

Also: ERAS Tutoring, Celebrating
Milestones Anniversaries,
College Pathways, and more!

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Celebrating Literacy



In September, we highlighted the vital contributions of adult and family literacy programs to our community through Literacy Month and Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. Literacy Pittsburgh celebrated our community impact in several ways.

- **Unveiled our new video:** If you missed this chance to meet our students and teachers, you can [watch it at this link](#).
- **Shared our viewpoint:** Rich Fitzgerald, Literacy Pittsburgh board member and executive director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, [wrote an article](#) for The Pittsburgh Business Times titled, *Adult Education Is Economic Development*
- **Participated in Flood the Hill:** Organized by the National Association for the Transformation of Adult Education (NAFTE), Flood the Hill brought together adult education advocates from across the country to Washington, D.C. to call on Congress to increase adult education

funding and pass the Adult Education WORKS Act.

- **Honored supporters:** Governor Josh Shapiro, Senator Lindsey Williams, and PA State Representative Natalie Mihalek were recognized by NAFTE for their steadfast support of adult learners in Pennsylvania.
- **Received recognition:** Pittsburgh Mayor Corey O'Connor and County Executive Sara G. Innamorato both issued proclamations to acknowledge the importance of our work during Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.
- **Boosted volunteer recruitment:** During September, we highlighted our need for volunteer tutors in our communications, encouraging people to Build a Bridge to a Better Life for someone in our community.

Our efforts don't stop when the calendar page turns. We continue to work hard at building awareness of our students' needs and successes. You can help by [volunteering as a tutor](#), [donating](#), or [advocating for our work](#) with your elected officials.

One Big Table Is Back!



We are thrilled to bring back One Big Table: An International Tasting on **Thursday, March 18 at Nova Place!** More than a celebration, One Big Table supports Literacy Pittsburgh's mission of better lives through learning. Your participation helps adults in our community build the skills, confidence, and opportunities they need to create a brighter future.

Join us for this culturally immersive event featuring international cuisine, captivating entertainment, and diverse art forms. Get details and your tickets at onebigtablepgh.com,

Employer Partnership Opportunity: College and Career Pathways



Literacy Pittsburgh's students are motivated to succeed and create a better life for their families. As a College and Career Pathways partner, you can help them develop the skills and knowledge to become valued employees.

The College and Career Pathways program aligns our educational programs, student services, and college and career-oriented classes to create a seamless journey for our students from entry through graduation or goal completion. We help prepare students to gain the reading, writing, math, English language, and digital skills needed to transition directly into the workforce or to enroll in two-year, four-year, or certificate programs.

We seek employers and educational programs who can support our students' success in one or more of the following ways:

- Participate in college and career fairs
- Conduct on-site interviews
- Host info sessions, workshops, or events
- Visit a class
- Host a tour of your location
- Provide us with job openings
- Contribute to course content

- Mentor students interested in your field
- Employee training services (fee for service)

Visit the [College and Career Pathways section of our website](#) to learn more or contact Lori Como at lcomo@literacypittsburgh.org or (412) 393-7640 to explore ways your company can help.

Encourage Opportunity This October!



Literacy Pittsburgh welcomes fall and the new opportunities it brings.

For students like Mari, a new opportunity arrived unexpectedly. Mari came to Literacy Pittsburgh hoping to volunteer, but unforeseen circumstances led them to become a student. They began with Accounting Essentials and Excel Associate classes. After finishing both and still eager to learn

more, Mari took QuickBooks to build on their accounting knowledge.

Within a week of finishing their QuickBooks certification, Mari secured a job with The Education and Training Fund, where they are now flourishing. But Mari's journey didn't stop there. Today, they volunteer as a classroom aide for the same accounting class that started their journey, giving others the opportunity to learn and grow, just as they did.

Every gift helps create opportunities for students to learn new skills, pursue their goals, and build brighter futures. Your support this fall will help make journeys like Mari's possible and give students the chance to turn one opportunity into another.

[Make a gift today and help create more opportunities for adult learners in our community.](#)

From Pilot to Program: ERAS for Adults Expands Its Reach



Six months ago, Literacy Pittsburgh set out to answer a simple question: could a reading curriculum built for K-12 students help adult learners strengthen their foundational reading skills? Early feedback from instructors, adult learners, and volunteers suggests an encouraging yes.

ERAS (Empowering ReAders for Success) began as a program targeted to elementary-aged students. The school-based ERAS program, offered in partnership with OpenLiteracy, pairs volunteer tutors with students and uses a science-of-reading curriculum to identify each learner's reading needs and then provide targeted support. Since launching in 2024, the program has served many students across the Clairton School District, Catalyst Charter Academy, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the Environmental Charter School. The school-based ERAS program has delivered strong reading gains and glowing feedback from volunteers. [Keep reading](#)

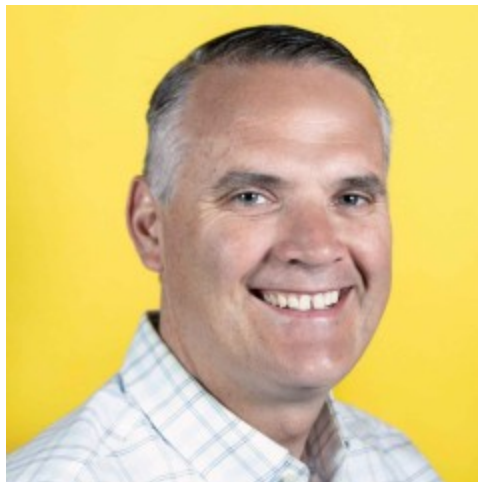
Celebrating Milestone Anniversaries

We are pleased to recognize three of our staff members for their dedicated service to Literacy Pittsburgh.



Najlaa Ebrahim
Student Support Specialist
20 years

Originally from Iraq, Najlaa has lived in the United States for nearly 30 years. Although she studied English before immigrating, communication proved challenging. She enrolled at Literacy Pittsburgh and spent two years as a student, later giving back as an English Language Learning (ELL) tutor for three years.



Alex Dow
Director of Data, Information, and Impact
25 years

Pittsburgh is a special place to Alex and he values the opportunities, institutions, and people who have helped he and his family over the years. "Literacy Pittsburgh is such a force for positivity and growth in Western Pennsylvania, he says. "It's an honor to work somewhere where I feel like I'm paying it forward by helping others build better lives for themselves and their families.



Shirley Rycleski
English Language Learning Instructor
5 years

“What I like best about working at Literacy Pittsburgh is being surrounded by such friendly, supportive, and caring colleagues,” Shirley explains. “I also love hearing about our students’ successes and accomplishments. It is rewarding to see how hard they work, celebrate their progress, and know that we are all contributing to their growth and success.”

[Keep reading to learn more about Najlaa, Alex, and Shirley.](#)

Welcome New Staff: September 2026

We are pleased to welcome the following new faces to our team:



Jasper Sachsenmeier

East Suburbs - Westmoreland Program
Coordinator



Tricia Bair

College and Career Readiness Instructor



Sarah Berry
Career Advisor



Muhammad Qasem Jami
Digital Skills Instructor



Abby Sawa

EL Civics/Partner Instructor



Marina Razgarina Family Literacy Instructor



Amy Reuveni
Tutoring Specialist

Sign Up for Our Next Introductory Tutor Training!

[Learn more](#) about becoming a volunteer adult literacy tutor and register for training.

Introductory Tutor Training: Teaching Adult Learners

Saturday, October 24
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Sewickley Public Library
500 Thorn St
Sewickley, PA 15143

Introductory Tutor Training: Teaching Adult Learners

Tuesday, November 3
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Christ Lutheran Church Millvale
917 Evergreen Avenue
Millvale, PA 15209

Why We Do the Work We Do

“I’m deeply grateful to all my teachers at Literacy Pittsburgh. Thanks to their dedication and the time they invested in me, I’ve been able to reach this important step in my journey.” **Literacy Pittsburgh Student**

Thank you to Highmark Wholecare for sponsorship of *The Spark Online*.



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