



LitBits

1600 South Avenue, Rochester New York 14620-3036 (585) 473-3030 www.literacyrochester.org

THE 2014 BRAIN GAME BRINGS ROCHESTER BUSINESSES TOGETHER TO SUPPORT LITERACY!

The Big Winners – Our Students.

The brain trophy was awarded to “team St. John Fisher College” on October 16, but the big winners are the Literacy Volunteers students who benefit from the services provided by almost 300 volunteers. Learning to read is a life changing benefit for each student we serve, and the relationship built for the tutors is often equally transformative.

The 15th annual Brain Game, LVR’s annual trivia challenge, was held at the Radisson Hotel and a good time was had by all 17 teams and 200 guests.

It was a great evening, led by emcees from WHEC News: anchors Jennifer Mobilia and Nikki Rudd. Thanks also to special guest auctioneers Dan Meyers, President of the AI Sigl Agencies, and Ray Martino, our Board President. This dynamic duo inspired individual winners who bid on and won the fantastic auction and raffle prizes generously donated by Jet Blue, Rochester Broadway Theatre League, Martino Flynn, Nannette Nocon and Karl Wessendorf, Rochester Red Wings and Wegmans.



Back row: Melissa Bissonette, Lauren Calimeris Kocman, Kourtney Blackburn, Eileen Lynd-Balta, Deb VanderBilt
Front row: Clair Smith, Daryl Hurd, [Ray Martino], Jeremy Sarachan and Dougie Bicket.

The event was sponsored by Excellus Blue Cross & Blue Shield and St. John Fisher College. Additional support was provided by Martino Flynn, and with our participating teams, LVR was able to raise a record breaking \$27,680 in support of its programs and services. For additional photos and a complete team listing please visit the LVR website at www.literacyrochester.org

Thanks to everyone, including our many dedicated volunteers, who made this event a great success and to those who come out to help our students succeed and read.

Holiday Schedule

December 22 – 26, Agency will be closed

January 1 and 2, 2015, Agency will be closed



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For years, LVR volunteers and staff have heard and told the stories of the hidden issues of illiteracy. Common examples include the adult who keeps her low-literacy skills a secret by bringing home a job application or a form from work to conceal her poor reading skills.

The need for literacy skills to get and keep a job has changed. With employment practices becoming highly computerized, applicants must be able to access a website, answer questions to an on-line test, and often have an email account. These requirements are expected for professional positions, but increasingly we see some of these requirements for jobs like dishwasher, cook, housekeeper and store clerk. Employers require basic literacy skills and computer literacy skills just to complete an application. For an individual with less than a sixth grade reading level, lack of computer access or knowledge can be an insurmountable barrier. For many minimum wage jobs, computers are not required to complete the tasks of the job.

LVR's Literacy Navigator program has assisted hundreds of applicants to overcome many of these obstacles to employment.

We were recently asked if we were "distorting the job market" by helping applicants that may not be able to complete all parts of the application by themselves. We in turn ask the question, "Does automating the hiring process distort the requirements of the job itself?"

The students we encounter at LVR with our Navigator program demonstrate that not everyone has made the journey across the "digital divide." Our efforts to assist those with limited computer literacy are in some ways not so different from our efforts to assist speakers of other languages. The objective of our programs is to assist an individual to reach his or her literacy, language or life goals so they may reach their potential and contribute to our community no matter what their job may be.



LETTER OF APPRECIATION

The letter below is from a retired city school district teacher who is the LVR tutor of a 58-year-old man. As she tells it, this pair "clicked" at their very first meeting!

When they met, the tutor had never taught an adult, and she believes that her student was simply overlooked as a youngster. She is an experienced educator and repeats how very smart her student is and how much progress they have made during the time they have spent together. "Teaching is an art," she says, and she knows from experience that each student learns in a different way. So she has "adjusted to the person I am working with."

They have become friends, and like the very best pairs—they motivate each other!

...“This is my first experience working with Literacy Volunteers of Rochester, and I am thoroughly enjoying the experience.

My partner is an impressive individual, prompt, consistently attends the tutoring sessions, and appears highly motivated to overcome his reading challenge. He is impressively intelligent, knowledgeable with an understanding of vocabulary comprehension. He has no problem articulating intelligent conversation, very perceptive of the world around him. He appears to live an above average normal middle American life style.

With a combination of repetition practice of site words, and using decoding skills he has come a long way. He is able to read a poem fluently and with expression. What an accomplishment! However there is still progress to be made.

I enjoy our time together. I am finding this experience very satisfying. I hope he will break through the wall he has hidden behind for seemingly all his life.”

If you are as touched by this letter as we were and know someone or a group who might want to become a volunteer(s), please share this letter and have them find us at www.literacyrochester.org or 585-473-3030.

LVR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The success of LVR and the work that we do is largely dependent on the efforts of our volunteers and the support we receive from many partners. Our partners include individuals, businesses and faith communities. Many new collaborations have been formed this year as we also continue to receive support from old friends.

- The **Rochester Educational Opportunity Center** has begun hosting LVR math classes at their new downtown facility.
- **Nazareth College and SUNY Brockport** have encouraged students from their Social Work programs to begin interning with the LVR Navigator program, joining existing **Monroe Community College** students.
- **Jeremy Cummings** and **Chase Bank** employees recently held a book collection to donate books for our family literacy program.

Our latest grants include:

- \$8,000 from the **Waldron Rise Foundation** to support an upgrade of our library materials and equipment
- \$2,000 from the **Episcopal Diocese of Rochester** to enhance recruitment for the Navigator program.
- \$3,000 grant from **International Paper** is funding books and materials for math classes.
- **Thomson Reuters Corporation** provided a \$2,500 unrestricted grant.

Like most of us, our students have fears that stop them from taking a chance and trying something new. This article illustrates what can happen when we're willing to step out of that fear.

STEPPING OUT OF FEAR AND INTO MY FUTURE

It was the first week in August when three women were appointed to a new task for their church, a Community Impact Weekend, that would take place on September 20, 2014. One woman's job was to contact the health organizations in Rochester. The next woman had the job of getting donations. The third woman was me.

I said, "OK, Jennifer, you will have an easy job to do as well."

Ha! Ha! My task was to go to the government officials in Rochester. I was scared because I felt unqualified. I did not have the big \$100 dollar words. I knew where to go but didn't know if they would talk to me. I prayed, then got on the bus.

Then I thought what Florence said to me one day. "It's OK. Take your time. You'll get there."

I went first to the mayor's building and filled out a form to give to Security. Then I was told to go to the elevator to the third floor. I walked right in and was taken to the executive assistant to talk about our plan for a family fun day and resources for the neighborhood. We'd like to have some leaders talk about the city plans for our community. Then I saw two doors. The assistant knocked. The door opened. Mayor Warren invited me in!

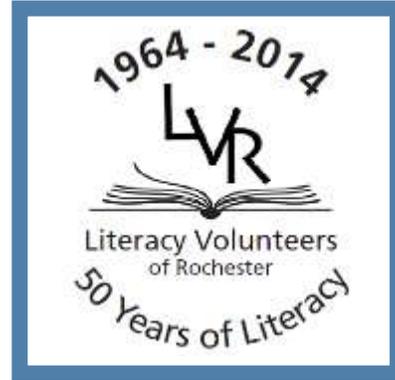
We talked about our families and the community we grew up in. They were happy that we were going to have a Day of Family Fun in our community. The mayor could not be there but she sent her people to talk about city plans.

On the big day I was excited. People came out from our community. There was singing, eating and speaking. The executive to the mayor came. The fire department came and the Open Door Mission and a library person was there and the Neighborhood Association president also. For me this was a time that I will remember because I stepped out of fear and decided to move forth in my growing and become all I can be.

by Jennifer Stevens

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TRIBUTE AND MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Please remember that another way to support Literacy Volunteers of Rochester is through your tribute and memorial donations. LVR is pleased to accept donations in celebration of special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and retirements as well as in memory of volunteers, donors, family, and friends.

An LVR contribution is also the perfect way to honor that person who doesn't need another "gift" and would appreciate knowing that LVR is benefiting from your generosity. Use our secure, online giving option at www.literacyrochester.org or give us a call at 585-473-3030.

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