

# A Community Initiative to Improve Adult Literacy

## A New Year: A Renewed Sense of Purpose



*Message from Susie Schechter, Ex. Director*

I admit it. I am one of those people who actually uses the New Year holiday as an opportunity to sit back, reflect on the previous year and set some goals for the upcoming one. Looking at

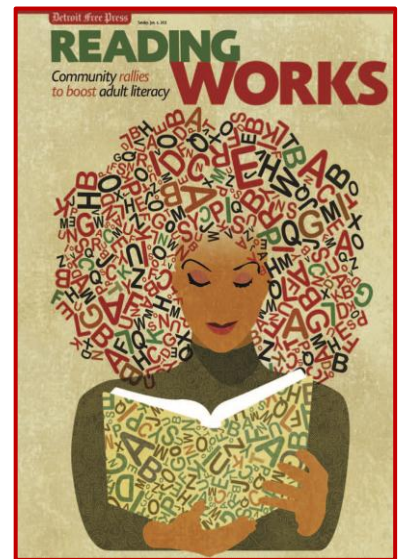
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Reading Works' previous year, I cannot help but smile. As the backbone organization of this community effort, we have been able to provide our partner literacy agencies with critical tools, resources and funding that have allowed them to build their own capacities, retain more adult learners and improve their accountability.

As we enter 2013, we have some exciting goals. Look for a more directed and intensified outreach effort, a growing list of community partners, more complete data, and our literacy toolkit that will help current and future partners expand the number of adult learners advancing reading levels.

I am also thrilled to announce that Monique Norfus has joined our staff full time as Director of Community Outreach. Monique likes to say "each learner has a story; listen and you will discover a wealth of knowledge." Make sure you read her compelling story "The Kitchen Table" on page 3 to learn what inspired her to join our efforts.



**Our Adult Literacy Partners!**

- ACCESS
- Another Chance
- Beyond Basics
- Detroit Literacy Coalition
- Dominican Literacy Center
- Macomb Literacy Partners
- Mercy Education Project
- Oakland Literacy Council
- Siena Literacy Center

**Welcome to Our New Board Members**

Reading Works is pleased to welcome three new board members: Maggie Allesee, Community Activist; Bankole Thompson, Senior Editor of the Michigan Chronicle; and Tim Smith President & CEO of Skidmore Studio. While all three bring unique talents to our board, they share a common passion for literacy and a desire to make our community a better place. Welcome and THANK YOU!!



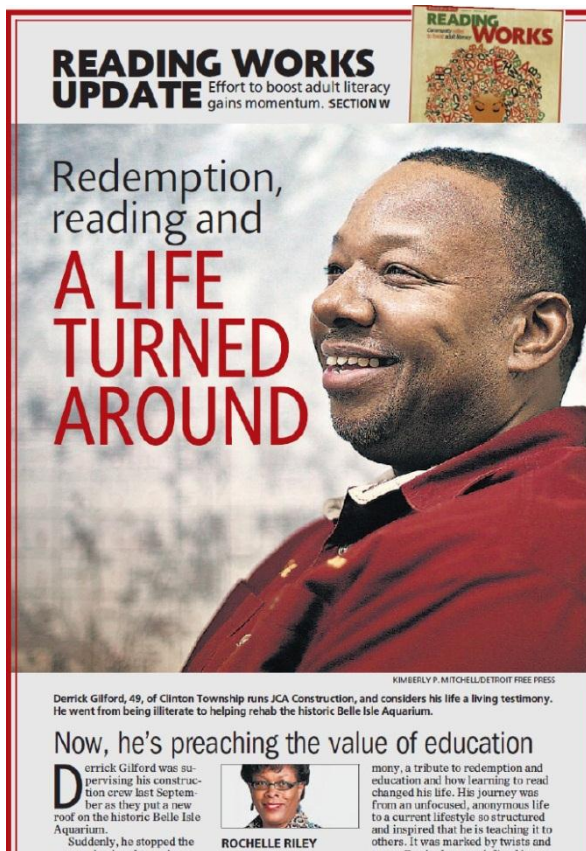
Maggie Allesee



Tim Smith



Bankole Thompson



## Focus on Raising Awareness

### Free Press Celebrates Learners' Successes

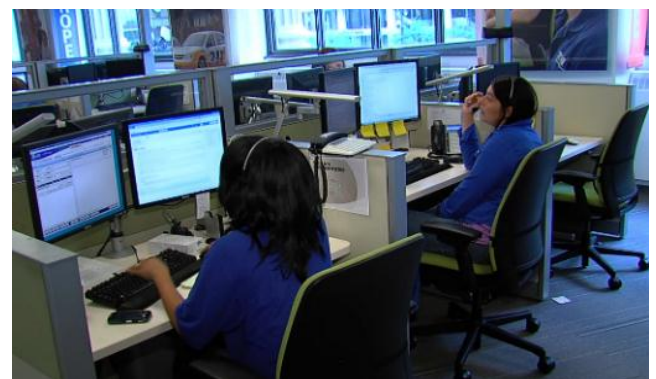
Reading Works is committed to raising public awareness. Our community needs to understand that many adults struggle with reading, there are amazing literacy programs with dedicated staff and volunteers ready to help, and yes, there ARE success stories. We are fortunate to have the Detroit Free Press as one of our media partners and it ran an incredible special section right after the first of the year. Columnist and Reading Works honorary chair, Rochelle Riley followed the remarkable journey of Derrick Gilford, a man who at 24 was living in his car, addicted to crack and unable to read, to a successful business owner, happily married man, and engaged

father. Mr. Gilford's road to success involved a stop at Oakland Literacy Council where he had the good fortune to be paired with tutor, Margaret Gazette, who not only taught him to read, but became a second mother to him. What Gilford remembers most about his beloved tutor is that she never let him give up.

Gilford now searches out others who may need help. He understands that it is a "terrible thing not to be able to read." So he volunteers his time at Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility where he tells his story and stresses to youth that their "silver and gold is not coming from robbing." It is coming from education.

## WXYZ Channel 7 Spotlights Adult Literacy: Urges Those Who Struggle With Reading to Call 2-1-1!

We had a feeling that television would be a powerful tool in spreading the word that help is available to adults who struggle with reading. And we were proven right! Thanks to our partner WXYZ-TV Channel 7, we have seen a huge spike in calls to the 2-1-1 referral line beginning in September. During the week of September 17, 2012, Channel 7's Detroit 2020 team ran a story every night on the 5:00 p.m. news highlighting the adult illiteracy issue and urging adults to call 2-1-1 to find a program for reading help. In that week alone, calls for literacy program referrals increased from 1 to 43 calls! That very next week, Channel 7 also began running a powerful Public Service Announcement reminding those who have trouble reading to call 2-1-1 for help. During the last three months of 2012, calls to the 2-1-1 referral line have remained consistent averaging 33 calls for GED programs and 24 for literacy programs per month. We are very encouraged with this increase in calls and look forward to exploring additional television outreach opportunities this quarter.



United Way 2-1-1 Staff Ready to Help Learners Find a Literacy Program Close to Home.

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 Visit our Website [www.readingworksdetroit.org](http://www.readingworksdetroit.org)

## Focus on Community Outreach



*Message from Monique Norfus,  
Director of Community Outreach*

The Kitchen Table. I remember my first day back home from college. I drove straight to my grandmother's house and ran anxiously to the door for my long awaited visit with my grandmother.

We would always have a seat at the kitchen table. This table held many stories of heartbreak, breakthroughs, breakdowns and breakups. As one of the oldest grandchildren in my family, I remember the awesomeness of sitting at the kitchen table with Grandmother. Each grandchild would approach the throne of that precious kitchen table with grace and humility.

This particular magical moment at the table my grandmother gave me an envelope. I had heard stories about receiving a special envelope from Grandmother, and now it was happening. I was raised not to open a gift immediately and held back with anticipation, but my grandmother granted me permission to open my special envelope. The stories were true; there was a card that contained a crisp ten-dollar bill inside. This was no ordinary ten-dollar bill. My grandmother's money was lined with magic. Her gifts would last for months, and it didn't matter the amount because it had the ability to multiply over and over again.

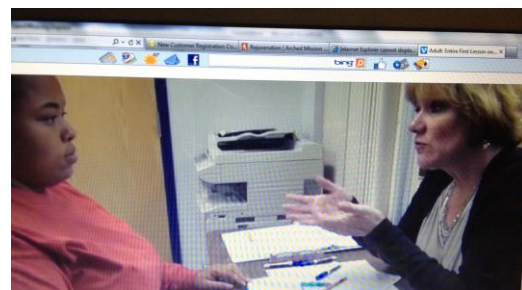
I placed the money aside so I could feast on her words of wisdom written in the card. I was shocked -- I couldn't read one word. I didn't dare ask my grandmother what she had written in the card. I disguised my disbelief and told her I was overwhelmed that she would take the time to write such kind words. I strategically waited until Grandmother left the room to approach my father. I asked "Why are there just lines and no written words in my special card?" My father shared with me that my grandmother had a 3rd grade education.

I felt like someone had sat on my chest. This had to be wrong; my grandmother always checked my homework. After some time to reflect, I realized that my grandmother had always just checked my homework to make sure it was complete. For years I never knew my grandmother was illiterate. It is a moment that changed my life forever.

My meeting at the table with Grandmother has molded me into an ambassador of literacy. I have been granted an extraordinary opportunity to be part of the Reading Works team. Reading Works is creating learning opportunities for functionally illiterate adults. For the past twelve years I have been a passionate educator, mentor and tutor. Every opportunity I have to teach someone to read is a gift. Hopefully, I can add a little of Grandmothers' magic so it will multiply.

### Charter One Funds EBLI Pilot

Reading Works is excited about a pilot currently underway at two of our partner agencies, Dominican and Siena. Thanks to the support of Charter One Bank, 30 learners are being taught to read using the EBLI method, a way of teaching unlike traditional methods. After 12 hours of tutoring, students will receive a post-test to see if any advancement in reading levels has occurred. In comparison, 30 more learners are being tested using the current curriculum. EBLI founder Nora Chahbazi believes we will see advancement after just 12 hours of tutoring. Our partner, Wayne State University, will compile our results in March. Stay tuned for our findings!



Nora Chahbazi works with a Dominican student.

business partners to invest in an improved, literacy-specific and cloud based database system. Most of our current partners are taking advantage of this opportunity and switching over to the new system, slated to be up and running by March. In addition, we plan on making this database available to future partners as a part of our literacy toolkit.

### Deloitte Partners Fund New Database



Mark Davidoff, Managing Partner Deloitte, Paul Anger, Reading Works Board Chair, Mena McLean, Manager Community Involvement, Schechter, and Cindy Pasky, Reading Works board member, gather to celebrate their partnership.

Reading Works wants to ensure that our partner literacy agencies can track their own key metrics, and that we are able to monitor how the community is progressing as a whole. When we first approached our partner agencies, most expressed satisfaction with their current database system. But over the course of the year, we have seen that the majority would benefit from an updated system, one that our partner ardentCause has the ability to build. We garnered a new collaboration with Deloitte and its

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# Thank You! Thank You!

We will never tire of thanking our supporters. You allow us to do the work we do to make sure *adults struggling with reading get the help they need!*

A. Alfred Taubman, Alex & Marie Manoogian Foundation, Belcan Corporation, Charter One Bank, Comerica Bank, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Deloitte LLP, Detroit Free Press & Detroit Free Press Charities, Detroit Media Partnership, DTE Energy Foundation, Ernst & Young, Essilor and Oakland Optometry, Forgotten Harvest, Gannett Foundation, Ilitch Charities, Kroger, McGregor Fund, Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, PNC Bank, PVS Chemicals, Inc., Quicken Loans, Strategic Staffing Solutions, The Keith Center, The Knight Foundation, The Law Firm of Miller Canfield, University Michigan Dearborn, United Way for Southeast Michigan, Verizon Foundation, Wayne State University, WXYZ-Channel 7 and Scripps-Howard Foundation, 100% Reading Works Board Support, Generous Detroit Free Press Readers



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