

## CAROLINE GAVER'S DESIRE TO HELP WORKERS ON HER FARM LEARN TO READ AND WRITE IN THE 1970S LED TO HER DISCOVERY OF THE LITERACY COUNCIL OF FREDERICK COUNTY. Caroline shares the story of the Literacy Council, which has changed the lives of thousands of county residents.

**Scott:** What are the origins of the Literacy Council of Frederick County?

**Caroline:** In 1959, some local women of Church Women United, including Kay Mackley, began a migrant ministry project to help the seasonal workers who came to the county each year. They found that many of the workers could not read and decided to add literacy to their services. In 1962, Kay went to the Koinonia Foundation near Baltimore for training in the Laubach Method of teaching reading. In October 1963, a trainer from Koinonia came to Frederick to train 19 volunteer tutors and the council, then called Frederick County Laubach Literacy, was officially formed. It was the second council of its kind in Maryland. Our "founding mothers" were Kay Mackley and Dolly Engle. Dolly Crum served as the first president. After the migrants moved on for the year, the women wanted to find local citizens who needed their help. The council soon learned that there were thousands of illiterate adults in the county.

**Scott:** So, the majority of the early students were American-born?

**Caroline:** Yes, nearly all were American-born. It was also learned that, at the time, about 20 percent of the local population was illiterate or low-literate.

**Scott:** Where were the students taught?

**Caroline:** Students have been tutored all over the county in public places such as churches, libraries, community centers, fire stations and places of employment, and, in earlier years, in the private homes of students or tutors.

**Scott:** Wasn't a key hurdle in growing the organization having people who could train tutors?

**Caroline:** Yes, for the first 11 years, the council was dependent on tutor trainers from places like Baltimore and Philadelphia. Betty Seligmann became the council's first local trainer in 1974.

**Scott:** When was the English as a Second Language program established? Was there an increase in immigrants coming to Frederick County that prompted this?

**Caroline:** The ESL program began in 1977 after Martha Lane from Lutheran Church Women in Philadelphia came to teach an English as a Second Language tutor training workshop. This was in response to the needs of the many Southeast Asian immigrants coming into the area.

**Scott:** Talk about the detention center-based program.

**Caroline:** In 1982, retired engineer Norman Paul began tutoring a student at the old South Street jail and soon had several more students. He continued at the new Frederick County Detention Center, and when one of his students was transferred to Hagerstown's Roxbury Correctional Institution in 1984, he

began tutoring there—eventually four days a week, teaching 400 people to read. In 1990, he set up a program where inmates who had achieved literacy tutored other inmates.

**Scott:** What prompted your involvement in the program?

**Caroline:** I knew local workers who could not read, including some employees on our family farm. In 1975, I saw an ad in the "Local Mentions" column of the newspaper about tutor training. I wondered how you helped adults learn to read, and called. Betty Seligmann answered the phone. She was very persuasive!

**Scott:** When did you receive tutor training and how many people do you think you have trained?


**Caroline:** I took a Basic Literacy workshop in 1975, and an English as a Second Language workshop in 1979. I became a trainer in 1976. At an average of about 50 tutors a year, I have probably helped train over 2,000 tutors.

**Scott:** How would you describe the growth of the organization?

**Caroline:** The Literacy Council has undergone many changes and significant growth through the years. Until 2011, it was totally volunteer, including administration. Now that we have a small professional staff, we are reaching more people than ever and expanding offerings, including new workplace and parent literacy programs. The biggest limiting factors are our number of volunteer tutors—we always have students waiting—and operational funding, of course, since our services are free to the public.

**Scott:** Why are you so committed to the Literacy Council and literacy?

**Caroline:** The Literacy Council responds to a need that doesn't go away, even though our ultimate goal is to put ourselves out of business. Being able to read and to use language is the basis for doing everything else. It's an organization of nice, selfless people who want to help others, which makes it a pleasure to be involved with.

*In 2015, Caroline Gaver, 73, was the recipient of one of the governor's Service Awards for Lifetime Achievement associated with her work with the Literacy Council of Frederick County. During the past 45 years she has contributed more than 32,300 hours to the organization. Caroline lives with her husband on a farm they own near Libertytown. Learn more at [frederickliteracy.org](http://frederickliteracy.org). Scott Grove is a marketing consultant and owner of Grove Public Relations, LLC, an advertising and marketing firm he founded in 1986. A former reporter, Grove is a lifelong student of history and co-owner of iTour, creator of the Frederick Maryland Walking Tour, produced both as a mobile app and a DVD. For more information, visit [itourfrederick.com](http://itourfrederick.com) or [grovepr.com](http://grovepr.com). *