



Dear READ Center family,

It has been seven months since the COVID19 pandemic changed our work, our community, and our lives. In March, we did not anticipate the length to the threat nor the impacts it would have on our economy, education, health, families and how we view the world. So much has changed and yet so much as stayed the same.

The READ Center has never stopped providing instruction. 75% of students continued with remote instruction through the spring and summer semesters. The fall semester began on September 14 with 4 of 8 READ's classes meeting online. For those who cannot meet online they are receiving remote instruction by phone and mailed education packets. One READ class is testing a hybrid model. No one who needs help is being left out or left behind. Here are few READ updates:

### Students

READ continues to serve our students by adapting digital alternatives and socially distanced options where available. Student assessments and orientations have begun again. READ program staff is scheduling small groups of prospective students to take the assessment at READ'S office. READ Distance Learning Coordinator Kristin Parson developed and implemented a digital skills screening for new students and piloted a computer skills class. Read more in "[Bridging the Digital Literacy Gap](#)," on page 4.

### Volunteer Tutors

The READ Center needs more tutors to support remote learning. Tutor orientation and trainings are being held online. You can register to become a tutor on the READ website, [www.readcenter.org](http://www.readcenter.org) and click on the Volunteer tab. If you are not sure if you want to volunteer, please read READ tutor [Kristin Trost's volunteer tutor spotlight](#) on page 3 to learn how rewarding helping an adult learn to read can be.

### Staff

The READ Center office continues to be open with staff rotating between the office and working from home on alternating days. We want to be here if our students, teachers, or volunteers need us while continuing to keep everyone safe. READ Center's Program Manager, [Nausha Brown Chavez](#), was [deservedly recognized as Virginia's 2020 Adult Education Leader](#). Read more on page 2.

### Our Community

READ students are our inspiration and motivation. Moving instruction to remote methods has not easy, but students, tutors and teachers, the READ staff and board of directors remain committed to each other and to continue learning . Please go to <https://readcenter.org/covid-19-updates-information/> to learn more about volunteering and COVID-19 measures.

Stay safe and healthy,  
Karen La Forge, Executive Director

# Annual Giving

“We rise by lifting others.” - Robert Ingersoll

As a READ community member, thank you for your commitment to changing lives through adult literacy. We are so proud of what we have accomplished together during this difficult time! Thanks to the perseverance of students, teachers, tutors, and staff, [over 75% of students continued instruction after classrooms closed on March 13th](#). Since then, we have continued adapting to changing needs and the fall trimester is off to a great start.

[More than 73,000 adults in greater Richmond struggle with literacy](#). For the student navigating complicated systems to access critical resources such as unemployment and medical care, your gift supports their ability to increase their economic security and wellness. [Your gift to The READ Center is the gift of a better life](#). For the student who now has to help their child navigate online classes, your gift supports their digital literacy skills, impacting the entire household.

[Your commitment to The READ Center is building a more equitable society](#). Your gift means that we can help adults develop the skills they need to achieve their goals as parents, workers, and citizens. Without literacy there can be no equity. The skills students develop at READ enable them to access greater economic opportunities and to [gain the tools to improve their lives](#). [Please consider a gift to the READ Center today or joining our monthly giving program](#).

Go to <https://readcenter.org/donate-today/> to see the many ways you can make a contribution.



## Outstanding Leadership

### *READ Staff Member Recognized at the 2020 VAACE Conference*



In October, READ's Program Manager [Nausha Brown Chavez](#) was recognized as 2020's Virginia Outstanding Leader at the Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education conference. VAACE is an association of adult education practitioners, including city and county adult programs, extension services, government, industry, health service, higher education, and non-profit organizations. Their mission is to provide advocacy, leadership, and professional development for the field of adult education in Virginia.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Nausha has worked tirelessly to continue meeting the needs of students in what has become a fast-changing, unpredictable environment. Her determination to face these challenges head-on and her dedication to student learning is truly outstanding.

We are so very proud of Nausha and all that she does for READ!



READ's 7th Street Christian Church class took advantage of a beautiful day in October by having their book discussion outdoors, safely distanced but still learning together.



Tutor Kristin Trost met with a student at the READ office to conduct one-on-one tutoring.

# Volunteer Spotlight

*By Kristin Trost*

I began tutoring with The READ Center in September 2017. As soon as I attended the orientation and tutor training, I knew that this opportunity was the right one for me. I have always loved reading, but I've also taken it for granted. Listening to a former READ Center staff member describe her grandfather's illiteracy and the challenges it posed, and the various reasons why adults were unable to read, I was so moved.

Over the years, I've gotten to know several of the students and they have a special place in my heart. One was eager to push himself a bit harder and further and so, in addition to both of us remaining in Janet's class, we began working together as a 1:1 pair about 18 months ago. This spring and summer I was honored to be able to assist him as he sought to purchase a home. The process is daunting enough when you can read, so I could only imagine what he faced. But this student was patient and willing to put his trust in me and we figured it out together, with a some generous help from his Realtor and mortgage banker. I recently attended his closing with him and am thrilled at what he has accomplished!

Volunteering as a tutor has been such a rewarding experience. If you are looking for an opportunity to share your talents and time and make an impact in the lives of others – and get so much in return, I encourage you to consider becoming a READ Center tutor!



## Become a READ Center Tutor

Helping an adult improve their literacy skills is a rewarding experience and can change his or her life. Volunteer tutor orientations and trainings are currently all virtual. To learn more and to submit your application on our website at: [readcenter.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://readcenter.org/volunteer-opportunities).



**Nov 26-27th:** Thanksgiving - no classes/office closed

**Dec 10th:** Last day of Fall classes

**Dec 11-31st:** Winter break—no classes

**Dec 21-25th:** READ office is closed

**Jan 1st:** New Year's Day — no classes/office closed

**Jan 4th:** First day of Spring classes

**Jan 18th:** MLK Day—no classes/office closed

**Feb 15th:** President's Day —no classes

**Apr 5-9th:** Spring break (make-up days)

# Bridging the Digital Literacy Gap

*How READ program staff created a computer skills pilot class*

By Kristin Parson, READ's Distance Learning Coordinator

The need for digital literacy is not a new concept. It is a reality education and businesses have been trying to navigate for some time. In fact, a simple online search leads to related publications that are over a decade old. It is also a reality backed by national statistics (nearly one-third of workers lack digital skills) and one that The READ Center has confirmed by surveying teachers, as well as new and current students.

To address the continued need for digital literacy education, The READ Center has created a basic computer skills assessment and pilot class for incoming students. As part of the registration process, students are asked to describe their comfort level completing foundational computer tasks – such as turning on a computer or opening a program via the start menu. Later, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the same skills on a READ Center-provided device during student orientation. Then, depending on their proficiency, they are invited back to attend a pilot class. Finally, during the “Introduction to Computers” class students learn and practice those foundational skills through teacher-led instruction, online learning modules, text to speech accessibility modifications, resource materials, and hands-on application.



READ students and teachers meet for class via Zoom. In the era of a global pandemic, digital literacy skills have become more important than ever.

The goal of the pilot class is two pronged. Firstly, we hope students will feel more confident starting up and using a computer. We hope they are so confident that they want more computer classes and even practice on their own! Additionally, we hope students will feel better prepared to participate in a world that is operating remotely – whether that is through a virtual literacy class or a Telehealth doctor appointment.

We are thrilled to start rolling out this program and excited to see our students embracing the opportunity.

## Mark Your Calendar!

### The Great Richmond



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The Great Richmond Trivia Bee returns April 28th, 2021.

Keep a lookout on the website for updates and more information at [readcenter.org](http://readcenter.org).

