

Project Graduate Student Spotlights



Ava

Hi, my name is Ava, and I am nineteen years old. I grew up in Fort Wayne with my mother, father, and older brother. I have six siblings who have taught me most of what I know now. I work part-time at a clothing store as a stylist. I have a dog named Valentine and a Hamster called Steve, and they are very spoiled.

I came to The Literacy Alliance after I dropped out of high school in what would have been my junior year. I was diagnosed with ADHD around the time that COVID hit, and my grades started to decline without contact with my teachers and friends in my life; it worsened as I moved into high school, as the isolation was still at an all-time high. I have gained friends and boosted my communication skills through my time at The Literacy Alliance. I had little knowledge when I came here and struggled to grasp simple concepts that surrounded some subjects for a while. The tutors here took the time that my previous teachers did not. They worked with me and explained in terms I could understand.

“A little advice that seems universal at this point: never ever be afraid to ask for help.”

My experience at The Literacy Alliance will be something I am forever grateful for. It has given me a second chance to improve my skills, whether communication skills, job interview tips, or knowledge of the many subjects taught in school. I have enjoyed the time I have spent here with everyone!

I am so grateful for the people who have helped me here at The Literacy Alliance. The tutors are very knowledgeable, caring, and patient. They have helped me tremendously. A little advice that seems universal at this point: never ever be afraid to ask for help. No one sees you as weak for not knowing something; we all go through life and learn something new! You can absolutely do this! So, that's my story...now go write your own!

Your gifts are helping more of our neighbors like Ava, Tyonna and Aaron. You can read more stories on our blog.

literacyalliance.org/blog



Tyonna

My experience at The Literacy Alliance has been great, honestly. My teacher, Mrs. Amy, has been so patient and sweet. She ensures all her students understand what they are learning, and the same goes for the tutors who take time out of their day to come and help us.

My goal after I get my high school equivalency diploma (HSE/GED) is to get into a community college and eventually become an RN.

I advise anyone reading this not to give up; it may not be easy, but it is worth it in the long run. If no one believes in you, believe in yourself. Being able to say you got your diploma, especially after no one believed in you, will be amazing. Just take your time and ask as many questions as you can and need.



Aaron

My name is Aaron. I am 20 years old, born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and I am an only child who came to The Literacy Alliance to achieve my high school equivalency diploma (HSE/GED). After I completed middle school, my family attempted home schooling because the cost of where I was going to go was simply too much. Home school didn't work out. To add to that, COVID happened. If I'm being completely honest, I don't regret the path I took, but I always knew that having my HSE/GED would help my future.

The Literacy Alliance is the perfect place to go make that happen. The lessons are straight forward, they have a teacher and tutors who will genuinely help you, and you focus on and learn what you absolutely need to know. Without hyperbole, The Literacy Alliance was the absolute best choice to obtain my HSE/GED. I'm forever grateful for my time here, people I met, and learning experiences I have received.

I truly believe anyone who studies at The Literacy Alliance will complete their goals and aspirations. I am thankful I did this. I know you will be, too.



The Literacy Alliance and the ACPL Friends of the Library present: **A Night At The Library**

Saturday, May 4, 2024 @ 6:30 PM
Main Library, Allen County Public Library
900 Library Plaza

MADE POSSIBLE BY



Join us for an evening where literacy, community, and fun converge! This special after-hours event is your passport to explore the hidden corners and curated collections of the library, all in support of vital literacy initiatives and library programs.

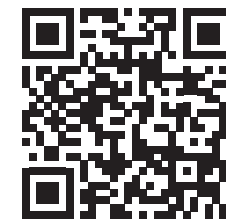
Kickstart Your Adventure

Immerse yourself in a sensory delight with expertly crafted cocktails by Licensed Bar Services and mocktails by Swizzle, complemented by an array of sumptuous grazing boards from The Kitchen & Company. Whether you're vegan, gluten-free, or simply a culinary explorer, we've got you covered.

Explore!

Let your curiosity lead the way in the Maker Lab. Walk through the stillness of the Stacks, the Fine Book Room, and the Genealogy Center on a guided exploration. Explore the Rolland Center, with knowledgeable docents to enlighten and guide your exploration.

Your ticket purchase also includes a one-year Friends of the Library membership.



TICKETS **\$75** per person. includes one drink ticket.

Scan the QR code with your phone or visit literacyalliance.org/night to get your tickets today!

Volunteer Spotlight: Cathy



How long have you been volunteering with The Literacy Alliance (TLA)?

This is my second year volunteering with Project Reads.

Why did you decide to volunteer for Project Reads?

After my retirement, I wanted to volunteer with TLA because I believe in the importance of literacy for all in our society. Literacy provides the foundation for full engagement in our society. I have witnessed the effect of illiteracy in our community and feel that TLA provides a vital role in offering excellent programs to address this issue.

Project Reads is a program that meets my desire to enhance literacy in the community and work one-on-one with children who may be at risk of not achieving grade-level reading proficiency by the end of third grade. There has been a lot of press recently about the number of children who are not able to achieve this standard. I hope to make a difference so that the child with whom I work will move to fourth grade, ready to tackle subjects dependent on adequate reading skills.

What has been the best part of your experience so far?

I love the smiles of accomplishment. Watching a child use techniques to figure out a new word and then saying, "Wait, I think I can do this." Also, it is heartwarming to see a child progress through second and third-grade word lists. It is wonderful to feel the excitement for reading.

What have you learned about yourself and others through volunteering at TLA?

The time spent volunteering has been refreshing. It is actually regenerating to contribute in a positive manner. Volunteering reminds me that there are many warm, empathetic people in our community who are willing to share time and talents with others.

Are you ready to make a difference in our community, your life, and our students? Give Nikki a call at (260) 423-0008, or visit our website for more information on becoming a volunteer at The Literacy Alliance.

SPRING 2024

Advancing Literacy

A Newsletter of The Literacy Alliance



The **iLi**
Literacy Alliance
Literacy Changes Lives.

Mission Statement

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

2024-25

Board of Directors

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HealthVisions Midwest of Fort Wayne

Tim VanHouten
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Melinda Haines, Ex Officio
The Literacy Alliance

Follow us on social media!



A Message from Melinda:

Spring has sprung here at The Literacy Alliance! Our staff is working hard to meet the challenges that come with exponential enrollment growth in our adult programs. We are at record enrollment levels for both Project Graduate and Project Connect and are seeking new resources and creative ways of dealing with the ever-increasing multitude of new students who require our services.

I am excited to announce that we will be offering a Project Graduate classroom in collaboration with the Fort Wayne Urban League in the next program year. We are grateful to our friends at Ambassador Enterprises for providing catalyst funding for a high school equivalency preparation program at this high-need location near Hanna and Creighton. Last year, Ambassador funded our new Project Connect classroom at Amani Family Services, which has been enormously successful. We will keep you updated on our progress!



Fort Wayne Urban League Building

This year we've been honored to receive funding from several local sources, many of which have been long-time supporters of The Literacy Alliance, including Foellinger Foundation, English Bonter Mitchell Foundation, Wilson Foundation, Schneider Foundation, the Rifkin Family Foundation and the AEP Foundation. Our deepest thanks go to these sustaining sources of support.

Thank you to everyone who was able to come out and support our collaboration with Arena Dinner Theatre, *Tuesdays with Morrie!* We welcomed more than 300 attendees for dinner and a fabulous show, raising more than \$5,000 for each organization. Watch for more details soon on our January 2025 event!

Speaking of events, we have a brand new one coming up Saturday, May 4, in collaboration with the Friends of the Allen County Public Library. More information about A Night at the Library can be found elsewhere in this newsletter, or online at www.literacyalliance.org/night. Tickets are \$75 each and include exclusive access to hidden corners of the main library, one drink ticket, fabulous food, and a one-year Friends of the Library membership. Please join us!

We've added several new board members in the past few months. Our complete board is listed to the left, but we are especially grateful to new board members Trudy Adams, Teresa Knoblach, Fred McKissack, State Representative Kyle Miller, Luke Mungovan and Sharon Tubbs. Please join me in welcoming them to The Literacy Alliance board of directors.

Thank you for your continued support!

Melinda Haines
Chief Executive Officer
melinda@literacyalliance.org
(260) 423-0001

Thank You, Homestead!



Lainey Morris and her step father delivered all the supplies!

The Literacy Alliance was contacted by Homestead High School sophomores Yevva Ireland and Azalea Bennett-Orsini to be the beneficiaries of their school's Eliminate Illiteracy supply drive. This is the second year that Homestead has asked TLA to be the beneficiary of its giving event.

In December, the Spartan's Eliminate Illiteracy drive focused on acquiring classroom and office supplies. They collected roughly \$1,200 worth of supplies, including the following:

Plastic Cups	Wipes	Disposable Coffee
Paper Towels	Stamps	Cups
Paper Plates	K-Cup Pods	Kroger Gift Cards (\$5)
Manilla Folders	Mints	Trash Bags (30 gal)
Erasers	Binders	Markers
Spoons	Binder Clips	Plastic Folders
Tissues (Boxes)	Whiteboard Spray	Highlighters
Napkins	Paper Clips	Candy

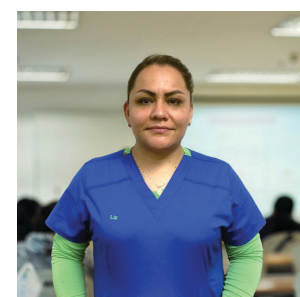
A big thank you to the Homestead Spartans for supporting The Literacy Alliance!

If you are interested in donating to our classroom needs list, visit our website (literacyalliance.org) and click Get Involved for a link to our Amazon Wishlist.

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, or by using the enclosed return envelope to give the gift of literacy.

Student Spotlight: Lizbeth



"Obtaining my HSE diploma is going to open many doors in my future. It is going to help me go to college and find a great job that I will enjoy. I know that anything I put my mind to is possible."

Visit our blog at literacyalliance.org/blog to read more about Lizbeth's journey at The Literacy Alliance.

Volunteer Spotlight: Steve and Sherrill



Do you have a favorite volunteer role/task from your work as a TLA volunteer?

Sherrill: "Learning our students' stories. I felt naive, in a way, because I didn't know that some people were only able to come to our country because of a lottery. Others came to escape persecution. All want a better life."

We have one student who is an Afghani refugee. She told us her story with tears of how she, her mother, and her father were able to leave, but not her brothers. Their family was part of those who evacuated quickly when our US troops left Afghanistan. She explained that she was told, in her country, that she would not amount to anything. She comes from the only country in the world where girls are not allowed to attend school.

I also helped another student study to take her citizenship test. She passed, which enabled her to go to Mecca and return easily to the U.S."

Steve: "Working with students in small groups. I really get to know them better that way. We sit down with one or two in small groups to work on grammar and reading or help them work on becoming the person they want to be here. The fact that they want to learn to speak fluently and if I can help in any way, that is the big thing for us."

What have you learned about yourself and others through volunteering at The Literacy Alliance?

Sherrill: "I have learned that even though I am almost 78, I still have something to contribute. I have come to find how blessed I am that I grew up in this country, and English is my native language because it is hard to learn. We are constantly saying that this grammatical rule sometimes applies if it follows this letter, but if it is this letter, it does not. There are so many exceptions in the English language. We were also blessed to be raised in homes where proper grammar and English were important. We were both encouraged to read. I believe that what you hear, have modeled for you, and observe daily greatly influences your life."

Steve: "I feel so fortunate to have been born and raised here. I feel very blessed when I hear the stories of what some of our students have given up to come here. They work so hard to learn our language and get established in a different culture."

Visit literacyalliance.org/blog to read more about Steve and Sherrill's experience as a TLA volunteer.

Want to help build a better community? Give Nikki a call at (260) 423-0008, or visit our website (literacyalliance.org) for more information on becoming a Literacy Alliance volunteer.

Events



The Literacy Alliance and the ACPL Friends of the Library present:

A Night At The Library

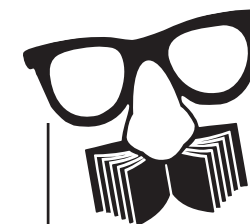
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TICKETS **\$75** per person. Includes one drink ticket.

Visit literacyalliance.org/night to get your tickets today!



LAUGHS FOR LITERACY!

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, September 20, 2024

Staff Promotion

Laura Weldon, development coordinator, has been promoted to associate director of development.



Laura has been with The Literacy Alliance since September 2021. She earned a certificate in fund-raising management from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University in 2022.

Melinda Haines, chief executive officer said, "We're thrilled to see our team evolve and flourish alongside the increasing demand for our services. Laura's elevation to the role of associate director of development truly celebrates her exceptional dedication to The Literacy Alliance's mission of empowering individuals and fostering community growth through education."

TLA Staff

Administrative

Melinda Haines
Chief Executive Officer

Matt Wire
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

Francine Liebhauser
Director of Operations

Laura Weldon
Associate Director of Development

Nikki Minarik
Volunteer and Event Coordinator

Brian Thomas
Administrative Coordinator

Project Reads

Deb Dutton
Program Director

JC York
Site Coordinator

Site Facilitators

Sheri Davis
Karen Sinish
Linda Thorne
Victoria Wilson
Jane Winnerman-Shaw
Janet Zuercher

Project Graduate

Cathie Bledsoe
Digital Navigator and Site Coordinator

Michael Jackson
Outreach Coordinator and Site Coordinator

Megan Knight
Site Coordinator

Melanee Neilson
Career/Life Coach and Site Coordinator

Project Connect

Ignacio Silva
Site Facilitator

Anna Bau
Teacher

Project Aim

Megan Knight
Site Coordinator

David Arnold
Teacher

Anna Bau
Teacher

Jessica Conley
Teacher

Kami Gavilanez
Teacher

Trevor Waldman
Teacher