

# BALTIMORE TIMES ONLINE

Wilbert Mitchell: Literacy Works, Inc.'s Student of the Year

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Wilbert Mitchell is proof that it is never too late to receive an education. At 54 years old, Mitchell was named Literacy Works, Inc.'s "Student of the Year."

Literacy Works was founded in 1990, with a goal to improve adult and family literacy. Their philosophy is "Teach the parent, reach the child." Literacy Works, Inc., operates distance learning programs, as well as 10 adult learning centers in Baltimore City and County.

"I thought the honor was wonderful, I feel good about it. It shows that I am not a quitter," said Mitchell.

Mitchell, who grew up in East Baltimore, dropped out of school in the eighth grade to help his family. He has been in the Adult Education Program for 10 years and is expecting to graduate soon with his GED.

"I have come a long way, believe it or not. I learned math; when I first came here I knew how to add and subtract, and now I do fractions, algebra and geometry. I am still brushing up on my reading. The problem is remembering what I am reading, because of my head injury," said Mitchell.

Mitchell, who was a roofer, was thrown off the roof at BWI Airport by a tractor, which landed on top of him, breaking his spinal chord and causing a head injury. He has been confined to a wheelchair for the past 20 years.

Mitchell has three daughters and six grandchildren. "I encouraged all my children to finish school. I would talk to them when they were young and when they were teenagers. I taught them not to make the same mistakes that their mother and I made. It was also important that I taught them respect, especially for their elders, because that is how I was raised."

Mitchell commented that belonging to Literacy Works, Inc., is like being in a family.

"I have learned a whole lot since I have been here, more than at any school I ever attended. Here we are like a family. People help one another, and I try and do the same. I help people with their math or whatever they need. I am not a selfish person, I don't mind helping people, because I don't mind people helping me," he said.

Mitchell's belief in helping others has him volunteering at The League. He also helps his grandchildren with their studies. His two youngest grandchildren attend classes with him, so they can learn at an early age.

He encourages others who are looking for help to seek out Literacy Works, Inc.

"It is a very good place to go to see what they offer. Never be ashamed of something that you don't know. If you dropped out of school, or have been out of school for a long time and you want to get back in school or finish your GED, this is the place to go. Plus, if you don't know and you want to learn about reading, writing, math, history, these things play an important part in your life. You need to know these things, so you can help yourself to a better job and life," says Mitchell.

For more information on Literacy Works, Inc. call 410-887-2001.