

Spring 2019

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The SPARK

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES SPARKED BY YOU!



Karmel Radan was honored with the 2019 Outstanding Student of the Year Award at a statewide conference in March. The Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education honored Karmel in recognition of the hardships she overcame to earn her diploma and start college.

STUDENT EARNS STATEWIDE HONOR

Karmel has a bright future thanks to you.

Karmel Radan endured many hardships in her life. She grew up in the foster care system and faced situations that no child should ever have to experience.

Because of your support of Literacy Pittsburgh, Karmel is forging a new path.

Her determination to overcome a difficult start in life earned Karmel the 2019 Outstanding Student of the Year Award from the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education. This award recognizes one student in the state who has overcome significant barriers to reach his or her goals while also demonstrating leadership in the classroom.

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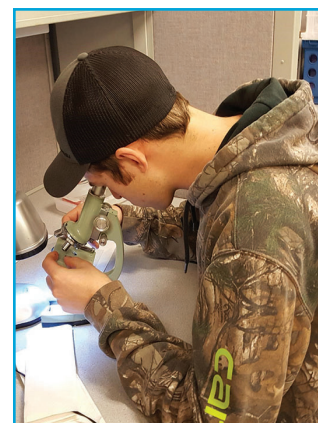
BEHIND THE SCENES: BEAVER COUNTY

Your support expands opportunities.

In July 2018, Literacy Pittsburgh expanded its services into Beaver County, taking over instruction formerly provided by Adult Literacy Action. Like Literacy Pittsburgh, Adult Literacy Action had a long history of serving its local community. It was initially founded in the 1970s as a volunteer-based program through a joint effort of Beaver

County's library system and the Lutheran church. In 1984, it opened an office at the Penn State Beaver campus and began offering classroom instruction.

Funding changes at the state level last year created instability for the organization and staff reached out to Literacy Pittsburgh for help.



Beaver County student Jahred examines slides during a lesson on the scientific method.

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NEWS FROM THE CEO

Your support fuels changes

Gaining and retaining employment remain primary goals for most of our students. Ensuring that our students are more relevant and ready for Pittsburgh's economic growth is my primary focus in the months ahead. To assist me with this goal, I have convened a transition committee made up of 13 stakeholders including three board members and leaders from Partner4Work, Allegheny County Community College, UPMC, Department of Human Services, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald's office, Mayor Bill Peduto's office, Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Jewish Family & Community Services, and Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

These leaders and partners have agreed to meet four times from March through June to help identify three to five strategic priorities for increasing Literacy Pittsburgh's impact on the region. In March, the group met for the

first time to review the current state of Literacy Pittsburgh's work including student population trends. (Did you know that more of our students are working when they enter our program? Or that 70 percent of students advance the equivalent of two grade levels after just 60 hours of instruction?)

At this meeting the committee began to consider opportunities and barriers for Literacy Pittsburgh to address the region's worker-skill gap. Future meetings will focus on internal and external alignment and resources needed to increase impact. The group will finalize a set of recommendations and investments at its final meeting in June, which will in turn inform the Literacy Pittsburgh board's next strategic plan and fundraising.

I thank you for your dedicated support of our students and look forward to sharing more in the coming months.

Carey A. Harris
Chief Executive Officer

STUDENT AWARD

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"Karmel was always happy to help out her classmates, and she also asked them for help when she needed it," explains Rachel Baron, who taught Karmel's math class.

As a child, Karmel was never permitted to attend school. However, she didn't let this stop her. Karmel taught herself to read and write with the only books in the house...the Bible and a set of encyclopedias.

The lack of a formal education coupled with scars from her abusive childhood made Karmel's adult life difficult—even day-to-day tasks like taking public transportation caused anxiety for her—and affected her entire outlook on life.

"I felt I wasn't good enough for an education, let alone smart enough," Karmel explains.

Karmel began studying for her high school equivalency diploma in 2017 at Literacy

"Literacy Pittsburgh is the safest roof I've ever been under."

Pittsburgh's downtown learning center, attending class four days per week with Instructor Kathy Scanlon. She also worked with Literacy Pittsburgh's Transitions Manager, Andrea Horton-Meriçli, to plan her future.

With this support, Karmel started to gain the confidence and education she had sought her entire life.

"Literacy Pittsburgh is the safest roof I've ever been under," Karmel shared during her award acceptance speech last month.

In July 2018, a mere ten months after enrolling, Karmel earned her high school equivalency diploma. In January, she began coursework at CCAC for biology. She hopes to attend the University of Pittsburgh in the future and become a dental hygienist.

"My ultimate goal in life, the reason why I have bettered myself and have gone through school, is so I can be the mother I want to be," Karmel explains. "I want to give my future children the childhood I never had." ●

BEHIND THE SCENES: BEAVER COUNTY

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A grant from the state, along with private funding from the PNC Foundation, allowed Literacy Pittsburgh to maintain quality literacy instruction in Beaver County without interruption.

Literacy Pittsburgh offers classes in Beaver, at CareerLink in the Beaver Valley Mall, and at the Beaver County Jail. Until last year, high school equivalency preparation comprised the bulk of the classes offered. Service has expanded to include English as a Second Language. Dislocated workers or those seeking to

enter postsecondary education can also receive math and reading remediation.

We have also revived the volunteer tutoring program in Beaver County and are recruiting individuals to teach English as a Second Language, and will soon expand to reading and math.

Literacy Pittsburgh works closely with CareerLink and Job Training of Beaver County to help individuals remove barriers to job success and create financial stability. Mary Leitao, Beaver County Program Manager, sits on the Beaver County Collaborative



Dylan, a high school equivalency student at our new Beaver County location, got a lesson in math when it was time to hang the Literacy Pittsburgh sign. Kudos to his instructor, Susan, for using real-life problem solving in the classroom.

Action Network to keep Literacy Pittsburgh connected to the area's trends and needs.

There are currently four staff members and fourteen volunteers serving students in Beaver County. Our goal

is to help 170 adult learners this year.

With your continued support, we hope to grow services even further in order to help residents fully participate in the county's expected job growth and economic boom. ●

Meet Gloria, a Beaver County GED grad, on page 4!



What will you **ACHIEVE** this year?

What will our students **ACHIEVE** because of you?

Kaci DREAMS of owning a restaurant.

William DREAMS of becoming a carpenter.

Jessica DREAMS of becoming a veterinary technician and bettering the future for her children.

Help Literacy Pittsburgh's students DREAM BIG!
Visit www.literacypittsburgh.org/dream

GLORIA REACHES HER GOAL WITH YOUR HELP

"I wanted to make my mom proud."

When Gloria Torres was a teen, her mom became seriously ill, and Gloria took on the responsibility of caring for her.

"I never really tried to work on school because I was too busy worrying if [my mom] was okay," Gloria

However, more than anything, Gloria knew she wanted to make her mom proud. Last March, she enrolled in prep classes for her high school equivalency diploma. She attended classes taught by a staff instructor two

"I hope to go to school to obtain my RN degree. Taking care of my mom when she was sick made me realize I loved caring for people and helping to make them happy and comfortable."

explains. She dropped out in 10th grade.

"When my mom passed away when I was 16, I completely gave up and lost hope of ever finishing school," Gloria remembers. "Dealing with my grief was a big obstacle I had to overcome."

evenings a week.

"The best part was realizing I wasn't the only one who struggled in high school," Gloria explains.

In August 2018, Gloria earned her high school equivalency diploma. Her whole family attended Literacy Pittsburgh's



Gloria Torres, pictured with Beaver County Program Manager Mary Leitao, earned her diploma in August 2018. Her extended family proudly attended Literacy Pittsburgh's graduation ceremony to cheer her on.

graduation ceremony that fall.

One year after Gloria attended her first GED preparation class, she was hired as a caregiver for The Delta Group. She has now set her sights on continuing her education so she can become a registered nurse.

"Taking care of my mom when she was sick made me realize I loved caring for people and helping to make them happy and comfortable."

Gloria credits the help and encouragement she received at Literacy Pittsburgh for helping her reach her goal.

"I am especially grateful to Susan for believing in me and helping me to believe in myself," Gloria shares. "She made such an impact on my life. I can never thank her enough." ●



One year after Gloria enrolled in high school equivalency prep classes, she got a job that will launch her dream career in healthcare!