

## Read Between the Wines: A Spirited Celebration of Literacy

Dean Turner grew emotional as he spoke of his father while reading from *Writing Our Way Out: Memoirs from Jail*. Dean and his fellow authors shared their stories with guests at READ's first annual Read Between the Wines event on September 27, 2017. Friends of READ, old and new, gathered together at The Renaissance to learn more about adult literacy, The READ Center, and meet the authors. The event was generously sponsored

by Bon Secours, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Sands Anderson, and John Daylor of Joyner Fine Properties.

**Pictured below:** 1) Authors Kelvin Belton, Dean Turner, Terence Scruggs, and Dave Coogan, 2) Becky Clay Christensen of Bon Secours, Sam Baronian, READ President, Karen La Forge, READ Executive Director, Jean Parnell of Bon Secours, 3) Charles Brim, Lew Hendrick, Chanel Lewis, READ Center Teacher, Kevin Monteiro, 4) Of Sands Anderson: Grace and Ed McNelis, Jennifer Yeager, Ray Rodriguez, and Frank McCormick, READ Center Board Member, 5) Toris and Derick Richardson



View more photos at  
[facebook.com/  
TheREADCenter](https://www.facebook.com/TheREADCenter)

# Letters from The

September 24—September 30, 2017 was Adult Education & Family Literacy Week. READ Center students, tutors, and teachers submitted letters to the Editor of The Richmond Times-Dispatch. Two were published—you can view them in the news section of our website. The rest are included here for your inspiration.

## Begin!

by Diane Chaplin  
READ's longest serving  
volunteer tutor

"If you think you can do it, begin it! Begin and the mind grows heated. Begin, and the task is completed." These motivational words by Goethe popped into my mind at just the right moment. I was struggling with writer's block, as I pondered the best way to describe the positive impact that The READ Center and the fantastic students at READ have had on my own life during my sixteen years as a tutor here.

Funny, how it took so long for those inspirational words to manifest themselves to me. Until they did, the best I could come up with was the well-worn phrase, "where do I begin?" Students here at READ often tell me that, for them, getting started is the hardest part of writing.

"Let go of the 'death grip' you have on your pencil," I tell them, and "let your thoughts flow freely. Grab hold of the emotions you feel at the moment, and get them down on paper while they are still fresh in your mind. We'll worry about correct grammar and punctuation later."

I almost forgot to take my own advice.



It is easy to be overwhelmed by the number of positive experiences you encounter when you become partners with such outstanding people as you meet here. The courage, determination, creativity, sense of humor, and sense of faith the students possess has brought about many changes in my own life, even to the point of enriching my own vocabulary. I have always been thankful for any good fortune or advantages I have had in my life, but until I came to The READ Center, I had not expressed these feelings with the words, "it's a blessing." Now, whenever I narrowly escape catastrophe, or receive unexpected good news, I often whisper, "Whew, it's a blessing."

I have often said, and **I firmly believe, that we are all teachers, and we are all students.** We each have important lessons to teach, and important lessons to be learned.

We each have passions to share, and as anyone who is passionate about something can attest, when we share those passions with others, it only increases our pleasure.

Reading has always been a happy part of my life, and one of my hobbies is collecting children's books. In my "passionate" (some might say "relentless") effort to interject some of my beloved children's books into the already-full class schedule, I'm sure I go overboard. But part of it may be because there is so much enthusiasm in our class. We all feel encouraged to express our interests and concerns.

We are fortunate to have such a wonderful teacher, Carolyn Harsh, who keeps the class lively and interesting. Her unique and innovative teaching methods are both fun and effective. She keeps students and tutors coming back. We like to say she is both "fun and funny."

Through the years, our creed, our motto at The READ Center has been: "It's never too late. You're never too old. Your best is good enough."

That's a program and a philosophy that I want to be a part of for a long time to come.

The Beginning!

# READ Center Family

**Submitted by Joanna Davis,  
READ Center Student**



Although I am a high school graduate, I still had trouble reading. So when I heard about the Read Center I decided to attend. For over ten years I have been coming to the Center.

My reading has improved a lot. I can sound out words, understand what I read, and write to express myself. I can read just about anything I pick up. I like to read poetry and Dr. Keith Roach and Dear Abby in the newspaper.

I also like to read nonfiction books. I am reading *Writing Our Way Out: Memoirs from Jail*, written by people right here in Richmond. I find this book very interesting because the people writing their stories have a chance to express their deepest secrets that got them where they are today. I can relate to their situations. I also had a deep secret. **My secret was that I could not read well.** Sometimes I wished I was blind or in jail so I would have time to learn to read. Very few people in my life knew about my secret.

So, if you struggle with a secret, just know there is someone out here who can help you. All you have to do is take the first step. This would be a good time to call the READ Center at 804-288-9930 as it is National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.

**Submitted by Janet Sodell,  
READ Center Teacher**

For 17 years I have been hoping my career would become obsolete. Don't get me wrong, I love what I do as a teacher for The READ Center. It is just that if my job became obsolete, that meant all adults were reading above a sixth-grade level. Think about that for a minute. Give your sixth-grader a rental contract, a job application, or a check-in form for the doctor's office. How far would they get in understanding what they read?

A clear majority of my students were born and raised in the USA. Less than 1% of my students over the years have had a native language other than English. What is happening? How can it be that a woman in her fifties reads at a first-grade equivalent level? Or a man in his thirties graduated from a Richmond area high school but read at a third-grade equivalent and writes at a second-grade equivalent? These are not stupid individuals.

Every student has a different path that leads them to The READ Center. It could be a learning disability that was or wasn't caught in school or a brain injury. It could have been they needed to drop out of school to work and help support the family. Medication has a tremendous impact on the ability to retain skills.

**I challenge each and every one of you to put me out of work.**

If you are a parent, advocate for your child if they are struggling in school. Resources are limited so make sure your child is getting the help needed. Spread the word at work, church, and other gatherings that there is FREE help for people struggling to read and write. Volunteer in the office or to tutor. Monetary donations are always welcome. Laptops are needed for improving the digital literacy of our students and adult interest, and low literacy books are always needed.

Thank you advance for accepting my challenge.



Students and tutors from The READ Center Chesterfield Technical Center class.

# Letters to the Editor

**Submitted by Viola White,  
READ Center Student**

Dear Editor:

I am writing you to tell you how important it is for adults who do not know how to read to go back to school. It is important to encourage adults to do this.

Why you should go back to learn how to read: to read your mail, sign your applications, read when you go to the store, read a book and read newspapers. It is also important to understand what you read.

It does not matter how old you are. You should never give up on your learning. Take advantage of the programs out there while it is available.

**Submitted by William Jackson,  
READ Center Student**

Dear Sirs or Madams:

Because of you, so many like me have found joy and happiness in improving our reading skills. I've seen a big jump in my understanding and desire to want to lead without fear.

I want to thank you for supporting the READ Center and trusting in all of us. Because of your assistance, there are places that are filled with students and volunteers taking advantage of all the work that goes into it all.

The volunteers reach out, giving a helping hand to the students. They see the great need we have, the effort we put forth and how we take the time to take in all that we can.

Taking this class has shown me the benefit of reading well, reading the newspaper, or a story from a book. Reading has a whole new meaning. The effort and time put in is well worth the time.

I have been able to improve in breaking long words down into smaller syllables so I can pronounce them correctly. I also find it easier to read my bible and all my bible based literature.

The teacher is well versed and patient with the students so that we understand clearly what is going on.

I've proven to myself by taking this class that it can be done; that is, your reading skills can be sharpened. Taking this class also has given me the ability to take on challenges that I would have stayed away from. I'm no longer the stand-offish or fearful person of reading that I once was.



**Submitted by Hazel Wilkes,  
READ Center Student**

My name is Hazel. My reading journey started with a postcard from the Family Dollar store on West Broad Street. My first class was at the Franklin Street Library.

My teacher's name was Laura Schoolcraft and my reading skills were below a third-grade level. Mrs. Schoolcraft was the best teacher I have ever had. She said I could call her Laura.

I told her I know the alphabet letters from A to Z. She asked, "do you know the sounds?" What sounds? I didn't even know there were any sound. "Yes", she says "A sounds like apple, B sounds like bat" and so on. She went as far as making a cassette tape with the sounds of the letters on it for me to listen too.

I know I shouldn't be patting myself on the back, but I believe my reading skills have improved a lot. So has my writing, I hope. My spelling, now that's where the problem comes in. My goal is to take part in a spelling bee during the 2018-2019 school year.

I thank my heavenly father for all of you who have participated in and supported The READ Center. God bless you all. If the READ Center can do it for me, I'm sure they can do it for anyone who needs help.

Proud Partner in Support of

**#AEFLWeek**  
September 24-30, 2017

Adult Education & Family Literacy Week

# Letters to the Editor

**Submitted by Don Wood,  
READ Center Teacher**

I love to read. I was one of those kids who read under the covers at night with a flashlight, enjoying adventures with Tom Sawyer and the Hardy boys. I thought I was fooling my parents, but they had instilled in me at an early age the joys of reading, so I'm fairly certain they were aware. I'm starting this tradition early with my grandson. "Good Night Moon" has already become a night-time favorite.

If my parents stressed the joy of reading for pleasure and escape, my teachers emphasized the importance of reading for knowledge, for lifelong learning. My fascination with history began when I was in Junior High school and has never waned.

Perhaps that is why I was drawn to volunteering with The Read Center a few years ago. Following my retirement I was looking for a meaningful way to give time to the community and, through friends, was made aware of this organization, which provides literacy education for adults at no cost. As a first-time tutor I felt some trepidation as I had never taught school. I soon discovered, though, that I had found my passion. Now a teacher, I am amazed at the will and determination exhibited by these adult students. One gentleman summed it up for me. "All I want is to be able to read a book to my grandson." His words touched me profoundly, for that is what I want, too.

Reading truly can change a life.

**Submitted by Ida Henry,  
READ Center Student**

I am a Student at The READ Center. Reading is the key to getting my G.E.D.

I want to get my G.E.D. to have my Children respect me more by sticking to my goal. I want to make my brothers and sisters proud of me when I pass the Math and Social Studies, which I found I love. The READ Center has helped me in my job and confidence which will allow me to read the Bible to my friends in Church.

I am determined to get my G.E.D.

**Submitted by Lloyd Callahan,  
READ Center Student**

Reading is Important to me because I want my GED so I can feel proud of myself. When I learn how to spell, comprehend and write better, I will get my GED. I want to make my sister and brother proud of me. I want to improve my reading skills. I want to better understand what I read. I want to read to small kids. Reading will improve my confidence and self-esteem. I want to be more of my self when I am reading. If I can understand what I am reading I will be more Confident and more independent.



**The value of your donation is up to you. The value of celebratory hugs: priceless. Thank you!**

## Volunteer Opportunities

If you've called the office lately, you've heard a range of friendly staff and volunteers answering the phone. We're looking for additional help with providing great customer service to our students, volunteers, and the public. If you'd like to help us in the office with reception, clerical work, and special projects, call or email Dawniece Trumbo at 804-288-9930, [dawniece@readcenter.org](mailto:dawniece@readcenter.org).

READ also has an ongoing need for adult literacy tutors. If you've been thinking about getting involved, why not come out to an upcoming orientation and learn what it's all about?

### Upcoming Volunteer Orientations:

- November 28, 2017 10am to 12pm
- November 30, 2017 6pm to 8pm

Orientations are held at the READ Center office on Radford Avenue.

**Thank you** to Gracie Mason, Marylee Fary, and Cindy Eramian for their assistance in the office. We appreciate you!

# Thank You

## October is Health Literacy Month



When READ students are ill, they aren't able to attend classes or tutoring sessions regularly, stifling their literacy progress. Adults with low-literacy levels are often challenged by navigating the health system and understanding personal health strategies. In fact, according to ProLiteracy, an excess of \$230 billion a year in health care costs is linked to low literacy.

This is why The READ Center has launched a health literacy class. The class runs from October 11 to December 13, 1:30pm to 3:30pm, and will be held at the Bon Secours Center for Healthy Living at 2600 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, 23223. Current and new students are encouraged to sign up soon to reap the full benefits of the class.

### Students will learn about:

- Talking to health professionals
- Where to go for services
- Medications, drugs, and prescriptions
- Paying for care and insurance
- Filling out health forms
- Nutrition and staying healthy

If you know someone who could benefit from READ's services, call our office at 804-288-9930.

## Staff Announcements

Dawniece Trumbo and Nausha Brown Chavez are still the dynamic duo of programming. However, Nausha is now the new Education Program Manager - overseeing all READ Center programs, and Dawniece is the new Volunteer Coordinator - serving volunteers and tutors, and coordinating one-to-one tutoring and health literacy.

**Pictured at left:** Dawniece Trumbo, Student/Tutor Pair, and Nausha Brown Chavez.

