

## I Pledge Allegiance...

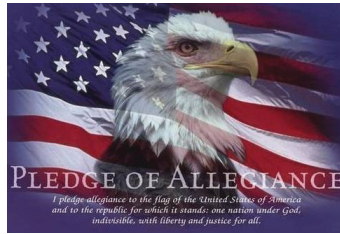
By: Linda McConnell

Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. is proud to offer Citizenship classes to its students, as well as high school equivalency prep, English as a Second Language, Medical Office, and Financial Literacy. Students often study for many years to become a United States citizen, having come from many diverse countries and often enduring tremendous hardships.

Twice each week, the Charlotte Field Office of the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services hosts the Naturalization Ceremony, where about 7,500 people in the Charlotte area become American citizens each year. Although each ceremony “looks alike,” each one is filled with the faces of different folks and their families, all a bit nervous, but so excited to see their dream of American citizenship be fulfilled.

As Executive Director of Gaston Literacy Council, Inc., I was invited this past year to attend several of these ceremonies with our students. It is almost impossible to really convey the joy and excitement on each face as their dream becomes reality. Sitting in long rows of other soon-to-be-citizens, they hold tightly to the documents provided for the ceremony and also to a small American flag. There are generally more than 35 different countries represented at each ceremony, so languages are different and most wait patiently, exchanging smiles with their neighbors and waving to family and friends in the audience. There is lots of picture taking!

The ceremony begins with a roll call of nations, acknowledging everyone’s country of origin. This is followed by several patriotic videos and a message from the president. And it’s hard not to sing along with Lee Greenwood’s song, “God Bless the USA!” The big moment comes when, in unison, everyone recites the Oath of Allegiance. Between big smiles and also tears, our newest citizens are welcomed to America, beaming with pride and the promise of the freedoms and opportunities that America affords. We are so proud to be a part of this process and the hard work that our students have done!



## 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)

**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

Marcus walked into Gaston Literacy Council in December, 2018. Students were on winter break and it was quiet in the office. Marcus appeared shy and a little hesitant as he entered GLC, asking about help with his reading skills. Linda McConnell, our Executive Director, sat with him in the lobby, asking for information about his prior education and what his goals might be.

Gradually, over about an hour's time, Marcus began opening up about his inability to read and how, at age 38, he had finally "gotten up his nerve" to come in to GLC. He is a hard worker and has worked with the same company for over 15 years. He recently declined the offer of a supervisory position, fearing his inability to be able to read emails or other correspondence and apprehensive that more advanced reading skills might be required.

Marcus spends a lot of energy keeping his poor reading skills a secret. To this day, few folks know of his struggle. But he is determined to succeed and meets once weekly with a one-on-one tutor, making steady progress. He comes in with a smile and is full of determination. We are so proud of you, Marcus, and are pulling for you!!

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### 2019 Phil Ritter Board Leadership Award

The "Phil Ritter Board Leadership Award" was established in May, 1992, and has been presented annually since 1993 to a member of the Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. Board of Directors for exemplary dedication and service. We proudly presented the 2019 award to Tim Efird.



Tim joined the GLC Board in 2012 and served for 6 years, rotating off in 2018. He held the positions of Vice-Chair, Chair, and was a key member of various Board Committees.

A trusted leader, advisor, and friend to many, Tim was educated at Gaston Day School, Ashbrook High, became a Tar Heel, and earned an MBA from Queens University. He is President of Standard Distributors, and President of the NC Beer and Wine Wholesalers.

Tim is a go getter, dependable and always there when needed. A lifelong member of First Presbyterian Church, he is also Board Chairman of Gaston Community Foundation, president of BOD at Covenant Village, past chair of Board of Trustees at Gaston Day School, co-chaired the 2015 United Way Campaign with his brother, Lewis, former member of the Board of the YMCA, and very involved with Boy Scouts. Tim is husband to Coleman and Dad to Elizabeth, David, Mary Stewart, and dog, Lily. Proud parents are Anne and Tom!

We were so proud to be able honor Tim for his service and dedication to Gaston Literacy Council, Inc.

#### Previous Phil Ritter Recipients:

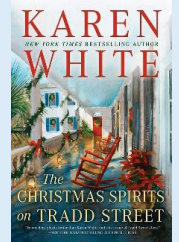
<b>1993</b>	Max Erwin	<b>1994</b>	Jim Baldwin	<b>1995</b>	Mitchell Moore
<b>1996</b>	Glenn Parrish	<b>1997</b>	Jack Page	<b>1998</b>	Sheri Sellmeyer
<b>1999</b>	Jennie Stultz	<b>2000</b>	Elaine Jenkins	<b>2001</b>	Jick Garland
<b>2002</b>	Frank Matthews	<b>2003</b>	Martha Burris	<b>2004</b>	Caroline Garrison
<b>2005</b>	Bill Cozart	<b>2006</b>	Annette Gehle	<b>2007</b>	Merryman Cleveland & Larry Petty
<b>2008</b>	John K. Long	<b>2009</b>	David Fleenor	<b>2010</b>	Richard Rankin
<b>2011</b>	Judy Planer	<b>2012</b>	Ed Sadler	<b>2013</b>	Annabelle Kelly & Maria Matiz-Gihwala
<b>2014</b>	Linda McConnell	<b>2015</b>	Julia M. Shovelin	<b>2016</b>	Benette Sutton
<b>2017</b>	Gayle Kersh	<b>2018</b>	Ann Woody Drum	<b>2019</b>	Tim Efird

## Meet the Author



The 13th annual “Meet the Author” event was held on May 1, 2019 at the Gaston Country Club. Featured novelist, Mary Alice Monroe, NY Times bestselling author of over twenty novels and three children’s books, shared her passion of conservation and the role it plays in the background of her richly textured stories that delve into the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the parallels between the land and life. Monroe’s novels are published worldwide.

She has achieved many lists, including the New York Times, USA Today and SIBA. She has received numerous awards, including several Readers’ Choice Awards, RT Lifetime Achievement Award, the Girls Scouts of America Woman of Distinction Award, the 2008 South Carolina Center for the Book Award for Writing and was featured at the National Festival of the Book, the 2008 International Book Award for Green Fiction for *The Butterfly’s Daughter*, the 2015 Florida Book Festival Distinguished Author Award, and the ASPCA Henry Bergh award for Children’s Fiction. The SC Academy of Authors inducted Monroe into the Literary Hall of Fame for her fiction work. Her novel *A Lowcountry Christmas* won the 2017 Southern Prize for Fiction. Monroe’s bestselling novel *The Beach House* was adapted into a Hallmark Hall of Fame TV movie in May 2018, starring three-time Golden Globe nominee Andie MacDowell, Minka Kelly, and Chad Michael Murray.

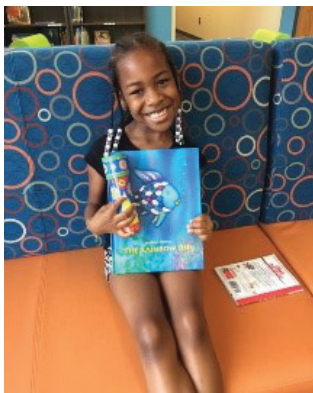


*SAVE THE DATE for Meet the Author #14. We are excited to host Karen White, NY Times bestselling author, at the Gaston Country Club on May 6, 2020.*

*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 continues to be one of the most exciting and valuable programs operating within Gaston Literacy Council. All research points to the value of early intervention and the difference it can make in the life of a child. RSM provides one-on-one tutoring in select Gaston County Elementary Schools, with priority given to 2nd graders identified as reading below grade level. Each week, volunteer tutors meet for 30-minutes with their assigned students and work on improving the students’ reading skills by reading together either a book the student has chosen or books provided by the RSM program. We are so excited and pleased to report the following results for 2018-2019:



- 85 students served
- 98% improved reading skills based on end-of-year assessments
- 58% were at or above grade level at end of school year

At the end of the school year, all RSM students were presented a book to take home and call their own. Many students have few books in their homes and this was an especially exciting time for the students!

### “My Experience as a Reading Soul Mates Volunteer”

By: Lucille Rinehart

Although I trained as an educator and have almost 20 years of volunteer experience in Gaston County Schools, I was not prepared for the rewarding experience I had as a first year Reading Soul Mates Volunteer at North Belmont Elementary School last year. I was surprised at the support and friendliness of the busy staff and administration. The teacher shared concerns about each of the three students I was assigned and checked with me regularly. The social worker let me know she was available and would answer any questions. The principal made an effort to introduce himself. Staff I met in the hallways always had a friendly word for me and the student. Clearly, the school valued the Reading Soulmates program! The students could be challenging—from arguing over the pronunciation of words, to wanting to be physically active, to flat out telling me they did not want to read. However, we were able to make progress through talking, working together, and compromise each week. The most rewarding aspects of being a Reading Soul Mates Volunteer was seeing a child’s face light up when I knocked at the classroom door because we had formed a bond over the love of reading, and knowing I had helped the student in developing an essential life skill.



## 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 are the programs available at Gaston Literacy Council in 2018- 2019:*

- **Customer Service Training / Customer Service Training for the Medical Industry**
- **Financial Literacy**
- **High School Equivalency Preparation**
- **English as a Second Language**
- **Citizenship**



**The 2018/2019 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.)

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

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Adult Basic Skills           | 29  |
| • High School Equivalency Prep | 5   |
| • English Language Learners    | 197 |

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

- Citizenship
- Customer Service
- Financial Literacy
- Medical Office

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

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Listening</u>
• Post-Tested	99	2	95
• Demonstrated Improvement or			
• Advanced a National Literacy Level	78%	100%	68%

Personal Goals Achieved:

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Earned Citizenship                | 2 |
| • Completed High School equivalency | 2 |

## Financial Statement Summary \*\*

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$99,463</b>
Receipts	444,306
Subtotal	543,769
Disbursements	-390,909
Ending Balance	\$152,860
Liabilities	0

### **Endowment**

Beginning Balance – Fair Market Value	\$828,495
Deposit – Contributions	0
Withdrawals	-33,197
Net Earnings	20,327
Ending Balance – Fair Market Value	\$815,625
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 Run each year since its inception. Although this year's weather did not cooperate and the Run was forced to be cancelled, GLC's proceeds totaled \$23,427.77. 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 \$3,700 from the Community Foundation.

*Hope you will remember us on April 4, 2020 when we once again, hit the streets running!!*

## **Contributors**

### **Major Funders**

**David Belk Cannon Foundation**

**NC Community College System**

**Sisters of Mercy of North Carolina Foundation**

**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

*Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. gratefully acknowledges the following supporters who made this report possible:*

### *Read! Read! Read! Club (\$1 - \$49)*

Bradshaw, Stacia  
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**All contributions support adult students working toward high school equivalency attainment, English as a Second Language, Citizenship, and the Reading Soul Mates Program (second graders learning to read on grade level)**

*Your contribution changes lives!*





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*All-America City Project*

*Gaston Together's Circle of Caring Award*

*Kiwanis Club Tablet of Honor*

*United Way of Gaston County Award of Excellence*

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Christa Heilig  
Caroline Hobson  
Donna Lockett  
Cheryl Black Loggins  
Mary Massey  
Becky McLain  
Denise McLean  
Chris Mills  
Laurel Morris  
Dan Moser  
Roger Rizk  
May Gray Robinson  
Ginger Rowe  
Jason Shoemaker

Ex officio: Linda McConnell, Executive Director