



2019/2020 Annual Report

Promoting Literacy through Advocacy and Instruction

MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT DAVID POSTON & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LINDA MCCONNELL

Hello Friends of Gaston Literacy Council,

Wow! What an interesting year it has been!! We never could have imagined how the world would change, but are proud to be doing well and in our 56th year of operation providing literacy services to Gaston County and our surrounding areas. Since our creation in 1964, countless students have walked through our doors, seen opportunities open up, and their lives changed!

This past year, we provided services to 233 adult students, 7 of those obtaining their US Citizenship. This is such an accomplishment and such a proud moment for students, their families, and us!! 68% of students made measurable improvement in their reading levels and 58% improved their listening levels. Even when Covid-19 made its appearance and restrictions were put into place by Governor Cooper, we quickly were able to offer our students a variety of online learning platforms to be able to continue their instruction.

Our Reading Soul Mates program grew by leaps and bounds during the 2019-2020 school year! With 121 volunteer tutors, we were able to help support 228 2nd graders in Gaston County Schools as they worked to improve their reading skills. We cannot wait to be able to get back into Gaston County elementary schools and once again provide our services to those precious students!

The success of Gaston Literacy Council is dependent upon our community. Our donors, supporters, advocates, and volunteers are critical components of our organization and make our work possible. As you peruse this Annual Report, please consider how the contributions of so many individuals time, talent, and financial support cumulatively help improve the lives of our students, their families, and our community! It takes a village and Gaston Literacy Council certainly has one of the best!!

Thanks to each of you for believing in GLC!

David E Poston

Linda McConnell



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.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE...

The Resiliency of Students During Covid Times

When our world changed in March of 2020, so did the instructional platforms and student participation at Gaston Literacy Council. As we moved quickly into the world of “remote learning,” new barriers emerged as students faced challenges of availability of devices, access to the internet, outdated computers, and limited digital literacy skills.



Many of our older students struggled with participation due to the lack of technical skills. Younger members of the household assisted them in accessing and participating in online classes. Some students simultaneously juggled childcare and supported their own children in online instruction while virtually participating in classes offered by GLC.

One father kept his toddler during Zoom class while the mother was at work. One parent used her child’s school issued Chromebook at night to study a software program online because there were no other devices.

Several students were only able to use their cellphones to connect to class via Zoom. Cell phones allowed students to participate when there was a work conflict. Some students joined class during work breaks or while traveling home from work. Students and teachers also interacted using “WhatsApp,” a communication application, on their cell phones to post assignments, ask questions, or even submit pictures of their homework when they did not have a computer or internet in their homes. These are just a few examples of how we adapted virtual instruction and continue to do so.

We want to praise ALL of our students for their initiative, courage, and desire to be successful students, parents, and citizens of our community. Despite the digital divide that exists in our communities, childcare issues, and work conflicts, they choose to persevere. Your continued support will allow us to make a difference in the lives of students, their families, and our community.

2020 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. Due to the cancellation of our 2020 Meet the Author Luncheon, when we traditionally make this award, we have delayed the announcement and presentation of this award until 2021. Although our selection has been made, we are keeping the honoree’s name under wraps until we can be together and present this award in person. Stay tuned for 2021!!

Previous Phil Ritter Recipients:

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

We Have a New Date!! Meet the Author 2021 ... with NY Times bestselling author, Karen White



Our 14th annual “Meet the Author” event was not to be!! Originally scheduled for May, 2020, then postponed until October, the pandemic would just not cooperate and we were forced to move ahead into May, 2021. Thankfully, our author, Karen White, is still available and we are looking forward to being together with her at the Gaston Country Club on May 5, 2021. We are planning for another spectacular “Silent Auction” prior to the luncheon and already have some fabulous items for your bidding pleasure!

If you are not familiar with Karen White, she is a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of 23 novels, including the popular Charleston-set Tradd Street mystery series. Who can resist a good mystery novel with a Charleston backdrop!!

In the meantime, grab one of Karen’s books, snuggle up with a soft quilt and some coffee or hot chocolate, and start reading! She also has a new book scheduled to come out in April, 2021, *The Last Night in London*, a story of friendship past and present, love, and betrayal that moves between war-torn London during the Blitz and the present day.

More information and chances to be a part of this event will be coming soon!

Reading Soul Mates

The Reading Soul Mates Program literally “exploded” with growth in both the number of tutors (121) and students (228) served during the 2019-2020 school year!! GLC was proud and excited to double the number of schools served (12) and everyone was looking forward to great gains in literacy skills of the students. Then...Covid 19 abruptly brought things to a screeching halt!! Tutors were left “hanging” as in-person school was suspended. Tutors were saddened to realize that they would not see their students again this school year.



But, all was not lost, as Merry Deely and Annie Anthony, fearless Reading Soul Mates leaders, arranged for all students to receive a backpack filled with a hardback book, activity book, crayons, and for many, a personal note from their tutor. Families were able to pick this wonderful gift up from the school at the end of the year. Although with the abbreviated year, we were not able to formally calculate the progress made by our students, each tutor knows that the time spent together each week is priceless and can be life-changing, for both students and tutors.

Reading Soul Mates remains one of the most exciting and valuable programs operating within Gaston Literacy Council. Research continues to point to the value of early intervention and the difference it can make in the life of a child.

A Few Words from RSM Tutors...

Carolyn King, Pleasant Ridge Elementary

- I had the pleasure of reading with two young men this year before we weren’t able to continue our program. Working with these two young men was a highlight of my day! I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the Literacy Council in such a lively and personally fulfilling ministry.

Trish Tate, Lowell Elementary

- I would like to share the positive effect that Reading Soul Mates had on me and my two second graders. Even though the boys were on different levels, they developed a kinship that enriched both. Our working together enriched me as well. As a retired teacher, I was able to relive the pleasure of seeing students succeed and really enjoy learning. I would so encourage the continuation of Reading Soul Mates because of its skill building strategies as well as the intrinsic rewards of sharing and cultivating ideas and friendships.

Laura Mackey, North Belmont Elementary

- I can think of no better calling than to help a child with his/her reading skills and boost their self-esteem.

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND OUR IMPACT

GLC offers small-group, leveled classes, complemented by individual tutoring. 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.

Core Instruction was offered in:

- **High School Equivalency Preparation**
- **English as a Second Language:**
- **Citizenship**

The 2019/2020 outcomes for major programs are detailed below. Even with an abrupt halt to our regular instruction when Covid-19 forced us to "pause" in person classes, GLC is proud to report:

233 unduplicated adult students

were served in the following Adult Basic Education/ESL Programs:

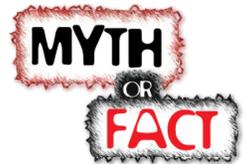
- Adult Basic Skills (8)
- High School Equivalency Prep (8)
- English Language Learners (217)

Progress made:

- 68% of students demonstrated improvement or advanced a National Literacy Level in Reading
- 58% of students demonstrated improvement or advanced a National Literacy Level in Listening
- 7 students obtained US Citizenship

ADULT LITERACY MYTHS DEBUNKED!!

There are many misconceptions about adult education. Here are the three most commonly heard myths people actually believe about adult literacy.



1. "I don't know anyone with a reading problem."

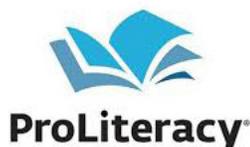
- There are 36 million adults in US who read below 3rd grade level... that means 1 in 7 people have literacy issues.

2. "Adults who attend literacy programs misbehaved in high school, were lazy, and generally didn't care about their education."

- They may have attended low-quality or poorly funded schools.
- They may have had to drop out of school due to events out of their control.
- They may have struggled with undiagnosed learning impairments.
- They may have fallen behind early and were unable to catch up.

3. "We have more important issues to worry about, like health care, unemployment, the economy, or who our next president will be."

- People with low literacy skills are 4 times more likely to have poor health, costing US taxpayers between \$106 - \$238 billion each year.
- Adults with low literacy levels are 2 times as likely to be unemployed.
- Adults with low literacy levels are less likely to be politically engaged or understand what is going on in politics.



Financial Statement Summary **

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

<u>Beginning Balance</u>	<u>\$152,860</u>
Receipts	354,786
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>507,646</u>
Disbursements	-402,659
<u>Ending Balance</u>	<u>\$104,987</u>
Liabilities	0

Endowment

<u>Beginning Balance – Fair Market Value</u>	<u>\$815,625</u>
Deposit – Contributions	0
Withdrawals	0
<u>Net Earnings</u>	<u>6,961</u>
<u>Ending Balance – Fair Market Value</u>	<u>\$822,586</u>
<i>Designated Scholarship Fund (included above)</i>	<i>\$10,008</i>

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**Audited statement prepared by Butler & Stowe and available on GLC website



Gaston Literacy Council has participated in the Community Foundation Run each year since its inception. And, although COVID-19 disrupted this year's event, GLC's proceeds totaled \$19,186. We wish to express heartfelt thanks to those of you, included in the contributors list, who helped us receive the maximum allowable matching gift of \$4,000 from the Community Foundation.

The 2021 RUN, set for April 17, 2021, will be "virtual" and your support will be more important than ever! So, hit the streets and build those miles, improving both your own health and the health of your chosen non-profit organization! #laceupforliteracy

Gaston Literacy Council, Inc.
gratefully acknowledges the following supporters who made this report and our mission possible.

Major Funders

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



"The whole world opened up to me when I learned to read."

Mary McCleod Bethune

Thank You

Contributors

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

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

Bach, Mary
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Matos, Diana
Mills, Chris and Elizabeth
Neerincx, Mr. and Mrs. James
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Steffey, Shelly and Brian
Thrower, Price and Bill
Trosper, Mollie
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Albright, Nancy
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Literacy Advocates (\$100 - \$249)

Abernathy, Dr. and Mrs. William
Albright-Whitesides, Susanne
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Bell, Mary Robin
Blachford, Ian and Donna
Boyce, Kathleen and Richard
Bryant, Beverly
Cinq-Mars, Ellen and Bob
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Moser, Dan and Betty
Norcross, Mary Lou
Pearson, Charles and Helene
Plowden, Amy
Price, Kay and Kim
Rhyne, Martha Jayne
Rinehart, David and Lucille
Robinson, May and Royce
Rowe, Ginger and Len
Rowland, Dr. Bobbie
Sutton, Benette
Thiele, Judith
Torrence, Charlton III
Ward, Ann
Watts, John and Kenna

Sustaining Supporters (\$250 - \$499)

Altrusa Club of Gastonia
Blair, Luther and Susan
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Gaston East Rotary Literacy Endowment Fund
Gray, Janice

Groves, Jean
Hancock, Marty and Amy
Heilig, Christa and Charles
Henry, George and Susie
Hobson, Davidson and Caroline
Kelly, Annabelle and Bill
Poston, David
The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Twenty Pearls, Inc.
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ROTELL Partners (\$500 - \$999)

Anthony, Annie and Edward
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Piedmont Plastic Surgery & Dermatology
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Laubach Society (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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Sarah Howe Literacy Guild (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Gaston County Family Advisory Board
The Charles and Irene Nanney Foundation

Thank You

Contributors

Olna Daves Leadership Givers (\$5,000+)

First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia and
Presbyterian Endowment Trust
Gaston Community Foundation
Pearson, Plato "Tete"
Petty, Jerry and Audrey
Petty, Larry and Linda
The Carrie E. and Lena V. Glenn Foundation,
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In memory of Erin Kathleen Barrett

Jimmy and Sybil Barrett

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In honor of Larry and Janie Stiles

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In honor of Bobby and Beverly Sumner

Karen and Billy Simmons

In honor of Don and Betsy Thrower

Karen and Billy Simmons



2019-2020 Grant Awards

- Dollar General Literacy Foundation
- Gaston Community Foundation
- Gaston County
(Family Advisory Board)
- Gaston East Rotary Literacy
Endowment Fund
- NC Community Colleges System
(Adult Education and Family
Literacy Act)
- Presbyterian Endowment Trust
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- The Carrie E. and Lena V. Glenn
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- The GoodCoin Foundation
- United Way of Gaston County
- United Way of Gaston County –
Emergency Fund

In Kind

CC Communications (Web Site)
First United Methodist Church -Rent Reduction

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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Awards

- NC Center for Nonprofits Sector Stewards Award
- 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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