping down tables, or cleaning up the room after the Project Reads sessions are over.

Sally's selfless dedication to helping others, generously offering her time and patience is truly commendable.



2023 Gordon Cole
Outstanding Volunteer

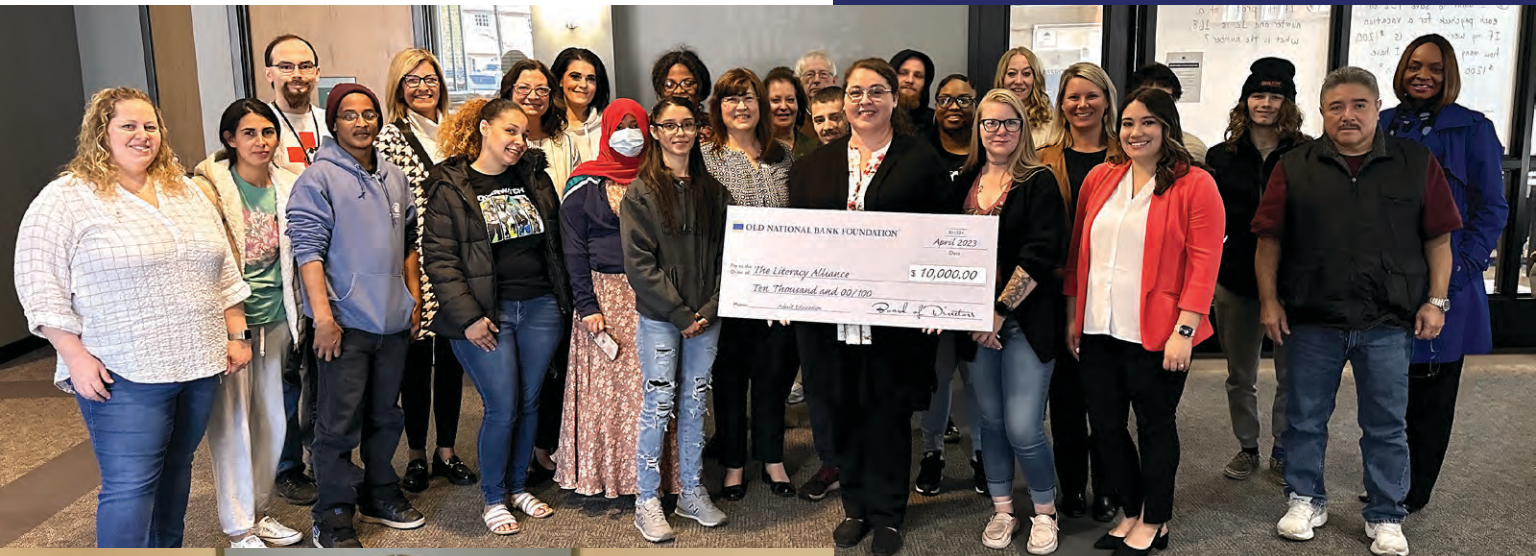
Evert Mol



2022-2023 Toma T. Davis
Volunteer Tutor of the Year Award

Sally Thomas

Community Partners



On April 26, TLA was excited to welcome six representatives of Old National Bank, including TLA board member Kara Densmore, to tour our Summit AM Project Graduate classroom. One of the members of the ONB delegation was Nikki Thomas (holding the check in the picture above), a graduate of TLA and now a relationship banker at Old National Bank. Nikki gave an impromptu pep talk to the current students about her experience at TLA and her journey to ONB to encourage them to keep working hard in order to get their HSE and move ahead in life.

The Literacy Alliance has many community partners who help make our work possible. We love to have them visit our classes and see their investments at work. During the 2022-23 fiscal year, 24 foundations and 43 businesses and organizations provided support to TLA. We were honored to be given \$5,000 in general operating support from the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne on Giving Tuesday after our generous stakeholders rallied to donate more to our endowment during the Giving Tuesday Challenge than others in the Lifelong Learning pillar. And Comcast provided \$50,000 and 50 laptops to support an initiative that embeds a digital navigator in all classrooms.



Fundraising Events

The Literacy Alliance presented two amazing fundraising events in FY2022-23! In September 2022, we brought the funny to raise some money, welcoming Chicago's Second City back to the Embassy Theatre for Laughs for Literacy. On top of raising \$50,000, TLA increased awareness of all programs and gained a handful of volunteers.

In May 2023, The Literacy Alliance and Arena Dinner Theatre again joined forces for a reprisal of "Salt & Pepper," a collaborative effort that was initially presented virtually in 2021. The engaging readers theatre performance was paired with delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts by Out of a Jam and resulted in contributions exceeding \$11,000, which were split evenly between both organizations.



An Evening of Readers Theatre to Benefit
The Literacy Alliance and Arena Dinner Theatre

SALT & PEPPER



arena Dinner Theatre

Literacy Changes Lives, Including Your Own

Volunteer

Our volunteers support our efforts, staff, and students. There are a lot of ways to volunteer. Whether it's in the classroom or in the office, we can use your skills. We can't do what we do without our volunteers.

Donate

We work hard to make sure that every dollar we receive goes as far as possible in our service to our students. Here are a few examples of what your generous donations can do:

\$1,000

A year of classes for an adult student

\$750

New books for Project Reads students

\$500

A laptop computer for the classroom

\$250

Training for one Project Reads volunteer

\$144

Cost of one HSE test

Any amount

Every gift helps end illiteracy.

Platinum
Transparency
2023

Candid.

LEARN MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AND DONATE ONLINE AT
www.literacyalliance.org



Donors

We thank all of our donors for their extraordinary generosity.

The donors listed in this report reflect gifts received during the fiscal year running September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023.

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Trolley Bar
Matt Wire and Cletus Goens
YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne
Sue Zihlerl

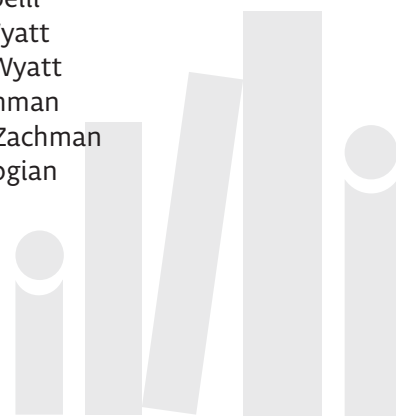
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*Perfect Attendance (monthly donors)



Schlichtenmyer Scholarship

In March 2023, The Literacy Alliance celebrated Brian Schlichtenmyer's 20 years of dedicated service to our students with the creation of the Schlichtenmyer Scholarship.

This scholarship provides TLA graduates with additional resources that make it possible for them to attend Ivy Tech. TLA grads are eligible for a stipend to help them overcome financial barriers related to tuition, books, or living expenses.

The Ivy Tech Foundation provided matching funds and with gifts from generous donors we raised more than \$10,000.

We are thrilled to announce our first three TLA graduates to receive the Schlichtenmyer Scholarship: Lucia Giron, Christina Mitchell, and Kevin Simon II, pictured to the right

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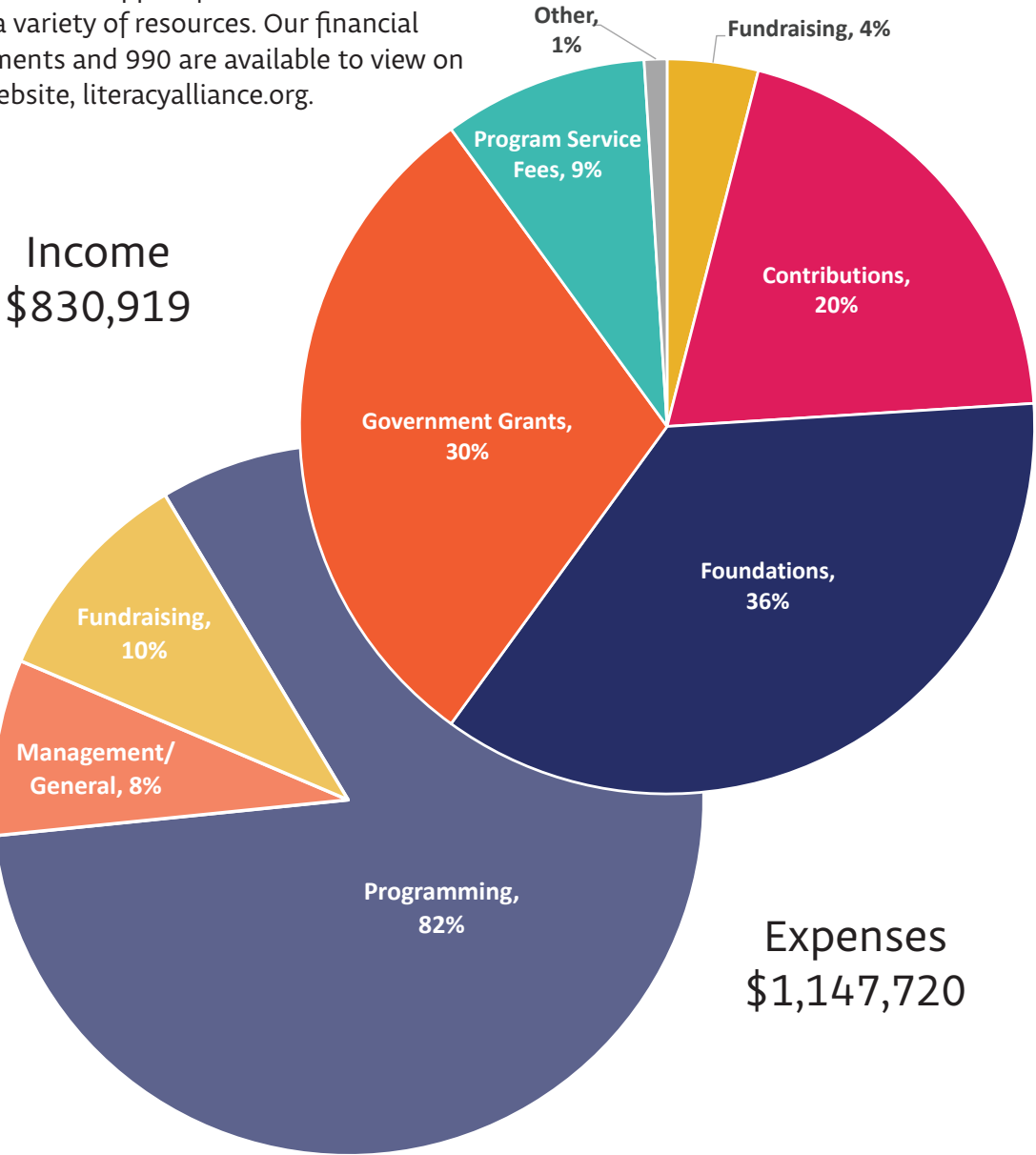


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Fiscal Year 2022-2023

The Literacy Alliance is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Support for our services comes from a variety of resources. Our financial statements and 990 are available to view on our website, literacyalliance.org.



9%

Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne Endowment Growth
The Literacy Alliance has held endowment funds at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne since 2007. Fund balances at the beginning of FY 2022-2023 were \$165,332 and grew to \$180,638 at the end of the fiscal year.



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