

The READ Center

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For Immediate Release

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National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week raises awareness of a forgotten community problem

One in Seven Adults in the Richmond area has literacy issues

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While most adults learned to read in elementary school, there is a significant number across the nation and in our community who did not. Today in the U.S, there are an estimated 36 million adults who cannot read, write or do basic math above a third grade level. Low literacy cost the U.S. at least \$225 billion each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.

Consider one in seven people in the Richmond metro area cannot read this sentence. According to the US Census, about 12% of Henrico County's and 11% of Chesterfield County's populations lack a high school diploma or GED, a reliable proxy indicator of literacy issues. In the City of Richmond's 18% of adults do not have a high school education. Low literacy adults would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to read and understand this article, their mail, prescriptions or a job application. Every day is a struggle.

The READ Center is a non-profit community based organization that offers free classes and one-to-one tutoring for people aged eighteen and over who have low-level literacy skills. The READ Center's thirteen classes meet twice each week at nine area locations. READ also has a one-to-one tutoring program.

"National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week helps raise awareness of a very difficult issue. There are a lot of adults in our community who cannot read well enough to function in today's world," says Executive Director Karen La Forge.

"READ is significantly expanding its one-to-one tutoring program over the next four years. We will more than double the number of adults READ serves with a goal to reach more young adults and parents of young children. Young people do not realize just how hard life will be if they cannot read or write well. Add being a parent who cannot support their children's education and the cycle of family illiteracy continues."

Adult literacy intersects with almost every socioeconomic issue—parenting, health, workforce development, and poverty. Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. Adult education can break the cycle of family illiteracy and poverty by giving adults the skills they need to be successful as workers and parents.

For more than 32 years, The READ Center has helped adults develop basic reading and communication skills so they can better fulfill their roles as citizens, workers, and family members. For more information about The READ Center and volunteer tutor opportunities, www.readcenter.org or 804-288-9930

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Everyone needs and deserves a literate life.