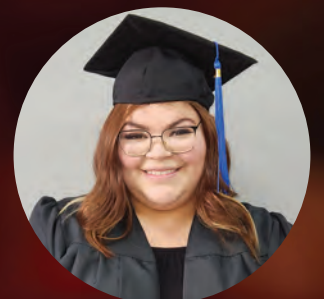


Advancing Literacy

SUMMER/FALL 2024


A Newsletter of The Literacy Alliance



LAUGHS FOR LITERACY!

Friday, September 20, 2024

Details inside!

The 
Literacy
Alliance

Literacy Changes Lives.

Congratulations to the 2023-24 Program Year Graduates!

We are incredibly proud of everything you have accomplished and can't wait to see what you'll achieve next. Taking the first step is the most important part of any journey, and you have done that with courage and determination. Remember the words of Eleanor Roosevelt: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Keep believing, keep striving, and continue to make us proud.



Project Graduate

Allan Abbott
Jennifer Acre
LaShawn Adams
(Amy) Johana Alameri-Trejo
Isaac Angel
Xavier Antanovich
Tway Ba
JenniLynn Barnes
Nick Bayless
Alan Bostic
Kaitlyn Bowling
Joe'Von Bruce
Karissa Carpenter
Chloe Cox
Andrew Cronin

Hunter Damron
Marilyn Delagrange
Alicia Delagrange
Jason Eardley
Brooke George
Ky' Shawn Guinn
Lillyan (Lawrence) Hann
Mackenzie Harris
Aaron Hastings
Anthony Hood
Tyonna Jackson
Shannya Jackson
Justin Johnson
Ava Johnson
Kyla Knight

Jesse Lewis Jr.
Aleida Lima
Ashton Loftus
Mercedes Marcolongo
Miracle Martin
Quentel Martin
Jazzmin McCormick
Holly Milledge
Porter Mounsey
Ronnie Mowery
Carson Palmer
Connor Patrick
Gerardo Antonio Perez
Michael Puzzello
Teresita Rodriguez

Delia Roque
Amber Russell
Amethyst Sanders
Kevin Simons
Zel Sit
Craig Troyer
Vincent True
Marshall Turner
Maung Chit Tway
Richard Waikel
Michael Warnsley
Reginald Warren
Amy Watson
Htet Htet Zaw

Student Spotlight Gerardo (Jerry)

My name is Gerardo; I am 28 and originally from Hialeah, Florida. It's a place where it's always raining, hot, and filled with floods and factories. I have two older sisters. I do not have children yet, but I plan on it in the next 3-5 years once I advance my career. I have a beautiful wife who has helped me a lot since I met her. **I've gone from someone who couldn't keep a job to being at my current job for almost four years.**



My mother told me about The Literacy Alliance. I was a little hesitant at first. I couldn't believe it was all going to be free! Once I knew that, I was all in. The experience here has been amazing. Everyone is so loving and caring about each student. It was definitely not like it was back in high school. I'm so happy that I'm finally done with this chapter in my life and ready to tackle my next adventure!

I came to The Literacy Alliance to eventually become an electrical apprentice. Since I was a little kid, I've known I was meant to do great things with these hands. If you put it in front of me, I could break it down and build it back up. I knew I was going to be either an EMT or an electrician.

My advice for future students is not to be afraid of being judged; come as you are, and The Literacy Alliance will evolve you. Everyone is super friendly, even the students. Remember we are all here to work on ourselves, and do not judge others. I know you can do it if I could do it. No matter how many barriers are in front of you, you must charge right through! Thank you, Literacy Alliance, for everything you've done for me. I love you all!

Your generosity is transforming lives, just like Jerry's and all our incredible graduates! Discover more inspiring stories on our blog.

literacyalliance.org/blog

Mission Statement

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

2024-25

Board of Directors

Isabel Nuñez, Chair
Purdue University Fort Wayne

Erin Nicolette, Vice Chair
Lincoln Financial Group

Michaela Baldwin, Treasurer
Blueprint Test Preparation

Tammy Allen, Secretary
Community Volunteer

Corey Porter, Past Chair
Lincoln Financial Group

Trudy Adams
Brightpoint

Susan Baier
Allen County Public Library

Zach Barron
Barnes & Thornburg

Kara Densmore
Old National Bank

Ron Duchovic
Retired Educator

Teresa Knoblach
East Allen County Schools

Fred McKissack
Fort Wayne Journal Gazette

State Representative Kyle Miller
Kekionga Bookkeeping Services

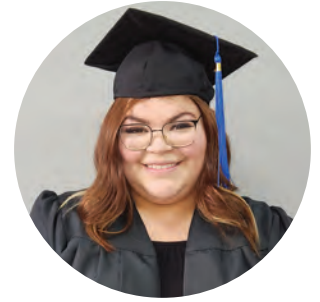
Luke Mungovan
Lake City Bank

Sharon Tubbs
HealthVisions Midwest of Fort Wayne

Tim VanHouten
Fort Wayne Metals

Melinda Haines, Ex Officio
The Literacy Alliance

Student Spotlight Johana (Amy)



Hola! Hey there! My name is Johana (Amy). I am from Chihuahua, Mexico. We came to the United States when I was four years old back in 2000. I returned to Mexico at the age of 15 years in 2010, and finally returned to the States in 2017. I am the oldest of my three siblings. I am married and have a beautiful 11-month-old baby girl, Eliana Danae. My daughter is my number one motivation and the reason I decided to get my high school equivalency (HSE) diploma and go to college here in the United States. I've always loved school, but things changed in 2010. My mom had to return to Mexico to change her immigration status, I stayed behind with my dad and was a victim of sexual assault. I went through depression and dropped out of high school. I was afraid of leaving my room. My father became extremely worried, so he decided we would join my mom and siblings in Mexico. After a year, my mom and siblings had to return to the states, but I couldn't. My immigration process had just started and took six years to resolve.

I finished school in Mexico and got a degree in educational psychology. My family proudly represents Mexico, my mother's birthplace; Iraq, my father's birthplace; and Guatemala, my husband's birthplace. As immigrants, we had to learn another language, a new living system, and different cultures. Everything was different, but we conquered our own fears and succeeded in a foreign country. Both my parents are bilingual and successful small business owners. My husband also is bilingual and has his own small business. I have taught English as a second language to Spanish speakers for about 5 years now. I worked for Catholic Charities until December 2023 when I decided to continue my education and focus on my daughter. Working for them has been an honor, being able to help the community was very important and satisfying. Giving back is something that was taught from my grandparents. The sun shines for everyone. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

I would like to thank The Literacy Alliance for making this an easy step and motivating us throughout the process.

When I was a child, my grandma always told me the importance of education, and that has never left my mind. There was a commercial that honored Hispanic people who had achieved something great. Every time I saw it, I would tell her, "That's going to be me, one day." I have high standards for myself and will achieve it. I believe every decision has a consequence and everyone is accountable for their own actions. We choose our battles.

I would like to thank The Literacy Alliance for making this an easy step and motivating us throughout the process. To my teacher Amy, thank you, you have helped me gain back the confidence to achieve my goals. Deb and Charlee, my tutors, thank you so much for your patience and for sharing your knowledge. My classmates, you're so close to achieving your goals. Stay focused, and you'll succeed!

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.

Follow us on social media!



A Message from Melinda:

The Literacy Alliance has been providing adult education services for more than 50 years, including adult basic education, high school equivalency (HSE) exam preparation, and English language learning (ELL). Since 2014, TLA has served Allen, Adams and Wells Counties by offering free classes to adult learners in high-need locations.



TLA is one of 55 adult ed providers around the state and is one of the most successful, with a high rate of enrollment increase as well as impressive rates of academic gains by students and HSE credential attainment, as noted in our program year highlights below.

The demand for adult basic education in our region is expected to continue rising and TLA has struggled to keep up with the demand. Exponential growth the last two years has drained resources to pay for staffing necessary to meet the increase.

TLA had to waitlist of 410 students last program year due to lack of space in an open classroom, 321 of them for ELL classes and 89 for HSE classes.

TLA's student successes, however, have been recognized by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, which has allocated twice as much funding in program year 2024-25 as the previous year. This will help, but it does not close the gap completely.

TLA had to waitlist of 410 students last program year due to lack of space in an open classroom, 321 of them for ELL classes and 89 for HSE classes.

Last year, program costs constituted 82% of organizational expenses and that will continue because of the small class sizes and personal attention TLA students receive from staff and volunteers. Most students are low- to moderate-income individuals who wish to improve their career/college opportunities and wage-earning ability by earning a high school equivalency diploma or improving their English language proficiency. Most have significant barriers to education, including transportation, housing and food instability, among others. Earning their HSE diploma allows them to enter college or improve their wages by an average of \$10,000 per year. A recent Adult Education Alumni Study conducted by the Coalition on Adult Basic Education showed the following:

- + 90% of those who set out to gain skills for a better job reported getting a better job**
- + 91% said adult education had a high or very high impact on improving their lives**
- + 95% indicated becoming more involved with their children's schooling, including helping with schoolwork, reading to their children, and communicating with their children's teachers**

HSE enrollments are at all-time highs, but the demand for ELL is even higher. Some ELL students already have degrees from their native country that are not recognized in the US, or they struggle to understand the language, thus most are underemployed. TLA worked with six manufacturing companies this year to improve English language proficiency in their employees so that those employees could be promoted into higher-level jobs. Many foreign-born students come to TLA to improve their English as a precursor not only to enhance their job prospects but also as a gateway to the HSE diploma.

TLA has created partnerships that provide space at high-need times and locations this year. New classrooms are slated to start beginning in July through September, but increased funding will be necessary to staff these new locations appropriately, with some existing staff poised to move to full-time positions and management ready to hire and train new staff.

If you can consider a gift of support to TLA, now is a great time, whether it is through an individual or corporate donation, attending a fundraising event, or providing a connection to a new funder. Our signature fundraiser, Laughs for Literacy!, takes place Friday, September 20. You are invited to join us as an attendee and can purchase tickets at laughsforliteracy.com. We also are seeking sponsorships—this is a great way for your business to show support for our mission! If you are interested in sponsorship, please contact me directly; my information is below.

I am happy to give you a first-hand look at our classrooms if you'd like to schedule a time to visit . . . you'll be glad you did!

Thank you for your continued support!

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

**This Is
Life-Changing
Learning**

589
TOTAL STUDENTS

59
HSES ATTAINED

+80%
STUDENTS WITH
MEASURABLE SKILL GAINS

2023-24 PROGRAM YEAR AT A GLANCE*

*Across all programs.



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

A Night At The Library

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the incredible success of A Night At The Library!

With your generous support, we raised almost \$29,000. The net proceeds of \$18,000 was divided evenly between the ACPL Friends of the Library and The Literacy Alliance.

We are profoundly thankful. Community support is essential to the ongoing efforts of The Literacy Alliance and The Friends of the Library. Your generosity enables us to continue our commitment to enhancing literacy, education, and personal growth throughout Allen County.

TOMÁS AND THE LIBRARY LADY

Coming February 2025!

In collaboration with



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
and Site Coordinator

Michael Jackson
Outreach Coordinator
and Site Coordinator

Megan Knight
Site Coordinator

Melanee Neilson
Career/Life Coach
and Site Coordinator

Tanisha Causey
Teacher

David Arnold
Teacher

Amy Mohr
Teacher

Nan Wilson
Teacher

Project Connect

Ignacio Silva
Site Facilitator

Anna Bau
Teacher

Jessica Conley
Teacher

Kami Gavilanez
Teacher

Project Aim

Megan Knight
Site Coordinator

Anna Bau
Teacher

Ellen Langford
Teacher

Trevor Waldman
Teacher

Want to join the team?
Visit literacyalliance.org/jobs
for current openings!



LAUGHS FOR LITERACY!

Friday, September 20, 2024
Baker Street Centre

323 W Baker St, Fort Wayne, IN 46802
Doors open at 6 pm | Show at 7 pm

Cyrus Steele



**featuring stand-up
comics**

and Dan Brown



**with emcee, WANE-15's
Alyssa Ivanson**



TICKETS \$75 Tickets include admission to the show, a pub-style buffet, and one drink ticket.

Visit laughsforliteracy.com and get your tickets today!

Volunteer Celebration

The Volunteer Appreciation Celebration held Friday, June 21, at Ivy Tech acknowledged our collective efforts, totaling 6,022 volunteer hours during this past program year. The dedication and generosity of our volunteers truly reflect the spirit of The Literacy Alliance. Thank you to our volunteers for your unwavering commitment and hard work; you truly are making it happen!

Gordon Cole Outstanding Volunteer of the Year **Karlene Kompara**

Karlene has been an invaluable volunteer with TLA for more than two years, contributing in various capacities including as a Project Connect and Project Build tutor. Currently, she is a primary volunteer at Amani Family Services, where she faithfully dedicates her time twice a week. Karlene's background as a Spanish teacher makes her an exceptional asset, particularly in translating and explaining grammar concepts to our students.



Her competence and consistent presence immensely enrich our classroom environment. We are incredibly grateful for the time, energy, and love she dedicates to her service at TLA.

Toma T. Davis Volunteer Tutor of the Year Award **Kay Fawcett**

Since 2011, Katherine (Kay) Fawcett has been dedicated to Project Reads, supporting students in their reading journey. Despite health challenges, she consistently shows up to aid her students. Kay demonstrates flexibility by switching students when needed and assisting absent tutors' students whom she doesn't typically work with. Her contributions extend beyond tutoring; she organizes materials, tidies up after sessions, and ensures everything is in place.



For more than 13 years, Kay has excelled beyond regular tutoring roles, evident in the remarkable progress and newfound confidence of her students. Her patient, understanding, and compassionate approach to learning has made a significant impact. The students and staff of The Literacy Alliance Project Reads program consider themselves fortunate to have her, acknowledging her adeptness in navigating the program's evolving landscape since she first joined the program.

! **There is an urgent need for Project Reads volunteers.** Give Nikki a call at (260) 423-0008, or visit our website (literacyalliance.org) for more information on becoming a TLA volunteer.