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LITERACY
PARTNERS

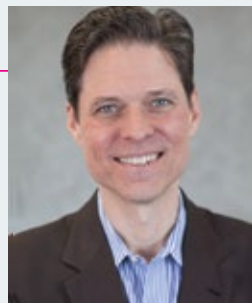


SUMMER 2019

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READING CHANGES EVERYTHING



Dear Friends,

In 2019, Literacy Partners is reaching more people than ever before, in more places than ever before, with new programs and initiatives—all made possible by you. Thank you!

Last fall, we began a small program for teenage moms in the South Bronx to help them not only succeed as new parents, but also go back to school to earn a High School Equivalency degree and transition right into college. After a promising first semester, we've already begun to see impressive results this spring.

In January, we launched the Liz Smith Adult Literacy Program. Adult literacy was the defining cause of Liz's life and this new program serves adults who are absolute beginning readers. Each has a unique journey as to how they've arrived where they are, but they all share three things in common: smarts, courage, and commitment. We know Liz would be proud to share the joy of reading with these students and we're proud to carry on her legacy.

Also in January, Literacy Partners launched our second educational media program with the national broadcast of a mini-series created with Univision. The Spanish-language program shows how parents and caregivers can promote their children's early literacy skills.

We celebrated all of this work at our Annual Gala where we paid tribute to our board chair, Mike Steib (outgoing CEO of XO Group), Lesley Stahl, and Andrea Davis Pinkney (author and editor at Scholastic). We enjoyed readings from Preet Bharara, Tayari Jones, and Andrew H. Tisch. As always, our student speaker, Gicela Jarquin, was a highlight of the night.

I hope you enjoy reading about all the ways in which you help improve the lives of our students and their families through education. Without you, none of this is possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Tassi". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anthony Tassi, CEO

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We strengthen families by empowering parents through education. Together, we can close the achievement gap before children even begin school.

LEAP: Empowering Young Parents

Your generosity is allowing us to expand our program to reach a new cohort of New Yorkers striving for success against incredibly long odds: teenage mothers in the South Bronx. In the fall of 2018, we launched a new class on the campus of Bronx Community College to help these young women earn a high school equivalency degree and transition right into college. We also provide resources to help them with their other big life goal: to become the best mothers they can be and support their young children's healthy development.

Our program is called Leadership for Education And Parenting or LEAP. Our weekly LEAP seminars begin with enhanced academic support for the participating mothers. As the students make progress on their studies and begin to envision their own academic future, we help them transfer their new confidence to their role as parents and their desire to promote their children's early learning. We provide each student with a home library of age-appropriate books for themselves and their children, which gives them an opportunity to bond with their children while reading together.

In just two semesters, LEAP has created a supportive community of learners who are achieving meaningful academic success for themselves, learning more about child development, and feeling more confident in their parenting. Several of the participants will help facilitate future LEAP seminars and family reading promotion activities with a broader audience of young parents.

This unique program is a collaboration among Literacy Partners (with our expertise in adult literacy and family reading promotion), Future Now (with expertise in high school equivalency classes and support for college transition), and Power of Two (an evidence-based coaching program for new parents). ■



Like all of our LEAP participants, Priscilla received a home library of age-appropriate books for herself and her children.

LIZ SMITH ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM LAUNCHES



Liz Smith

Literacy Partners launched our new **Liz Smith Adult Literacy Program** this January thanks to the support of many individual donors who gave generously in her memory. The program represents state of the art basic literacy instruction, a culmination of years of experience and in-depth research into what works. The program is not themed for parents, as our other classes are, and is open to adults at the very lowest reading levels.

Serving this population of absolute beginning readers is a niche that only Literacy Partners can fill. There is no place else for these adults to go to get this kind of intensive help. And it is intense! Each person who is learning to read as an adult from the very beginning

needs specialized instruction. They are deeply disconnected from positive educational experiences and because of their varied life experiences, no two students need the same support. The person who grew up with undiagnosed dyslexia has vastly different needs from someone suffering from brain injury or the person who was incarcerated at a young age.

Our dedicated tutors engage learners with one-on-one tutoring and small-group instruction for six hours per week, under the supervision of a literacy manager. We have designed a two-pronged approach that begins with a highly structured approach to basic phonics—the building blocks of reading instruction. We then continue with a storytelling curriculum that helps students develop their narrative skills, first orally, and then in writing. As students improve their narrative skills, their desire to claim their voice and tell their story awakens and they have more confidence to use their skills to pursue their real-world goals.

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Our tutor, Debbie MacGregor, with her student, Isaiah Wyatt.

Our students are inspirational. One works as a notary at a messenger service. She somehow made it through high school and even earned an Associates Degree without really knowing how to read. She has a fantastic memory for “sight words” and is able to guess their meaning based on the context. But, that work-around is no longer working for her. She wants to advance in her job and go back to college for a four-year degree. When she heard about LP’s free class to help her to overcome this challenge, she quickly signed up. She is a diligent student who is motivated by the tangible progress she is making.

Another student came to us after suffering serious educational trauma as a child. Learning did not come easy to her in the early years. Her first teachers made her struggles much worse by humiliating her for lack of progress. She recalled that an elementary school teacher actually hit her when she struggled to pronounce the word “the.” From there, she never found a supportive teacher to help her turn things around. In fact, there were many other negative experiences as she got older and was branded as incapable of learning. Today, she has put her trust in Literacy Partners to help her overcome a lifetime of educational trauma one step at a time.

It takes a lot of **courage** to admit that you cannot read as an adult. It takes a lot of **commitment** to come to class six hours a week after already completing a day’s work. Our students inspire us, just as students in years past inspired Liz Smith, our lifelong champion. Liz made literacy promotion her life’s great **cause**. And we are making this great new program our enduring tribute to her legacy. ■

FAMILY LITERACY ON TV



Each year, we help hundreds of low-income immigrant parents develop their literacy and language skills while promoting their children's early literacy skills and school readiness by discovering the joy of family reading. Now, thanks to an innovative new program called *La Fuerza de Creer*, Literacy Partners will help thousands more parents in New York City and other large cities across the country.

For the past year, Literacy Partners has worked with Univision (the largest Spanish-language television network), together with Too Small to Fail (an initiative of the Clinton Foundation) and Vroom (created by the Bezos Family Foundation), to create a television miniseries that focuses on the role of parents and caregivers in promoting children's early learning, social emotional growth, and school readiness. The Spanish-language show takes place at a community center with a beloved child care program, providing an appropriate backdrop to illustrate ways in which everyday moments with children can be learning opportunities.

The educational messaging is blended into a classic telenovela format, centered on the personal drama of four families: an illiterate grandfather who can't communicate well with his grandson who only wants to speak English; an aunt and uncle raising their niece, whose mother is detained out of the country; a single father raising two sons; and two moms who adopt a daughter with a history of traumatic experiences.

The show was broadcast nationally on Univision in January 2019, with an average daily viewership of 679,000 individuals. Literacy Partners is now building on this success with a parent education curriculum for Spanish-speaking parents that can be implemented by family literacy programs, libraries, and early childhood education programs. We've begun prototyping the workshops throughout NYC to solicit parents' feedback. Parents have shown a need to share their own experiences and hear from fellow parents; they've said that the telenovela is accessible, engaging, and relevant.

This summer, we will be reviewing parent, facilitator, and partner feedback to develop and pilot a Parent Education Toolkit. The toolkit aims to make the program easy for an organization to implement and adapt, while maximizing the usefulness of the program for parents and maintaining the telenovela's relevant themes and strong early childhood development content. ■

GALA RECAP

WHAT A NIGHT!

Literacy Partners raised \$1.1 million to support our students.



A BIG THANKS TO THE DOROTHY STRELSIN FOUNDATION

Literacy Partners is deeply grateful for the Dorothy Strelsin Foundation's generous gift to establish the Dorothy Strelsin Foundation Endowment for the students of Literacy Partners. The Endowment will continue to bring the joy of reading to families across New York City.

*Pictured above (top L to R):
Andrea Davis Pinkney;
Sophia Chang and Preet
Bharara; Kemp and Mike Steib;
Tayari Jones; Lesley Stahl;
and Andrew H. Tisch, Mary
Skafidas, Wes Moore, and
Jonathan Crystal.*



Photo credit: Mark Gurevich

In 2019, 836 children will
receive home libraries with
brand new books to enjoy.
Thank you!