



# Delaware Communities of Excellence

## Message from the Co-Chairs



*Dr. Annie Norman, State Librarian, Delaware Division of Libraries & Cindy Shermeyer, Director, Literacy DE*

This October we begin phase three in the Community of Excellence journey.

**In just two years we have not only completed reflective questions in the yearly application, but we have set a mission, vision, and values, formed an Advisory Committee of literacy champions, established four literacy workgroups—Early Childhood, Health, Adult and Environmental, hosted Dolly Parton to celebrate Delaware Libraries Imagination Library, hosted a virtual Adult Literacy Action Forum, established September as Literacy month, and advanced Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.**



Not too bad for only two years!

Upon reflection however perhaps the most notable accomplishments are unseen to most. Delaware Libraries and Literacy Delaware have developed a more intentional, supportive relationship sharing ideas, resources, and wisdom. The individuals who faithfully attend meetings, share ideas, and even respectfully disagree have been inspiring to work with and call colleague.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every one who work with us each month to move our vision of a literate proficient Delaware for all Delaware residents through the lifespan.

## SPECIAL EDITION

### THE DELAWARE LITERACY ALLIANCE:

First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney,  
ex officio

Anne Hiller Clark,  
Delaware Division of Libraries

Leslie McGowan,  
Literacy Delaware

Caroline O'Neal,  
Reading Assist Institute

Diane Frentzel,  
Delaware Readiness Teams

Dan Cruce,  
United Way of Delaware

Dorothy Dillard,  
Delaware State University

Denne Crumrine, Higmark

MaryAnn Faralli, Higmark

Greg O'Neill, Christiana Care Jim Purcell, Energize Delaware

Tynetta Brown,  
Philanthropy Delaware

James Spadola,  
Read Aloud Delaware

Rita Landgraf,  
University of Delaware

Lauris Schutt, First State Educate

Martina Johnson, DNREC

Maureen Whelan,  
Delaware Department of  
Education

Mel Carney, DANA

Sheila Bravo, DANA

# SPOTLIGHT: Committee Member

*Submitted by: Leslie McGowan, Operations Coordinator, Literacy DE*

## Delaware Celebrates Literacy Month in September



According to the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 55% of adults in Delaware read below the 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, while 42% of youth in Delaware read below their grade level.

Given these alarming numbers, Governor Carney and Lieutenant Governor Hall-Long, officially proclaimed September as Literacy Month and the week of September 18–24 as Adult Literacy Week in Delaware. The City of Dover, Kent County Levy Court, New Castle County, and Sussex County Council also showed support by signing their own proclamations.

Throughout the month of September, legislators, educators, nonprofits, adult education programs, and libraries from all over the state came together to raise awareness around the importance of literacy and to advocate for investment in literacy efforts across the lifespan. Events, both small and large, were held to celebrate learner accomplishments, to highlight successful programs, and to bring communities together in efforts to create a more literate Delaware. Literacy Delaware and the Frankford library joined forces for a “Read In for Banned Books,” the United Way held a book drive to support local classrooms, and the Delaware Division of Libraries urged folks to visit their local library and sign up for a library card.

**Improved literacy skills increase equity, is the greatest deterrent to recidivism, supports the economy, and prepares individuals for future education opportunities and careers. Literacy doesn't just cover basic reading and writing skills; it impacts how we interpret health, financial, digital, and environmental landscapes.**

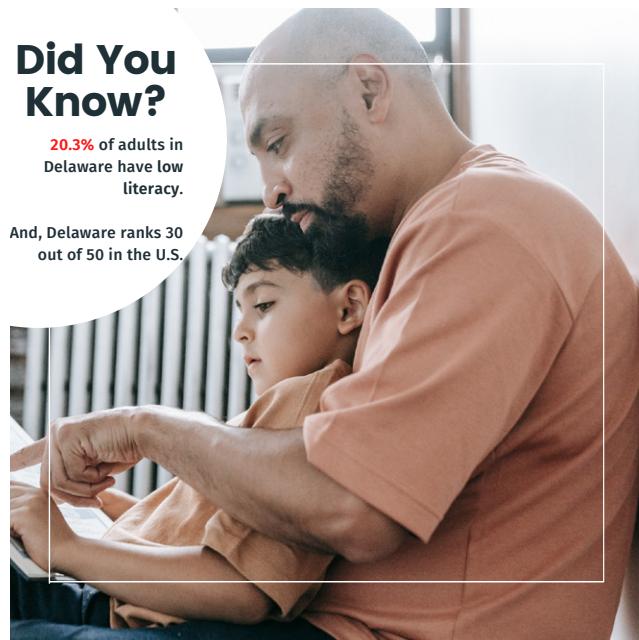
Delaware is fortunate to have quality programming aimed at improving literacy skills from birth to adulthood.

We need to capitalize on the support we have seen during Literacy Month to keep the momentum going! Keep advocating, keep volunteering, keep sharing your learner successes—together we are working towards a more literate Delaware!

### Did You Know?

**20.3%** of adults in Delaware have low literacy.

And, Delaware ranks 30 out of 50 in the U.S.



# Literacy Proclamations



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### **PROCLAMATION IN OBSERVANCE OF LITERACY MONTH AND ADULT LITERACY WEEK**

*Whereas*, literacy is the foundation for success in school, in work, and throughout life; and

*Whereas*, 42% of Delaware children read below grade level and 20% of adults in Delaware read below a 3rd-grade reading level; and

*Whereas*, numerous organizations are collaborating through the Delaware Community of Excellence Equity Through Literacy initiative to address the literacy gap for all Delawareans across the lifespan; and

*Whereas*, the First Chance Delaware initiative is helping to raise awareness of the importance of early, positive, interactive language experiences toward healthy brain development and school readiness; and

*Whereas*, every Delawarean under age 5 is now eligible to register for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library through Delaware Libraries as a foundation for literacy success; and

*Whereas*, Literacy Delaware provides literacy tutoring for adults as a foundation to access a high school credential, job training programs, college and careers; and

*Whereas*, the extensive efforts of all of the literacy partners empower Delawareans to build better lives and to strengthen Delaware's workforce and economy.

*Now, Therefore, We, John Carney, Governor,  
and Bethany Hall-Long, Lieutenant Governor,  
do hereby declare September 2022 and September 18<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> 2022*

### **LITERACY MONTH AND ADULT LITERACY WEEK**

in the State of Delaware, and encourage all Delawareans to support literacy work on behalf of our neighbors of every age, to read with children, to get a library card, and to recognize and promote reading as an essential skill and lifelong pleasure.



*John C. Carney*  
John C. Carney  
Governor  
*Bethany A. Hall-Long*  
Bethany A. Hall-Long  
Lieutenant Governor

← *State of Delaware*

*Dover, Delaware* ↓



*Sussex County* →



# Health Literacy Chair

Submitted by: Greg O'Neill, MSN, APRN, AGCNS-BS, NPD-BC, Health Literacy Chair and Director, Patient & Family Health Education, Institute for Learning, Leadership & Development (iLEAD), Christiana Care

## It's Health Literacy Month!



### HEALTH LITERACY MONTH

*Building Awareness Through Action*

**How are you taking action to build awareness about health literacy?**

**Share the hashtag #healthliteracymonth**

**[healthliteracymonth.org](http://healthliteracymonth.org)**



#### **Why should health literacy be a part of every discussion in your organization?**

As with many social determinants of health, the basic skills needed to gather, process and act on health information don't exist in isolation. These skills

are critical, but perhaps more so is the belief that paying attention, making the effort, and asking questions is important in the first place. Humans are known for being poor decision makers when it comes to long-term planning; so when faced with the daily decisions that add up to a lifetime of experiences, how can everyone in our community be empowered to take each little step?

Perhaps the answer can be found in the expanded definition of health literacy presented in the updated **Healthy People 2030**. These new

definitions address both personal health literacy and organizational health literacy:

**Personal health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

**Organizational health literacy** is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

While the personal approach has been understood for a couple of decades, it is important to recognize that the environment and systems surrounding people as they live out their

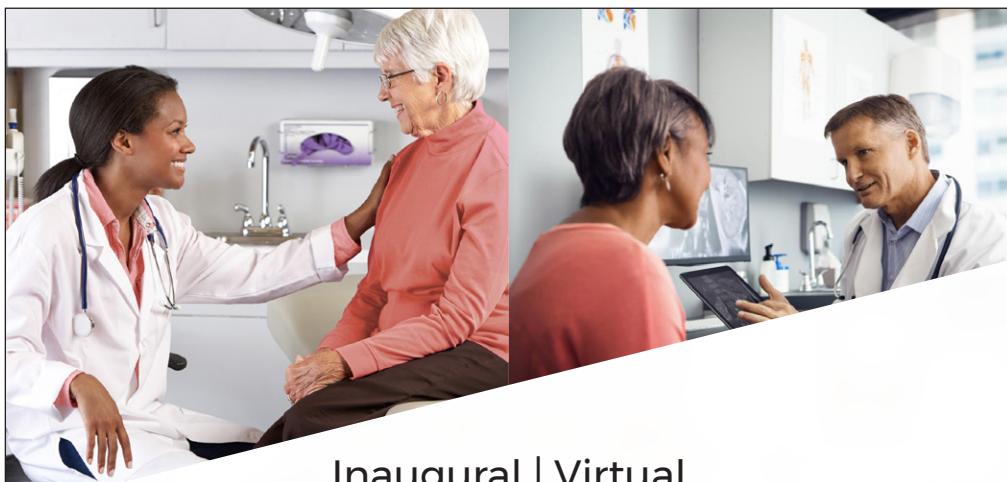
lives is just as likely to shape decision making, priorities and health options. Since 2013, the National Academies of Medicine have promoted the framework for building more health literate organizations (see [Ten Attributes of a Health Literate Organization](#)). Until these definitions and recommendations are fully implemented it may be difficult to expect radical improvement in the health of our communities.

**The perfect time to reflect on this goal as an organization is during Health Literacy Month!**

Started in 1999 by Helen Osborne, October has become a month to celebrate, strategize

and energize around improving health literacy. The [Institute for Healthcare Advancement](#) has since sponsored [Health Literacy Month](#) and provides a website with all kinds of tools and tips for bringing this issue to the forefront. From a planning guide to webinars to logos to branded social media files... anything an organization might need to plan a great awareness campaign is ready and waiting.

**The only part of this puzzle that remains is to decide who in your organization is going to champion this cause? This could be your time to shine!**



Inaugural | Virtual

## Delaware Health Literacy Forum

Wednesday, November 16, 8:30 am-12:30 pm

**SAVE THE DATE**



**Keynote Speaker Dr. Rima Rudd**  
Harvard School of Public Health  
*Health Literacy and Its Implications for Equity and Social Justice*

**PANEL DISCUSSION**

**Health Literacy:**

- A Strong Foundation
- Innovation in Health Literacy
- Policy to Practice

**REGISTER NOW >**

 DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

This forum was supported by funds made available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Center for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support, under National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities.

**PANELISTS**

- **Michael Villaire**  
Institute of Healthcare Advancement
- **Wilma Alvarado Little**  
New York State Department of Public Health
- **Teresa Wagner**  
Safer Care Texas  
*and more!*

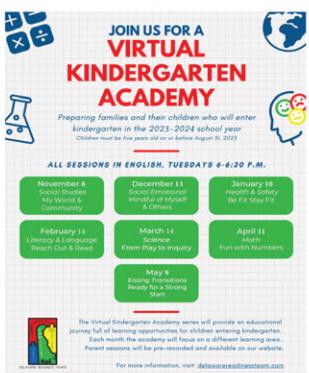
 **Partnership for Healthy Communities**  
 **UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE**

# Early Literacy Chair

Submitted by: Diane Frentzel, Early Literacy Chair and Program Manager, DE Readiness Teams



## Early Childhood Literacy Update



### Early Literacy Summer Outreach Program

**145** Partners



**15** Languages

**32** Community Events

**12,000** Books and Early Literacy Resources



### KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

#### KICK-OFF EVENTS

Join the Delaware Readiness Teams and First Lady for a Day of Learning as we kick off Kindergarten Registration with three great events across the state!

Learn the important facts about registering for kindergarten, and see... Delaware's new online system!

OCT 3 **SEAFORD LIBRARY** 10 a.m.-11 a.m.  
OCT 3 **HARRINGTON LIBRARY** 1 p.m.-2 p.m.  
OCT 4 **WILMINGTON LIBRARY** 10 a.m.-11 a.m.

Seaford: [bit.ly/3L6H9F](http://bit.ly/3L6H9F)  
Harrington: [bit.ly/3BxH6SG](http://bit.ly/3BxH6SG)  
Wilmington: [bit.ly/3B3cs9D](http://bit.ly/3B3cs9D)

JOIN US 



### Kindergarten Registration Campaign and Kindergarten Academy



# SPOTLIGHT: Council Member

*Submitted by: Peggy Geisler, Director, SCHC*

## Linking Arms with Literacy



**The Sussex County Health Coalition exists to engage the entire community in collaborative family-focused effort to improve the health of children, youth, and families in Sussex County.**

At first glance of the SCHC mission, it would seem SCHC is exclusively concentrated on health. However, this narrow focus discounts the foundational concepts of true wellbeing, which lie in literacy. In order for the Coalition to effectively “engage the community,” we must first acknowledge the current reading and comprehension levels in which we best connect with residents.

There is no issue within this state that exists in and of itself. The literacy endeavors that are well underway via the Communities of Excellence are relevant to the SCHC mission, in that they directly affect our community’s ability to understand

and engage with the invaluable resources and programs we’ve created to meet health needs. Furthermore, our health pursuits work in tandem with the literacy efforts to improve resident’s access to higher education, and healthcare management. These endeavors coalesce to equip Delaware residents with the fundamental skills needed to thrive within the workforce and the community at large.

We have gladly committed our resources and time to bolster the literacy efforts within the state in the past. However, with the maturation of the Communities of Excellence, SCHC intends to strengthen our commitment and become more intentional in pursuing opportunities to elevate literacy within the state.

This commitment fosters collaboration on a deeper level, while simultaneously achieving the SCHC vision—**a community in which our citizens and... are actively engaged in community health promotion as a shared community good...which supports healthy lifestyles for our children and their families.**



**SUSSEX COUNTY HEALTH COALITION**

**PMG**  
CONSULTING