

LITERACY MONTHLY

McLit, Marathon County Literacy Council, Inc.

November 2023

A Message



From the Executive Director

Words from the Director: Peace On Earth

This has gained new importance for me this year. There are so many wars and countries that are unstable. I am happy to be in a safe country and city.

I want to thank all for the donations, financial support, and necessities that make McLit possible.

Thank you to all our volunteers who help with teaching, mentoring, and keeping the building running. Thank you to my staff who are always there and willing to go the extra mile, adding those little extras that make all the difference.

Starting a new year is a great time to reflect

and dream about how I would like to see the new year unfold.

2024 will be a year of growth with a new McLit board, new expectations, and a new strategic plan. The direction McLit plans to take will be to help the community by enhancing and enriching the lives of everyone we help.

We hope you are touched by life's positive changes.

As a team we are becoming stronger every day, increasing our capacity to help those in need.

Connie Heidemann,
Executive Director



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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, ESL/ELL.





Santa Letters 2023

By **Judy Staszak**

Once again McLit is excited to offer Letters to Santa as an opportunity for the community to get involved with a fun way to encourage children to read and write. Each year, we place mailboxes with letter forms in various businesses throughout the Wausau metropolitan area. McLit delivers the mailboxes and forms. We also pick up the letters and refill the mailboxes. After Christmas, we pick up the mailboxes and leftover forms. Boxes are located at all three Culver's, both Lamb's Fresh Markets, I-Hop, Rocky Rococo's, Texas Roadhouse, Dale's Weston Lanes, Dovornay Orthodontics, Sam's Pizza in Rothschild, Pick 'n Save on Bridge St, Coral Lanes, and the YMCA in downtown Wausau. If you know of a location that would like to participate, please let us know and we will deliver a box to them.

Letters can be returned to a mailbox at any location, brought to the McLit office at 515 N. Third St. in Wausau, or mailed (to the same address). Letters also can be dropped off at Evolu-

tions in Design, 626 N. Third St. in Wausau. Letters received by December 20, 2023, will be answered and returned in time for Christmas; they will also have a Rudolph postmark. Letters received after December 20 will still be answered, but will be mailed from Wausau (not Rudolph, Wis.) and may not arrive until after Christmas.

Last year, McLit and its volunteers responded to over 230 letters; we would like to break that record this year. Volunteers who help write responses are provided with Letters from Santa stationary and sample responses. You will be contacted to pick up a packet of 10 letters and to return the responses within a week. You will not need to provide envelopes or postage as that will be provided by McLit.

If you would like to help with this project, we are looking for volunteers to "adopt" a mailbox location; help with responding to letters; contribute postage, paper, or Canon 54 toner cartridges. Money contributions are also greatly appreciated. Contact McLit at 715-679-6170 or e-mail mcclitofwausau@gmail.com. ■

Feature Profile: Crystal, McLit student & volunteer

What brought you here?

I wanted to work on my reading and writing.

How long have you been coming to McLit?

I started coming in 2023.

About how often do you come each week?

I come Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

What do you like to do while you are here?

I like to help people out when they need help. I have organized the bookshelf and done general organizing. I also work on my reading and writing with a tutor. I spend time with Connie, Ashley, and Dottie. They help with talking about personal problems like how I don't like people judging me.

Do you have a favorite memory?

Singing and sharing my gifts. Drawing pictures for people.

What are some things you love to do for fun?

Drawing, singing, walking, and cleaning.

Anything else you would like to add?

I am looking forward to December 7th because there is a special someone coming to visit me from Shawano, and he is going to propose! ■



Feature Profile: Dottie, McLit's newest team member

Hi, my name is Dottie and I am blessed to be here at McLit with many hats: Tutor, Office Management and Hospitality, and Volunteer Coordinator.

I grew up in northern Wisconsin and returned home from Iowa after attending Wartburg College for a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management.

I am a dog-mom and love to knit, crochet, garden, and read. I have a passion for serving people, and I have reached the best fit for me at this time in my life. I enjoy all the students, I'm learning new things, and I am honored to be part of the team.

I look forward to learning Spanish and would like to invite more people to become a volunteer. Please call me to set up an appointment to shadow me, or anyone else on the team, for a few hours and see what we can do to make a new friendship.

Dottie



Thank you to the Marshfield Clinic Health System for selecting McLit as a recipient of its Addressing Health Disparities Funding Program. McLit received funding to help with our Improving Community Health Program. Through this program, we provide free health resources, guidance, and education to address the health inequities caused by economic, social, and environmental disparities.



The McLit team extends a big thank you to the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation for its support support of McLit's Continuing to Improve Quality of Life Program. As a nonprofit organization, we are dedicated to providing the best care, services, and support to our community, especially those with limited resources. It is our generous community that allows us to continue offering these services free of charge.

GREEN BAY PACKERS FOUNDATION



Thank you to the Green Bay Packers Foundation for its support of McLit! The foundation awarded a grant specifically for McLit's Behavioral Health Program. This will make a big difference as we address behavioral health issues in our community through our programs, outreach, and resources.



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



McLit extends a heartfelt thank you to the Murco Foundation Fund for its support of our Making a Difference Program. The grant is a great help as we prepare for another cold winter by opening our warming center, co-located with our educational center at 515 N 3rd Street, Wausau.

To clarify for those community members who are asking to help McLit, some of our current needs are: Copy paper, toner, K-Cup coffee pods, bilingual books, spiral notebooks, stamps for our Santa letter campaign, and monetary donations to assist with heat/electricity as we are a warming center during the winter. Also, we are always accepting applications for volunteers. Thanks so much for thinking of McLit this time of year!



Jodi's Corner: What If...

Is that young man walking down your street a criminal? What if he has a troubled past and harmful intentions? Do you trust his rough appearance? Are you a bit fearful of that skull tattoo and the frown on his stubbled face?

What if this same young man is very remorseful of his past? Shelter life is his reality but he dreams of more. What if he is unable to have his own place because no one will rent to him? What if despite the closed doors, he tries to fill his heart with positivity and light? Did you know that he calls his mom every week so she doesn't worry and he ends each call with... Mom, I love you! What if the tall man in tattered clothing talking to himself is a danger to you? Do you think he might lunge at you as you pass? Do you think that he might try to snatch your purse or your backpack? Do his odd ramblings set you on edge?

What if this same man has a medical condition that causes him to speak and yell involuntarily? What if this man is a gentle and polite person? At McLit you might hear him asking to use the computers and giving a curt thank you bow in such a pleasant gentlemanly way. What if he longs for friendship and close connections but no one is able to look past his vocal condition? Is the dark mysterious stranger in black garb a terrorist? Do you imagine this person to have an evil plan to harm our city and our community members? Do you think they are hiding something behind that scarf? Are they hiding something when they avert their eyes as you pass? Does their "strange" culture make you uncomfortable?

What if your immigrant neighbors were learning English? What if they study every day for hours, because they want to fit in and be part of the community? What if they feel just as uncomfortable as they walk, because in the back of their mind, they still have an intense fear of guns, dogs, violence? What if they had to leave behind spouses and children in their native country and worry about them every day? What if they lost a child and each and every day, they find it hard to breathe? What if their heart aches so incredibly for their far away family that it is hard to smile?

Is this large woman with the colorful hair a sorry sight? Would you call her overweight or unattractive? Do her clothes seem like an odd choice to you? Do you look down upon her or make jokes to a friend? Did you know that she has a simple sweetness that sets everyone at ease? She is always concerned about making others feel special and appreciated. What if sometimes she is raw with pain from how others treat her, yet she keeps her kind spirit and offers smiles and friendship?



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

What do YOU look like? How do YOU act when walking on the streets of Wausau? What is YOUR inner soul like? Kind, caring, accepting, sympathetic, hardworking, happy, sad, angry? When we look past appearances there is so much more that we see. One of the most important things that I have learned by working at McLit in downtown Wausau, is that everyone has a story. And once you get to know that story, people are not as scary or unusual as they may seem. So many amazingly loving and thoughtful people are wrapped in different packages. This opening is a gift that I will always be thankful for.

So next time you find yourself walking on the sidewalks of downtown Wausau, give a little smile and nod. Let's work to understand and accept all the brilliant and unique packages that fall into our worlds. ■

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. Thank you for your consideration!



Jodi's Corner (Bonus Article): Time in a Pocket

What a blessing it is to have a set of car or truck keys in your pocket. The freedom of quick and secure transportation is something many take for granted. I remember these special days in our students' lives when a new car or truck (sometimes used but new to them, and sometimes, brand, brand new) is obtained. Working full time and saving tips, applying for vehicles through non profits or receiving a reliable vehicle from a parent or grandparent are all WOW moments that our students love to share with us.

Faded home keys, whether tinted with gold or silver, jingle in our purse or in our denim jeans or quilted fall/winter coat. They represent a warm, safe space to unwind after a long day at the office. Opening your door to be greeted by a fuzzy calico friend and the nearness of a hearty dinner of your choice makes for a very relaxing night. Couch time, whether reading or watching tv, is another unbelievable safe and comforting feeling. What a HUGE moment when our stu-

dents achieve the dream of having their very own apartment or rental home.

Sometimes in life, we lose a loved one or fall into divorce or get laid off from our job or our home is foreclosed on. Security disappears and life seems so wide open, in a bad way. This is when people have time in a pocket. Time stretched out, scary and unknown, in such an unfriendly stance. When time is in one's pocket, there is only emptiness. We see students holding this emptiness every day.

At McLit there is openness. Expansiveness. Possibilities. Dreams with delicious gravy. Goals sprinkled with cinnamon and cloves. Wants and needs dolloped with Cool Whip. All is on the table. Nothing gets swept under. Nobody gets swept under. Whatever stage of life you are at, whether you have keys in your pocket or time in a pocket, the door of McLit is ALWAYS enveloped in an unseeable mist that calls out "WELCOME." ■

EVENTS DECEMBER 2023

Wednesday, December 6, 10:30 A.M.-11:30 A.M. Family Storytime at T. B. Scott Free Library, 106 W. 1st St., Merrill. Continue to build early literacy skills through interactive stories, songs, play, and crafts. Geared toward children ages 3- to 5-years-old, but all ages welcome. Pre-registration not required.

Monday, December 11, 10:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Bug Tussel University - Drop-In Tech Help in the Conference Room at Marathon County Public Library Wausau Headquarters, 300 N. 1st St., Wausau. Get one-on-one help with your computer, Internet, smartphone, and other tech questions.

Tuesday, December 12, 10:00 A.M.-11:00 A.M. Tots in the Gardens at Monk Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. 1st Ave., Wausau. Each session includes an activity or craft, and a story. Learn about plants, birds, bugs, and the tools you can use to explore nature with your 3- to 5-year-old. Fee: \$5 per participating tot, free for members (cash only). Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b094ca5a72eabfd0-tots2#>

Wednesday, December 13, 10:30 A.M.-11:30 A.M. Start With Art: Woodson Art Museum at T. B. Scott Free Library, 106 W. 1st St., Merrill. Families with young children join Woodson Art Museum educators for stories, activities, and hands-on art making. Experience children's illustrated literature and learn about the elements of art and design through guided projects. Try out a variety of art materials and explore themes like composition, pattern, and complementary colors.

McLit in Pictures: Special Occasions



Happy Spinal Bifida Day! On October 25, the McLit team proudly wore teal to celebrate our Ashley (front, center) and all those impacted by Spinal Bifida. How many shades of teal are there?!



Day of the Dead, which falls on November 1, allowed McLit to honor one of its founding fathers. Similar to Memorial Day, the Day of the Dead is a South American and Mexican tradition.

McLit in Pictures: Friends and Fun



Happy Birthday, Juan!!



Congrats Greg on 9 months of sobriety!!



McLit in Pictures: The holiday season has arrived!



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Board of Directors
Under construction by Karla

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