



**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: September 24, 2020

PREPARED BY: Victor Castellanos,
Literacy Coordinator

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: Fiscal Year 2019/2020 Literacy Services Update

OBJECTIVE: To update the Library Board on the status of Literacy Services.

UPDATE:

Tutors/Learners

Since July 2019, there has been a total of 52 learners served in the program who completed at least one learning goal. In addition, two tutors and 15 learners have been added to the program in the past year. Pre-COVID, there were 26 tutors meeting one-on-one with 42 learners, and four tutors in the process of becoming literacy volunteers. Currently, we have six tutors meeting virtually with seven learners and another six tutors facilitating our five virtual groups for learners. Since July 2019, tutors have volunteered 1,916 hours to the literacy program. Based on calculations by the Independent Sector in Washington, DC, the current value of volunteers is rated at \$27.20 an hour, a value of about \$52,115.

Every learner enters the program with a goal which may include obtaining a high school diploma or passing the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), building vocabulary and communication skills for work and life, improving job skills such as writing reports and reading charts to get a better job, and increasing confidence to communicate with others outside of their homes and communities. Of particular note, learner goals completed during this time period include writing a biography of their family's history to pass on to their children, gaining acceptance to community college for a child development degree, obtaining employment as a teacher's aide, and learning to read and write for the first time.

Tutor/Learner Support

- a) Spring 2019: In addition to the ongoing *Literacy Book Club*, *Culture & Conversation Group*, and the *Speak Easy Group*, staff implemented the new bi-monthly Literacy Writing Club. This writing club supports learners who want to explore creative writing and learn more about the writing process in a group setting. Topics include poetry, short story, autobiography, the five senses, and descriptive writing.
- b) September 2019: Literacy Services began the *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors* classes for parents and guardians of small children. This 8-week class promotes school readiness, family well-being, and advocacy by addressing best practices in brain development, early childhood development, civic engagement, and more. This program is funded by the Family Literacy Grant awarded in early 2019.

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- c) October 2019: Tutors and learners participated in the *NaNoWriMo* challenge of writing 50,000 words of a novel in thirty days. One literacy learner in the *Writing Club* completed the challenge in two weeks, and subsequently is in the process of editing her 277-page autobiography.
- d) November 2019: Literacy Services hosted a three-hour *Pronunciation Workshop* for Monrovia volunteer tutors and other tutors and literacy coordinators from neighboring libraries to address the needs of their learners. Participants were introduced to practical phonics activities and phonics methodologies.
- e) January 2020: Literacy learners from the Culture & Conversation Group attended the State of the City to learn more about local government.
- f) January 2020: Staff implemented the new *Watch & Talk Group* for learners to learn more about American culture and to address the growing need of conversation practice for English-language learners. Each week focuses on different television shows and movie clips, and topics include idioms and vocabulary, American popular culture, humor, relationships, and more.
- g) February 2020: Staff performed outreach and promoted library and literacy services to the Monrovia Community Adult School. This growing partnership is part of the Library's focus on providing library cards to all adult school students.
- h) April 2020: 100% of Literacy Services transitioned online. The bi-weekly *Book Club* and *Writing Club* also transitioned into weekly clubs.
- i) May-June 2020: Learners and tutors attended two Southern California Library Literacy Network (SCLLN) online writing and poetry workshops aimed at improving writing skills. These virtual workshops equipped tutors with lesson plans, writing prompts, and practical activities to improve the writing process for new writers and introduce learners to poetry.
- j) June 2020: A second weekly Literacy *Book Club* was established to address the learners' requests for more online services. This second book club focuses on classic texts.
- k) July 2020: A month-long *Poetry Appreciation Class* was designed to address the learners' requests for more online services. The *Poetry Appreciation Class* is facilitated by one volunteer literacy tutor with the goal of introducing learners to different types of poetic genres, performing critical thinking when reading poetry, and writing their own poetry.

Technology & Materials Support

- a) Ongoing: One hundred percent of Literacy Services has transitioned to a virtual space, and staff has conducted ongoing technology training to learners, tutors, and other library volunteers to enable more participants to join our virtual literacy program.
 - i. The book club and writing club, the conversation groups, the one-to-one tutoring, new learner assessments, and tutor training are now all conducted online via Zoom.
 - ii. Before transitioning everything to a virtual space, staff led tech training for all Monrovia volunteers and learners. Tech training enabled more participants to join our new virtual literacy program and for volunteers to provide literacy services.
 - iii. All literacy services and volunteer training are conducted virtually in one-on-one or small group meetings, and via phone calls.
- b) Literacy Services continues to provide materials for new and struggling readers, and this includes access to new materials such as the *Fresh Reads* collection located in the library lobby and updated literacy materials for tutors and learners.

- i. *Fresh Reads* is a collection of quick and easy reads for adults looking for non-intimidating novels and non-fiction titles. The collection removes the stigma of illiteracy and is instead promoted as convenient for new adult readers and for those with hectic schedules in search of a quick read.
 - ii. The Literacy Center purchased newly published English grammar and vocabulary, writing, HiSET, and job skills workbooks to replace outdated materials published more than 10 years ago. These workbooks are aligned to current state standards for adult learners in educational programs, and many of the materials also contain online practice. In addition, the Literacy Center also purchased eBook versions of many of these titles for learners.
- c) In order to deliver quality online services such as tutor training, learner programs, and family literacy classes, the Literacy Center's new Logitech video conferencing system allows for clear video and audio for online participants. This system is mobile, and it enables staff to create virtual classrooms anywhere in the library.

Staff Professional Development

Staff attended the following:

- a) Spring 2019: The Literacy Coordinator became co-president of the Southern California Library Literacy Network (SCLLN). Duties include leading quarterly network meetings, establishing literacy subcommittees, creating professional development opportunities for colleagues, and planning the semi-annual SCLLN Literacy Conference and Writer to Writer celebration in Buena Park.
- b) August 2019: SCLLN workshop at Newport Beach Public Library. Professional development on volunteer recruitment.
- c) September 2019: *ProLiteracy Conference on Adult Education* in San Diego. Served as a panelist for *The Future of Tutor Training* and panel facilitator for *Literacy Book Clubs*. Attendee for workshops on literacy management and training, utilizing adult learners on staff, creating and measuring success with special projects for literacy learners, and learning circles for English as a Second Language (ESL) and basic literacy learners.
- d) October 2019: SCLLN meeting at Los Angeles Public Library - Wilmington Branch Library. Professional development on marketing and social media for literacy.
- e) January 2020: SCLLN meeting at Santa Monica Public Library. Professional development on family literacy.
- f) May-June 2020: SCLLN virtual professional development opportunities for staff and volunteer tutors. Topics include the updated Roles & Goals for literacy programs, and teaching writing and poetry instruction for literacy tutors and learners.

Literacy Fundraiser

Staff worked with the Library Foundation Fundraiser Committee from June 2018 to September 2019 to plan the annual *Team Up-Dream Up* Literacy Fundraiser held on September 29, 2019.

The fundraiser was attended by local community members and included a scavenger hunt and a book signing by Mabel Ngo, a literacy learner. She signed copies of her book, *Escape from Vietnam: Van's Story* that she wrote while enrolled in the literacy program, with all proceeds from book sales going to literacy

services. Mabel Ngo achieved the goal she set for herself in the literacy program of writing the true story of her father-in-law's escape to America during the Vietnam War. The publication of the book was a life goal for her, and her book was one of the selections for the Monrovia Literacy Book Club. The Literacy Fundraiser generated a net income of \$24,709. Some of the funds raised at the fundraiser went towards the purchase of book sets for the Literacy Book Club, creative writing books for the Writing Club, StoryCenter training and software, updated reading and writing workbooks, and biographies, graphic novels, and digital materials for learners and tutors, and a year-long Zoom subscription to enable our Literacy Program to operate virtually.

CLLS Funding

On December 23, 2019, staff received notification from the State of California that Monrovia was awarded an additional payment of \$14,191 for fiscal year 2019-2020. The baseline amount of \$18,000 was approved in August 16, 2019. The two payments together result in a grant total of \$32,191.

Staff also received notification of approval for the Family Literacy Grant 2019/2020 from the State of California for \$45,000. The grand total for Adult Literacy Services and Family Literacy Services for 2019/2020 is \$77,191.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-1 Fiscal Year 2019/2020 Literacy Services Update.

LIBRARY BOARD ACTION REQUIRED: If the Library Board concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion: **Receive and file report AR-1 Fiscal Year 2019/2020 Literacy Services Update.**

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