

LITERACY MONTHLY

McLit, Marathon County Literacy Council, Inc.

August 2023

A Message



From the Executive Director

Words from the Director: Back to School!

Here at McLit, Marathon County Literacy Council, we celebrate Back to School just like any other holiday. It is definitely worth honoring the wonderful opportunity for new learning experiences and growth, with hopes and dreams of a fun and rewarding future!

I cannot wait to get started. McLit is ready to help you whether we are teaching the class or you are taking the class somewhere else, and you need extra one-on-one help. Please stop by and find out what we can do for you. We are open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday thru Friday, but we do our best to adjust our schedule to accommodate your busy life schedule.

We want to see your life improve, and we are ready to assist you any way we can! We have become the go-to place for Spanish AND English language learning. We help learners with both languages, and are happy to have native Spanish speakers on hand. We also help with comput-



er skills that are increasingly necessary in both school and work environments.

Remember, our services are always FREE! That being said, we are in need of financial help. Our vital “equipment” is the humans who interact and make our teaching experiences the best possible. Many of our students cannot afford the high prices of basic and continuing education, and that is where we come in with experienced teachers. We are so grateful for our volunteers and staff, and we are always appreciative of support when it comes to compensating them for all that they do. To support McLit, consider becoming a volunteer or helping us cover the costs of office supplies such as copy paper, Canon Laser ink 054, coffee and creamer, and paper supplies, (including hand towels, toilet paper, paper plates, etc.).

We hope to meet you soon,

Connie H.

In This Issue

Beyond p. 2

Reading program update p. 3

CHIP program overview p. 4

Jodi's Corner p. 7

Bon voyage, Alonna p. 9

Who We Are

Our mission: *Improve quality of life through literacy.*
We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the students who enter our program(s).

We provide free tutoring services to Marathon County and surrounding areas.

We support and promote literacy at all ages.

Areas of instruction include reading, writing, math, finance, health, workforce, computers, citizenship, and ESL/ELL.





Beyond

By Jodi Schreier

There is so much that goes on behind the scenes at our literacy council. There are grants to apply for, meetings to attend, events to plan, emails to answer, a database to update, books to put away, calls to take, and special projects assigned by the director. McLit is a walk-in literacy council, which means that many of our learners “pop in” at their convenience and are helped by the staff and volunteers who are working that particular day. An animated flow of learners arrive and depart at all hours of the day. Our motto has always been that learners come first and many times the behind-the-scenes duties are set aside so that we can greet, answer inquiries, give tours, register new students, tutor, and solve immediate walk-in needs like housing and hunger. As the day winds down and as the week

I remind myself that offering human warmth to a lonely soul is absolute success in the grand scheme of things.

progresses, I sometimes look back and realize that not much of my “to do” list was accomplished.

First, I feel a bit defeated, as there are never enough hours to complete everything. I sit and frown and stress a bit as the small piles of tasks multiply. It is the perfectionist in me. But then I replay the McLit reel of the day. I see many snippets of my day that to an outsider may look benign. Me, locating a word search book for a man who walks in the McLit door saying it is so boring and lonely at home. “Come hang out here today,” I say. Sometimes the friendly faces at McLit are the only interactions that some may have. I remind myself that offering human warmth to a lonely soul is absolute success in the grand scheme of things.

Me serving a cold drink to a man who is using our computers to apartment hunt. It is a warm day out-

See BEYOND, page 3

BEYOND, continued from page 2

side and as he places this simple request, he touches his hot hand to mine to show how melted he is from walking over to McLit from the shelter. He also asks if we can store his Kwik Trip salad in our refrigerator for a few hours until lunch. We chat for a bit about our mutual love of salads. He kindly offers to bring me a salad someday. Ok, my heart sometimes grows larger during these moments, just like that crabby old Grinch. Fast forward a couple months and now this man has found an apartment and no longer needs to stay at the shelters. He tells me that he was impressed with McLit's friendly staff and volunteers, and because of this, he feels comfortable saying that Wausau feels like home.

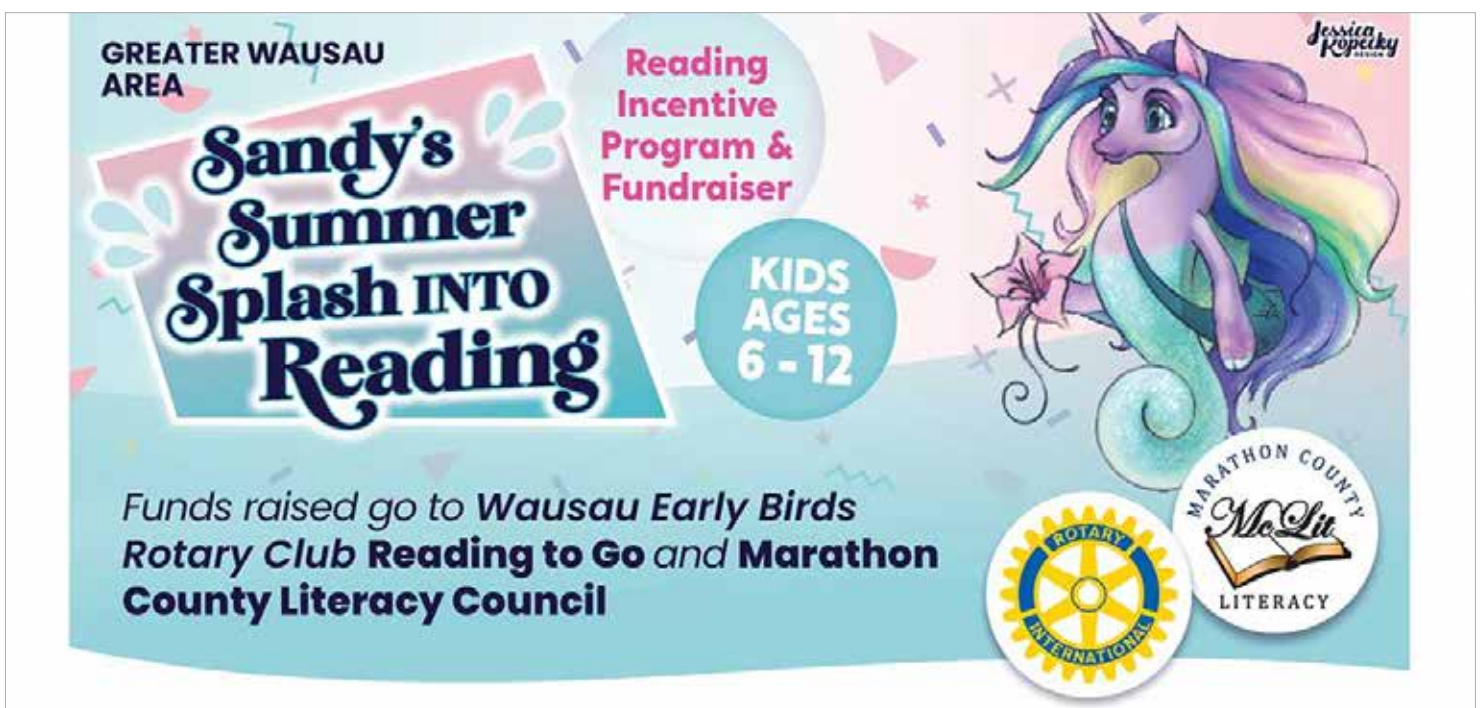
Me, helping a woman order her very own Current catalog. She has seen our office copy of this colorful book of party trinkets and decorations. She had called the 1-800 number on her own one day, but did not understand the auto attendant's directions and had no idea what number to press to get a live person. She asked if I could help her order one on the computer. This modern world sometimes forgets that not everyone knows how to navigate a 1-800 number or a computer. Walking someone through the steps of using a computer can be eye opening for some of our learners. Fast forward once again and our learner is so excited to tell me that she received her very first "magazine" in the mail. Catalogs absolutely count as tools for reading practice.

Me, giving a tour to a new learner, a woman experiencing homelessness. I point out the computers, the bathroom, the book collection, and lead her to the fridge. I explain that sometimes (not always, because being a nonprofit our budget can be tight) there is soda, water, coffee, sandwiches, cookies, or other treats. I tell her that she is allowed to take one drink and one snack per day. (We try to spread the food out for all.) I see tears in her eyes as I try to make her feel at home. Later in the day, she shyly approaches me and asks if she can have a sandwich and a bottle of water. She tells me that she wanted to be polite and ask first. Later in the week I slip her a bag of unmentionables and ask her if she can use them. She peeks in the bag and looks happy to see new bras and underwear. I later learn that her boyfriend had abandoned her and she suddenly found herself all alone without any of her belongings. McLit filled the role of support system. I am a planner and each morning I map out my day in my mind and many times on paper. Life gently laughs at my need for control and deposits new faces in front of me.

"This is more important Jodi. This person is more important. Drop your plans, forget about the multiplying tasks (they always get done eventually) and focus on the person in front of you. You may be the answer, the encouragement or the lifeline for them."

A different kind of accomplishment, a different kind of success that I like to call the "beyond" of working at the McLit Literacy Council in downtown Wausau. ■

McLit receives generous donation from local reading program



Sandy's Summer reading program raised more than \$2,000 in support of literacy! Local business sponsors pledged one penny per minute of reading to support the program. McLit was honored to receive \$1,002.97.

McLit, CHIP interns develop curriculum for basic health literacy courses

McLit is excited to offer a new, comprehensive health literacy curriculum that can be adapted to fit the needs of different community organizations.

The curriculum is the result of McLit's third annual partnership with the Community Health Internship Program (CHIP), which connects health-focused interns to a variety of community entities including local health departments, tribal and community health centers, and community service organizations for an eight-week internship.

Throughout June and July, McLit interns Connor and Sujlan researched, planned, and designed a basic health literacy program for future residents of the Gospel TLC, a faith-based transitional living center for men

recovering from addiction. Each individualized lesson plan pertains to a different health topic that will help residents learn more about proper nutrition, disease, hygiene, and first aid, to name a few.

McLit also is excited to make this curriculum available to anyone interested in health education as the large selection of health-focused subject matter allows for easy customization. Those interested can contact McLit's Johanna Nelson at 715.679.6170, e-mail: johanna@mclitofwausau.org.

McLit's 2023 summer interns included Sujlan Thao, a biomedical sciences student who plans to graduate in Spring 2025; and Connor Jeske, a Spring 2024 graduate majoring in biochemistry. The two attend University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and UW-Stevens Point, respectively. ■



Feature Profile: Sujlan, 2023 CHIP intern

- **Tell us a little bit about yourself**

Hello, I am Sujlan Thao. I reside in Milwaukee and enjoy exploring the variety of cultural influences you can find downtown.

- **What year in school are you, and what are you majoring in?**

I am a junior majoring in Biomedical Science on the track to becoming a medical laboratory scientist. I currently attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

- **What is your future goal in medicine? (specialization)**

My future goal is to work in a laboratory setting and perform research relating to health. This would include becoming a pathologist, a physician who specializes in analyzing and interpreting pathogenic specimens, or a medical laboratory scientist who works with testing human samples in the lab.

- **What made you want to go into the healthcare profession?**

My strong passion and interest in the health field motivated me to pursue a healthcare profession. I had participated in a Project Lead the Way curriculum for three years in high school where we explored the basics of genetics, disease, and medical interventions. Those classes were engaging and inspired me to go into the health field. Not only that, the support of my friends and family have also helped me stick to my passions and encouraged me to continue my journey.

- **Describe your project for McLit**

For our project with McLit, we partnered with the newly established Gospel TLC to come up with a teaching curriculum on basic health. The Gospel TLC houses residents who are recovering drug and/or alcohol addicts who may not have an adequate understanding of their health and the healthcare system. My colleague, Connor Jeske, and I compiled research from library books and online sources to develop lesson plans that are easy to teach and can be expanded on in the future.

Another project we worked on was a health literacy presentation. We utilized resources compiled by past CHIP interns, as well as some of our own, to provide updated information. This includes how to get insurance, finding a doctor and making appointments, a list of different organizations in the Wausau area, and more. With this, we presented at the Community De-



velopment Authority to help share the ways in which they can navigate through healthcare.

- **What do you like doing in your spare time?**

In my spare time, I enjoy doing creative hands-on activities, some of which would include drawing, painting, and working on small, personal projects. I also like to read books when I have the chance, or study Japanese through songs, videos, and lessons. Listening to music is another activity I do often when I have extra time.

- **What are your top three favorite songs?**

My top three favorite songs would have to be *In this Moment* by Gavin Luke, *Haven't* by Yoasobi, and *Lovin' Me* by Fifty Fifty.

- **What kinds of books do you like to read?**

There's a variety of genres I enjoy reading when it comes to books. If I am looking to engross myself in story building, stories with fantasy, magic, and/or historical elements are my go-to. If I want to expand my knowledge, topics on genetics, the human species, and evolution are fun to read. If I am looking for a quick read, manga would be my first choice.

- **Any other comments?**

If you are looking to go into the medical field or medical school, consider applying for CHIP and/or AMP! It is a wonderful opportunity to gain experience working with non-profit organizations and the community!

Feature Profile: Connor, 2023 CHIP intern

- **Tell us a little bit about yourself**

Hello, my name is Connor and I am from a small town called Colby, WI. I have three younger triplet brothers who are also interested in going into the healthcare field. I have a black lab named Archie who absolutely goes crazy over bread and ice cubes.

- **What year in school are you, and what are you majoring in?**

I will be going into my senior year at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and I am majoring in Biochemistry, I also play football for UWSP.

- **What is your future goal in medicine? (specialization)**

My future goal in medicine would be to make a beneficial impact on someone's life, whether that would be community-based or in the healthcare setting. I would also love to inspire young minds and guide them into the healthcare setting.

- **What made you want to go into the healthcare profession?**

A big reason why I chose a path into the healthcare profession is due to my mom. My mom is an Oncology nurse at the Marshfield hospital and hearing the stories of how she has made impacts on people's lives has really inspired me. Also hearing the bad side of healthcare really inspired me to get into it and try and make a change.

- **Describe your project for McLit**

Here at McLit we were tasked with two really big projects. The first project we did was make about



a thirty minute presentation on health literacy and how to navigate the healthcare field. This presentation included things like health insurance, how to receive care, basic health information, transportation, and additional resources around the Wausau area. The second was to create a health literacy curriculum.

- **What do you like doing in your spare time?**

When I have free time I enjoy fishing and lifting weights.

- **What are your top three favorite songs?**

Good Die Young

More Than My Hometown

Tennessee Number

- **What kinds of books do you like to read?**

The kind of books I enjoy reading are Sci-fi or Adventure books. I also enjoy reading weird crazy medical articles.



Jodi's Corner: Carlota, our Mexican snow bird

Carlota came to McLit in August of 2021. She grew up in Mexico and there she completed elementary school. Reading and writing was not her favorite so at an early age she asked her father's permission to do something different, like working or learning a skill. They decided to send Carlota to a special school that taught sewing. She quickly developed a knack for sewing, alterations, and creating items from cloth. Later on in life, she met an American man who spent some of his work days in Mexico. This was the man she would marry. Carlota moved to the United States and began a new life in Wisconsin. She decided to learn English so that she could communicate better with her friends, her husband, and the community members in Wausau. Carlota is active with the church and makes handmade blankets for the homeless out of plastic bags. She has also made kitchen towels, hats, purses, shawls, and many other things to donate and sell. Her latest project is sewing a traditional Mexican outfit for a doll.

Classes with Carlota are fun for our staff and volunteers. Together we look at picture books and name as many objects that we can. In this way, Carlota learns many common kitchen and household items, animals, colors and shapes, and articles of clothing. We also enjoy doing word search books. Categories of words have included dolls, games and sports. Conversations are practiced and lessons have been taught about how to take a message on the telephone, how to greet and say goodbye, how to talk about her family



McLit tutor and wordsmith Jodi Schreier shares her reflections on day-to-day life at our learning center.

and where she is from and how to share her feelings.

Carlota's husband also takes Spanish classes at McLit. He already had a basic knowledge of Spanish but now is furthering his skills by working with our native Spanish speaker, Celin. This will be the third summer that Carlota has spent with McLit. In the cold of winter, she heads back to Mexico to visit her family. McLit is very pleased to have such a kind and talented student as Carlota, and having her husband at McLit is a wonderful bonus. ■



COMING SOON!! SANTA LETTERS

Once again, we will be doing the Santa Letters Program beginning in early November. This program allows children to practice handwriting in a fun way. The letters are collected from mailboxes placed around the area. Volunteers then write responses, which are taken to Rudolph, Wis., for post-marking and sent to the children. McLit addresses and stuffs the envelopes, attaches postage, and has an "elf" from Wausau's Evolutions in Design take them to Rudolph for mailing.

We are looking for sites to host mailboxes, volunteers to help manage mailboxes, volunteers to write responses, and donations for postage. Please either call us at 715-679-6170 or email us at mclitofwausau@gmail.com and let us know how you would like to help. ■



SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Wednesdays, September 13, 20, and 27, 10:30 A.M.-11:30 A.M. Family Storytime at T. B. Scott Free Library, 106 W. 1st St., Merrill. Geared toward children ages 3 to 5 years but all ages welcome. Pre-registration not required.

Thursday, September 14, 11:00 A.M.-12:00 P.M. Storytime in the Garden at the Yawkey House garden, 403 Mcindoe St., Wausau. For more information, please contact the Marathon County Historical Society at (715) 842-5750 or info@marathoncountyhistory.org.

Mondays, September 18 and 25, 10:30 A.M.-11:30 A.M. Toddler Storytime at T. B. Scott Free Library, 106 W. 1st St., Merrill. For children ages 2 to 3 years. Please register by calling 715-536-7191 or stop at the Youth Service desk to sign up today.

Monday, September 25, 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. The Landing Literacy Book Club (hosted by McLit), at The Landing, Woodson YMCA, 707 N. 3rd St., Wausau. For more information, contact McLit Marathon County Literacy Council at (715) 679-6170 or mclitofwausau@gmail.com.

Thursday, September 28-Sunday, October 1, Central Wisconsin Book Festival. See mcpl.us/cwbf for more information.

Bon Voyage, Alonna!! (We miss you already)



The McLit team says 'goodbye' to a wonderful tutor, volunteer coordinator, and friend. Thank you for sharing your gifts, dedication, and positive spirit... You are truly one-of-a-kind, Alonna! We wish you all the best as you begin a new chapter of your life in Mexico.



McLit extends a thank you to all of our generous sponsors!

Financial and/or In-Kind Support for McLit provided:



McLit extends a heartfelt thank you to the CoVantage Cares Foundation, which generously donated \$5,000 in support of our Podcast programming. McLit creates and produces original Podcasts pertaining to financial literacy, personal testimonials, and health literacy; and we are always exploring new topics to share with the community. McLit couldn't make this happen without the help of the CoVantage Cares program, which allows us to procure the expensive technology and equipment necessary to bring these programs to listeners free of charge.

McLit in Pictures: Community Events



McLit enjoyed the festivities and friendly faces at this year's World Cultures Day, held in downtown Wausau.



Please/"Pleas" from the Editor:

As many of you know, we have lost our main benefactor this past year. Without the help of that sponsor, we are in need of help to continue our free programming. If you or someone you know is interested in supporting literacy education for our community, please consider donating what you can. We always need Canon Ink 054, printer paper, books, and money to pay for the heat and lights as well as the great staff who dedicate their time to helping people. Thank you for your consideration!



McLit in Pictures: Community Events



What better combination than pets and books?! McLit sponsored a square at this year's Chalk Fest. Below: McLit volunteers Mary and Johanna braved the hot weather to create their literacy-inspired masterpiece.



McLit in Pictures: Learning Center in Action



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