



# LITERACY COUNCIL FREDERICK COUNTY, MD

EMPOWERING ADULTS THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

## Hire of First Executive Director and Increased Service Highlight Accomplishments of 2014

Now in its 51st year, the Literacy Council of Frederick County (LCFC) is both strengthening its internal organization and expanding its outreach in an effort to assertively address its mission as never before.

The Council's recent plan for growth has led to the employment of its first executive director. Laurie Fisher, a graduate of Dickinson College and the Thunderbird School of Global Management, has been hired part-time to coordinate the Council's continuing expansion.

Fisher spent more than 15 years with American Red Cross International Services, including a decade organizing national and regional training workshops for a national education program for students and educators at high schools, two and four-year colleges and universities and law schools. That program, in 2013, exposed 46,000 people to global humanitarian issues.

A well-managed and growing Literacy Council is sorely needed at a time when



See the video online at: [frederickliteracy.org](http://frederickliteracy.org)

Frederick County alone has as many as 17,000 functionally illiterate adults and more and more immigrants in contact with the Council hoping to learn English.

In March of 2014, the Council had 208 students being instructed by 124 tutors, compared to 171 students and 88 tutors during the summer of 2013. The students include American-born adult residents learning to read and write, and people from other countries learning English as a second language. The tutors, all volunteers, receive extensive training before being certified to work with students.

Since 2011, tutors in the program have increased 56% and the number of students has grown by 68%. In 2013, tutors donated an estimated 14,000 hours to working with their students. And when the work of all Council volunteers is taken into account, including that of trainers, board members and volunteer office staff, the number of hours donated reaches 17,602 for 2013. That's 440 40-hour work weeks. The work of Literacy Council volunteers last year was worth nearly \$400,000, taking into account an average dollar value of volunteer time of \$22.55 an hour.

Since the Council knows many more area residents need help and more tutors are needed, contributions provided by the Ausherman Family Foundation and the Randall Charitable Trust have been used to hire a marketing consultant and produce more effective marketing and publicity materials. Among the materials is an inspiring video featuring students helped



Laurie D. Fisher  
*Executive Director*

by LCFC tutors that underscores how the literacy program opens up new opportunities for its participants.

Key goals for next year will be generating publicity to attract more tutors and students and collaboration with other organizations that can refer students to the LCFC. A partnership has already been developed with the Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF), which for the last decade has sought to improve the lives of Asians and other minorities living in and around Frederick County. AACF services include not only providing interpreters for translations, health education and preparation for citizenship examinations, but also English classes. LCFC is working with AACF to develop a sound English language program.

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*Literacy Council Board 2nd Vice President and tutor, Sandy Doggett, launched the ESL class at the Asian American Center of Frederick at the request of Elizabeth Chung, Executive Director. Sandy and Elizabeth are seen with Cho Cho Lwin, an ESL student from Burma.*

## LCFC Partners with Asian American Center

Elizabeth Chung, Executive Director of the Asian American Center of Frederick, is very pragmatic about making sure the needs of her community are met. And that's why one of the Center's key services is teaching immigrants English and why, in March, she turned to the Literacy Council of Frederick County to set up a comprehensive "English As A Second Language (ESL)" program at AACF.

"We need to learn English -- it is the language of this country," Chung said. "There's an English part to the American citizenship exam [that students must pass]. And they need [to be able to speak English] to live in America and be successful. Without language proficiency, you cannot communicate. The Literacy Council provides the expertise we need (to help students learn English)."

As of August, a LCFC tutor had taught 24 students with various levels of ability all together in a single class. The program was being expanded to four classes in September so students could more easily be grouped with others of similar ability to receive more effective instruction. There was a student waiting list, and the goal was to accommodate each person. More tutors would be added as needed.

The classes are conducted weekly, each lasting an hour to 1.5 hours, at the AACF office at 1080 West Patrick Street, Suite 16, in a neighborhood that includes many immigrants. "They come here to be comfortable," said Chung. "This is a safe place where they can focus on their studies."

The partnership between LCFC and AACF is a good fit, with the AACF providing a convenient meeting place and a range of students, including immigrants from not only such Asian nations as Vietnam, Burma and Iran, but also El Salvador, Peru, some African nations and many other countries. According to Chung, 65 languages are spoken in the city of Frederick.

The LCFC provides trained tutors and the expertise to develop an effective ESL program. Plus, the chemistry between Chung and the Literacy Council's Sandy Doggett, the chief architect and tutor of AACF's ESL program, is obvious.

Chung praises Doggett's ESL expertise and calm, easy-going teaching style, and Doggett stresses Chung's abilities as an administrator, including a knack for preparing applications for state and federal grants. "We're writing a grant [application] together now," said Doggett, noting that they are seeking funds to buy study books for students. "The books are a significant cost," she said. "And some of the students don't have jobs or have low-paying jobs."

Chung and Doggett will explore other grant opportunities as well, as they seek to expand the scope of the Asian American Center's growing ESL program so more area immigrants can be taught English. Their program is the first of many collaborations the Literacy Council would like to develop with other organizations. Discussions with other groups are underway now.

# Additional Tutoring Supports Advanced ESL Students

Rosibel, a mother of three from Nicaragua, including a 23-year-old college graduate and a fifth grader, is determined to master the English language so she can secure the job she deserves. A recipient of bachelor's and master's degrees, she wants to reach the point where she speaks and understands English so well that she can get a good job.

"I would like to have a better future for me and my family," she said. "I want a better life and better opportunity."

Under the steady guidance of Sister Alice, who taught high school English for 20 years during a 34-year career as a teacher, Rosibel is making progress. She said her family and friends "have noticed the improvement in my English."

(Sister Alice) has pushed me to learn," said Rosibel. "It helps me when I speak with her. She challenges me. And that's what I want --to be challenged."

The LCFC program, she noted, has given "(me) the opportunity to interact face-to-face with an instructor and correct my mistakes. (The program) is well-designed and adjusted to the needs of the student."



*Sister Alice (left), a LCFC tutor for the past 10 years, is seen with bachelor's and master's recipient, Rosibel, who wants to be more proficient in speaking English so that she can find employment.*

Sister Alice said Rosibel "does more than she has to. She's motivated to move on," and she, as her tutor, is trying to accommodate her determination with comprehensive lessons in spelling, grammar, reading and writing.

Rosibel is one of two students tutored by Sister Alice, who has been a LCFC volunteer tutor for about 10 years. She meets twice a week with each student and each session lasts 1.5 hours. "It's an opportunity to serve people," she noted.

## Student Is Committed To Changing Her Future

Carol wants not only a job, but also the joy of being able to read, write, spell and do math. And she is determined to prove wrong those thoughtless people who have called her mean names.

"I'm fighting for myself," she said during a recent tutoring session at the Literacy Council. "I want to learn to read and write and do math. I'm glad I came to the Literacy Council (in August)."

It has only been two months since she began her tutoring sessions on Mondays, but already "I'm happy," she said. "If other people did what I'm doing, maybe they would learn (math and to read and write too)." "Pat and I are a perfect match," said Carol. "She's a wonderful teacher."

Pat said that already, Carol has taught

herself addition and subtraction and is currently working on her multiplication tables at home. And she is responding well to weekly instruction in reading, writing and spelling. "She is an ambitious woman, and she works hard," Pat said.

Carol studies at home every day on her own. "I have the most eager student and it is paying off for her," said Pat. "I enjoy my Mondays tutoring Carol."

Pat, an employee of the American Federation of Teachers, moved to Frederick a little over a year ago and began looking for a public service organization for volunteer work that would be a good fit



*Pat, an American Federation of Teachers employee who recently moved to Frederick, tutors her student, Carol. Photo: The Arc of Frederick County.*

for her. She chose the Literacy Council of Frederick County, in part, because "I'm a firm believer that education is the solution to societal problems. And reading is the first step."



*Literacy Council Board Director and tutor, Denise Dertzbaugh, teaches a weekly Conversation Class that routinely attracts more than a dozen students of many nationalities. In addition to practicing conversational English, the students are also assisted with pronunciation.*

## Conversation Class Provides Added Level of Learning For ESL Students

LCFC programming also includes a Conversation Class for students who speak and understand English so that they can practice what they've learned and continue learning. "The conversations range from A to Z," said class coordinator Denise Dertzbaugh, a retired elementary school teacher. "It's informal. They talk about whatever they want to or something we want them to discuss. If a holiday is coming up, we'll talk about what it is all about. And we'll ask if they have something similar in their countries. Last week, we talked about the activities in the Inner Harbor [of Baltimore commemorating] the 200th anniversary of the [writing of] The Star Spangled Banner."

Often, the class discusses current events or new laws that impact the students, such as changes in child safety belt requirements. At a class on September 11, students from Japan, Chile, Honduras, Colombia, South Korea and Syria discussed the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "I was in Syria at the time and the television was on," said Jacquelin, the student from Syria. "We were shocked. And now the terrorists are attacking my country."

The September 11 class, sitting casually in a circle in the Council lobby, also learned the meaning of the phrase "on the go" and

learned about the services of the Frederick Community Action Agency and how to access the newspaper "News for You." Additionally, the students were notified about an upcoming community health fair.

The atmosphere was relaxed, punctuated by frequent bursts of laughter. Dertzbaugh gently guided the shyer, quieter students into the conversation during their one-hour discussion.

"I came here eight months ago," said Jacquelin, the Syrian student. "I know English -- I studied it in school -- but I need to be encouraged to speak. The class helps me to correct my pronunciation."

Karina, a Chilean, said she too needs "to have more conversations [in English]. I need to practice my English."

Both Karina and Jacquelin say they continue to attend the conversation class because of the camaraderie that has developed and because of Dertzbaugh's kindness and skill as a tutor. "I feel comfortable here," said Jacquelin.

For Dertzbaugh, leading the conversation class has meant "making some fabulous friends. I've learned as much from my students as they've learned from me."

## LCFC News & Notes

### Combating Illiteracy Through Partnerships

Recently, the Frederick County Detention Center (FCDC) called LCFC to discuss development of a tutoring program for inmates who want to learn to read and write. As we have with the Asian American Center, we are working with the FCDC to develop such a program. This is just one of many partnerships the Literacy Council hopes to develop with agencies, organizations and other citizen groups to more effectively reach those who are in need of our services.

### Volunteer Tutors Are Needed

The list of students seeking tutors will continue to get larger if we succeed in our outreach initiatives. Do you have two to three hours each week to devote to a student who wants to achieve a better life and contribute to the betterment of our community?

Volunteers are given comprehensive training by veteran tutors. A background as a teacher is not necessary to succeed. And contrary to popular belief, you do not need to know a foreign language in order to teach ESL.

Today's LCFC volunteers include a retired journalist and trade association media spokesman and National Weather Service meteorologist, among others.

### Need A Speaker for Upcoming Meetings?

The Literacy Council of Frederick County is making a concerted effort to improve community awareness of its programs and the people it serves. Allowing us to present to your organization will help us to get the word out and potentially generate more tutors. There is a list of students who are waiting to be assigned a tutor. Illiteracy affects us all. Improved literacy enables our students to get better jobs and ultimately boost the local economy. We would welcome the opportunity to speak before your organizational meeting. Please call our office at 301-600-2066.

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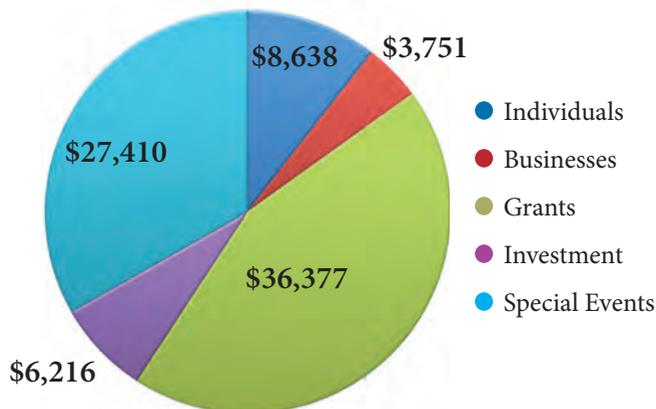
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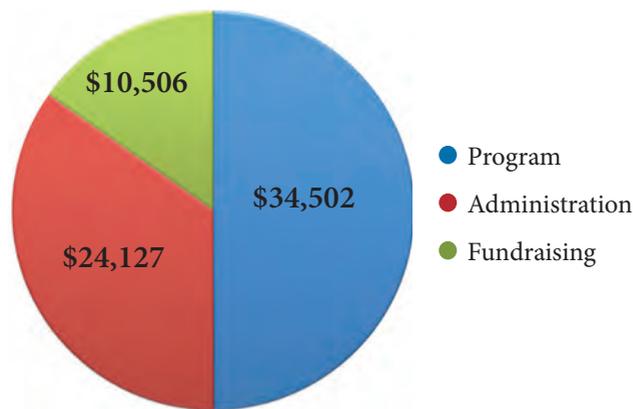


# 2013-2014 Finances

Revenue – \$82,392



Expenses – \$69,135



All Literacy Council direct services are provided by volunteers. Last year our 152 volunteers contributed over 17,600 hours of their time, equaling approximately 440 40-hour work weeks, equating to a monetary value of \$396,925 (based on a standardized hourly rate of \$22.50).

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# Thank You! We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!

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### Community Partners

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# Help us to serve the 17,000 Frederick County adults who need our assistance by making a financial gift to the Literacy Council.

## 1 in 10 or 17,000 Frederick County Adults is Currently Functionally Illiterate



25% are believed to be American-born residents who never learned in school. 75% are immigrants who have not yet learned to read or speak English.

**Illiteracy affects us all.**

**Every time someone is taught to read or speak English...**

- His or her prospects of being employed or promoted dramatically increase
- Higher employment rates equate to a higher tax base and lower taxes for everyone
- An educated workforce is vital in attracting desirable new or relocating businesses
- There is a reduced need for tax-payer funded social, medical and police services
- Literate adults are more effective at parenting when raising their children
- Children of literate parents are academically more successful in school

## Growth in Tutors and Students



Our growing number of volunteer tutors is working with an increasing number of students. Still, a long waiting list of students exists.

■ Tutors ■ Students

## Together we can end illiteracy in Frederick County.

Return Service Requested

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