

LINKS TO LITERACY

SERVING ADULT BASIC LITERACY AND ESL STUDENTS IN CENTRE & CLEARFIELD COUNTIES

Happy 50th Anniversary Mid-State Literacy Council!

AMY WILSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MID-STATE LITERACY COUNCIL



Thousands of faces of program participants and literacy supporters are in our memories of the past 50 years. We treasure your contributions and achievements. Mid-State Literacy Council was founded by volunteers who recognized the need for literacy in our community. There are highlights of progress, students laughing while they enjoy working with their tutors, and adults obtaining jobs. We thank everyone who shares in the Mid-State Literacy Council experience. Please celebrate 50 years of literacy with gifts of your time volunteering at Mid-State Literacy Council.

upcoming EVENTS

22nd Ron and Mary Maxwell

Community Spelling Bee

Wednesday, August 4, 6:00pm

<https://youtu.be/75V7o9up16Q>

New Volunteer

Zoom Training

Monday, August 30

Wednesday, September 1

Friday, September 3

10:00 – 11:30 am

Volunteers attend all sessions. Sessions will be recorded for anyone who can't attend.

Literacy for Life: Computer Skills for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Education sessions will be scheduled throughout the Fall and Spring

Mid-State Literacy Council Online Auction Fundraiser

October 1-17

Details forthcoming at
mid-stateliteracycouncil.org

MSLC Book Fair

Saturday, November 20

Author and Shop In-Store event
Barnes & Noble, State College

director's NOTES

A Monumental Year

AMY WILSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MID-STATE LITERACY COUNCIL



Together, volunteers and literacy supporters fueled the success of adults learning reading, computer skills, and English. Because of you, we could provide outreach, classes, and one-to-one tutoring. An adult who

learned at the literacy council for five years in classes and one-to-one tutoring achieved the skills to enroll at Penn State. While working, he takes classes and will graduate from Penn State in May 2022. He says thank you for making sure he had a place to learn literacy.

Our health literacy program helps families access and understand healthcare. Students learn to recognize symptoms, access emergency services, and follow aftercare instructions. Mount Nittany Health is supporting our instructional lessons to help community members with chronic illness. CCUW Women's Leadership Group supported Literacy for Life: Computer Skills for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. A grandmother was concerned that her grandchild was not learning to read in school. She received help and learned what her child should be accomplishing and how to access additional help for him. Our dream is that no one lacks literacy so everyone can access a life of safety, realized goals, and community participation. The Hamer Foundation helped us maintain education programs. Thank you.

This year community members prepared for the U.S. Naturalization Test with help from our volunteer tutors. A deep understanding of civics and competent English skills led to passing scores. We heard that a celebration included chocolates for all.

Finally, please know that you make a difference. During this year's celebration of the 50th anniversary of Mid-State Literacy Council, we hope that you will honor your gifts of literacy. Historically, literacy councils were designed on the premise of each one, teach one. As adults learn, they share their knowledge and skills. You are creating a legacy. We celebrate the gift of literacy and thank you.

Centre Gives Raises \$26,775.07 for Mid-State Literacy Council

Our literacy donors made this year's Centre Gives a huge success for Mid-State Literacy Council. The \$26,775.07 raised as part of the Centre Gives event and direct donations will enable us to continue providing literacy instruction and programs to those in our community who need them. Your support will help us make a difference in the lives of these adults by bringing vital skills to their lives.

Thank you, donors, for your support!

2021 Ruth C. Kistler Service Award Honors The Hamer Foundation

Supporting expanded outreach and literacy instruction in both Centre and Clearfield counties, The Hamer Foundation is highlighted in 2021 with the Ruth C. Kistler Service Award. Ruth, now 97, appreciates and thanks The Hamer Foundation for their vision and impact providing literacy services. Literacy is a powerful force and practical solution; literacy helps our neighbors communicate, work, and thrive.

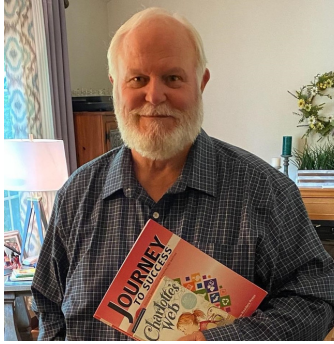
MSLC's Rose Cologne Volunteer of the Year, Chris Weaver, shares...

"I was introduced to the team at the Mid-State Literacy Council while volunteering my time and expertise as part of a local group that works with non-profit organizations to improve their brand and digital presence. I quickly realized the passion and commitment of the team at the Mid-State Literacy Council and just how deeply they care about serving their community and empowering individuals through increased literacy and communication skills. Personally, I can't imagine navigating life without the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively. It's a pleasure to help the team at the Mid-State Literacy Council in any way that I can".

Thank you, Chris, for being an important part of Mid-State Literacy Council!

Paired to Learn: Perspectives of a New Tutor and Student

BECKY MASON, LITERACY COORDINATOR



Roland:

Roland has a Master's degree in Education from Penn State and did his thesis on learning strategies. He has worked with dyslexic adults as a volunteer instructor with a learning center. Tim and Roland were paired together in February 2021. Roland's education and experience enables him to quickly identify Tim's reading challenges and to work on finding solutions. "It's like playing a game of chess," said Roland, "you have to adjust the teaching strategy to address the deficiencies that pop up." He wants Tim to have a meaningful strategy to decode words out of the reading context. Tim frequently chooses the right word when he is reading a book in context, but he has difficulty when the words are not supported by the storyline. Roland has Tim stop, think, and analyze a word he does not know instead of guessing at it.

Roland views reading as fundamental to everything we do in life and operates from that perspective. We all must take a test at some time in our lives: in school, to get a driver's license, to get into college, or for vocational training. The level of reading varies as you go, but reading is a key part of success in life. Having the desire to work hard and improve your reading is more important than anyone's innate ability, he says. That is the perspective he brings to his tutoring, and it is reflected in the early progress he is making with Tim. He says that Tim is a fun guy with heightened perception so the answers he gives are always interesting, and sometimes amusing.



Tim:

Tim is focused on increasing his reading and writing skills. He knows that these skills will help him achieve his goal of getting a better job, but he is more motivated by a personal objective. He is writing a novel that he wants to finish in 2021! Tim says that his reading is better, which has been noted by a Strawberry Fields volunteer who assists Tim with his tutoring homework. Tim says that Roland is "teaching him tricks to help with his reading skills." He finds Roland cool and interesting. They have some things in common, one of which is Batman. The pair is reading a graphic novel, *Batman Overdrive*, to reinforce the reading skills and strategies Tim is learning.

Tim also enjoys poetry. Roland has found a unique way to tap into Tim's creative side. He must write and read a haiku poem to Roland each week. I had the privilege of hearing his latest after a week of stormy summer days:

"The thunderstorm came. It was very loud. It is gone today."

After meeting with the pair, it is noticeably clear how much they enjoy their time reading together and learning from each other. This is what tutoring is all about!

Reading is a Lifeline

BECKY MASON, LITERACY COORDINATOR



Bringing books to people of all ages is a great way to keep them reading. The past year brought this objective into greater focus for the Mid-State Literacy Council as schools moved to remote learning and adults were asked to remain at home as much as possible. This situation eliminated one of our primary channels of book distribution-- school district summer reading programs. New books collected through our annual Barnes & Noble book fair and gently used book donations from individuals and local organizations, including Altrusa International of Centre County, Grace Lutheran Church, and Meals on Wheels, needed to go out to children and adults. Fortunately, we were able to connect with the Moshannon YMCA, which has generously filled the gap with a summer reading program and mobile library. Events are being held throughout the summer at various locations in Centre County to help reduce summer reading loss among school-age children. To encourage reading, children are invited to pick out their own books. Parents can also select adult-level books to enjoy.

Mid-State Literacy Council staff also distributed books to other local non-profits, including Housing Transitions and Out of the Cold, to create or supplement reading libraries for their clients. New libraries were created at various low-income housing locations in the area. Books are also available through the Computer Literacy for Grandparents program in Centre and Clearfield Counties. We are proud to know that we can keep the reading lifeline alive.

Computer Literacy for Grandparents: Learning Remotely

BECKY MASON, LITERACY COORDINATOR

The need for computer literacy became more evident as the communication landscape evolved through the summer and fall of 2020 into 2021. We recognized that grandparents were relying on technology for many essential tasks during the COVID pandemic in addition to raising grandchildren. Local seniors were relying on computer technology to keep in touch with family, connect with medical providers, and buy groceries while remaining safe from the virus at home. Fall and Spring semesters included one-to-one tutoring and group sessions in zoom. Despite the challenge zoom presented for some participants, we were successful in having groups of participants motivated to learn. Instruction was provided to participants about computer hardware and software, searching the internet and social media, and cell phones and mobile applications. Presentations offered tips and information that the seniors could explore. Said one student, "I think one of the best things I learned were the mobile apps for seniors. I saw several that I will definitely download and use. The magnifier was a great tip that I did not know about." PSECU provided a session on scams and identity theft that was very well received. Participants were grateful to have the learning offered in a remote setting and in the words of one "I really liked the zoom platform and being able to participate from home. It was super convenient."

As senior centers and other public settings begin to open, we are optimistic about offering in-person computer literacy programs again in the fall at locations in Centre and Clearfield counties. We are working with the managers of low-income housing in Centre County and the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging to coordinate these programs. Going forward, we recognize that computer technology is here to stay, and we want the seniors in our community to have the tools and knowledge to use it effectively.

Finding Hope



In 2017, Seher and her family moved from their home in Turkey, to Orlando, Florida, where they were surrounded by a large Turkish community. Two years later, their daughter, Hafsa, was accepted into an undergraduate program at Penn State. Thrilled by the opportunity, the family packed up and moved to State College. However, when the tuition bill came, they were unable to afford it and she had to withdraw. Family bonds were strained as they started to wonder whether they had made a mistake by moving. Seher felt alone and had few people to talk to. She quickly realized that in order to create the life she wanted for herself and her family, she would need to improve her English. She asked Hafsa to accompany her to Mid-State Literacy Council to inquire about classes. When they entered the office, they were greeted warmly by a staff member who helped Seher register and also provided a welcome wagon of community information. Seher quickly got involved in the MSLC community, taking classes and working with a tutor twice a week.

A special bond formed with one of her teachers, Ann, who took a passionate interest in Seher and her family and introduced them to opportunities to get involved in the community, including volunteering with the AAUW. Through this connection, the family learned about academic scholarships the organization offers to qualified women in the community. Seher's family was filled with hope as they considered what this could mean for Hafsa's dream of pursuing higher education.

Hafsa applied for the scholarship and was selected! In Hafsa's words, Ann was "the rolling wheel that started life again" for her and her family. "She [Ann] didn't know or judge me, she just saw me as human" and wanted to help. Seher is very proud of her daughter and grateful for the opportunities that MSLC brought to both of them. Hafsa plans to volunteer at MSLC in the future after being inspired by another volunteer. In turn, she is an inspiration for her younger siblings who currently attend State College High School.

Mid-State Literacy Council provided the literacy support, friendship, and hope the family needed to move through their struggles. Now, they know they belong in this community and have a bright future ahead of them.

No Teaching Experience? No English Degree? No Problem.

ERIKA REUTZEL-BECHTEL, ESL SPECIALIST

A top priority of Mid-State Literacy Council is to ensure that everyone who volunteers in our English as a Second Language (ESL) program receives the training and on-going support necessary to be successful. While respecting our volunteers' time, we offer a robust training program designed to make this possible.

Every semester, new volunteers take part in three interactive sessions guided by our Training Team in which they are introduced to agency procedures, the types of students they will work with, as well as key principles and methods for teaching ESL.

After they begin their teaching or tutoring, volunteers are invited to participate in Instructional Support Sessions which are offered throughout the semester and facilitated by Training Team members. In these sessions, volunteers have the opportunity to connect with each other, talk about their experiences, trouble-shoot challenges, and exchange good teaching resources and ideas.

This Fall, we are excited to offer a new session, *What about Culture? In Language Teaching and Learning*, where ESL volunteers and students can openly explore their observations about culture and communication and the qualities and practices that facilitate meaning-making across cultural boundaries.

So, whether you are a retired administrator, an undergraduate Biology major, or a yoga teacher with a passion for travel, as long as you have a desire to serve and a few hours per week to give, please consider volunteering with us. We are committed to providing the support you need to have a mutually rewarding experience with an English language learner in our community.

Thank you, Volunteers, for your time!
MSLC reaches so many because of your
willingness to give your time.

our MISSION

The Mid-State Literacy Council is a non-profit group providing adult education instruction in Centre and Clearfield counties. We offer basic literacy, English as a Second Language, and health literacy services to adults in need of the essential skills to navigate their daily lives.

MSLC team

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our financial supporters:



The Hamer Foundation
Mount Nittany Health
Diane V. Moore Memorial Fund

Health Literacy

JENNIFER WALTER, ESL COORDINATOR

Healthcare in the United States is confusing even when English is your first language. There are vocabulary and acronyms that are specific to each aspect of healthcare and learning to ask the right questions is challenging. So much of the information we need is on our healthcare provider's website, which requires one to be computer-savvy. English language learners also need to navigate their second language and understand the United States' healthcare culture. Mid-State Literacy Council is here to bridge the gap and offers English for Doctors Visits, and Women's and Men's Health classes to help our ESL students learn the English words and American culture around using healthcare. Classes and one-to-one tutoring include information on screenings and chronic disease management.

We also invite the community to join us for special topic sessions including heart, eye, and mental health. We are developing a session on digital health literacy to help people navigate reliable online resources and monitor their fitness through technology. Continual education on healthcare topics is beneficial for individuals and our community. Thank you, Mount Nittany Health, for supporting health literacy at Mid-State Literacy Council.

**A Special thanks to Rapid Transit, King-Bee donor
for the 22nd Ron & Mary Maxwell Community Spelling Bee!**



Building a Legacy with Ruth Kistler

BY SARA YI



50 years ago, Ruth Kistler decided to provide a permanent learning environment where adults could improve their literacy and not be ashamed to seek help. As volunteers and students can see today, Ruth accomplished this goal and now students are even becoming teachers at Mid-State Literacy Council in

the hope of giving back. This goes to show, in Ruth's own words, that "such small beginnings can touch the lives of so many people." No matter the reason for their enrollment, learners can now seek an education because of the numerous volunteers and teachers who hope to uphold Ruth's message for many more years to come.