

PERSPECTIVE

EDUCATION



The development of housing and health care in the West Valley complex is helping the area and the region, it says. The West Valley complex is a \$1.2-billion project that will include 1,500 housing units, a 100,000-sq-ft health care facility and a 100,000-sq-ft community center.

A degree of respect at any age

Diploma attainment always within reach

MATT WIRE

In ninth grade, my school counselor told me, "You have no skills or talents to get you anywhere in life." Moments later, I stood up and walked out of high school for the last time.

Fast forward a couple of decades — After the economy crashed and my once-thriving business lost its footing, 36-year-old me came to a hard truth: I needed a "real" job. There was just one problem: I was a high school dropout, and I'd spent my adult life hiding it.



Matt Wire is chief marketing and communications officer for The Literacy Alliance.

That all changed the day before my 37th birthday when I signed up for the GED exam. I wasn't sure I'd pass, but I knew I had to try. Since then, I've earned a bachelor of arts and a master's degree (graduating at the top of my class), and I'm currently working on my second master's. I serve as the chief marketing and communications officer for The Literacy Alliance. And I even teach some of the very college courses I once took as a student.

Imagine that: a former high school dropout now standing at the front of a college classroom.

My story is personal, but the challenges I faced are far from unique.

As of 2023, more than 24,000 adults in Allen County — over 10% of the population — lack a high school diploma or equivalency. Across northeast Indiana, that number rises to more than 85,000.

These aren't just statistics; they represent friends, neighbors and family members whose potential is waiting to be unlocked. This isn't just about individual success; it's about building a stronger community.

Earning a high school equivalency diploma changes lives. It opens doors to better job opportunities and can increase annual income by nearly \$10,000.

Adults who earn their equivalency often become stronger role models for their children, encouraging a cycle of education that benefits entire families. They also contribute more to the local economy and help create safer, more connected communities.

But none of this happens without support. Continued funding for adult education programs is essential. These programs provide the free resources and instruction adults need to gain employment, achieve financial stability and fully participate in civic life.

Unfortunately, adult education funding is taking a hit at both the state and federal levels, even as the need continues to grow. Yet this work remains a powerful catalyst for change.

I encourage you to contact your elected representatives (votervoice.net can be your guide) and let them know that adult education matters. I also urge you to support local organizations — such as The Literacy Alliance — that work tirelessly every day to make this kind of transformation possible.

Here in our area, The Literacy Alliance is proud to lead this work. Our free program, Project Graduate, serves adults in Allen, Adams, and Wells counties, helping them prepare for and earn their equivalency diploma. With personalized support and wraparound resources, Project Graduate opens the door to new opportunities — educationally, professionally and personally.

I've seen the impact. I've lived it. Believe me: It's never too late. You are enough. You are worthy. And no matter what anyone has told you, your story is still being written.

LANDLOCKED

With annexation stymied, cities need a new path for responsible growth

The landlocked cities of Allen County are facing a unique challenge: how to grow responsibly without the ability to annex surrounding areas. This is a problem that many landlocked cities across the state are facing, and it's one that needs to be addressed.



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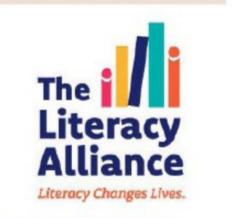


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NEXT STEPS



To learn more about Project Graduate or to support its work, visit literacyalliance.org or call 260-426-7323.

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