

Literacy

Literacy can be taken in many points of view. Some people think it is just something you need for a job or school, while others may view it as a gift to be able to do something as simple as read. Literacy can also be taken in many ways, such as reading, writing, mathematics, or even computers. It can be found almost anywhere.

My opinion is literacy is one of the things you need, but it's also a gift. To get a job, I am going to have to know how to read and do basic math, otherwise I'm not getting that job. When going to school you need to be able to read just to begin to understand what is going on around you. Most of all, if you see someone, who struggles or can't read you're thankful that you can.

In order to be literate at something, you need at least a basic understanding of whatever it is. If you want to be literate at reading then you have to be able to read at least a little bit, or if you want to be math literate you need to know how to calculate things. To society I suppose it means a lot; they always have reading benches, and commercials to keep kids in school. Literacy means many things to many people, but over all literacy is education.

I dropped out of school a little over a year ago, and about four months after that I found the Eastern Family Resource Center. They are responsible for me going to take the GED, and for learning all that I have since beginning here. In the earlier part of the year I had a lot of trouble with math, I could barely do fractions, and now in the later part of the year I'm starting geometry. Literacy means more to me than just a diploma or just a job, it means life.

Jamie Gates

Center for Adult and Family Literacy
Eastern Family Resource Center
9100 Franklin Square Drive
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June 1, 2005

Re: Nomination for Student of the Year

As the instructor for ASE/GED for Literacy Works and the Community College of Baltimore County at Eastern Family Resource Center, I would like to nominate for Student of the Year, one of my younger students, Miss Jamie R. Gates.

Jamie started in September 2004 after withdrawing from Kenwood High School for numerous social and academic reasons. When starting this past fall, Miss Gates was very socially withdrawn and had very low self-esteem. Since that time to the present, she has become very sociable and basically a natural born leader. Continuously throughout the year, I have observed her tutoring and aiding other students in work that she herself did not understand at the start of her new academic career.

One of the hardships that Jamie has had to face this year was that this is the first time in many years that she has lived with her mother. During this period of time her mother started experiencing many health problems. Economically, Miss Gates cannot afford a lot of the luxuries that we take for granted. However, she still puts on her boots and trudges through the mud four days a week and attends class. She has basically self-taught herself fractions, decimals, and percents, naturally with some help. Additionally, she is continuing to acquire the skills of algebra and geometry.

Along with her many accomplishments in math, we have a volunteer who teaches lessons in American history, citizenship, and other skills in social studies. Working with him, she has more than excelled in every history lesson, has improved in writing well above the expected levels, and has used her creativity and leadership to make history "fun".

I, along with the opinion of my volunteers and aides, cannot think of a more deserving candidate for "Student of the Year" than Miss Jamie Gates. She has become not only a very impressive student but has carried her true willingness to succeed on to many others. In July of this year, Miss Gates will take her GED test and from her successful Practice Test scores, I expect her to do very well.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dee
Instructor

The Power of Literacy
By: JoAnn Kidwell

Literacy Works has opened up a whole new world for me. Every morning I am motivated to wake up and go to a place where I feel supported. I have lots of friends who are like family to me. That is a great feeling! Being in class has built my self-esteem. I have less fear of failing because I know that I have people who believe in me.

My reading skills have improved dramatically. I recently read an entire book for the first time in my life. It was the life story of the world famous doctor, Ben Carson. I also read a biography on Betsy Ross. Now I am not hesitant to pick up a book to read about any subject because I know I can do it. I am also working hard on my math skills. The instruction I received from teachers and volunteers is awesome. Because of Literacy Works the opportunity for job training came about.

In my job I answer the phones, screen calls, and take messages. I am learning to type and use Microsoft Word on the computer. I assist the Program Director by making copies and helping her prepare for workshops.

Literacy Works is an important program. I hope it never loses its grants so it can continue to help people improve. Improving a person's self-esteem improves the world... I will continue to work with Literacy program.

I believe in God and myself and that anything is possible. I really believe that my life long dreams will come true in spite of the boundaries that some people put on individuals with physical limitations.

JoAnn Kidwell

JoAnn Kidwell
submitted by
Nancy Johnson

JoAnn Kidwell has been an inspiration to me and to her classmates. In September of 2004 she arrived in class feeling very defeated. Now her self-esteem is high. She has proven that hard work does pay off.

JoAnn attends class regularly and works very hard. Her reading skills have greatly improved. Several months ago she read an entire book and wrote a report on it. She has been writing in a journal for the first time in her life. JoAnn has also been working to improve her math skills. Now she feels more confident with multiplication and division. She is very proud of her progress.

JoAnn tells me frequently how important this class has been in her life. Last fall she began working a part time job through Baltimore County. She has made new friends and earned the respect of her peers.

Working with JoAnn has been very rewarding for me. I always enjoy seeing the smile on JoAnn's face as she accomplishes another new task. It once again gives me the opportunity to be thankful for the satisfaction I experience in my work.

My Road to Literacy Works
By: Wilbert Mitchell

I want to briefly explain to you my background, my recent experiences, and my future goals. I come from a basic black, family of 10, growing up on the Eastside of Baltimore, Maryland. My mother always made us do a lot of chores that taught us responsibilities that are needed to live as an adult. It may seem simplistic, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, etc. but at that time in the 1960's surviving everyday life was of more importance than anything but a basic education. It is so strange to think that just 30 years ago I was washing my laundry in a tub with a washboard and now thanks to Literacy Works I have taken the assessment test for the External Diploma Program!

We were always a very religious Catholic family and mother taught us never to hate anything that was different in our changing world, to stick together, love one another, and do the best we could no matter how life may change. That still didn't mean leave the neighborhood but it left me curious about the outside world. Unfortunately, I still had to drop out of school in grade 8 to support my mother, brothers, and I.

I went to PS102 for grades-1 through 6 and then for grades 6 through 8 I attended Gunther Elementary School. It was legal back then to quit after grade 8. I was always a good student though. I joined the Job Corps in 1969-1970 but I also had to quit there because my girlfriend was pregnant.

What brought me here to Literacy Works is a desire to learn, a feeling of needing to achieve, and to fulfill a deep underlying goal to help people. I struggle daily with a disability that caused me a brain injury but this program has taught me never to quit. I am now after 10 years in the Adult Education Program and hope to graduate next year.

Thank You Literacy Works, Inc. for helping me achieve my goals!

Wilbert Mitchell – EFRC’s nominee for Student of the Year

As the ASE/GED teacher in the Literacy Works, INC. program at EFRC, one of my truly outstanding students is Wilbert Mitchell. Generous of heart, Will is embraced by his fellow classmates for his kind and caring nature. A very sociable individual, Will readily reaches out to new and current students and is always eager to help anyone with their studies.

He is a person to whom academic accomplishments are valued very highly. While learning has not always been easy for Will, he continues to persevere and works diligently toward improving his reading skills. No matter how difficult the vocabulary or reading skill may be, Will does not quit. Additionally, he is a real team member, frequently working with two other men, each of whom is still strengthening their own reading skills. It is a joy to observe how they support each other!

In math, Will came to Literacy Works needing assistance in completing whole number skills. He has now mastered most of fractions, decimals, and percents and is currently working in geometry and algebra. He does so with enthusiasm!

He has carried his newly acquired skills outside of the classroom by helping his grandchildren, encouraging them with their studies, and emphasizing how important it is to have a good education. Additionally, Will volunteers at The League for the Handicapped. While confined to a wheelchair himself, Will’s disability is definitely not a handicap.

It is with great honor that I nominate Wilbert Mitchell for Student of the Year. He personifies what Literacy Works is all about!

Stephanie Dee
Literacy Works, Inc.
EFRC