



Literacy Works, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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LITERACY WORKS EDUCATING THE HOMELESS

BALTIMORE (Jan. 18, 2004) – How can you help the homeless improve their lives? Enroll them in reading, writing and math classes. That's the solution Literacy Works, Inc., the Community Assistance Network (CAN) and Abraham's Tent Coalition of Towson Churches have implemented for the second year in a row at the emergency shelter at the Eastern Family Resource Center (9100 Franklin Square Dr.) in Rosedale. Classes are offered Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 5 to 7 p.m., exclusively to those staying at the shelter.

Origins

Literacy Works' offices and its eastern Baltimore County Community Technology Center have been located in the Eastern Family Resource Center, upstairs from the homeless shelter. Abraham's Tent Coalition, which had been volunteering in the shelter, discovered that many of the people there wanted to learn how to read.

"One of the big problems to the homeless getting the help they need is transportation," said Richard Doran, the Community Assistance Network's executive director. "Because these individuals already are at the shelter, there's no issue."

Last year, the Coalition approached (CAN) and Literacy Works for assistance. Coincidentally, Literacy Works had funding for classes in another part of the county, but those classes didn't fill up. Instead, Literacy Works relocated the classes to the Eastern Family Resource Center, where those staying in the shelter could take them. Then, Abraham's Tent trained its volunteers to be tutors assisting the Literacy Works teacher.

Success

Nineteen students, ranging in age from 16 to 60, became Literacy Works students. Of those:

- 95 percent attained at least one competency (reading, math or writing).
- 84 percent gained computer skills.
- 42 percent passed a practice GED test.
- 70 percent of those entering the program employed retained their jobs.
- 20 percent entering unemployed gained employment.
- 100 percent increased their community involvement;
- 89 percent received citizenship skills, and
- 42 percent of those with children increased their parent/child interaction.

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"These students were never shown how to do basic tasks, such as order a book, get a driver's license or complete an application," said Helene Waranch, executive director of Literacy Works. "Although they have experienced hard knocks and have very low self-esteem and little or no support system, they are capable, polite and motivated."

Linda Galinski, a nurse and volunteer coordinator through Abraham's Tent Coalition, volunteers at the shelter. According to her, the students were tired from walking the streets all day; many couldn't read at all, while others were on a kindergarten reading level.

"Last year, three individuals wanted to learn how to read, but couldn't see," Galinski said. "The volunteers got them glasses through Prologue Homeless Outreach. One reports being 'thrilled to be able to find where things are in a grocery store.' They all worked so intently to improve their reading and math skills."

"Once you give people information, they can run with it and have new opportunities," Waranch said. "We hope to be in the position to provide classes to additional shelters if funding is available."

Founded in 1990, Literacy Works, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that coordinates, promotes and supports adult and family literacy services. It operates adult learning centers in Rosedale/Essex, Lansdowne, Randallstown, Chase and Washington Village/Pigtown. For more information about the organization and its programs, call 410-887-2001.

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