



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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

RICHMOND, VA -- September 10, 2018 -- 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 – including more than 72,000 in metro Richmond—who cannot read, write or do basic math above a third-grade level.

“National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, September 23-29, 2018, helps raise awareness of a very difficult issue” says Executive Director Karen La Forge. “Adult literacy intersects with almost every major socioeconomic issue Richmond needs to tackle—health disparities, income inequality, housing affordability, and workforce development. Low literacy costs the U.S. at least \$225 billion each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment. We need to invest in adult literacy.”

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, 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.

“For Richmond to improve literacy and educational attainment of K-12 students, there needs to be focus on adult literacy as well,” added La Forge. “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.”

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. READ’s classes focus on reading and writing and integrate math and digital skills that are so vital to daily life in the 21st century. In the last year, READ also added health and financial literacy into its programming.

Because learning to read as an adult is complex and adult learners have had limited success in school, READ serves students in a more individualized way. Instruction centers around their personal life goals, such as obtaining a GED, enhancing job skills, getting a driver’s license, or supporting their children’s education.

For more than 34 years, The READ Center has helped adults develop basic reading and communication skills, so they can better fulfill their roles as family members, workers, and members of the community. For more information about The READ Center visit, www.readcenter.org.

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Stories from READ Center Students

Growing Up Not Being Able to Read

by Lloyd B.

Growing up as a child going to school I had trouble learning. I couldn't understand the things the teacher was telling the class. I felt like no one cared whether I could understand what was going on in class.

As I went through the school years, they just passed me through school from year to year and I graduated and still could not read.

Now that I am out in the world I have all kinds of challenges, I need help to fill out applications because I couldn't read them, I need someone to come with me to the DMV to read the rest to me so I could pass and get my license.

Think about as you are driving down the road trying to go somewhere and cannot read the road signs. We did not have GPS then, that is what it was like for me.

I was going through the daily routine faking to read newspapers and magazines. I could not even go to the library to learn anything about history, my culture or anything in the world.

I went through life like this for years then one day I was home and I was trying to use a computer; I asked my wife how to do things on the computer and how to spell words and I felt bad about that, so I asked her to help me to find someplace so I can go and learn how to read. She went on the computer and found the "Read Center" for me.

I went to the Read Center and took the test and started going to classes, the teachers there really helped me and showed me things I did not really learn in school, they worked with me and I learned the sounds letters, vowels, and how to pronounce long and short vowels. I have been going for one year and now I am still learning and I can read a lot of things I could not read before. I work hard at school and at home, I go to school three times a week and have a private tutor.

I have more confidence in myself than I ever had before. It feels good to look at works and be able to read them and understand what they mean. It changed my life. I thank all my teachers for working and helping me get where I am today. I will tell anyone out there to get help because you do not want to go through life not be able to read. There is help out there for you. All you have to do is call the reading center and they will help you. I thank my wife and the Read Center for all they have helped me with on this journey of learning to read and understand what I have read.

Janine

By J.B.

I am that girl who used to think about how people would look at me because I couldn't read or write. In school, I was that kid that would get in trouble when the teacher would call on me to read in front of the class. I must have done the 10th grade for two years before I decided to drop out.

Most of my life I was ashamed and embarrassed because I couldn't read or write. I was a little discouraged because I couldn't get the jobs that I wanted, so "I just gave up."

I was in my late 40's when I came across a program called the READ Center and I'm so glad that I found it. I've been here for about 2 years now. The tutors and the students are wonderful. We have one-on-one sessions with the tutors and the students help each other out at times. Nobody judges anybody.

I just want to thank the READ Center and the tutors for helping people like me out. I just wish I came across the READ Center 30 years ago. I could have been a tutor helping somebody like me out.

Who knows? Maybe one day I'll be able to give back like I am being given.