

Student Spotlights

Isaac

Hi, I'm Isaac. I'm 18 years old. I was born and raised in Fort Wayne. I'm one of three brothers, of which I'm the oldest.

I came to The Literacy Alliance because I felt it was time to finish my high school education. I didn't attend high school for personal reasons, and later started classes online but fell behind. Attending The Literacy Alliance has given me the confidence to further my education and realize just how far I can go.

"Attending The Literacy Alliance has given me the confidence to further my education and realize just how far I can go."

My time here has been very enjoyable. Everyone is so friendly and kind; I've had a great experience overall.

When I obtain my high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, I plan to continue my apprenticeship as an electrician. After that, I'd like to get a job working in the industry. And as an idea for the future, I'd like to be a business owner. Who knows, maybe I'll do real estate. I'm just glad I've had this opportunity.

I've enjoyed my experience with TLA and would recommend it to any new or returning students. If you do your work and give your best effort, everything should be a breeze. I had a good experience, and I wish everyone the same.

Isaac received his HSE diploma in September 2023.



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

literacyalliance.org/blog

Christina

My name is Christina, and I am 32 years old. I came from a family of seven. I have three wonderful children and a great boyfriend. I have worked in retail for three years, and I must admit I love it.

Although it has been a long time, my children are getting older and asking many questions. I decided to make time for myself and accomplish my goals. I had not been in school for at least ten years. So, I decided to look up different programs, and when I did, I found The Literacy Alliance and decided to give the program a shot.

I was amazed at how much I remembered and didn't remember. The teacher, site coordinator, and the tutors are all a blessing. I had no issue addressing my problems when I struggled because I never felt judged.

"I never thought my dreams would come true, but I have learned that anything is possible with hard work and dedication."

When I graduate - I know I will graduate - I will feel overwhelmed with emotions. I have been through a lot but I will not let my past define me. After I receive my high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, I plan on furthering my education to get my real estate license. Then, eventually, I want to get a business degree to start my own real estate business.

Finally, I would like to give a huge shout-out to my family and especially to The Literacy Alliance. All of you never gave up on me, even when I didn't believe in myself. I never thought my dreams would come true, but I have learned that anything is possible with hard work and dedication. So, the next time you see me, I will be standing proud in my cap and gown. The best part about it is showing my kids that it is never too late to follow your dreams. Thank you to everyone at The Literacy Alliance; you have changed my life for the better.

Christina received her HSE diploma in May 2023. She has since enrolled at Ivy Tech and received a Schlichtenmyer Scholarship.



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 TLA through my current job. The factory I work for collaborates with TLA to offer on-the-job English classes. 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

"I learned about TLA through my current job. The factory I work for collaborates with TLA to offer on-the-job English classes. I started attending, and I enjoyed them."

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 GED. I want to learn as much as possible and am excited to have more opportunities.

Project Connect

English Language Learners Program

Volunteer Spotlight: April

April has been working with adults and elementary students for the last year, volunteering at The Literacy Alliance. As a retired educator, she wanted to use her experience to give back. Participating in one-to-one relationships, tailoring lessons, and watching students grow has been a great experience for her.



"You always gain more when you give."

April feels it's important to volunteer and get back to life after the isolation we have faced recently. "You always gain more when you give." Her advice includes working on the relationship with students in the beginning, to gain trust and see students make gains by taking a personal interest in their interests. This has been a key factor in working individually with her adult students.

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.

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.

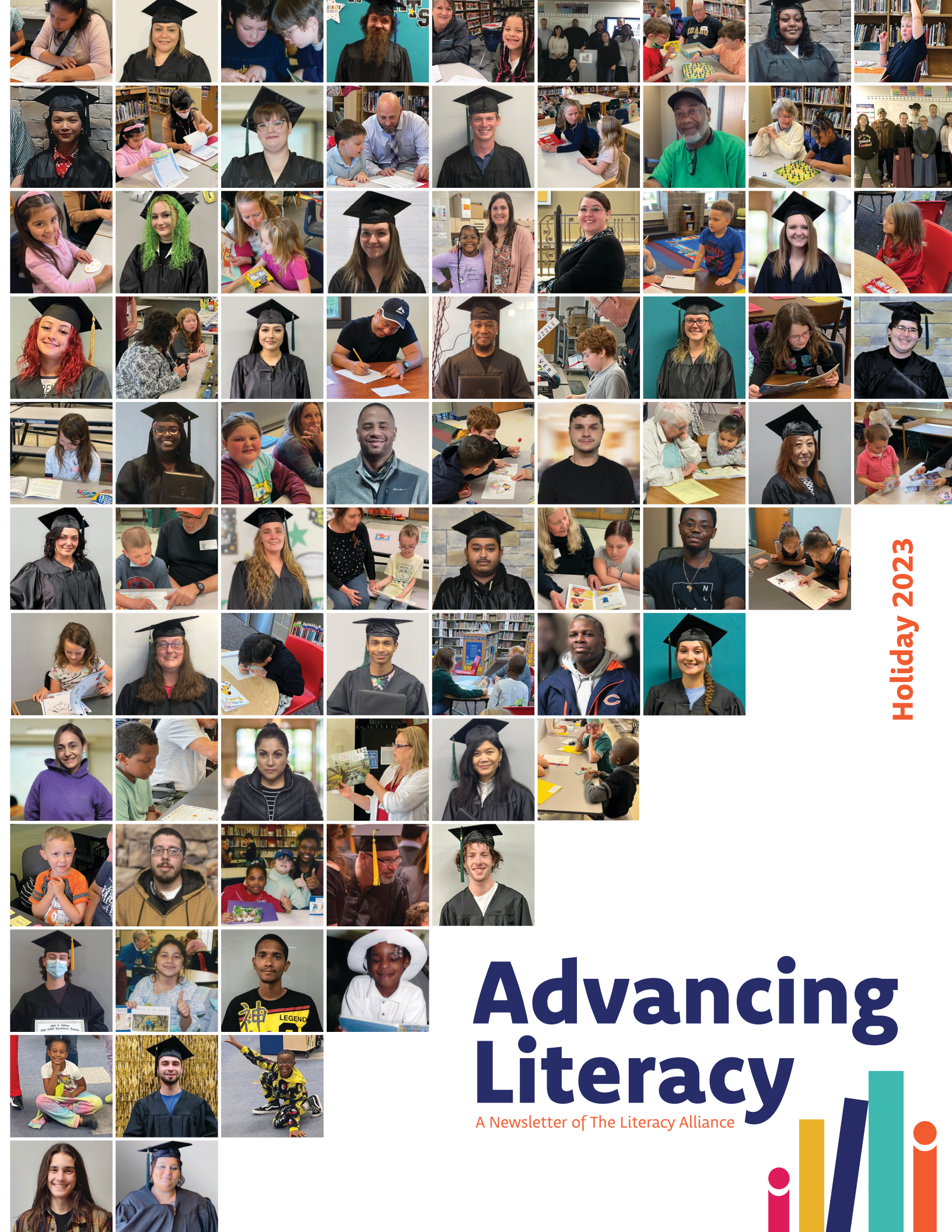
DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR

\$22,250

MATCH CHALLENGE!

NIPSCO and an anonymous donor will match each dollar donated up to \$22,250! Give before midnight, December 31, 2023, and your gift will be doubled!

To give the gift of life-changing literacy, use the enclosed return envelope or scan the QR Code to give a secure gift via credit card.



Holiday 2023

Advancing Literacy

A Newsletter of The Literacy Alliance



Mission Statement

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

2023-24

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Melinda Haines, Ex Officio
The Literacy Alliance

A Message from Melinda: The Importance of Legacy and Partnership

The holiday season is a great time to reflect on those who have made an impact on student success at The Literacy Alliance. This year we have honored two people who have been instrumental in making TLA the organization it is today. In March, we said goodbye to Brian Schlichtenmyer, our chief operating officer, who served in many roles over the past 20 years. To honor his service and dedication, we started a scholarship fund at Ivy Tech for our graduates who desire to further their education. Please read the separate article in this newsletter on the first students who have benefited from this new scholarship. Donations to the scholarship will make sure that we can continue to offer this opportunity for years to come.

In October, we honored long-time executive director Judy Stabelli at an event that celebrated her legacy at The Literacy Alliance by naming a planned giving program, The Stabelli Society, in her memory. Gifts large and small are essential to the ongoing vitality of TLA and The Stabelli Society is a formal program that allows supporters to let us know that they have included The Literacy Alliance in their estate plans through a will or bequest. We are pleased to recognize the extraordinary efforts of a woman who was the heart and soul of the agency for more than two decades, Judy Stabelli, and to honor her service by naming our new planned giving society after her. Members of The Stabelli Society enjoy special recognition (or anonymity) in donor publications and are invited, as our guests, to all TLA events. If you have planned a future gift in your estate or will, please let us know. We hope you consider joining The Stabelli Society to continue building a legacy of literacy.

Partnerships abound at The Literacy Alliance! In response to our great demand for English language learning classes through Project Connect, Ambassador Enterprises stepped forward to fund a new partnership at Amani Family Services serving immigrants and refugees who wish to improve their English.

Comcast funded a new digital literacy initiative to make sure that our students are well grounded in the basics of digital literacy, along with their instruction in high school equivalency preparation and English language learning.

We look forward to a continued partnership with Arena Dinner Theatre as we combine efforts for our fourth collaboration with performances of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, January 19-28, 2024.

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



TLA CEO Melinda Haines (far left) was joined by former executive director Judy Stabelli's family for the announcement of The Stabelli Society, including (left to right), sister Jeanne Morris; daughter, Mia Stabelli; granddaughters Mariah Stabelli and Amber Carnahan; and sister Carla Slagle.

Donor Spotlight: Tim



What is your name and line of work?
My name is Tim Van Houten. I am a director of the assembly business segment at Fort Wayne Metals.

What is your affiliation with TLA, and for how long?
I have volunteered as a board member for TLA over the past six

years. Through that time, I have served on several committees, including the marketing committee and the executive committee. I currently serve on the finance committee and the events committee.

Why do you choose to support TLA financially and through board service?

I am honored to serve on the board and contribute financially to an organization that supports education for children and adults. I believe that promoting literacy is essential for the overall development and empowerment of individuals within our communities. Volunteering my time to support TLA has been very fulfilling for me personally. I have had a firsthand view of TLA's impact on this community. Throughout my time on the board, it has become clear that the need in our community for literacy support is much greater than the resources available. Please think about supporting TLA financially or by volunteering your time. These resources will help TLA fulfill its mission by reaching more students and further closing the educational gap present in our community.

Volunteer Spotlight: Paul

How long have you been volunteering with TLA?
About nine months.

Why did you decide to volunteer at TLA?

Many people have helped me throughout my life. I wanted to give back somehow, and I felt that sharing knowledge might be a good way to do it.

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

Many things stand out. I spend most of my time focused on math. Being there for those ah-ha moments when students find that they can solve a problem they previously found insurmountable is very rewarding. It's also a great feeling when time is up, and students want to keep talking about their aspirations and thoughts. That's when you realize that maybe you've made some positive impact in their life.

Why should others volunteer?

Each individual has to have a reason to volunteer, but I can say this: if you're inclined, don't hesitate to do it. Some of my early efforts at tutoring were a bit clumsy, but I've learned so much through the process.



Student Spotlight: Nikki

I will start by introducing myself, my name is Nikki, and I am a graduate of The Literacy Alliance. I am excited to share my journey, hoping to be someone's motivation.



I was a pregnant high school dropout in foster care when I was 17. I was forced into a program that did not meet my educational needs, nor was I getting anywhere with it. I felt defeated and quit school for a second time.

I ended up working dead-end and unfulfilling jobs to make ends meet. Each job was the same, long hours, off shifts, and I had no time to spend with my young son. It was time to make a change for a better life for my son and I. That's when I enrolled myself in The Literacy Alliance high school completion program.

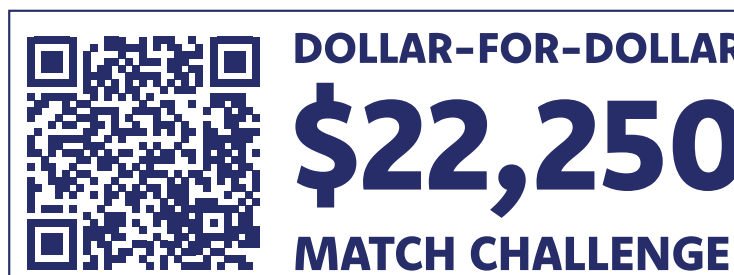
“Without this program, I probably would still be working a dead-end job with no future in sight, and I am truly grateful.”

I started classes shortly after enrolling in February 2016, going every Tuesday and Thursday evening with my toddler in tow. The teaching staff and volunteers were always helpful and very friendly. They never made you feel less of a person for not knowing the right answers. By May 2016, I took my high school equivalency test and passed it! I was so amazed that completing the program only took two months.

With my diploma, it was a perfect opportunity to explore my career choice. I am now a relationship banker with Old National Bank. I am also a proud homeowner with my husband and two beautiful children. I feel that my current life would not be possible without the help of the wonderful people at The Literacy Alliance. Without this program, I probably would still be working a dead-end job with no future in sight, and I am truly grateful.

Project Graduate

High School Completion Program



See the back panel for full information.



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.

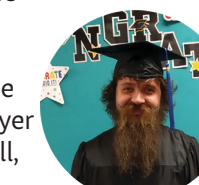
You can donate to the Schlichtenmyer Scholarship on line at literacyalliance.org or by using the envelope enclosed with this newsletter.



Lucia Giron



Christina Mitchell



Kevin Simon II

Mitch Albom's
tuesdays with
Morrie

January 19-28, 2024

A Collaborative Event of The Literacy Alliance
and Arena Dinner Theatre



Visit literacyalliance.org/Morrie for more information and to get your tickets for this special event!

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