



**Tompkins Learning
Partners**

Literacy for Life Campaign



Quietly Effective in Transforming Lives

“The obstacles faced by many of those we serve are significant – but all of them share a strong desire to succeed and to master the basic skills that can lead to a fulfilling, independent, and more prosperous life.”

Tom Weiler, Campaign Co-Chair and tutor

Literacy for Life Campaign

The goal of the Literacy for Life Campaign is to substantially increase Tompkins Learning Partners' capacity to meet the growing demand for adult literacy services in our community by raising \$660,000 to increase tutoring, reduce the waiting list for services, upgrade and renovate the agency's recently donated home at 124 W. Buffalo Street, and build a small endowment.

A Pressing Need

More than 4,500 adults in Tompkins County are functionally illiterate.

Imagine if you couldn't read a traffic sign, the label on a medicine bottle, your child's report card, an e-mail, or a simple recipe – to say nothing of the news or a novel.

That's the frustrating – and limiting – reality for thousands of adults in Tompkins County. The inability to read makes every aspect of daily life harder and stymies success at home, at school, on the job, and in the community.

The lack of basic math skills makes using a checkbook or getting correct change a challenge – and a real obstacle to independence. The lack of computer literacy cuts area residents off from an increasingly vital way of learning and communicating.

Literacy in all its forms is essential to full participation in a democratic society and is often a prerequisite for more education, a better job, the timeless pleasure of reading a good book, and a greater connection to and enjoyment of the world.

Quietly Effective Programs that Transform Lives

For more than twenty-five years, Tompkins Learning Partners has made it possible for thousands of adults in our community to learn to read, write and speak English, and gain basic math skills and computer literacy. In order to maximize our outreach and effectiveness, we work closely with community partners like BOCES, the Women's Opportunity Center, TC3, and Catholic Charities.

Every year, Tompkins Learning Partners provides individualized one-to-one assistance to more than 100 individuals who want to learn to read and write or to speak English. Typically, the agency has a waiting list of thirty or more people in need of help.

Many of those we assist feel invisible or have long been ashamed of their inability to read and write. Tompkins Learning Partners is the go-to agency for adult literacy and related services in our community and we are the only community agency that offers individualized literacy tutoring and citizenship training. Those individuals who struggle with reading, a layoff, or a new language and culture know they can count on receiving confidential, respectful, expert tutoring and life-transforming assistance.



Dan graduated from high school, but still read at a low level. He wanted to read better to improve his employment options. After several years of individualized tutoring, Dan now reads proficiently and has received a well-earned promotion at work.

Chris George, TLP tutor since 2006,
and his student Dan

Adult Basic Education . . . It's Never Too Late to Learn to Read and Write Better

20% of adults in the United States read at or below a fifth-grade level and 43% of people with low literacy skills live in poverty.

Whether they fell behind in school and never caught up, are new to this country, were stymied by learning disabilities, or face other obstacles, many of those assisted by Tompkins Learning Partners can barely read – or cannot read at all.

Some were too embarrassed to seek assistance and spent years masking their illiteracy. Others lack basic math and computer skills essential for functioning in today's complex, high-tech world.

Tompkins Learning Partners offers individualized, one-to-one tutoring to help adults learn to read, write, gain math and computer skills that lead to employment, more education, and a more fulfilling and prosperous life.

Adult illiteracy costs society an estimated \$250 billion each year in lost industrial productivity and unrealized tax revenues.

As job functions have become more demanding and the economic downturn has continued, Tompkins Learning Partners has seen an increase in the number of unemployed people seeking help. Many of those laid off from a job need to brush up their math and reading skills in order to earn a GED certificate, often a requirement for a new position.

75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties and those without a high school diploma earn only about 25% of those with a diploma or college degree.

Because they are unable to read medical information or prescription labels, adults with low reading skills also often suffer from poorly treated and chronic health problems.

Tompkins Learning Partners individualized tutoring helps adults to secure employment, upgrade job skills, and earn the degrees they need to succeed and lead healthier, happier, and more fulfilling lives.

English as a Second Language

After New York City and its surrounding metropolitan area, Tompkins County has the second largest number of non-English speakers per capita in the state. Even when immigrants and refugees are literate in their own language, help is still needed learning to speak, read, and write English.

Tompkins Learning Partners' English as a Second Language Program helps adult refugees and immigrants from more than 24 countries and Puerto Rico to learn to speak English, increase computer skills and understand American culture.

Learning English is not only important for everyday communication and a prerequisite for finding a job, it is also an essential step to obtaining U.S. citizenship – and the opportunity to vote and fully participate in the American way of life.

Tompkins Learning Partners is the only community agency in the county that helps students prepare for the U.S. Citizenship exam. Last year alone, 13 students became U.S. citizens.

After their village was destroyed, a Burmese couple spent ten years in a refugee camp before resettling in Ithaca. The difficult transition to a new culture and language was eased by a number of area organizations, including Tompkins Learning Partners, where a volunteer tutor helped them learn English. Now they can speak English well enough to hold down jobs and can read well enough to share books with their children.



Giving Incarcerated Youth Another Chance to Learn

Tutors work with young women at Lansing Residential Center and young men at MacCormick Secure Center, both in the classroom and individually, to improve reading, writing, or math skills, and to help prepare them for the New York State Regents or GED exams.

Approximately 15 young people at each facility are assisted annually. Literacy plays a vital role in giving these young adults another chance to turn their lives in a more positive and productive direction.

After ten months of one-to-one tutoring in basic math skills, a seventeen-year-old incarcerated youth at the MacCormick Secure Center went from being “no good at math” and “hating the whole subject” to letting his tutor know “I’d like to be a math teacher someday.” Now he is on the way to earning his GED.

A Wonderful Opportunity for More and Better Space to Meet a Pressing Need

Last year, Tompkins Learning Partners received a remarkable and timely gift of the house at 124 West Buffalo Street, where the agency has rented the first floor since 1994. This wonderful donation not only gives the agency a permanent home, but also opens up the entire second floor, doubling the current 1,547 square feet of programming and office space to 3,015 square feet.



Tompkins Learning Partners at 124 W. Buffalo Street



Upstairs front room

By renovating and reconfiguring our newly acquired building to expand and enhance key programming, tutoring, and educational opportunities, the Literacy for Life Campaign will make it possible to help many more of our community members to transform their lives. Plans call for:

- o Expanding into the second floor to better meet the increased demand for services, including new tutoring rooms, office space to plan and maintain successful and growing programs, and storage areas.
- o Reconfiguring the first floor tutoring and office spaces, upgrading the computer lab by installing individual carrels, and enhancing both the library/resource areas and the conference/training room.
- o Upgrading heating and electrical systems to increase comfort, improve safety, and to provide more power for expanded student and tutor activities.
- o Sprucing-up the building interior with new floor, wall, and window treatments to improve the quality of the educational experience.
- o Preserving building integrity and improving exterior appearance by re-roofing, improving drainage, repairing the foundation, and painting.

The Literacy for Life Campaign: A \$660,000 Goal

By significantly expanding Tompkins Learning Partners' existing program and tutoring space, a successful \$660,000 capital campaign will dramatically increase the quantity and quality of a key literacy service in our community, thereby addressing a growing need and making a significant and lasting difference in the lives of thousands of courageous adults who have relied on the agency to help achieve life-transforming educational, professional, and personal goals.



Carl Haynes and Tom Weiler outside TLP

“The generous support of individuals, businesses, and foundations will insure that Tompkins Learning Partners can make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to start a whole new chapter for adult literacy in Tompkins County.”

Carl Haynes, TC3 President & Campaign Co-chair

In addition to the lead gift of the building, the former home of Pauline Bailey Jones, donated to the agency in her memory by David Easton and Jones' daughter, Elaine Easton, and valued at \$260,000, the campaign has set the following priorities:

Campaign Priorities

- o \$300,000 For urgently needed renovations, upgrades, and refurbishments to the interior and exterior of 124 W. Buffalo Street to create more and better-suited space for tutoring and literacy programming.
- o \$50,000 To reduce the current waiting list for services and address the growing demand for adult literacy education by providing 2,400 additional hours of tutoring and increasing the number of volunteer tutors by 30 and hiring additional, temporary staff to recruit, train and support them.
- o \$50,000 To build an endowment for building maintenance and to sustain programming.

Volunteers & Staff

Volunteers:

Tompkins Learning Partners' volunteer tutors provide individualized long-term help. Each year, nearly 100 tutors commit to a year of teaching English, basic literacy, math, or computer skills. Our tutors are a diverse, dedicated group with a wide range of backgrounds and work experience. Individually and collectively, they are the heart and soul of the agency, donating more than 5,000 hours each year to the cause of literacy.

Board of Directors:

A highly engaged, committed, and fiscally responsible Board of Directors comprised of individuals and community leaders support Tompkins Learning Partners' mission, volunteers, and staff.

Staff:

Tompkins Learning Partners' knowledgeable, professional, and compassionate staff consists of three full-time and two part-time employees, led by long-time executive director, David Smith.



A Critically Important Mission

Tompkins Learning Partners' mission is to help adults and incarcerated youth who live and work in Tompkins County meet their personal literacy goals, free of charge, by improving their ability to read, write and speak English, and to use math and computers.



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