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ANNUAL REPORT 2019–2020

LITERACY MINNESOTA (formerly Minnesota Literacy Council) began in 1972 when a group of volunteers realized if one person taught someone to read, and that person taught someone to read, they could create a movement.

Today, Literacy Minnesota has grown to include six learning centers; thousands of tutors trained per year; hundreds of curriculum downloads per month; AmeriCorps members working on literacy initiatives across the state and a digital-literacy learning platform, Northstar, utilized in nearly all states and several countries.

Literacy Minnesota is now recognized as a local and national leader and a driving force behind the latest developments in literacy learning. We continue to build a movement of learners, educators, literacy advocates and organizations in pursuit of a world where lifechanging learning is within everyone's reach.



Our Mission

To share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.

Our Vision

We believe literacy has the power to advance equity and justice, and we envision a world where life-changing learning is within everyone's reach.



OUR PROGRAMS

MINNESOTA PROGRAMS

Open Door Learning Centers - Six Twin Cities sites offering English, GED, computer, citizenship, job-readiness and other basic-skills classes for adults. Our Arlington Hills location in Saint Paul also has a preschool program for children of adult students.

Parenting Program - Provides families with tools to break through inequitable power structures and create a more just education system.

Adult Literacy Hotline - Online and phone referral service to adult literacy programs across Minnesota.

AmeriCorps Programs

Summer Reads - Provides reading tutors and mentors for children entering grades K-5.

Literacy Leadership Program -

Engages AmeriCorps members to design and carry out literacy initiatives in partnership with schools and community organizations.

Tutor Training - Pre-service and in-service workshops for literacy volunteers and educators.

Volunteer Recruitment - Recruits and places volunteers into service organizations across Minnesota.

NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Northstar Digital Literacy - Assesses digital skills through online modules and provides classroom curriculum and self-directed online learning.

Advocacy - Mobilizes to influence policy and legislation around the literacy cause.

Curriculum & Resources - Searchable online library of literacy curriculum and teaching tools.

Journeys - An anthology of adult student writing with accompanying classroom resources.

Literacy Strategies - Consulting services to help organizations launch and develop literacy programming.

NEW! Open Door Collective - Combats poverty through literacy education, policy and research.













ERIC NESHEIM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CORE VALUES

LIFELONG LEARNING

We believe the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong journey. We all have something to teach each other.

INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY

We believe individuals have the power to create their own potential through teaching, learning and community involvement. We create learning environments where the dignity, worth and complexity of each person is honored.

EQUITY & JUSTICE

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We believe access to quality education is a cornerstone of a more just and equitable society. We work to provide transformative learning opportunities to people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.

LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION

We believe in nimbly responding to a changing landscape, creating new pathways for groups and individuals to reach their full potential.

For us as for everyone, the big story of this past year is one of overcoming challenges, adapting programming and examining our role in confronting and alleviating structural inequality.

These demands dovetailed, fortunately, with strategic directions Literacy Minnesota had already embarked on, such as more clearly activating literacy as a cornerstone of an equitable society, strengthening studentcentered design and convening a broader network of partners across sectors and geographical locations.

We launched a new website and refreshed brand presence in January of 2020 hoping to convey openness, vibrancy and dynamism; and to connect more people with tools to advance literacy and promote life-changing learning.

With the onset of COVID-19, physical distancing and heightened urgency around racial justice,

these goals were really put to the test.

One thing that sets our organization apart is the way tools developed in the context of our ODC's mission is to reduce poverty in the U.S. by learning centers, in the context of our immediate building partnerships between adult foundational (or basic) skills programs and organizations community, are broadly applicable and in high demand for literacy programs everywhere. supporting social and economic justice.

We were able to tap into this trust and expertise We are excited for the ways this new partnership to guide literacy programs in adapting to remote will deepen and broaden our work, making even stronger and more actionable connections learning. between literacy learning and a more equitable Our curriculum, teaching tools and trainings are world.

designed by educators, for educators. Though we are an organization with strong roots in the state of Minnesota, the reach of our work is increasingly national and international.

Last year, **Open Door Collective (ODC)**, a group of experts publishing research on the connection between adult education and povery reduction, joined Literacy Minnesota's family of programs.



Visit opendoorcollective.org to see their latest research papers.

In the following pages, you'll see how our staff and stakeholders leveraged existing strengths, nimbly adapted to changing circumstances and demonstrated literacy's deep interconnectedness with all elements of societal wellbeing.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership and belief in the power of literacy.

LITERACY MINNESOTA LEADS **THE WAY IN DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICES FOR REMOTE** INSTRUCTION



Less than a month after COVID-19 made gathering in person impossible, our training department revamped all tutor and volunteer trainings to be online only. Tutor Tips, sent to a list of 900 email addresses twice a month, shifted focus to address challenges and best practices related to remote tutoring. Northstar Digital Literacy rapidly developed ways for digital literacy assessments, certificates and teaching materials to be more accessible in a remote environment.

Literacy Minnesota's longstanding commitment to values of accessibility and

inclusion put us in a strong position to respond to these rapidly evolving circumstances.

The training department had already been working hard to remove barriers for tutors who are unable to attend in-person trainings due to disability, geography or time. In February 2020, the month before COVID-19 hit Minnesota, Training Coordinator Andrea Echelberger had already piloted a webinar training-the platform which would soon become a matter of course.

Since transitioning tutor trainings to webinars, we have welcomed tutors, teachers and volunteers from all over the world, attracting attendees from places such as Rhode Island, Iowa, Washington and Australia.

Webinars have covered topic such as...

- Remote Tutoring 101 •
- Lesson Planning for Adult ESL Virtual Classes
- Using WhatsApp for Teaching Conversation to Adult ESL Learners
- Teaching Phonics Virtually to Adult ESL Learners

...and more.

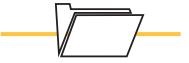
Visit literacymn.org/webinars to see a full list.

"That was an astoundingly good conference call. I loved that you encouraged the chat, but kept the mikes and video off. Time was managed well. It's the best Zoomcraft I've seen yet, and like you all, I've been to a lot of Zoom meetings! But the content, pedagogy & practice— the best I've seen yet."

- Satisfied Webinar Attendee



16 training webinars drew 1,159 attendees in fiscal year 2020. 41% were from outside of Minnesota.



Nearly 900 people received our Tutor Tips in their inboxes, addressing topics such as digital literacy, phone dictation and how to use WhatsApp to tutor.



5,409 documents and teaching tools were downloaded from our online **Educator Resources Library** between January (when Literacy Minnesota launched a new website and brand presence) and June 2020.



771,242 Northstar Digital Literacy assessments were completed online in the areas of Essential Computer Skills, Essential Software Skills and Using Technology in Daily Life.

NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY

Northstar Digital Literacy helps individuals around the world master the digital skills needed to work, learn and participate fully in daily life. Northstar assesses digital skills and provides classroom curriculum and self-directed online learning.

To best serve digital learners and testing sites during COVID-19, Northstar adapted in the following ways:

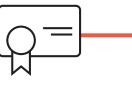
- · Self-directed online learning in the areas of Basic Computer Skills and Career Search Skills was made freely available on our website.
- Remote Teaching Guides for classroom curricula were developed.
- 1:1 Digital Literacy Skills Volunteer Tutor Plans were created to help volunteers work virtually with learners.
- Remote proctoring guidelines were designed and distributed.

EDUCATOR RESOURCES LIBRARY

The Educator Resources Library, a key feature of Literacy Minnesota's new website, organizes all of our curriculum and teaching resources in a searchable and downloadable format.

The library makes the many resources we offer more accessible to those who make use of them (teachers, tutors, volunteers, etc.). It also allows us to better identify those who are utilizing our resources so we can connect them to more tools that are relevant to their work. This has been especially helpful for sharing information about remote teaching and learning.

Visit literacymn.org/educator-resources.



35,295 Northstar certificates were earned, allowing test takers to demonstrate their skills to potential employers.



250 official testing locations were added, bringing us to a total of 881 Northstar testing sites around the world.



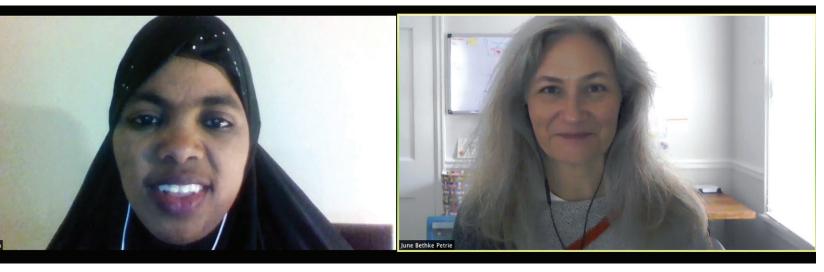


EDUCATOR RESOURCES

Your hub for all things ESL and Adult Basic Education.



MEET REMOTE LEARNING TEAM RUKIYA AND JUNE



Rukiya (left), a learner at Open Door Northside, and June (right), a volunteer, meet on Zoom for tutoring sessions.

Rukiya, an adult learner at Open Door Northside and June, a volunteer tutor, have met for virtual tutoring sessions almost every day during the pandemic. Both of them have children in school who have been learning at home, and both have struggled with feelings of isolation, but they describe their daily tutoring sessions as "a good opportunity to get to know each other."

Together, June and Rukiya have been working on English conversation and pronunciation. "I'm learning how to speak clearly and also learning many new words," says Rukiya. June is also tutoring her in reading, writing and grammar.

"We add continuously to Rukiya's growing vocabulary, looking

up the meanings of words and finding examples of usage, spelling them, and doing some writing practice," says June. "It's all very organic."

"I admire Rukiya's eagerness to learn," says June. "She is the one who wants to meet every day! Rukiya will work independently after we work on something together; most recently, for example, looking up YouTube videos on how to say the various past-tense "-ed" endings. This makes me want to match her enthusiasm with my own and bring her useful exercises."

Rukiya has a broad range of interests and is driven to understand American culture in depth. In her sessions with June, alongside her study of the English language, she has asked to

learn more about subjects such as COVID-19, the U.S. Census, Juneteenth, the Civil Rights Movement and people like Mr. Rogers and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

"I like individual learning," says Rukiya. "You understand more if you have an individual teacher. If there is one student the teacher can give more attention."

Remote tutoring sessions are also providing both Rukiya and June with practice using new technology. "I'm sure that across all teaching levels, this experience will force a sea change in the use of technology in teaching that will remain even after people can be together again," says June.

"Learning at home is a great opportunity," says Rukiya.

OPEN DOOR LEARNING CENTERS

Shift to remote learning brings challenges and opportunities

"We are moving toward a more student-centered approach." - Yixiu Chen, Learning Centers Manager

Our six Open Door Learning

Centers across the Twin Cities metro offer free classes for adults in English, GED, citizenship, computers, college prep and more. Classes are led by teaching staff and dedicated, trained volunteers. In addition to adult literacy programming, our Open Door Learning Center Arlington Hills in Saint Paul has a preschool for children of adult learners, aimed at providing quality early literacy instruction and getting kids ready for Kindergarten.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Minnesota, learning center staff kicked into gear to transition to remote learning.

Lloyd Brown, learning center coordinator for Open Door Northside, says, "Northside is run primarily with volunteer-led classes. My big concern in March was, we have this volunteerled program, and now we're in shutdown. What's going to happen to my volunteers? I have to find things for my volunteers to do or we're going to lose them."



1,648 learners attended our six Open Door Learning Centers.

familiar with."

Lloyd immediately identified two barriers: the need for curriculum specific to remote teaching, and the fact that many students did not have the technology and digital skills needed to successfully engage with remote learning. He got to work adapting and creating curriculum using a tiered approach tailored to different levels of volunteer experience.

To address the lack of access to devices, reliable Wi-Fi and digital literacy skills many students were experiencing, we raised funds to distribute Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots and provide digital literacy instruction.

"Now, we are reaching into the community in a way we never have before," says Lloyd.

Though this transition has come with additional hurdles, the



"I want to understand more. I want to speak better at work, and with my kids' teachers. That's communication for the community."

- Rukiya, Open Door Northside Learner

He immediately started building a remote tutoring program. "I got about a dozen volunteers on board right away and paired them with students they were

focus on remote learning has its definite upsides.

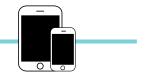
"We've removed obstacles of logistics and schedule. We've removed the commute. You don't have to go out in the middle of winter to take a class or volunteer. It's more comfortable," says Lloyd. "I've had students say, 'I want to stick with virtual learning. I get the teacher all to myself," says Lloyd.

"I've seen so much collaboration. Teachers are coming together from across sites," says Yixiu Chen, learning centers manager. For example, Barb Murphy, a teacher at Open Door Arlington Hills, and Meghan Boyle, a teacher at Open Door Lake Street, are now co-teaching a Computers, Careers and Civics class. That collaboration wouldn't have been possible previously.

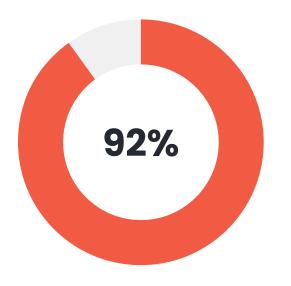
"A lot of these things have really inspired me; given me a lot of energy going forward," says Lloyd. "Next year will be an opportunity to refine the system we have in place, expand it and move forward with a hybrid system."



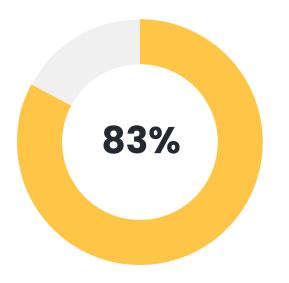
88 adult students who took our citizenship classes passed their U.S.citizenship tests.



12,950 remote tutoring hours were logged by Open Door learners and volunteers.



136 out of 148 parents in our Parenting Program showed increased knowledge in how to talk to teachers about their children.



15 out of 18 Open Door Preschoolers improved their ability to identify letter names.

PARENTING PROGRAM

Literacy Minnesota's Parenting Program provides families with the tools they need to break through inequitable power structures and create a more just education system. Adult learners at Open Door Northside and Open Door Lake Street can attend classes to navigate cultural differences in the education system, find effective ways to advocate for their children and learn how to promote literacy at home. Last year, says Ebyan Adbulle, early literacy and families manager, "Families became more involved in the school board. Parents attended info sessions and expressed their concerns."

Ebyan helped parents navigate COVID-19 by communicating with schools and guided them through applying for unemployment benefits and getting set up with wireless internet.

OPEN DOOR PRESCHOOL

Our preschool welcomes three to fiveyear-olds who are the children of adult learners attending Open Door Learning Center Arlington Hills. The preschool uses a time-tested curriculum that builds schoolreadiness skills and prepares students for success in Kindergarten and beyond.

Beginning in March 2020, Open Door Preschool transitioned to Preschool at Home. "I have had several parents tell me how excited their children are to get their Preschool at Home activities," says Rachel. "They say their children love listening to me read stories each week, and they themselves like listening, too (it's a great way to practice their own English!)."

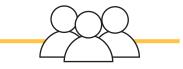
100%

19 out of 19 Literacy Leadership members completed a full year of service despite challenges presented by COVID-19.

70 out of 70 Summer **Reads members** reported that serving with Summer Reads helped them grow personally and professionally.

Literacy Minnesota offers two types of full-time AmeriCorps opportunities: our year-long Literacy Leadership Program, which engages service members to work behind the scenes with schools and community organizations to design and carry out literacy initiatives; and **Summer Reads**, which brings literacy tutors and mentors to low-income children in grades K-5 at libraries, schools and community organizations across Minnesota.

This past year, we worked with site partners and the Corporation for National and Community Service to broaden the scope of both programs to address urgent needs brought on and exacerbated by COVID-19.



Our volunteer recruitment program placed 251 volunteers into literacy programs across Minnesota.

In line with our goal of attracting volunteers who are reflective of learners' communities, 27% of volunteers placed were Black, Indigenous or people of color.

Our Adult Literacy Hotline connected prospective learners with literacy programs through 118 text referrals, 174 email referrals, 707 phone calls, 95 in-person referrals and 12,506 unique website hits.

Phone interpretation in 200+ languages was made available through Language Link.



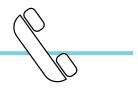
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86%

of children in Summer **Reads** who were assessed maintained or increased their reading fluency.

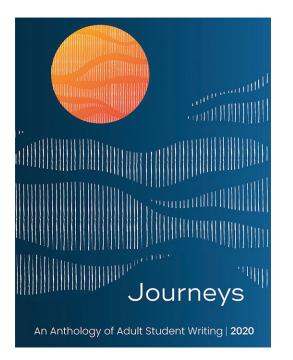


Summer Reads AmeriCorps members Estelle and Hannah distribute books for families.



"It is a moral and legal obligation to make education accessible to all adult learners."

-Andy Francis, **Literacy Minnesota** Access Coordinator, **AmeriCorps Member**



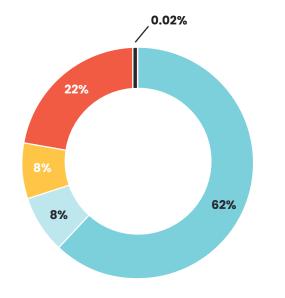
The 2020 edition of Journeys: An Anthology of Adult Student Writing features 810 stories and art pieces submitted by learners enrolled in 49 different Adult Basic Education programs across Minnesota.

20 Journeys authors submitted videos of themselves reading their stories at home for our Virtual Journeys event in June. Visit **literacymn.org/virtualjourneysreadings** to see the videos!

"I dream about finishing school and someday getting my GED. I go to school every Monday through Thursday. I work at Lyngblomsten Nursing Home. I also take care of my mother and daughters. I know education is very important in the USA. I have family doctor appointments very often for my mother, siblings and my children. I need to know how to speak English to help them."

- Than Than Bo, Journeys author

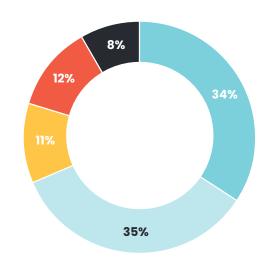




WHERE DID OUR SUPPORT COME FROM?

Government Grants	\$3,019,565
Corporate & Foundation Grants	\$374,715
Contributions/ Special Events	\$408,332
Program Service Fees/ Other	\$1,084,968
In-Kind Contributions	\$11,200
Total Support & Revenue	\$4,898,780

Financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020



HOW DID WE SPEND OUR MONEY?

Minnesota Programs	\$3,462,399
Serving Minnesotans	\$1,711,145
Supporting Organizations National Programs	\$1,751,254 \$567,431
Administration	\$596,368
Fundraising	\$428,752
Total Expenses	\$5,054,950

'Ihank you, donors!

Donors who made tax-deductible contributions to Literacy Minnesota from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are listed below. Literacy Minnesota recognizes that gifts of any size and type help create a world where all individuals have access to life-changing learning. To learn more about why we are no longer listing donor names in size categories, please contact Gift Officer Sarah Caflisch: scaflisch@literacymn.org or 651-251-9087.

your will.

GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Corporation for National and Community Service, Minnesota Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Labor

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James Chladek

Provide life-changing literacy skills for future generations. Please remember Literacy Minnesota in

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