



March 2020
Issue 6

Literacy Chicago News

Chicago's Oldest Literacy Organization Stays Young

Literacy Chicago • 641 W. Lake St. Suite 200 • Chicago, IL 60661 • 312-870-1100 • literacychicago.org

Message from Our Executive Director



Richard Dominguez

In 2019 Literacy Chicago opened 14 new classes across the city. We are pleased to have already opened three new classes in 2020 including Math for Everyday Life at our Lake Street office, a new ESL class at the Temple of Faith, and an ESL class at Our Lady of Tepeyac School.

We are looking forward to creating new partnerships within the community that will allow us to expand our programs and meet the needs of adult learners in their neighborhoods throughout the rest of 2020.

Due to increasing concerns regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, the Literacenter is closed until March 31st. All Literacy Chicago's classes are on hold until March 31st as well.

We hope to reopen classes and training sessions when social distancing practices end. For continuous updates please follow us on Facebook, Instagram and our website where we will keep you up to date on when we will reopen.

If you need to reach us, we will still be available by our office phone number and emails.

Please take care of yourselves and stay healthy.

*Richard Dominguez
Executive Director*

CONNECT



@literacychicago



Literacy Chicago News Highlights

Save the Date! June 4th

Join us at the [Laugh Factory Chicago](#) for Laughs for Literacy, a fundraising event that will really make you laugh! Chicago's best comedians are telling their jokes in support of eradicating illiteracy. All ticket sales will be donated to Literacy Chicago. Must be 18 years or older to attend. Two drink minimum in the showroom. Purchase your tickets [here](#).



Community Spotlight

New Math Class

Our adult literacy students are thrilled with their new class: Math for Everyday Life taught by volunteer Charles Klein. Students are learning the basics in order to manage their daily lives more effectively. Even basic addition and subtraction can be a challenge for some of them. Just think how hard it would be to balance your checkbook or decide which can of tomatoes is the best buy, if you didn't master these basics.

New Partnership with Daily Life Church



Pastor Joe Pelegrini had a wonderful idea. He started the We are One in Christ Project to connect the church and the community resources. Literacy Chicago is the adult educational partner and our common objective is to open ESL and WorkForce training classes in churches across Chicago land. Our pilot project started this year at Temple of Faith church when Pastor Gilles offered a space at his church for ESL classes. Taught by Catherine Perez this class is highly popular and attendance has been great!



HEADS UP!

**Keep Up to Date
on LC Events**
Save the Date

June 4th

Join us at the [Laugh Factory Chicago](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/93863972669) for Laughs for Literacy, a fundraising event that will really make you laugh!
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/93863972669>

June 17th

The 2020 edition of **Words on the Page – Top of My Bucket List** will be presented. Family, friends, volunteers, and community supporters are invited to save the date for this fun event! Come celebrate and hear our students read their own essays from the book. Purchase copies of previous editions of the book at our office or order here on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).
www.literacychicago.org/words-on-the-page

September 17th 2020

LC will be celebrating its 52nd anniversary, so be sure to mark your calendar. This year's gala will be held at the [American Writers Museum](https://www.americanwritersmuseum.org), in the heart of Downtown Chicago. Stay tuned for additional details!

www.literacychicago.org/gala-2019-information

Volunteer Tutor Training

May 9th & 16th

June 13th & 20th

This fun-filled training course takes place on two consecutive Saturdays from 9 to 3. Two days of training are required.
[Find out more about volunteering here.](https://www.literacychicago.org)

QUOTE OF THE MOMENT

"Anyone who stops learning is old whether this happens at twenty or at eighty. Anyone who keeps on learning not only remains young but becomes constantly more valuable regardless of physical capacity."

Henry Ford



Betty Hurder

Vibrant Volunteer of the Month



Betty has been volunteering with Literacy Chicago for nearly five years. In that time she has tutored two students one-on-one and teaches an Adult Literacy class called Phonics, Reading, and Writing on Thursday Mornings.

Betty likes to warm up her students at the start of class with activities that introduce new vocabulary, like word searches. Betty's favorite activities to do with her students focus on phonics and identifying vowel sounds. She notes that even students who are more advanced readers have difficulty with the pronunciation of words. Sometimes readers at a lower level are better at identifying the sounds of letters and this gives them an opportunity to help their classmates and demonstrate mastery of a fundamental reading skill.

When asked how she feels about her students, Betty expressed that she is grateful for her students motivation to come to tutoring sessions and her class each week. In one word, Betty describes her students as inspirational. Betty also shared that she feels comfortable at Literacy Chicago because of the support our "incredibly nice staff and students" give her. Literacy Chicago is happy to have a Vibrant Volunteer as dedicated to her students as Betty.

New Student Objective

Libby

On December 13th we held our annual volunteer appreciation luncheon and revealed a new student objective. The new student objective is for every student to download and use the Libby public library app by June this year. A portion of the volunteer luncheon was dedicated to a professional development session outlining how to use Libby. We are asking all tutors and teachers to have their students download the Libby app and show them how to access its resources. Libby gives everyone access to books, magazines, audiobooks and more right on their phone! Instructions on how to use Libby are available to all tutors, teachers and students. We are excited to have access to this free library resource.

Meet Libby.

The new app from OverDrive that makes eBooks and Audiobooks easy!



Star Student Spotlight



Simin Mirshahi



From Malayer to Chicago: Simin's Adventure

Simindokht Mirshahi (better known as "Simin") grew up in a small town in the western part of Iran called Malayer. Simin speaks of her hometown with great love: she remembers with nostalgia a very healthy drink made from the dried fruits and local clay. Malayer is also well known for its Iranian carpets.

Like many people Simin left her hometown to get a higher education and went to Tehran University where she obtained a BA in English Literature and foreign languages. Before she could start working though, her son was born and she stayed home to raise him. That was in 1976. Her son was only 3 during the Iranian



Revolution in 1978-1979 (also called the Islamic Revolution). Life changed dramatically in Iran after the revolution when the Shah of Iran had to leave the country on an "extended vacation", and he died the following year in Cairo.

For Simin life didn't change too much, except on the street, she now had to cover her head when going outside. During this time she had her second son. She decided to dedicate her life to her children while her husband worked as a legal advisor in a private medicine company.

Meanwhile one of her sons received his medical degree in Tehran. He married an Iranian-American artist and moved to Chicago to do his internship in Vascular Medicine. He is now Director of the Arteriopathy Clinic at NorthShore University Health System. He has since become an American citizen through marriage.

In 2012 Simin and her husband moved to Chicago to join her son and daughter-in-law. She especially enjoys taking care of her grandson. She feels very comfortable living in Chicago where she finds people in her neighborhood very friendly. Although she does miss some of her family and friends in Iran, she has made many new friends—a mix of Iranian and American. At parties, she says, you might hear people speaking in Farsi, English, French and German.

Simin first started taking English classes at Literacy Chicago in 2014, and then joined the Citizenship Preparation classes in 2017. She has already started the naturalization process.

Wanting to take a more active role in American life, Simin joined Open Books bookstore as a volunteer in November of 2018. She is thoroughly enjoying this experience and is now looking for a job - in a bookstore!



DID YOU KNOW?

Declining Financial Literacy

Not long ago, cash was used for most daily purchases. Now we rely on debit and credit transactions. The way we shop has changed as well. Online shopping has become the top choice for many, creating opportunities to use and overextend credit. It has become easy to accumulate debt.

Many individuals have very little understanding of finances, how credit works and the potential impact on their financial well-being. In fact, the lack of financial understanding has been signaled as one of the main reasons behind savings and investing problems faced by many Americans.

- 40% of U.S. adults don't have enough savings to cover a \$400 emergency.
- The median retirement savings for Americans between ages 55 and 64 is \$104,000, or \$310 per month if it was invested in an annuity.
- Average household credit card debt has risen to \$8,284, its highest level in a decade.
- Student loan debt, at \$1.5 trillion, is more than double what it was a decade ago. The average is \$6,600 per student annually.
- Students with loans leave college with an average debt of \$22,000.

People now have to make more financial decisions. Retirement planning is one example of this shift. Retirement used to depend on pension funds, managed by professionals, put the financial burden on the companies or governments that sponsored them. Individuals were not involved with the decision-making. Employees are now being offered the ability to participate in 401(k) plans, but they need to make investment decisions and decide how much to contribute.

Financial illiteracy and the lack of education surrounding finances may soon be against the law in some parts of the U.S. North Carolina is one of 28 states pushing for legislation to teach financial literacy in high school. This effort arises while Americans assume a record amount of credit and student loan debt. Much of this debt is owed by 18 to 35-year-olds. This often leads to a cycle of reckless spending and little if any saving or investing. Implementing curriculum focused on personal finances and mastering financial literacy could prevent this trend from continuing.

Sources:

<https://www.investopedia.com/the-push-to-make-financial-literacy-into-law-4628372>

Photo Gallery



Rich and Joanne meet with Pastor Gilles at the Temple of Faith to organize new ESL class.



Students enjoy lunch at the student holiday party.



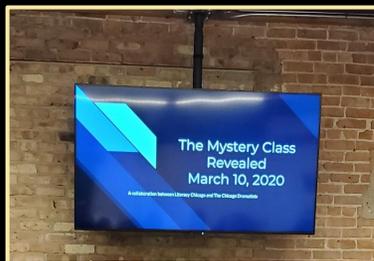
ESL students at Nixon school



Ten new volunteers attended the January volunteer training.



Keay running registration for the annual Volunteer luncheon in December.



Stay tuned for details about our revolutionary way of teaching adult literacy students!



DONATE

Help Support Literacy Chicago's Efforts!



OR



By shopping with Amazon Smile who will donate 0.5% of your purchase amount to us or on our website:
Literacy Chicago • 641 W. Lake Street • Suite 200 • Chicago, IL 60661 • 312-870-1100 • www.literacychicago.org

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

HELP MAKE LITERACY A REALITY



VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Become part of a team of like-minded individuals dedicated to reaching and advocating for Chicago adults who struggle with basic education

<https://www.literacychicago.org/volunteer.html>



BECOME A TUTOR

Give a couple of hours a week to help someone with their reading, learn English, or master essential skills to join the workforce

<https://www.literacychicago.org/become-a-tutor.html>



DONATE TO LITERACY

Your generous monetary gift will provide educational programs for Chicago communities in need and help adults to find gainful employment

<https://www.literacychicago.org/donate.html>



[Click Here to Shop and Smile](#)

SMILE WHILE YOU SHOP

Visit smile.amazon.com and search for Literacy Chicago as your charitable organization

For every eligible purchase, Amazon donates 0.5%