

Literacy Works Presents:



Foreword Thinkers

Outstanding Tutors and Learners
Nominated by Literacy Works Members



Literacy Works


litworks.org/week-of-giving

Jim R. and Charmaine

Tutor and Learner pair at The Learning Center

“Jim has worked independently with the adult learner Charmaine, who began studying for her final GED subject at The Learning Center in the Fall of 2022. Although Jim’s experienced in all areas of math, he was particularly **interested in not only challenging those that he tutors, but also himself.** When we matched Jim with Charmaine for tutoring, there was an instant connection! In working together, they’ve built a strong and committed relationship with one another and towards Charmaine’s future.

As the Volunteer Coordinator, there are two words that perfectly describe this dynamic duo, **consistent and committed.** Together, they’ve worked long hours (both in person and Zoom) and spent much time working over holiday breaks. In the unfortunate instance of Charmaine ending up in the hospital a few months into tutoring, she was still insistent on continuing her tutoring sessions with Jim. Jim himself couldn’t get Charmaine to take a break. She just had to keep herself going, never wanting to forget the material she’s learned. In all the time they’ve worked together in studying for Charmaine’s final test in Math, she was able to pass! Since she’s passed the math subject of the GED, she continuously mentions how grateful she is to Jim. Although their independent tutoring has come to an end, Jim still continues to help Charmaine in her future endeavors with her GED. **They’ve moved beyond a tutor/learner relationship, and have built a lasting friendship!”**



Jim C. and Josue

Tutor and Learner pair at The Learning Center

“Jim and Josue have built a noticeable bond in tutoring with one another. With previous experience as a teacher, Jim works in every area of math and has volunteered nearly 10 years of tutoring with The Learning Center and we couldn’t be more grateful! Jim initially started tutoring in lower level math, such as basic addition and subtraction with our adult learners. As he continued tutoring, Jim soon became interested in the higher level math and even began studying higher math to better help our adult learners. In taking his time to study more difficult math material, Jim soon began to work with one of our adult learners, Josue.

Since starting with us in the summer of 2023, Josue has been able to complete four out of the five HiSET test subjects. Just as our other tutor/learner nominees, these two are consistent in working with one another to reach Josue’s final GED subject in math and there’s such a great amount of effort put into their tutoring sessions on both ends. **Jim is committed to Josue’s education**, and has personally purchased outside math material for both Josue and the entire math classroom.

Not only is Jim committed to tutoring, but **so is Josue in achieving his final goal**. Although Josue works an overnight shift, he continues to come into The Learning Center for tutoring with Jim. Our scheduled tutoring sessions are 45 minutes, but Jim and Josue will continue to work for more than an hour. More times than not they’ll work in Math for the entire class day, all the way from 9 AM to 12 PM. I often come to check in on them during their tutoring, letting them know to take breaks in between. However, they’re always **insistent on continuing their work together**, planning to get the job done. Together, they’ve made the goal for Josue to take his official GED math subject in April.”

Renee and Felicia

Tutor and Learner pair at Prairie State College

“For four years, Renee has demonstrated loyalty to numerous adult learners. Recently, she expressed the desire to match with a motivated ESL learner. Felicia is a graceful lady who is eager to learn. In Africa, Felicia worked on a farm and had not received any formal schooling. She came to America and became employed as a hair braider. Initially, she was not able to enroll in ESL classes due to her work schedule. Right away, I could tell Felicia was a determined learner. For instance, Felicia had over five hours of communication with me prior to me finding the perfect tutor match for her. She was paired with Renee. **The timing of this tutor match was divine!**

Renee and Felicia’s introductory tutor session tickled them both. Their **joyful laughter** could be heard in the hallway. As Renee was helping Felicia fill out the AVL intake form, both discovered they actually live next door to one another! What are the chances? Jokingly, Renee said, “Now, I can finally ask my neighbor to remove that awful tree that is leaning over into my yard.” With Renee’s support, **Felicia is doing “excellent” in her ESL class.** Her instructor said, “Felicia is speaking with confidence and demonstrating a good understanding of the materials.” As a retired Special Education teacher, Renee brings a well-respected level of expertise to the AVL project at Prairie State College. Her **individualized lesson plans are so precise** and her ability to laugh through even the toughest times helped maintain my sanity during the pandemic.”

Carolynn and Leticia

Tutor and Learner pair at The Literacy Connection

“Carolynn has been instrumental in the success of our weekly Citizenship Conversation Group, which she began supporting shortly after she started tutoring in 2012. This group, hosted at the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin, provides an opportunity for local community members to practice their English skills while focusing on topics related to U.S. Citizenship and the citizenship test. In addition to helping head this conversation group, Carolynn has been a one-on-one tutor for a number of individuals. Carolynn has been **tutoring her current learner, Leticia, since 2015**, and has helped empower her to reach many literacy goals. Since Carolynn joined The Literacy Connection in 2012, she has given over 1,750 hours of her time - an astounding contribution to literacy in our community!

Leticia has been pursuing her literacy goals with The Literacy Connection since 2011, when she began attending our English conversation groups. Some literacy goals that Leticia has accomplished during her time in our program include: becoming a citizen and voting for the first time, communicating better at work, and receiving a promotion. Some specific instances where Leticia has been able to use her English skills include: scheduling a hospital appointment in English, communicating more with her child’s teacher, and acting as an interpreter at the DMV for a Spanish-speaking relative. **Leticia’s commitment to her goals continues to be an inspiration!”**




Sharon and Denitsa

Tutor and Learner pair at The Literacy Connection

“Sharon has been tutoring with The Literacy Connection since 2011. During that time she has worked one-on-one with 9 different learners, totaling over 365 hours of volunteer tutoring! She has been committed and perseverant as a tutor in the program through the ups and downs of learners’ schedules and abilities to stay in the program. Sharon and her current learner, Denitsa, have been working together for one year. It is a testament to the success of their sessions together that Denitsa’s reading and listening test scores have increased so significantly. **Sharon, like Denitsa, inspires us in her commitment to literacy in our community.**”

Denitsa immigrated to the United States twelve years ago from Bulgaria, where she worked for thirty-five years as a dentist. **English is her fourth language;** her other languages include Bulgarian, Russian, and German. Prior to being matched with a tutor, Denitsa attended our conversation groups to practice her English. She says, “I always wanted to improve my English because it is very important for me to communicate. [...] Even though I was very busy taking care of my grandchildren, but I try to listen to the radio, watch TV, and speak with people, with neighbors, in stores.” Denitsa has been working one-on-one with her tutor, Sharon, for one year. In her latest post-test, Denitsa’s reading and listening scores increased by 24 and 25 points, respectively - a huge leap, demonstrating her dedication and commitment to her English goals!”



Marsha

Tutor at The Literacy Connection

“Marsha is on staff with the Literacy Connection as our Data Manager. But outside of her work on staff, Marsha is a committed volunteer tutor. Marsha has been tutoring with us since 2010, with a total of 914 hours of tutoring and tutoring preparation hours (and counting)! We are also inspired by Marsha’s commitment to continued education, as she has attended over 60 volunteer tutor trainings and workshops. Our weekly conversation groups have benefited from Marsha’s tutor support since 2011, and she currently leads one of these groups with support from other tutors.

The learners in Marsha’s group love to return because of her **kindness, humor, and how she challenges them to grow.** Marsha’s longevity as a tutor means she has impacted many individuals through her time here. Marsha recently shared a story of getting in an Uber car and discovering that her driver was a past learner! He was delighted to see her and excited to catch up. Marsha’s commitment to helping learners is vital for our organization, and, most importantly, **a beautiful asset to our community.”**



Denis

Tutor at The Literacy Connection

“Denis wanted to find a way to give back to his community after retirement. He learned about volunteer tutor opportunities through the Literacy Works website, and joined The Literacy Connection as a volunteer tutor at the end of 2021. Since then, Denis has given over 340 hours to volunteer tutoring with our organization. That’s an average of 12 hours per month!

Denis has also supported the organization through sharing about his tutoring experience with potential volunteers in the community at outreach events. Denis currently tutors two separate adults in a one-on-one settings. Denis also supports our English conversation groups through helping with activities, questions, and general conversation. Denis recently said, “**With confidence comes learning,**” and his patience and clear communication help instill that confidence in his learners. Denis is fulfilling his retirement goal to give back to the community, and then some! We are grateful for his commitment to supporting adults in our area on their literacy journeys.”



Congratulations to all of our Foreword Thinker nominees!

Literacy Works is proud to honor the tutors and learners who have shown dedication to learning and their community. Thank you to our Community Literacy members for stewarding and nominating these fantastic tutors and learners!



Photos provided by The Literacy Connection. From left: Denis and his granddaughter, a tutor and learner pair work together outside, Literacy Connection tutor Marsha, a tutor leads a conversation group