

The Ripple Effect...

Around the world, millions of adults are unable to read or write, and therefore struggle to earn a living for themselves and their families. Even in the United States, with its vast amount of resources, there are approximately 36 million adults who can't read better than the average third-grader, according to the international nonprofit ProLiteracy. Most recent statistics report that about 1 in 5 Gaston County residents struggles to be functionally literate, unable to use reading, speaking, writing, and computer skills in everyday life.



Illiteracy affects all areas of life. Those with low literacy skills are far more likely to live in poverty, face health problems because they can't read prescription labels or instructions, and grow isolated in a world increasingly dependent on technology. And the lack of a skilled workforce is detrimental to any community's economic survival.

Even more troubling is the impact on future generations. Many children are raised in households where parents are low-skilled or illiterate. These families struggle to support their children's educational journey. School districts are working hard to address the deficiencies in their students, but sadly realizing that many problems will not be alleviated until we address the households they are coming from.

Adult literacy issues often don't pull at the heartstrings the same way as when you see a child who can't read, but, in fact, it's a vicious cycle and it perpetuates itself. Gaston Literacy Council is working to address literacy issues in both adults and children. In 2017-2018, 48.5% of adult students at GLC made meaningful gains in their educational levels. And through the Reading Soul Mates program, serving 105 eligible 2nd graders in Gaston County Schools, 82% of these students increased a reading level, with 8% exceeding their grade level in reading. Many thanks to our loyal and hardworking tutors for these accomplishments!

Not only does GLC focus on literacy skills, but we also are continuously working to help students attain the skills they need to be successful in the workforce. Through a partnership with the Gaston County NC Works Career Center, we are able to stay current on employment opportunities and the skills needed in our local area. Teaching reading to both adults and children results in a ripple effect...just as a stone tossed into a pond, what begins as a tiny splash is often far reaching. When someone learns how to read, they have that for a lifetime. It ripples through our community, one by one, and that is our goal.

ProLiteracy U. S. Adult Literacy Facts



- 36 million adults in the US cannot read, write, or do basic math above a 3rd grade level
- Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. These children are more likely to get poor grades, display behavioral problems, have high absentee rates, repeat school years, or drop out. (National Bureau of Economic Research)
- One in six young adults – more than 1.2 million – drop out of high school every year. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- 2 million immigrants come to the US each year, and about 50% OF THEM LACK HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION AND PROFICIENT English language skills (Center for Immigration Studies)
- Low literacy costs the US \$225 Billion or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment. (National Council for Adult Learning)
- 43% of adults with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- \$232 Billion a year in health care costs is linked to low adult literacy skills. (American Journal of Public Health)
- 75% of state prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate. (Rand Report: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education)

What Are the Effects of Low Literacy on Health and Safety?

Literacy is integral to our lives with far reaching effects, touching every aspect of our daily life. Because the needs of individuals are varied, the ways in which low literacy affects them are also varied. One effect that can be critical is in the area of health and safety.

Low literacy is a serious issue of health and safety, both at home and in the workplace. From reading the instructions for dosage on a medicine bottle and medical care instructions, to understanding warnings and symbols for handling hazardous materials, to interpreting blueprints and instructions, to following maps and diagrams – the list goes on and on. Wherever the need exists to apply literacy, whether in the written language, numeracy, or diagrams and symbols, there are risks for adults with low literacy skills and these risks can be life threatening.

DEFINITION: Literacy is the ability to clearly read, write, and speak English on a level necessary to develop one's knowledge and potential, compute and solve problems, achieve individual goals, and function in our English-speaking society.

MISSION STATEMENT: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc., a private non-profit organization, exists to help people become functionally literate through advocacy initiatives and instructional services.

VISION: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. serves to promote a thriving, productive community that recognizes individuals in need of literacy services, encourages them to come forward, and supports their efforts to gain essential knowledge.

VALUE STATEMENT: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. believes that literacy enriches the quality of life for individuals and our community. To this end, we are committed to:

Partnership, Responsibility, Accountability, Inclusiveness, Accessibility, Learner-Centered Instruction, Volunteerism.

Your Support is Everything...A Student's Story

Julie M. withdrew from "traditional" high school midway through the 9th grade after struggling with illness resulting in frequent absences. She completed 9th grade through a "hospital homebound" program, which included instruction online and by telephone. In 2012, at age 15, Julie made the decision not to return to school, but planned to get to work on her GED.

Fast forward to 2018, Julie moved to North Carolina to live with family in Gaston County. She was studying on her own for the GED and also helping out some at one of Gastonia's downtown businesses, The Hive, owned and operated by Merryman Cassels. A chance conversation with a customer of The Hive, who happened to be an employee of the United Way of Gaston County, began Julie's journey to her GED completion at GLC. Merryman (former GLC Board of Directors) and Julie walked over to GLC and in a short period of time, the enrollment process was complete and the studies began.



(From left to right
Julie M., Kasi Walker)

Julie quickly developed a close bond with Kasi Walker, a GLC Education Coordinator, and progress was quickly made. In a matter of weeks, Julie passed (with flying colors we might add!!) the first of four tests required for high school equivalency completion. Within the next 3 months, all four tests were taken and Julie had achieved her high school equivalency! She was certainly pleased to have this complete, but no prouder than the entire staff at GLC!

Since completion, Julie has remained a frequent visitor to GLC. She was invaluable in helping create and set up "The Lost Pharaoh," an escape room activity enjoyed by our students. She and Kasi stay in close contact and are talking about future goals and plans for Julie, which include college and her interest in "video game and simulation design." Hats off to Julie for hard work, persistence, and determination!

Who's Who at Gaston Literacy Council

Many literacy organizations operate with a staff of volunteers. GLC is proud to employ a staff of professionally trained individuals who offer instruction and support to its students at the highest level. This commitment to professional staff is reflected in the progress and gains that the students achieve.

Executive Director:

- **Linda McConnell** joined the staff of GLC in May, 2017. Linda was long time director of Pre-k Services for Gaston County Schools. She believes that the mission of GLC can and will change lives and make our community a better place for all of us. Linda keeps busy hiking, biking, kayaking, walking/running, eating pastries, and enjoying her family!

Education Coordinators:

- **Kelly Link** has been a valuable resource at GLC since 2005. Kelly has a BA from East Carolina University and an MA from UNC Charlotte. She has 18 years of experience in Adult Education, including 5 years teaching at Gaston College prior to coming to GLC. She loves the outdoors and has a passion for rescuing animals. She can frequently be found working on her family's farm in the muscadine vineyard. Her most recent adventures include beekeeping and coyote hunting!
- **Kasi Walker** was welcomed to the GLC family in 2015. She has 10 years of experience in teaching in Adult Education. Kasi earned a BA in Communication at Slippery Rock University and studied graduate level course in Professional Communication at Clemson University where she worked as a Teaching Assistant and taught freshman English. In her free time, Kasi enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with family, friends, and her two beloved dogs!
- **Donna Watson** has been part of the GLC staff since 2012. Donna has a BFA from UNC Charlotte and has over 11 years experience in Adult Education. She was formerly an employee of Gaston College and Gaston County Schools. Donna enjoys reading, traveling to historic sites, dancing, watching documentaries, and local missionary work.
- **Marsha Wright** has recently joined the GLC family. Marsha has BA degrees from Belmont Abbey College (Education Studies and Economics in Business Administration) and has previous work experience at Wells Fargo, TIAA-CREF, and Bank of America. She first came to GLC as a volunteer tutor some years ago and we are thankful for her return. Marsha has a big heart for volunteering and is an animal lover!

Funds Development Coordinator:

- **Delta Sanders** came to GLC in late 2017 and hit the ground running! She is a familiar face in Belmont and in our area non-profit world as she has worked in this area over many years. She is currently very active with Elements of Empowerment. In addition to her many non-profit and volunteer activities, Delta keeps busy with her husband and two daughters.

Reading Soul Mates Coordinator:

- **Merry Deely** joined the staff of GLC in 2018 as Reading Soul Mates Coordinator, replacing long-time RSM Coordinator Becky Franco. Although we will miss Becky greatly, Merry is a wonderful addition to our GLC family. She is a long-time resident of Gaston County, wife and mother, and lover of children and animals (particularly horses and dogs!)
- **Becky Franco** stepped away from GLC in 2018 to pursue other dreams. She has been such an integral part of the Reading Soul Mates program and is credited with its growth and expansion. We wish her well and hope she will find some time to read, travel, lay on beaches and have people wait on her, shop, garden, hike, and cook (mainly desserts and breads!)

Meet the Author



The twelfth annual “Meet the Author” event was held on May 2, 2018 at the Gaston Country Club. Featured novelist, **Ron Rash**, an American author of novels, short stories, and poetry, shared his vision of literacy, of writing, and of the importance of literature to a “sell out” crowd of literacy supporters. Rash, who was by turns humorous, poignant, and contemplative, interspersed short pieces of his writing with stories about growing up in Boiling Springs and spending time on his grandparents’ farm outside of Boone, near the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Ron was born in Chester, SC and grew up in Boiling Springs, NC. The New York Times Bestselling author lives in the western North Carolina area with his wife, Ann. Rash holds the *John and Dorothy Parris Professorship in Appalachian Cultural Studies* at Western Carolina University, where he teaches poetry and fiction-writing in the Department of English.

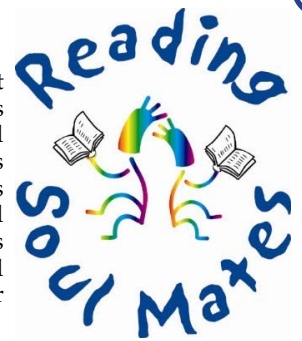
Rash’s NY Times bestseller works include *SERENA, THE COVE*, and *NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY*. His 2008 novel, *Serena*, was adapted into a movie, released in 2015, starring Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper. In addition, his 2006 novel, *The World Made Straight*, was also adapted into a movie released in 2015, starring Noah Wyle, Jeremy Irvine, and Minka Kelly.

Rash’s poems and stories have appeared in more than 100 magazines and journals. *Serena* received enthusiastic reviews across and beyond the United States and was a 2009 PEN/Faulkner Award Finalist.

SAVE THE DATE for Meet the Author #13. We are excited to host Mary Alice Monroe, NY Times bestselling author, at the Gaston Country Club on May 1, 2019. Mary Alice is the author of *The Beach House Series*, *Lowcountry Summer Series*, and has also written two children’s books. More information and chances to be a part of this event will be coming soon!

Reading Soul Mates and “Read to Achieve”

“Reading Soul Mates” matches at-risk second-grade students with supportive role models who tutor, set expectations, and provide motivation, encouragement, and guidance. Using the Gaston County Schools approved reading curriculum, children develop a positive attitude toward reading, achieve success, and build self-confidence. The program includes a variety of language skill building activities and incorporates a multi-style approach to teaching. Students learn to focus on meaning and use problem-solving strategies to figure out words, deal with difficult sentence structure, and understand new concepts. Discussions and open-ended questions help children develop higher order thinking skills by inspiring imagination. Thanks to you, RSM served 105 children in 2017-2018, providing needed support to each child as they worked hard to improve their reading skills. Together, you met for 685 ½ hours, with 82% of students increasing their reading levels.



“Read to Achieve” Summer Camp is sponsored by Gaston County Schools to provide instruction and support to identified students who need some extra help in reading. “Read to Achieve” summer reading camp was created as an opportunity for students to receive reading support, gain reading proficiency, and prevent loss of reading skills over the summer break. Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. has been a partner with this endeavor the past two years. During Read to Achieve Summer Camp 2017, sixteen RSM interns (high schools students) worked with ninety-one 3rd graders, volunteering 360 hours in a few short weeks, with 68% of these students maintaining or increasing reading levels.

Special thanks to our 2017-2018 RSM volunteer tutors and interns!! You guys are the greatest and we love you!!

After School Tutors: Jessa Jackson, Kylie Little, Evan Null, Alanie O’Dell, Carmella Shindler

Catawba Heights Elementary: Annie Anthony, Jane Brown, Sue Johnson

Forest Heights Elementary: Jennifer Altunar, Irene Cebada, Abigail Fairfield, Laura Herrera, Diamond Huseky, Carrie Huss, Dashona Sanders

Gardner Park: Alicia Accor, Gerson Barahona, Logan Barnette, Katherine Bolt, Amaya Brown, Ryan Clinton, Megan Farris, Kyla Grier, Amelia Hoskins, Maggie Lanier, Sara Leiva, Kasen Lindsay, Caitlin Meeke, Marylyn Perez, Angel Primeau, Samarian Ray, Kaitlyn Sisk, Samantha Stacy, Emily Wood



North Belmont: Kathleen Boyce, Richard Boyce, Jann Cloninger, Lynn Jenkins, Karen Kaufman, Laura Mackey, Tom McMeeken, George Ann Ratchford, Lindsay Rhyne, Jonathan Taylor

Pleasant Ridge Elementary: David Christy, Ann Davis, Les Davis, Becky Franco, Becky Greene, Mary Massey, Kristi McClellan, Linda McConnell, Alyssa Morris

Robinson Elementary: Ana Garcia, Anne Kaul, Mark Ludwig, Allison Miles

Sherwood Elementary: Elizabeth Acosta, Beth Bolin, Clarissa Craig, Becky Franco, Grace Laney, Laurel Morris, Roger Rizk, Barbara Yarbrough

Read to Achieve Summer Camp Interns: Hannah Berckman, Emily Berry, Molly Burns, Cynthia Garcia, Jessa Jackson, Julia Kim, Grace Laney, Jocelyn Lanham, Kylie Little, Maggie Moore, Evan Null, Priyanka Patel, Madison Queen, Carmella Shindler, Julia Short, Daytona White

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND OUR RESULTS

GLC offers small-group, leveled classes, complemented by individual tutoring. Daily, 100% of our students receive instruction utilizing technology, and GLC provides its students with workbooks and textbooks to keep so that they can study and practice on their own. Owning books is a significant aspect of GLC's programs because it allows students to study independently, which creates an atmosphere of learning in their homes that can positively impact their children and other family members.

Here is some information about the programs available at Gaston Literacy Council in 2017 - 2018:

Customer Service Training for the Medical Industry

2017-2018 saw the continuation of a new career pathway program in partnership with HealthNet Gaston. Classes for customer service training in the medical industry were offered to bilingual students for clerical jobs within the medical industry. GLC facilitated a curriculum designed to prepare students for entry level employment opportunities. Students gained proficiency in medical terminology, customer service, office operations, medical law and ethics, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and basic computer skills.

High School Equivalency Preparation:

Students can prepare for the high school equivalency exams utilizing a computer software program designed to determine specific student needs. This program allows students to practice various computer skills needed to pass the exams, at the same time simulating the test layout and types of questions a student may encounter. Students are able to practice at the basic level through advanced skills to prepare them for the language arts, social studies, science, and math components of the high school equivalency exam.

English as a Second Language:

Students may improve their English skills by taking English as a Second Language classes. Classes are offered from beginning through advanced levels. Students work on their conversational English, grammar, writing, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills.

Citizenship

Students can receive help for preparing for their citizenship interview and examination. Classes are offered from basic through advanced levels. Students learn about the naturalization process, American history, government, and eligibility requirements. Students also practice their conversational English and writing skills.

The 2017/2018 outcomes for major programs are detailed below. (Note: Adult client improvement outcomes are based on formal pre-/post-testing utilizing federally-recognized adult assessment systems. Eligibility for post-testing is based on the test developers' prescribed number of instructional hours.)

253 unduplicated adult students were served in the following Adult Basic Education Programs:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Adult Basic Skills | 19 |
| • High School Equivalency Prep | 12 |
| • English Language Learners | 222 |

In addition to the required core curriculum classes, students elected to attend the following complementary classes:

- Medical Office
- Citizenship

National Reporting System literacy level advancement as measured by CASAS and/or TABE:

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Listening</u>
• Post-Tested	108	3	103
• Demonstrated Improvement or			
• Advanced a National Literacy Level	78%	100%	75%

Personal Goals Achieved:

- Earned Citizenship 10

Student/Staff/Board Picnic



GLC students, staff, and Board members gathered at Martha Rivers Park on August 16, 2017 for an afternoon of fun, food, and fellowship! It was great to see our students outside of the regular classroom and get to meet their family members. Although one of the hottest days of the summer, plates were filled with foods from native countries, games were played and conversation abounded as families met one another and new friendships were forged. As we plan for another gathering, we wouldn't change much about this day...except we will definitely wait for a little cooler weather!



Financial Statement Summary **

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Beginning Balance	\$130,521
Receipts	382,967
Subtotal	513,488
Disbursements	-414,025
Ending Balance	\$99,463
Liabilities	0

Endowment

Beginning Balance – Fair Market Value	\$817,201
Deposit – Contributions	0
Withdrawals	-30,819
Net Earnings	42,113
Ending Balance – Fair Market Value	\$828,495
Designated Scholarship Fund (included above)	\$10,008

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**Audited statement prepared by Butler & Stowe



Gaston Literacy Council has participated in the Community Foundation's Run for the Money each year since its inception. This year's proceeds totaled \$14,888.50. We wish to express a special thanks to those of you, included in the contributors list, who helped us receive the maximum allowable matching gift of \$3,500 from the Community Foundation. *Hats off also to the GLC Board member, Beth Patton, whose "fleet feet" earned a 1st place in her age group and an additional \$300 for Gaston Literacy Council!*

Hope you will remember us on April 13, 2019 when we once again, Run for the Money!!

Contributors

Major Funders

David Belk Cannon Foundation
NC Community College System
United Way of Gaston County



When individuals learn to read, write, or do basic math, they can find and keep jobs, enjoy better health, and educate their own children. Their new skills enable them to dream big, do more, and move forward. And that means society can move forward, too.

Thank You

Contributors

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Program (second graders learning to read on
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Treasurer, Mark Skillestad
Immediate Past Chair, Martha Jayne Rhyne

Directors

Frank Craig
Marianna Davis
Tim Efird
Carol Elliott
Caroline Hobson
Cheryl Black Loggins
Ellen Maxwell
Becky McLain
Laurel Morris
Dan Moser
Beth Patton
David Poston
Roger Rizk
May Gray Robinson
Ginger Rowe
Marty Starnes

Ex-officio: Linda McConnell, Executive Director

2018/2019 Officers

Chair, Lisa Albright-Jurs
Vice Chair, Carol Elliott
Secretary, Lil Summerville
Treasurer, Mark Skillestad
Immediate Past Chair, Denise McLean

Directors

Frank Craig
Marianna Davis
Caroline Hobson
Donna Lockett
Cheryl Black Loggins
Ellen Maxwell
Becky McLain
Chris Mills
Laurel Morris
Dan Moser
Beth Patton
David Poston
Martha Jayne Rhyne
Roger Rizk
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Ginger Rowe

Ex-officio: Linda McConnell, Executive Director