



Literacy Network™

Improving Lives Through Literacy

701 Dane Street
Madison, WI 53713
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Mission: Literacy Network teaches reading, writing communication and computer skills to Dane County adults so they can achieve financial security, well-being and deeper engagement with their families and the community.
www.litnetwork.org

Literacy Network and Jewish Social Services get grant to promote volunteerism, cultural connections

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A collaborative grant of \$10,000 between Literacy Network and Jewish Social Services has been awarded by the Jewish Federation of Madison. The grant program is named for philanthropist Cheryl Rosen Weston, who made a bequest to the Federation and died in 2018.

The grant will promote social justice by providing supported volunteer tutoring opportunities to members of the Jewish community. Each year, volunteers help hundreds of Dane County adults with low incomes improve their reading, writing and English language skills. Ninety-five percent of the organization's adult learners are people of color and come from more than 60 different countries, providing an opportunity for volunteers to vastly expand their understanding of the world while making a tangible difference in their learners' lives.

With tutors' support, learners dramatically increase their ability to participate in the Madison community and support their families. Volunteers provide weekly tutoring, helping learners build skills for better communication on their job or with their children's schools. Many learners get better jobs, earn their US Citizenship, or achieve a high school diploma. Hundreds of Literacy Network volunteers donate thousands of hours at a value of more than \$600,000 each year.

"Now I have a job as a baker. I take care of my children and in my free time I study English to be able to talk with people to help my children with homework. In the future, I would like to have a great bakery since it is what I like the most," said Genoveva, who left school in the sixth grade to go to work to help her family. She continues working toward her goals in Literacy Network's individual tutoring program.

This project will connect members of the Jewish community to volunteer opportunities that reduce poverty and increase the well-being of adult learners and their families. Tutor David Seligman writes, "Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to tutor several different students from Mexico and Honduras. **I was the first Jewish person that they had an opportunity to chat with** and explore some of our religious observances. The exchange was not one way. These learners were equally enthused to share their Catholic backgrounds and rituals. There was no question that these exchanges did much to broaden each other's understanding and trust in each other. **We were able to gradually expand and grow our mutual respect and appreciation for each other.**"

The organizations will collaboratively reach out and recruit tutors among college-aged Jewish young adults and other members of the Jewish community.

The organizations will work together to track the number of recruits and hours through this project, with the goal of recruiting at least 10 volunteers in one year from among the Jewish community. These volunteers will provide at least 370 hours of tutoring at a value of more than \$10,000.

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