

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2026



Literacy KC
Changing lives beyond words

**CHANGING
LIVES BEYOND
WORDS**

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

This year reminded us that the work of adult education has never been more essential—or more urgent.

Across our community, adults continue to seek opportunities to strengthen their literacy, earn a high school diploma, learn English, build digital skills, and prepare for meaningful careers. At the same time, organizations like Literacy KC are navigating an increasingly uncertain funding environment. Delays in public funding, shifting government priorities, and growing demand for services have challenged nonprofit organizations across the country, including ours.

Yet amid that uncertainty, one thing has remained constant: the determination of our students. Every day, they arrive ready to invest in themselves and their futures while balancing work, family, transportation, childcare, and countless other responsibilities. Their perseverance reminds us why adult education matters. It is about far more than earning a credential. It is about opening doors to employment, strengthening families, improving health, building confidence, and creating opportunities that can change the trajectory of generations.



**GILLIAN
HELM**
CEO



As Missouri's largest Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-funded adult education provider, we continue to serve thousands of adults each year through literacy instruction, high school equivalency preparation, English language learning, workforce certifications, and digital skills training. Every graduate, every newly confident English speaker, every parent able to help a child with homework, and every learner who secures a better job represents another life transformed, and another step toward a stronger Kansas City.

The need continues to grow. Hundreds of thousands of adults across the Kansas City region still struggle with low literacy or limited English proficiency. At the same time, employers increasingly depend on workers with stronger communication, technical, and foundational skills. Adult education sits at the intersection of workforce development, economic mobility, and community well-being. Investing in adult learners is not only the right thing to do—it is one of the smartest investments we can make in our region's future.

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This year also reinforced the importance of advocacy. National conversations about the future of adult education funding have underscored how important it is that the voices of adult learners, educators, employers, and community partners are heard. Literacy KC remains committed to championing policies that expand educational opportunity and ensure every adult has access to the tools they need to succeed.

While this year presented financial challenges, it also demonstrated the extraordinary resilience of our organization. Because of the generosity of our donors, the dedication of our volunteers, the commitment of our Board of Directors, and the remarkable work of our staff, we continued serving students without losing sight of our mission. Together, we adapted, persevered, and positioned Literacy KC for the future.

I remain deeply optimistic.

I have the privilege of witnessing transformation every single day. I see students who once doubted themselves earn diplomas, secure promotions, become U.S. citizens, read to their children for the first time, and discover possibilities they never imagined. Those moments are powerful reminders that education changes lives—and that communities are stronger when every adult has the opportunity to learn, contribute, and thrive.

Thank you for believing in that vision. Your generosity, partnership, and advocacy make this work possible. Together, we are not simply responding to today's challenges—we are building a stronger, more welcoming, and more prosperous Kansas City for generations to come.

With gratitude,
Gillian Helm, CEO

VISION

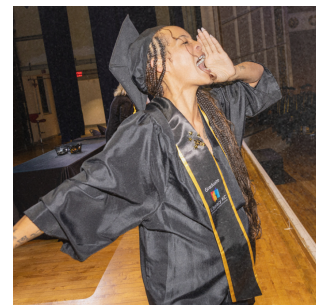
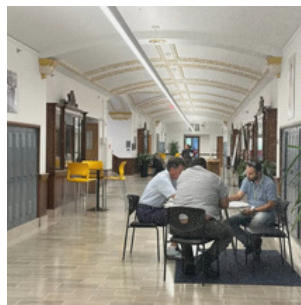
Literacy for all

MISSION

To advance literacy within the Kansas City metro area through direct services, advocacy, and collaboration.

VALUES

Integrity, inclusion, innovation



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Paul DeFoe, Chair | Strategic Insights, Optum

Bridget Richards, Vice Chair | Vice President of Marketing, Children's Hospital of Colorado Foundation

Ann Tinsman, Secretary | Community Advocate

Pierson Curtis, Member at Large | Vice President of Marketing, Resolute Property Tax Solutions

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Crystal Captain | Associate Chief Operating Officer, University Health TMC

Christina Chandler | Community Impact Education Manager, JE Dunn

Charles Kelly | President & CEO, The Educators Academy

Mike Mielke | Director & Senior Consultant of Treasury & Payment Systems, BMO Harris Bank

Marquis Queen | Chief Knowledge Officer, Sicket

Tricia Scaglia | Attorney, Scaglia Law Firm

TaRonda Randall | Senior Counsel, Husch Blackwell

Dori Stayton | Vice President Relationship Manager Corporate & Institutional Banking, PNC Bank

Monica Tiffany | Principal/Creative Director, Merrigan & Co.



LEADERSHIP TEAM

To view the full team, visit literacykc.org.



Gillian Helm
Chief Executive
Officer



Kate Brown
Chief Marketing
Officer



Kim Graves
Chief Operations
Officer &
Asst. Dir. of Adult
Education &
Literacy



Yolanda Waldon
Chief Workforce
Officer

WHY LITERACY KC?

Education changes everything. At Literacy KC, adults gain the reading, language, and education skills that open doors to better jobs, stronger families, and greater opportunity, creating ripple effects that strengthen our entire community.



750,000

Adults in the KC Metro struggle with low literacy, nearly 1/2 reading below a 3rd grade level.



\$2.2 Trillion

Bringing all adults across the nation up just one literacy level would add \$2.2 trillion to the economy and save us \$240 billion in healthcare costs.



72%

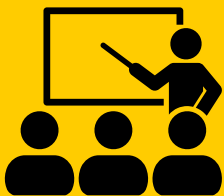
Children of low literate parents are 72% more likely to be low literate themselves.



OUR IMPACT

The numbers below represent more than program outcomes. They represent individuals gaining confidence, achieving educational milestones, advancing their careers, and creating new opportunities for themselves and their families.

Outcomes from 2025-2026 school year.



1704

Students served (HSE, ELL, & Digital)



151

Credentials (High School Equivalency & Workforce) earned



105,649

Instructional hours completed



371

Students attended hiring fairs



LITERACY KC PROGRAMS

Literacy KC offers programs that empower adults to strengthen their reading, language, workforce, and education skills. Through personalized support and instruction, learners gain the tools they need to reach their goals and build brighter futures.



High School Equivalency

Our High School Equivalency classes help students prepare to take the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) or earn a GED.



Workforce Development

Workforce Development is comprised of workforce and college preparation, integrated education training, and workforce education - Offering certifications in food handlers, forklift, Certified Nursing Assistant & Certified Medical Technician.



Digital Literacy

Classes cover basic to advanced topics, including email, internet navigation, and Google Workspace. Walk-in sessions also explore online safety, finances, job searches, and healthcare while helping participants build and practice essential skills.



English Language Learning

Our English-Language Learning program instructs students in reading, writing, listening and speaking English. This program is tailored specifically towards our non-native English-speaking community members.



Excel Adult High School

Excel Adult High School provides students the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and prepare for what comes next. The program is completed virtually.





STARTING OVER IN A NEW COUNTRY TAKES COURAGE. FRANCISCO'S JOURNEY IS A REMINDER THAT EDUCATION CAN BE ABOUT MORE THAN LEARNING NEW SKILLS. IT CAN REVEAL NEW PASSIONS, CREATE UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES, AND INSPIRE PEOPLE TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT HELPED THEM GROW.

Five years ago, Francisco arrived in Kansas City from the Dominican Republic, captivated by the colorful fall leaves, the crisp air, and the friendly smiles that reminded him of home. As he began building a new life, he quickly realized that improving his English would be essential to reaching his goals. Through Literacy KC, Francisco found more than language classes. He enrolled in English courses, explored career training opportunities, and earned his CNA credential through Literacy KC's workforce programs. With growing confidence in his language skills and a new professional credential, he secured a position at University Health. "Literacy KC helped me discover my calling with the wide variety of programs they offer," he shared.

Today, Francisco continues to build on that success. In June of 2026, he passed his HiSET (High School Equivalency Test), an important step toward his goal of returning to college and pursuing a career in nursing or occupational therapy. Along the way, he has combined his love of art with volunteer service at the Nelson-Atkins Museum and found a passion for helping others through his work in healthcare. Looking ahead, he hopes to use his language skills to support immigrants and non-English speakers in the community and is even considering becoming a Literacy KC tutor himself. Reflecting on his journey, Francisco says, "Life changes, and also you change through the years. Now is my time to give back." His story is a powerful reminder of how education, career training, and community support can open doors to new possibilities.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Literacy KC is proud to partner with organizations across the Kansas City region that share our commitment to empowering adult learners. Together, we provide educational opportunities, supportive services, workforce credentials, and community-based learning environments that help students achieve their goals.



MORNINGSTAR CENTER

**TRANSITION CENTER
OF KANSAS CITY**

MAJOR PARTNERS

Our major partners are helping transform lives through the power of education. Their leadership and generosity make it possible for Literacy KC to expand access, remove barriers, and create brighter futures for adult learners across our community.



PROSPERITY
ADVISORS



Kiewit



SCHARNHORST
AST
KENNARD
/GRIFFIN^{PC}

Euronet.



**Judith & Matt
Flynn**

Marion and Henry
BLOCH
FAMILY FOUNDATION



Kansas City



BRAIN GROUP



CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Literacy KC is grateful for the businesses and organizations that stand alongside our learners. Through their generosity and partnership, our corporate supporters help make education, opportunity, and economic mobility possible for thousands of adults each year.

**SPX COOLING TECHNOLOGIES
JACKSON COUNTY
CITY OF KANSAS CITY, MO
SPRINT T-MOBILE
HALLMARK CARDS, INC.
KIEWIT POWER CONSTRUCTION CO
UNITED WAY OF GREATER KC
EURONET WORLDWIDE
GREAT JOBS KC
KISSICK CONSTRUCTION CO.
GIBBS TECHNOLOGY
GOOGLE FIBER
BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD KANSAS CITY
DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION
MISSOURI HUMANITIES COUNCIL
DIPASQUALE MOORE
FORVIS MAZARS
STATE STREET
SCHARNHORST, AST, KENNARD, GRIFFIN PC
WILDWOOD OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER
PROLITERACY
THE MERC COOP
JE DUNN CONSTRUCTION
ARTSKC
COUNTRY CLUB BANK
INTEGRITY GROUP REAL ESTATE
KANSAS CITY POWER & LIGHT
EPR PROPERTIES
CHILDREN'S MERCY HOSPITAL AND CLINICS
BLUESCOPE STEEL
THE LEVY CRAIG LAW FIRM, P.C.
EVERGY
JOHNNY'S TAVERN PL LLC
NIAGARA BOTTLING LLC**

**TECHNOLOGY ENTERPRISE NETWORK
TITO'S HANDMADE VODKA
UMB BANK
VANTRUST REAL ESTATE
GENESIS OF KANSAS CITY
MENTOR'S FOUNDATION
PERINATAL SPECIALISTS OF KANSAS CITY
UNIVERSITY HEALTH
BLUESCOPE BUILDINGS NORTH AMERICA
KC DENTISTRY 4 KIDS
FULL EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL
KANBE'S MARKETS
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS AND
ALLIED TRADES
BRIGHT FUNDS
CENTRAL BANK OF KANSAS CITY
ECCO SELECT
MILLER HAMMOND CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
POLSINELLI LAW FIRM
HALF PRICE BOOKS - OIATHE
PAINTERS DISTRICT COUNCIL #3
ARVEST BANK
PIPE FITTERS LOCAL UNION 533
SLCKET INC
MIDWEST TEA FEST
BESTWAY INTERNATIONAL
KC ATHENAEUM
NEBRASKA FURNITURE MART
STATE LINE SERVICE LEAGUE
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
KANSAS CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OUTDOOR LIGHTING PERSPECTIVES**

INDIVIDUALS & FOUNDATIONS

The individuals and foundations recognized below make our mission possible through their generosity and commitment to adult education. Their support helps Literacy KC remove barriers to learning, expand opportunity, and empower adult learners to achieve their goals.

MARION AND HENRY BLOCH FAMILY FOUNDATION
PAUL AND JULIE EWING GREATER KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
PNC FOUNDATION
JUDY JOSS
RONALD DEFFENBAUGH FOUNDATION
VICTOR E. AND CAROLINE E. SCHUTTE FOUNDATION
THE SHERMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION
JUDITH AND MATT FLYNN
LYNNE AND MARK O'CONNELL
KAY M. SALLEE FAMILY FOUNDATION
TODD AND EMILY VOTH
HEALTH FORWARD FOUNDATION
ELIZABETH TINSMAN
JIM AND ANN TINSMAN CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
DAVID AND CATHI BRAIN
OPPENSTEIN BROS. FOUNDATION
ANN AND JIM TINSMAN
DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION
JONATHAN STERNBERG
TRUMAN HEARTLAND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
DOROTHY ELLIOTT
KIRK FOUNDATION
MARINER FOUNDATION
THE WALLY FOUNDATION, INC
MOS FAMILY FOUNDATION
WILLIAM G MCGOWAN CHARITABLE FUND
GARRETT TINSMAN
MYLINDA AND GIL SCOTT
WILLIAM WOLF-TINSMAN
PAUL AND LAUREN DEFOE
FRANCIS FAMILY FOUNDATION
JOHN BRUHN
MARY MCNEIVE
DAVID T. B. NORTON FUND
LYNN AND BRIAN SCHAEZLER
CATHY AND DAVID LARRABEE
MICHAEL AND JULIE HIRONS CHARITABLE FUND
LELAND SHURIN
BILL KOENIGSDORF AND KAY JOHNSON
JEAN A ROSENTHAL FUND
THE APRIL & BRYAN JENKINS FUND
MARTIN ZEHR
CAM AND SHANA WILLIAMS
EVELYN OTSUKA-DAVIS
LINDA DAVIS
RANDY MOORE
RYAN SLACK

STEVEN POTTER
FRED VALENTINE
MENTOR'S FOUNDATION
MONICA TIFFANY
HEBENSTREIT FAMILY FOUNDATION
LOWRY AND LAURA JONES FAMILY FOUNDATION
MARK SCHWEIZER
SAM HALES
BRIDGET AND CHRIS RICHARDS
MIKE AND LEA MIELKE
PIERSON AND MICHELLE CURTIS
HELEN BETTS
JAMES CUMLEY
THOMAS SCHENKELBERG
MICHEL COVERDALE
WENDY AND MIKE KLINE
ALAN AND BARBARA PURVIS
CLEM AST
CURT MCCONNELL
DENNIS AND PALLE RILINGER
AST FAMILY FUND
MATER GIVING FUND
RICK AND BARBIE DIERKS FUND
KELLY HART
LINDA L DAVIS
MARGARET COOK EVANS
MARK SUENRAM
TIM SWEENY
TOM LANCASTER
VICKIE JACK
BRENT AND JULIA ROGERS
BIAGIOLI FAMILY FOUNDATION
JESSICA FRANZ-MARTIN
EVAN BLACK
BARB AND LYNN BROWN
CARLEY MORTON
SUSAN GREEN
DEBRA NEUFELD
SANDY AND SUSAN EEDS
TARONDA RANDALL
BOBBY KELLY
SPENCER BOLAND
MEGAN FOLKEN
JEN PARKER
MECHAM FAMILY FUND
KEVIN FOXWORTH
DEBRA PERSINGER
LEIGH WAGNER
DANIEL DEVINE
DOUGLAS HUNDLEY
ERIC AND CASSANDRA DIEBOLD
J EUGENE BALLOUN TRUST
MCCAMON FAMILY FUND
THE DOYLE DREILING AND JIM COAKLEY FUND
JACOB KENDRICK
JEAN ROSENTHAL

MELISSA WAUGH
MICHAEL AND MAUREEN EUSTON
STEPHEN HOOLEY
TED WALKER
TERESA POWELL
WILLIAM EASLEY
WILLIAM ROGENMOSER
DORINDA STAYTON
JALEN MYRICK
CHANCE POPE
RACHEL RUSSELL
CLARKE L. HENRY, JR. AND MARY
MARTIN HENRY FUND
KELLEY PHIPPS
KRISTI MEHNER
ANN AND GILL WILLIAMSON
CARLOS GOMEZ
DEBRA BUSBY
KARLA HEFELE
LAURA AND DAVE MARCUS
MOUNTJOY
LUCERO CRUZ MARTINEZ
VANESSA KNAEBEL
DIANNE AND PAUL BREWINGTON
BILL BERKLEY
SARAH ROWLAND
JENNIFER STORZ
DAN O'CONNELL
GREG PASLEY
JENNIFER HOWARD
JORDAN BANION
SIENNA HOHENSTREET
SUE MACKIEWICZ
KEVIN DEROWANIAN
MELISSA GAWF
ASIA JONES
CAROLYN SAUDER
JENNIFER HARSCH
KEVIN SAUDER
MICHAEL AND CECILY GANHEART
AARON OTTO
ANNE HANNAH
BRIAN HARTLEY
CHERYL SIMMONS
DAN GAY
KATE HUGHES
KEVIN HENN
KIM AND TED HIGGINS
KYLE FITZGERALD
MARTHA PARK
MARY JONES
ROBERT AND ELISE CHAPLINE
SALLY MILGRAM
TERRY RODEGHIER
WILLIAM LYONS
THE BESSEMER GROUP



MEET SAVANNAH

Savannah (Right)
with her
instructor Heather
Mecham.

SAVANNAH'S STORY IS A POWERFUL REMINDER THAT IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START AGAIN. WITH COURAGE, SUPPORT, AND A PLACE THAT BELIEVES IN POSSIBILITY, ONE DECISION TO RETURN TO LEARNING CAN OPEN THE DOOR TO AN ENTIRELY NEW FUTURE.

Savannah arrived at Literacy KC carrying years of self-doubt. After leaving high school during her sophomore year, she built a career in the bar and restaurant industry, working her way into leadership roles and managing the fast pace and long nights that come with it. Still, something felt unfinished. She wanted more stability for herself, and a future her son could look up to. Going back to school after so many years felt intimidating, but from the moment she walked through the doors at Literacy KC, she found encouragement instead of judgment. With the steady support of her instructor, Heather, Savannah began to rebuild the confidence she had long set aside.

In just seven months, Savannah passed all five of her high school equivalency exams, a milestone that proved she was capable of far more than she had once believed. Only three weeks later, she earned her substitute teaching certificate, opening the door to an entirely new path. What once felt impossible quickly became reality: Savannah moved from late nights behind a bar to stepping into classrooms where she can make a difference. Today, she is preparing to continue her education at Metropolitan Community College with plans to pursue a career in pharmaceutical sales, carrying forward the confidence and determination she rediscovered at Literacy KC.

She has also come full circle in another meaningful way. Savannah now works part time at Literacy KC on the Assessment Team as a test proctor and evening administrator, helping other adult learners find the same confidence and success she discovered here. Every evening, she's a reminder that education can change the direction of a life, and that sometimes the people most equipped to inspire students are the ones who once sat in those same seats themselves.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



The following financial information reflects Literacy KC's commitment to responsible stewardship and sustainable growth. Through careful management of resources and the support of our community, we continue to expand access to education and create opportunities for adult learners across the Kansas City region.

* REVENUE & EXPENSES

Revenue	\$4.08 M
Expenses	\$4.12 M

TOP VOLUNTEER HOURS



During the 2025–2026 school year, volunteers contributed roughly 7,500 hours of service to our programs, equating to more than a quarter of a million dollars in value (Independent Sector, 2026). This impact spanned over 45 distinct classes, supported 28 instructors, and tutored 1444 students. The following volunteers have contributed the most hours this year.

JUDY JOSS
MYLINDA SCOTT
THERESA FITZPATRICK
JORDYN HOLLOWAY
MARK SUENRAM
SCOTT CANON
LUCY BROCK
KARL COLLIER
STEVEN SMITH
AMY SHEA
TOM O'DONNELL
SUE MACKIEWICZ
G KIBBY

ALAN PURVIS
BARBARA HENSON
VICTORIA PFAU
LAURA MARCUS MOUNTJOY
ANNE HANNAH
TOM LANCASTER
LYNN SCHAEZLER
CHARLES LILLIE
LARRY STICE
SHELLIE GILL
LINDA BECKRING
PAT CLEMENT

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