



Minnesota Literacy Council

**Annual
Awards
Ceremony**

May 21, 2015

6:00 pm





Community Partner Award

Deb Tretsven and Ken Sohriakoff, Goodwill Easter Seals

Nominated by JennaRose Bondeson

When the Minnesota Literacy Council needed space to hold digital literacy classes, Deb at Goodwill stepped up to offer a small computer lab at Goodwill Easter Seals offices. When the program grew and needed more space, Deb arranged for use of a bigger lab. She has been an amazing liaison and supporter of the program, keeping staff and clients informed about the program, helping with tech issues, and assisting in any way she can, even though none of this is in her job description. Ken is a Case Manager at Goodwill, and works with many people who are coming out of corrections and looking for jobs and computer skills. Not only does Ken refer clients to the program, but he actively checks up on them, and comes in the lab and cheers for them when they pass Northstar Assessments. Deb, Ken and the entire Goodwill team have helped to make the digital literacy program a success and we are extremely grateful for their partnership!

Outstanding Volunteer Award

Steve Burrill, Open Door Learning Center- Midway

Nominated by JennaRose Bondeson

For the past 18 months Steve Burrill has been volunteering with Open Door Midway's computer classes in different capacities. Steve spends between five and eight hours at the learning center tutoring students who are learning basic computer skills to those who are looking to master Excel. With his unique ability to understand and explain both the complexities and the basics of computer skills, Steve is the most in demand tutor here. JennaRose Bondeson, the coordinator, says that Steve serves as inspiration to her learners because he faces his own barriers in life and always remains positive, *"he is an inspiration to adult learners, many of whom feel that their barriers are insurmountable due to their age, education, literacy, or employment status."*



Lauryn Heineman, Minnesota Literacy Council

Nominated by Daniel Backman

In the last 14 months, Lauryn Heineman has helped create, edit and publish two editions of Journeys (including last year's accompanying book, *Routes*). With editing under belt and a penchant for literacy, Lauryn became an intern last year and was asked to return as managing editor this year. "*[Lauryn] understands the utmost importance of honoring the art and writing of adult learners, and recognizes her role in ensuring that their voice is not changed in the editing process,*" says Dan Backman, one of the *Journeys* coordinators. Because all of her hard work and behind the scenes, keen eye for editing and leadership, Lauryn has taken *Journeys* to the next level.

Bill Helker, Open Door Learning Center – Northside

Nominated by Lloyd Brown

As a volunteer for the past eight years, Bill Helker has grown and supported Open Door Learning Center- Northside's citizenship program. As the lead citizenship volunteer Bill coordinates, manages and trains five volunteers, and coordinates the learning center's backlog of citizenship students. With his extensive knowledge of American History and years of experience in preparing students for the citizenship test, Bill has built a network of contacts and lists of resources he uses to help students navigate other immigration issues. Bill's warm and caring personality immediately put his students at ease. Both Bill and his wife have attended countless swearing ceremonies. "*With Bill's depth of life experience and compassionate demeanor, he could pick any program to volunteer at. We are so fortunate to have Bill as a part of the Open Door family.*"

Adan Ibrahim & Abdinoor (Ali) Ali, Franklin Learning Center

Nominated by Elizabeth Grant

This duo joined the Franklin Learning Center in 2006 as interns through a senior employment program and have stayed on as volunteers. Both Adan and Ali have known each other since they were children in Somalia. Both agree that they love to teach. Ali is a former student of



the Franklin Learning Center and every week he makes the journey from South St. Paul to Minneapolis to work with his students, focusing on math. He is committed to the success of his students and constantly reminds them and others that one is never too old to learn. Over the years Adan has become the FLC's lead citizenship tutor. He uses his knowledge of multiple languages to make sure that students understand both the question and answer in Somali and English. Since he transitioned from intern to volunteer, Adan has helped over 100 learners prepare and pass the US Citizenship exam. Both Adan and Ali have contributed their language and leadership abilities and have shown an immeasurable amount of dedication to the students of the Franklin Learning Center.

Gloria Noren, Minneapolis Adult Education

Nominated by Anne-Ellen Kerr

Gloria has been volunteering with 11 different ELL classes at the North Campus for the last ten years. She has helped countless students improve their reading, writing, math, listening and speaking skills, and encourages learners who think they are too old to learn to do their best work. Currently she comes to the North Campus four mornings a week to assist students in the computer lab and ELL classroom, where she works with individuals, small groups or classes, depending on the need. Her patience, enthusiasm and flexibility are prized by students as well as by the staff who partner with her to help students achieve their goals.

Rachael Urban, Deaf ABE

Nominated by Sarah Hoggard

Rachael was the first person to express interest in volunteering at Deaf ABE who had two important qualifications: fluency in ASL and an interest in working with adult learners. She jumped right in as a pronunciation and lip-reading tutor for hard of hearing students, a volunteer role that had never been tried before at Deaf ABE. She also works one-to-one with a student with Cerebral Palsy, who has expressed how much she has helped him improve his writing, computer and communication skills. Rachael develops English and



math lessons and activities that are customized for the students' unique needs. She is dedicated to seeing each student succeed, challenging them to go beyond their preconceived limitations about themselves.

Gay Zyvolski, Central Minnesota ABE

Nominated by Jane Stevenson

Gay volunteers with ESL literacy level students, leading small group sessions and doing one-to-one tutoring to help students master basic English skills. Her passion led her to organize a book drive and establish a lending library specifically for beginning literacy level students, who take pride in bringing books home to read to their children. She is a creative teacher whose previous experience working with individuals who have learning disorders has allowed her to tailor her lessons to fit multiple learning styles in the classroom. With the attention Gay is able to give to the students, many have made significant progress and moved into higher level classes.

Honorable Mention for the Outstanding Volunteer Award

Evelyn Browne, International Education Center

Hylton Dacre, Open Door Learning Center- Lake St/Neighborhood House

Phyllis Klapwyk, WEST ABE

Kathryn Reinicke, Metro North ABE

Monica St. Germain, Learning-in-Style

Joan Tuttle, Franklin Learning Center

Volunteer Service Awards

1000 Hours

Kristi Holmquist, St. Paul Schools ABE

Corrinne Mady, Adult Academic Program

Bruce Thayer, Open Door Learning Center- Midway

Ted Wanous, St. Paul Schools ABE

2000 Hours

Kevin Kirch, St. Paul Schools ABE

Jim Miller, Metro South Adult Basic Education



Andy Otness, Metro South Adult Basic Education
Michael Rose, St. Paul Schools ABE

3000 Hours

Rita Stough, Minneapolis Adult Education

7000 Hours

Curt Cameron, St. Paul Schools ABE

20000 Hours

Judy Halverson, Franklin Learning Center

Outstanding Learner Award

Amina Abdi, Open Door Learning Center – Northside

Nominated by Kat Aymeloglu

Amina and her family moved to the U.S. from Saudi Arabia in May 2014. Very shortly afterwards she and her mother started coming to English classes. She is dedicated to learning and rarely misses a class, spending up to seven hours a day at the school. She also volunteers in the evening four days a week and has become an invaluable asset. When the school had a recent influx of beginning level Somali students, Amina was invaluable in helping them enroll in classes, setting them up with independent study materials on the computer, and assisting with job and housing applications. Her desire to learn, initiative to help other students, and her bright and friendly personality, make her an incredible asset to the school.

Amy Hadammek, Open Door Learning Center – Lake Street

Nominated by Annelisa Donlan

Amy Hadammek is terminally ill and has been diligently working towards her GED at Open Door – Lake since March 2012. Over that period, in addition to being in constant physical pain, she has had to deal with being homeless and has had to release her children to a family member due to financial circumstances. Through all of this, she has remained so focused on her goal



that unless she is in surgery or at the doctor, she is in class. She meets and greets every new student and has been a role model for the other students with her attention and focus.

Kristin Kaase, Centennial ACE, Metro North ABE

Nominated by Gail Stone

Kristin came to Centennial ACE to study for her GED test in February of 2014. Her teacher said that in 19 years, she has never had a student who had as many or as intense challenges as Kristin, yet she was the first student at this site to earn her GED. Kristin was a FEMA employee for many years, working with disaster victims all around the country, and on top of that, she’s had many personal challenges. Her teacher says: *Kristin has a strong character. I greatly admire her grit and attitude. I am not sure who was learning more when she came to class, her or me. She was learning academics, but I was learning about how to deal with life’s adversities in a more positive way than I had in the past.*

Madison Smith, Open Door Learning Center – Midway

Nominated by JennaRose Bondeson

Madison started as a learner in the Basic Computer Skills Lab with limited computer skills. He had used a computer before, but was not able to pass the Basic Computer Skills assessment at first. He determinedly worked his way through each module, including Excel and Mac OS. He is now a volunteer Computer Skills Tutor. *“It’s easy for learners to relate to Madison because he has been in their shoes. He’s been unemployed and anxious about not knowing how to use the computer. He’s an excellent role model for the learners, and proof that if you put in the time it will pay off. Now, he is taking classes at St. Paul Community College, where he also helps people in his class learn to use the computer to complete class assignments. He also refers people in his class to our program. He plans on getting an IT related degree.”*

Lucille Fischer Outstanding Learner Award

Bilan Ahmed, Central Minnesota ABE

Nominated by Jane Stevenson



Bilan enrolled at Central Minnesota ABE as a student in September 2012 to improve her English, computer and job skills. Since then she has become a volunteer, tutoring four days per week in another classroom before her own class starts. In the fall of 2014, Bilan was hired as the Literacy Accountability Assistant and now coordinates the study room in the morning making sure all students' needs are met by matching them with volunteers. She is also the business owner of a small store in a Somali mall called, "Lucky Shop." *"Bilan is a dedicated student, volunteer and employee. She is able to work with diverse groups of students and bring them together to work on their educational goals. She has a soft spoken nature and puts people at ease with her encouraging words and smiles."*

Nimco Hashi, Franklin Learning Center

Nominated by Nancy Thornbury

Nimco is a dedicated learner and a leader amongst her peers at Franklin Learning Center. She is a mother of seven, studies at two schools, works a part-time job, and spends her free time helping other students. Through it all, she has amazing coping skills and a positive attitude. *"Nimco truly makes the most of her life never forgetting to give back to others. She is grateful for what she has and understands the difficulties of life. At 13 she became a refugee. She lived 10 years in a refugee camp before moving to South Africa for another 10 years and now she is beautifully settling into life in Minnesota."*

Yong Thao, CSD Deaf ABE

Nominated by Sarah Hoggard

Yong is a motivated learner and dedicated volunteer. Since joining the program, he has been a role-model to other Deaf ABE learners. Just recently, Yong helped another student with minimal language skills by braving the winter's cold to escort him to and from class on the bus (an hour and a half ride each way). He then made sure that the student could travel independently, and now this student attends class regularly. Yong has also accompanied Deaf ABE staff to local high schools and transitions programs to share his experiences in ABE and how it has benefited him. He has contributed greatly to Deaf ABE's outreach efforts.



Honorable Mention for the Outstanding Learner Award

Geraldine Steele, St. Paul Schools ABE

Hawa Egal, Franklin Learning Center/VOA Adult High School

Jocelin Garcia, Open Door Learning Center – Arlington Hills

Jazmin Guerrero Varela, PACE Family Literacy

About the Lucille Fischer Award

This year, we are happy to honor three Outstanding Learner recipients with a \$250 Lucille Fischer Award. This award celebrates the memory and work of Lucille Fischer, who was a beloved Adult Basic Education (ABE) teacher and the first instructional supervisor for the St. Paul Public Schools ABE/GED program in 1970. Under Lucille (or Lucy's) leadership, St. Paul became the first program in Minnesota to hold a GED graduation ceremony with caps and gowns. Lucy was also a founding member of the former professional organization, the Minnesota Association for Continuing Adult Education (MACAE). We are grateful to the leadership team of this former professional organization for making these three awards possible!

About the Minnesota Literacy Council

The Minnesota Literacy Council shares the power of learning so all Minnesotans have the opportunity to be successful students, workers, family members and community citizens. Literacy-rich preschools and summer reading programs start Minnesota's youngest readers off on the right foot. Free English, GED preparation and job-readiness classes prepare adults for post-secondary education and careers. Support in program best practices, educational technology, volunteer training and national service hosting strengthens over 400 community-based literacy sites across Minnesota.

About the Loft Literary Center

Incorporated in 1975, The Loft Literary Center is one of the nation's leading independent literary centers. The Loft supports the artistic development of writers, fosters a writing community, and builds an audience for literature. For more information about the Loft, please call 612-215-2575 or visit www.loft.org.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to all those who made this event possible!

- The Loft Literary Center for donating the space
- Sherrie Fernandez-Williams and Bao Phi from The Loft Literary Center for their collaboration in planning the event
- The Awards Selection Committee who reviewed and selected the 2015 Minnesota Literacy Council award winners
- The Minnesota Association of Continuing Adult Education for making the Lucille Fischer Outstanding Learner Award available and for selecting this year's award recipients
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) staff for nominating learners, volunteers and community partners for awards
- The following local businesses, for generously donating tonight's refreshments and decorations:
 - Breadsmith
 - Butter Café Bakery
 - Corner Balloon Shoppe
- The many interns, volunteers and literacy council staff who prepared for and volunteered at tonight's event