



**CONGRATULATIONS  
CLASS OF 2008!**

# Literacy Link

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## **Literacy Council Graduates Number 100**

Just four years ago, a young mother from the Literacy Council's first formal GED class earned a Maryland state high school diploma. Since then, 105 more adults have joined the ranks of "high school graduates" with help from the Literacy Council's Basic Skills & GED classes and External Diploma Program. On June 12, 2008, that was great cause for celebration.

Cheers of congratulations and tears of joy filled the Literacy Council graduation ceremony, where 25 students were applauded by a standing-room only crowd of families, friends, teachers, advisors, and a community leaders and supporters.

Triscina Grey, host of WHUR's Café 96, delivered the keynote address. Council Member Will Campos, Delegate Justin Ross, Roni Nudelman, State Senator Paul Pinsky and Michael Herman, Chief of Staff for the Prince George's County Executive, attended the ceremony and extended their support and congratulations to the graduates.

Each student had traveled a unique path to earn their high school diploma. Some had been out of the classroom for decades and wanted to complete the task they began so long ago; others had been in the workforce for years and wanted to gain the credibility that a high school diploma affords.

While the life stories and obstacles overcome by each graduate varied, one of the common threads through their experiences was the unwavering support that they received from their families, and the attention and encouragement that their teachers and advisors offered along their journeys.

In addition to providing academic instruction, our teachers called students when they missed class, helped students stay connected to the program when medical and family emergencies arose, and showed genuine interest and concern about students' lives.

When we build adult literacy programs that are caring and respectful, student persistence increases and participation intensifies. These graduates are living examples of this!

## **Director's Corner**

Everyone associated with the Literacy Council has a right to be proud. Our students are succeeding! Every day I see new evidence and hear stories that show how Literacy Council activities are enriching our students' lives and expanding their potential to be successful community contributors.

Recently, I found myself smiling from deep inside as a previously reluctant student confided that at night, as he lay in bed, he reflected on the wonder of his increasing capacity to succeed. "I know I can do it!" he now says.

And I know one reason why. Every day I also see new examples of teachers, staff, and community members expressing the ingenuity, compassion, and persistence that encourages and supports these successful outcomes.

This issue of *Literacy Link* opens a window for the entire community to see a few ways the Literacy Council is using teachers' talents and local resources to create a learning community that strengthens each student.

We trust you will find inspiration from the contributions included and will want to share your own stories in the next issue.

*Gail Drake*



Literacy Council of  
Prince George's County, MD, Inc.

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## Student Successes

### *Literacy Council Student Achievements*

*Each milestone that Literacy Council students reach, each competency attained, and each personal goal achieved is encouraging to us all -- students, teachers, tutors, staff, and supporters. Please continue to share stories or achievements like these that will continue to inspire our work.*

**Twenty-five** adult learners celebrated earning their high school diplomas by successfully completing the External Diploma Program or passing the GED exam at the June 2008 graduation.

**Willie** read in public for the first time at the Literacy Council's open-mic. Overall, nearly 30 adult learners participated.

**Roxanne** earned a 2008 Student Award from the Maryland Association for Adult Community and Continuing Education.

**Marlon** successfully completed all coursework to become a certified personal trainer with American Fitness Professionals & Associates.

**Naomi** completed a nursing course and became a Certified Nursing Assistant.

**Luz, Cristela, Rosa and Oluchi** became U.S. citizens.

**Marlene** attended a parent-teacher conference without a translator for the first time.

**Amelework**, who is enrolled in our Pre-GED level class, passed the Montgomery Community College Placement Test.

**Amare** met with University of Maryland counselors to get his degrees evaluated and translated. He is now able to attend school at a Masters Degree level.

**Reginald** used classroom lessons on angles to help calculate dimensions on an air duct job.

**Lupita** took the driver's test, encouraged by the progress she made in speaking and reading English after attending language classes for six months.

**Francisco** improved his speaking abilities considerably through hard work, listening to English language radio, and working with his more fluent family members. One indication of his progress and confidence was that he changed his business voice mail answer from a relative's voice to his own.

## Bright Idea: Telephone Pals

### *An Interview with Nancy Burphy about Telephone Pals*

*Nancy Burphy is a business management consultant, operating her own NTB Management Consulting Services firm. She has been teaching adult education classes for two-and-a-half years.*

*In January 2008, she began developing and using the Telephone Pals System, structured telephone conversations based on current lesson plans with volunteer tutors, to help learners in her ESOL classes improve their speech, develop self-esteem, and make an American friend.*

#### **Why did you start using Telephone Pals in your ESOL class?**

My students were improving in writing, but I could not see the same level of improvement in speaking. So, I asked them to bring in the name of one of their American, English-speaking friends with whom they could practice their English. That's when I found that 90% of my students didn't have such an acquaintance! They were mingling with people from their home-countries after class and speaking their native languages, so their English speaking skills and impressions of American culture were very limited.

#### **How does the Telephone Pals System work in your class?**

First, I encourage students to share long-term goals and short-term goals that are realistic, measurable, and achievable. It's so important to know the students and to match them with a pal that has similar goals or has achieved these goals.

Students talk with their telephone pals about anything from food and cultural activities to how to get around town. The conversations are informal, but they do have to fit into what's going on in the classroom. I set the parameters for the conversation by regularly sending the pals synopses of the lesson plans.

#### **How have your students been affected by it?**

I started using the system to help my students enhance their speaking skills, but there have been so many unanticipated benefits. I truly was not prepared for what happened. Students were essentially getting one-on-one tutoring through their Telephone Pals, so they began speaking English with confidence and pride. Their vocabulary increased and they were willing to speak out without the fear of someone laughing at them. And, on the personal level, they really developed positive friendships with their Telephone Pals.

*Interested in using Telephone Pals or any of the "Bright Ideas" in your class? Let Jill know if she can help you get started!*



Name Plates & Flowers



Rappin' Teachers



End of Semester Celebrations

#### **1. Name Plates & Flowers:**

One ESOL teacher uses name plates to help students feel welcome and successful from the first moment they walk into class.

#### **2. Rappin' Teachers:**

Two of our teachers "wax poetic" as they recite an original rap to help motivate adult learners.

#### **3. Semester Celebrations:**

Many teachers use these gatherings to encourage students to post-test and celebrate their successes.

# My Voice, My Word

## Student Poetry

### Monday

Monday I walk in  
to gain a lot of knowledge.  
I have much to learn.

— Monday Reading Clinic

### I Believe in Learning

I believe in learning.  
In this I believe.

I believe in this because  
Reading opens doors to the world.

I believe in learning because  
It opens your mind to different  
thoughts and ideas.

I believe in coming to class.  
It takes a team effort to improve  
our understanding.

I believe in working hard.  
It builds my confidence to accom-  
plish my goals.

I believe in learning.  
In this I believe.

— Oxon Hill Reading Class

### To My Mother, OH MOM!

Bambara woman, woman of Mali!  
You who gave me birth.  
You who taught me to walk.  
You who taught me to talk.  
I think about you.

Woman of the market.  
Woman of the kitchen.  
Woman of the farm.  
I think about you.

You were never tired.  
— Mamadou Kone

### Wednesday

Wednesday is my day  
I drive to my tutor's house  
There I learn to read

— Wayne White

### Welcome

Welcome aboard, welcome into  
the train of a lot of people who  
speak different languages but have  
one goal.

Don't be afraid because you just  
boarded it.

Don't be afraid because you speak  
a different language.

Don't be afraid because you  
might say something wrong.

Don't be afraid to talk to the  
other passengers on board

because you think they know  
more about this train than you.

The ride might be very long,  
but don't get off along the way.

You might get tired of being on  
this train, but don't give up.

This train is maybe not as fast  
as you want it to be but it is the  
most safe. That train is the Eng-  
lish learners train, driven by the  
Literacy Council.

— Lassina Borimbia

### The Places You Go!

Congratulations if you smile at  
someone.

Congratulations if you say hello to  
somebody.

If you do those simple things to  
someone the world will be better.

If you get involved in those things  
then life will be great.

Today is your day if you say hello  
to somebody.

Congratulations.

— Lydia Bano



A few of the  
30 student poets  
who read  
original poems  
or selections from  
favorite authors  
at the  
Literacy Council's  
first open-mic.

# My Voice, My Word

## Student Poetry

### My Goal

Not my gold around my neck  
But my goal to success

High expectations I set  
On my journey to be the best

Nothing more, nothing less  
Right or wrong I will accept

If I fall on the first  
I get up and claim the rest

‘Cause my goal to success  
Is more important than the rest.  
— *Jeff Butler, Class of 2008*

### To Be Alone

To be alone.

What does that really mean?  
Is it to be in the middle of people  
I don't know?

Or, is it only when I am homesick?  
Or, is it an opportunity to reflect  
that nobody is really alone?

You just need to be friendly  
with the person next to you,  
And you'll see life is different.

Yes, as the people next to you.  
Yes, as the family you miss.

Everybody is different,  
Different opinions.  
Different colors and behaviors.

See....

Maybe you've never been alone.  
— *Nery Alvaro*

### English is a Difficult Language

English is a difficult language to learn.  
That is why you need to go to school to understand.

It is important to learn English,  
How to write, speak, understand and read.

Never give-up, keep learning.  
I know that it is hard when you are beginning.

English will open a lot of doors.  
You will be happier than before.  
— *Fidel Flores*

### If You Are Learning English

If you are learning English don't feel bad and frustrated;  
English is not difficult as you see.  
Use your brain and you will succeed!

Sometimes you will think that you are not learning,  
but only wasting time.  
You need to be positive, change your mind.

Life will be different if you learn how to speak English,  
and you can say exactly what you need.  
Work hard and you will learn how to read.

Listen to the radio in English and soon you'll understand.  
You are a smart person, do as much as you can.

You should never skip English class.  
Don't put your future in the trash.

Never give-up. Keep learning English if you want to go far in life.  
With all your English knowledge, don't be surprised!  
— *Marlene Machado*

## It Takes a Village



Paty Molina is a student from El Salvador, who came to the Literacy Council in her final two months of residency in the U.S. Using her office skills and strengthening her English speaking skills as well, Paty volunteered more than 100 hours by helping with student registration and outreach, the Volunteer Appreciation Brunch, and general office work.

Without the support of tutors, donors, community partners, and volunteers like Paty, the Literacy Council would be unable to carry out its program. We thank you all!

We would especially like to highlight organizations and groups that made financial contributions in spring/summer 2008:

The Herb Block Foundation  
Barbara Bush Foundation  
Central Prince George's County  
Community Development Corp.  
Clark-Winchcole Foundation  
ProLiteracy/Dollar General  
Accountability Initiative  
LeadershipCares  
Office of Eric Olson  
Office of Camille Exum  
Office of Thomas Dernoga

## The National External Diploma Program

Helen Ottley, *EDP Coordinator -- Literacy Council*

Back in the 1970s, in the state of New York, it was noticed that there was a section of the population who didn't have high school diplomas, and who were not enrolled in adult high school, night school or GED classes. After conducting a survey, it became apparent that the reasons were fairly standard: lack of evening child care, inability to sit through class twice a week, dislike of classroom situations, or fear of exams.

Consequently, the state of New York gave birth to a program that would enable these adults to get their high school diplomas. The National External Diploma Program allows adults to work at their own pace, meet weekly with their assessor in a one-to-one situation at a mutually convenient time, have no exam to pass, and to be assured of privacy and confidentiality.

In 2007, the Literacy Council opened its doors to adults who wanted to enroll in the program. In a mere 18 months, the EDP has increased the graduate population by 39 and opened up a whole new world for these adults whose lives have forever been changed. Read more about the EDP program at [www.literacycouncil.org/edprelections](http://www.literacycouncil.org/edprelections).

*Is there a student in your class who might qualify for the EDP program? Call 301.699.9770 for details about the October EDP Registration.*

## Psst! Tips to Use for Your Job Search

Sylvia Green, *Volunteer Tutor -- Literacy Council*

Now that you are looking for a job, what are some resources on the web that can help you out? Let's talk about the country's largest website for part-time and full-time hourly jobs: [Snagajob.com](http://Snagajob.com)

At [Snagajob.com](http://Snagajob.com), find out who's hiring by just putting in your zipcode. Once you do that, you can narrow your job search by selecting a radius of up to 20 miles, specific city, or company name.

You can also sign up for emails for when new jobs in your zipcode are announced. I found this a useful tool. You get emails on job openings at the large companies like UPS, Kohl's, Home Depot, and Verizon. It is a good way to keep informed of where the jobs are and also of what new businesses are opening in your neighborhood.

A lot of the job openings require you to go to the company website to apply. Your application normally goes to the headquarters of the corporation; sometimes it gets referred on to local sites. Usually you can find out the status of your application by visiting a local site and letting them know that you applied by the internet. If a few months pass and you haven't heard from the company, reapply to help keep your application current. Good luck on the job hunt!

## What's *Right* with Prince George's County?

Ron Yudd, Founder -- LeadershipCares

There are plenty of wonderful and caring young adults in Prince George's County and they are busy making a huge difference in the lives of others. This school year a group of caring high school leaders that are part of the MentorCares Program at Northwestern High School in Hyattsville created and participated in an exciting new concept in helping others learn to read.

They partnered with Rosa Parks Elementary to set up Saturday morning reading and tutoring sessions for kindergartners, first graders, and second graders. Parents of the elementary students were required to participate in the sessions.

The MentorCares students received training from a very passionate team of reading specialists from Rosa Parks lead by Ms. Karen Matthews. The high school leaders learned how to conduct various lessons that were part of several reading stations that the young students and their parents rotated through during the sessions. They worked on many aspects of reading--vowel sounds, rhyming words, spelling, guided reading and many other activities geared to build confidence and make reading fun!

The results: The MentorCares students, along with their Rosa Parks partners, have created a program that they are all very excited about growing and expanding in the next school year.



The little ones and their parents are hungry for more sessions! Even more exciting is the fact that several of the high school students now want to become teachers and focus on literacy. The even bigger picture is that this type of program is helping to create the next generation of literacy volunteers.

These passionate and caring young people have learned how they can have a powerful impact on the lives of others simply by giving of themselves a couple of hours on a Saturday morning.

Thanks to young caring leaders that decided to make a difference, there are good things happening in Prince George's County!

Since 1998, LeadershipCares has operated three outreach programs in mentoring, literacy training, and hunger relief. Learn more about this important work at [www.leadershipcares.org](http://www.leadershipcares.org).

*Thanks to the persistence of Leadership Cares and the Rosa Parks Elementary staff, the Literacy Council will offer a fall English for Parents class at the school.*

## Where in the County

Fall 2008 Class Sites

### Basic Skills & Diploma Prep Sites

- Hyattsville Middle School
- Literacy Council Office
- Morningside Elementary
- One-Stop Career Center
- Oxon Hill Church
- Salvation Army
- Southminster Presby. Church
- Sports & Learning Complex

### English Class Sites

- Beltsville Library
- Berwyn Heights Elementary
- Deerfield Run Elementary
- Greenbelt Library
- Hyattsville Middle School
- James McHenry Elementary
- Literacy Council Office
- Oak Ridge Apartments
- Rosa Parks Elementary
- University of Maryland
- University Park Elementary
- Yorktown Elementary

### Family Literacy Sites

- Berwyn Heights Elementary
- James McHenry Elementary

*Most sites offer a range of classes, from beginning to advanced.*

*Visit [www.literacycouncil.org](http://www.literacycouncil.org) throughout the semester for any changes to the class sites listing.*

# Three Ways to Support Literacy this Fall



**Save up to 20% at Macy's**  
on Saturday, September 20th  
when you make a  
\$5 donation to the  
Literacy Council.

[www.literacycouncil.org/shop](http://www.literacycouncil.org/shop)

## CELEBRATE LIFE

*one word at a time*

### **10th Annual Awards Banquet & Silent Auction**

**Thursday, October 2nd**

Newton White Mansion  
Mitchellville, MD

\$25 Literacy Council Students  
\$35 General Admission

[www.literacycouncil.org/awards](http://www.literacycouncil.org/awards)

## Barnes & Noble BOOKFAIR



*Join us for special events throughout  
the day. A percentage of the net sales  
will be donated to the Literacy Council.*

**Saturday, October 4th**

2:00 - 4:00 PM

Barnes & Noble

Bowie Town Center

[www.literacycouncil.org](http://www.literacycouncil.org)

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