



Ionia County Literacy Council

2011 Annual Report

Special points of interest:

- *Young Cam Jansen and the Zoo Note Mystery* (2)
- Adding a new board member, losing a long-term one (3)
- Great Gown-up Spelling Bee (4)

Board of Directors

Norrie Slater, Chair
Sr. Kathleen Kaiser,
Vice Chair
(outgoing)
Marilyn Stock, Vice
Chair (incoming)
Linda Stewart,
Treasurer
Olga Albert,
Secretary
Sue Kessler
Karen Perkins
Vicky Wagner



The Ionia County
Literacy Council is
funded in part by a
Workforce Investment
Act, Title II, Grant

Dear supporter of literacy,

Did you know that, according to the United States Census Bureau, the poverty rate in Ionia County for those over age 25 without a high-school diploma is 20.2%, as compared to 4.2% for those with a Bachelor's degree or higher? Eight percent of our county is considered illiterate.

To be literate means that you have the skills to understand what you read, communicate with others and engage fully and confidently in life's activities and opportunities – at work, at home and in the community. Literacy is a tool that opens up a world of opportunities to an individual. It is also something that many of us take for granted.

Did you know that Ionia County Literacy Council is the only place in Ionia County where an adult can receive free literacy tutoring? And, yet, to re-coin a phrase, it takes a village to become a literate village.

Since taking on the task of directing the Ionia County Literacy Council three years ago, I've become aware of, and now collaborate with, many in the region who try to help residents achieve their literacy potential. These include Michigan Works!, Belding Adult Education, Portland Adult Education, Montcalm Community College, area businesses and libraries, Montcalm/Ionia Great Start Collaborative, and United Way, among others. We all have a vision of a literate community – after all a literate community is a prosperous community.

In cooperation with area libraries and the Great Start Collaborative, we are working to pull together family literacy programs, in which child and parent can learn literacy skills together. We all know that a child who is read to regularly – the earlier the better – has a greater chance of succeeding in school; but what does a child do when a parent can't read? Even Start, the government sector funding family literacy, ceased to exist this year, so we turn to private foundations – and donors like you – to help us reach our goals.

This year, more students received tutoring from the literacy council than last year or the year before. We trained six new tutors in September, and still we have a waiting list.

With financial support from people in our village, we can continue to fund the literacy council and fight to raise the literacy level in our county. Won't you help?

Inside this annual report you'll read about some of what has been happening with the literacy council throughout the past year. You'll also find a convenient form that you can clip out and mail to us with your donation. You'll receive an acknowledgement from us that will serve as a receipt for your tax-free donation.

As always, Ionia County residents, thank you for supporting literacy!

Gayle Thompson
Executive Director

Tutor Training

Meet the newest tutors for the Ionia County Literacy Council. These six women just completed a 12-hour tutor training and are now qualified to tutor adults in reading, math, and English as a second language. The new tutors (shown here holding their certificates of completion) are, from left to right, Janet Baker from Muir; Carol Larsen-Roddy from Portland; Jan Nurenberg, Westphalia; Nanette Goupil from Greenville; Marilyn Peckins from Lyons; and Sandra Meitler from Portland.

The 12-hour tutor training took place over four evenings in September and covered such topics as how

to tutor adults, learning styles, working with speakers of other languages, and much more.

The emphasis on tutoring adults is to make sure the student leaves the tutoring session feeling successful.

Often adult students have had a bad experience in school, and we don't want to repeat that experience here.

Most tutoring is done individually and takes place in a public library in the community in which the student lives. How

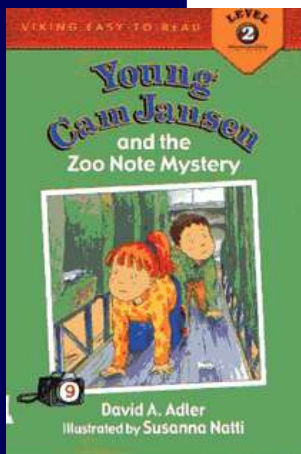


New tutors from left to right: Janet Baker, Carol Larsen-Roddy, Jan Nurenberg, Nanette Goupil, Marilyn Peckins, and Sandra Meitler

often a student and tutor meet and the time of the sessions is determined by the student and tutor, based on their schedules.

Ionia County first graders receive free book from Literacy Council

During March is Reading Month 2011, the Ionia County Literacy Council provided a free copy of *Young Cam Jansen and the Zoo Note Mystery* to 901 first graders in Ionia county



The book, purchased at a reduced price through a literacy partnership with Scholastic Books, was delivered to first graders at Ellis, Boyce, Rather, Jefferson, Emerson, Twin Rivers, Clarksville, Sunfield, West, Woodland, Oakwood, Palo, Haynor, Coon, North Le-

Valley, and Saranac Elementary schools; Grattan and Threshold Academies; Faith Community Christian School; Seventh Day Adventist School; and SS Peter and Paul and St. Patrick's schools.

Reading to first graders were Olga Albert, Norrie Slater, Amanda Osborne, Linda Stewart, Sister Kathleen Kaiser, Cari O'Connor, Vicky Burrows, Bruce Chadwick, Vicki Bradley, Amy Buckingham, Dan Mitchell, Judy Huhyn, Laura Hager, Josh Taylor, Megan Ledin, Sue Kessler, Joan Miller Moran, Valerie Gaus, and Sandra Meitler.

The literacy council inserts a flyer into each book encour-

aging parents to read to their children. Research has proven that those children who are read to at an early age have significantly higher gains in school than those who were not read to on a consistent basis. Unfortunately, not all parents can read.

You may have friends and neighbors who cannot read or cannot read well. If you know of someone in this situation, please encourage him or her to contact the Ionia County Literacy Council, so they, too, may be able to read to their children.



Please help the Ionia County Literacy Council continue its mission by donating.

Send this form with your tax-deductible gift to

Ionia County Literacy Council, P.O. Box 288, Ionia, MI 48846

(You may also donate to us online at www.ioniacountyliteracycouncil.org)

I/we enclose \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 other _____ to help increase literacy in Ionia County.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

I am interested in becoming a tutor. Please contact me.

Saying good-bye . . .

Sister Kathleen (Kit) Kaiser, csj, came to Ionia in April 1996 and has worked these past 16 years for the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids in pastoral ministry to the Spanish-speaking population in Ionia and Montcalm Counties.

Because of her concern for the literacy of her Hispanic community, she offered English classes at SS Peter & Paul School for three years to Spanish-speaking adults. It was during this time that she met Mary Ann Hagemeyer, director of the Ionia County Literacy

Council, and was asked to join forces in establishing an ESL program (English as a Second Language) with the council.

Sister Kit joined the council as an adjunct member and in 2008 became a board member. During her 13 years with the council, she has been active in all areas of adult literacy promoted by the council, but most especially in recruiting teachers and students for the ESL program in both Ionia and Belding.

In early January, Sister Kit will be leaving the Ionia area to take a position

near Kalamazoo. She will always consider Ionia one of her many 'homes' and the people of Ionia part of her dear 'family'.

Sister Kit has been a dedicated member of the Ionia County Literacy Council Board of Directors and will be dearly missed by all.



. . . and hello



Karen Perkins, joined the Ionia County Literacy Council Board of Directors on October 13, 2011.

Karen brings 25 years of case management experience in employment-related services to the literacy council. She began that service with EightCap in 1986.

Currently Karen is Lead Case Manager at the Ionia County Michigan Works! office in Ionia, where she oversees the Workforce Investment Act Employment and Training Programs, as well as the Jobs Education and Training Programs.

Karen also has been involved in the community in a number of ways,

including serving as an Ionia Chamber of Commerce Ambassador for 22 years. Most recently she served as chairwoman of the 2011 Ionia Free Fair Women's Day event.

Karen's work and volunteer experience will prove to be a valuable asset to the mission of the literacy council, and we feel honored to have her aboard.



**Helping People Achieve
Life-Changing Goals**

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Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee

On Tuesday, March 22, 2011, the Ionia County Literacy Council hosted its first Great Grown-up Spelling Bee Fund Raiser. As its name implies, the spelling bee was a competition for adults.

Five teams, consisting of three members each, competed for the first-place trophy, which was won by Judy, Han and Eric Huynh, spelling for Michigan One Community Credit Union.

Other teams were Jason Ratliff, Ben Weller, and Karen Boswell, sponsored by Portland Federal Credit Union; The PACE Honeybees, consisting of Stephanie Schneider, Laura Hager, and Karen Wisnewski, sponsored by Portland Adult & Community Education; The First Bees, comprised of Dan Mitchell, Jackie Thebo, and Linda Steele, sponsored by Firstbank West Michigan; and The Spell Chicks, Cindy Currie, Carol Abood-Palm, and Kathy Bengel, who sponsored themselves. All teams, which

were on the 'stage' at the same time spelling the same word, were allowed to misspell two words before being eliminated.

Ionia Middle School English teacher Christina Frost was the word pronouncer. Judges, who determined correct spellings, were Woodview Elementary Principal Julie Milewski, Saranac Elementary Principal Jason Smith, and Kimberly Treece of Portland Adult and Community Education. Attorney Pat Duff was master of ceremonies.

Donations for the silent auction came from Sterner Veterinary Clinic, Ionia; Gus Macker Basketball, Belding; Around the Block Quilt Shop, Portland; Shadow Ridge Golf Course, Ionia; Blossom Shoppe, Belding; Kathy Bengel, Lansing; Jo Ann Carney, Alto; and Linda Stewart, Ionia.

In addition to the team sponsors, Scott Miller of Edward Jones Ionia and



Master of Ceremonies Pat Duff presents the winning trophy to the Huynhs

Mike and Joan Boog of Lyons made financial contributions to the bee.

The next Great Grown-up Spelling Bee is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20, 2012 at the Ionia County ISD. Dinner is \$15 (\$25 per couple) and children under 10 eat free.

The cost to sponsor a team is \$200. We look forward to seeing you again in the spring and, once again, having a really great time!

Call the literacy council for details about how to participate.