

## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



*Dr. Annie Norman, State Librarian, Delaware Division of Libraries  
Cynthia Shermeyer, Executive Director, Literacy Delaware*

September is not only Literacy Month in Delaware but also a time to recognize National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week September 15–21. This month marks the beginning of a significant project for members of the Delaware Literacy Alliance, including Delaware Libraries and Literacy Delaware.

***Did you know that more people in the United States are affected by low literacy than are diagnosed with cancer or heart disease? This solvable crisis calls for an “all hands on deck” approach.***

Libraries are crucial access points for literacy in our communities, with untapped potential to move the needle in solving the adult literacy crisis. Responding to a call for grant proposals from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the American Library Association (ALA) brought together five national organizations focused on adult literacy to leverage their expertise and become agents of change. ALA, ProLiteracy, World Education, ALL-IN, the National Center for Families Learning, and the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy (BBF) applied for and received a two-year grant to pilot Adult Education and Family Literacy Centers in libraries.

This pilot needed to include diverse library systems. Thanks to our established relationship with ALL-IN and the BBF, Delaware Libraries, along with the Charleston County Public Library and Chicago Public Libraries, were selected to be part of this national initiative. Literacy Delaware is bringing their extensive experience working in libraries and their adult literacy instructional and training expertise to develop a toolkit that will assist libraries across the country in replicating the pilot.

“What an incredible honor to be involved in this pilot, working with these leading experts in the field of adult literacy. I am thrilled we are a small part of this initiative,” Cindy excitedly exclaims.

We are also very excited to launch the **Delaware Reads Campaign**, a statewide initiative designed to spread awareness around literacy. This campaign aims to engage communities, promote reading, and emphasize the importance of literacy for all ages. The Delaware Reads toolkit, available for download on our website, [delawareliteracyalliance.org](https://delawareliteracyalliance.org), offers valuable resources, including social media posts, key messaging, templates, and more. We invite everyone to join us in this effort to make a meaningful impact on literacy across Delaware.

# ANNOUNCING THE DELAWARE READS CAMPAIGN: CELEBRATING LITERACY MONTH THIS SEPTEMBER

As September approaches, we are excited to launch the Delaware Reads Campaign, a statewide initiative that will run throughout Literacy Month. This campaign represents a collective effort to promote literacy and engage communities across Delaware in the joy and importance of reading. With a focus on fostering a culture of literacy, Delaware Reads is more than just a campaign—it's a movement to empower every Delawarean through the power of reading.



## Why Literacy Matters

Literacy is the foundation of lifelong learning and empowerment. It opens doors to new opportunities, fuels personal growth, and strengthens communities. In Delaware, we are committed to ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and support needed to develop strong literacy skills from early childhood through adulthood. The Delaware Reads Campaign is our way of uniting the state in this mission, emphasizing the critical role that literacy plays in every aspect of our lives.



## What to Expect

We encourage you to take full advantage of the comprehensive resources we've provided by downloading the [Delaware](#)

[Reads Campaign Toolkit](#). This toolkit is designed to help you plan and execute impactful activities throughout Literacy Month, ensuring that your efforts are aligned with our collective goal of fostering a culture of literacy across Delaware. Inside, you'll find ready-to-use materials, including social media posts, event ideas, key messages, and more.

By using these resources, you can help amplify our message and make a significant impact in your community. Whether you're organizing an event, sharing information within your networks, or simply spreading the word, the toolkit will equip you with everything you need to support and celebrate Literacy Month.

We encourage you to download the toolkit [here](#) and start planning your activities for Literacy Month. By using these resources, you can help amplify our message and make a significant impact in your community.





### Spotlight on Our Partners

The success of Delaware Reads relies on the dedication and collaboration of our many partners. We are thrilled

to have the support of organizations such as the Delaware Division of Libraries, Literacy Delaware, the United Way of Delaware, and countless others who are committed to making a difference in our communities. Together, we are creating a powerful network of advocates who are working tirelessly to ensure that literacy remains a priority in our state.

## Get Involved!

There are many ways to get involved with the Delaware Reads Campaign. Whether you're an educator, a parent, a business leader, or a community member, your participation is vital to the success of this initiative. Here's how you can make a difference:

- **Join a Local Event:** Attend one of the many literacy-focused events happening throughout September. View literacy events [here](#).
- **Host Your Own Event:** Use our toolkit to organize a reading event in your community. Publish any literacy related events to our website [here](#).

- **Spread the Word:** Share our resources on social media, in your newsletters, and within your networks to raise awareness about the importance of literacy.
- **Connect On Socials:** Connect with the Alliance through social media and tag #DEReads or #LiteracyMatters:
  -  @DelawareLiteracyAlliance
  -  Delaware-literacy-alliance
- **Support the Campaign:** Encourage others to get involved by sharing your own reading experiences and using the hashtag #DEReads.

### Looking Ahead

As we look forward to Literacy Month and the Delaware Reads Campaign, we are filled with optimism about the impact we can make together. By shining a spotlight on literacy, we hope to inspire a lifelong love of reading in every Delawarean and create a brighter, more literate future for our state.

We invite you to join us in celebrating Literacy Month this September. Let's make Delaware Reads a resounding success, ensuring that literacy is recognized, celebrated, and supported throughout our state.



**TOGETHER, WE READ.**  
**TOGETHER, WE GROW.**  
**TOGETHER, WE SUCCEED.**

For more information about the Delaware Reads Campaign and to download the toolkit, visit [here](#).



# STARS IN LITERACY



## READING ASSIST

Reading Assist provides high-impact literacy tutoring for at-risk children struggling with reading across Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Since 1989, the program has helped thousands of students develop essential reading skills, altering their educational paths and life outcomes.

***Recognizing that two-thirds of children nationwide struggle with reading, and with alarming statistics in Delaware, where 85% of Black and Hispanic students and 90% of low-income students lack reading proficiency by 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Reading Assist is committed to addressing this critical issue.***

Their year-round support, including schoolyear, after-school, and summer tutoring, empowers students to achieve academic success, graduate high school, and lead fulfilling lives.

In the 2023-24 academic year, Reading Assist served over 1,700 students across 40+ schools, with 90% of students meeting foundational reading benchmarks. A pilot program with small group tutoring saw 100% of participants reach these benchmarks, with average reading improvements of 432%. Additionally, 93% of students showed increased engagement in reading. The program also launched Tutors to Teachers Delaware in partnership with Wilmington University, offering a pathway for AmeriCorps tutors to earn a master's degree and teaching certification in Delaware, significantly impacting both students and educators.



## DELAWARE FREEDOM SCHOOLS

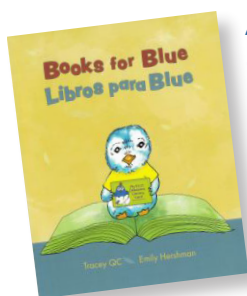
Freedom Schools, established by the Children's Defense Fund during the 1960s civil rights era, is an educational initiative aimed at African American children. In Delaware, the program is managed by the United Way of Delaware (UWDE) in partnership with community organizations such as the First State Community Action Agency (FSCAA), the Peter Spencer Family Life Foundation, and local school districts. Serving over 325 scholars across seven locations, the program focuses on preventing summer learning loss, particularly in reading, through a research-based, multicultural curriculum. The program's five key components include high-quality academic enrichment, parent and family involvement, civic engagement, intergenerational leadership development, and attention to nutrition and health.

The six-week summer program integrates an engaging curriculum with activities like singing, dancing, and physical exercise, making learning fun and effective.

***In 2023, Freedom Schools nationwide helped 2,375 children increase their instructional reading levels by an average of nine months. In Delaware, 85% of participants maintained or improved their reading levels, with some showing gains as significant as two years.***

Beyond academics, the program also fosters self-empowerment, conflict resolution, and civic engagement, with over 85% of scholars reporting improvements in these areas, highlighting the program's holistic impact on students' development.

# DELAWARE AUTHORS SPOTLIGHT



## **"Books for Blue" by First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney**

Discover the latest release of "Books for Blue," a captivating new book by Delaware's First Lady, Tracey Quillen Carney. This beautifully illustrated work, featuring the artistry of

Emily Hershman, is a heartwarming story that celebrates the joy of reading and the importance of community. Be sure to check it out and support local authors and illustrators. For more information, visit [Tracey Quillen Carney's Author Page](#).



## **Westside Family Healthcare Promotes Childhood Literacy with New Book Initiative**

Westside Family Healthcare has launched an exciting new initiative to promote childhood literacy by offering a new book to young patients and their families. This effort aims to encourage reading at an early age, recognizing the critical role that literacy plays in a

child's development and future academic success. By distributing books during health visits, Westside Family Healthcare hopes to foster a love for reading and provide valuable resources to families in the community. This initiative is part of their broader commitment to holistic healthcare, addressing not only physical well-being but also educational and developmental needs. For more information, visit [Captain Westside](#).



## **"Non-Obvious Thinking" by Ben DuPont**

In "Non-Obvious Thinking," Ben DuPont encourages innovative approaches to problem-solving and challenges conventional wisdom. This engaging book explores how embracing non-obvious ideas can drive success

and create meaningful impact. It is perfect for those looking to break away from traditional thought patterns and adopt fresh perspectives. For more details, visit [Non-Obvious Thinking](#).



## **"The Daughter of Man" by L.J. Sysko**

Delaware author L.J. Sysko has released her debut full-length poetry collection, "The Daughter of Man," a finalist for the 2023 Miller Williams Poetry Prize. This compelling

work follows an unorthodox heroine's journey from maiden to warrior, queen, maven, and crone against the backdrop of suburban America from the 1980s to today. With biting social commentary and humorous self-critique, Sysko reimagines the hero's journey, featuring an eccentric cast that includes Betsy Ross and Dolly Parton in unexpected roles. The book is celebrated for its sharp wit, profound observations, and poignant humor. Discover more about this engaging collection at the [University of Arkansas Press \(L.J. Sysko\)](#).



# HEALTH LITERACY COUNCIL OF DELAWARE: A YEAR OF ADVANCEMENTS, COLLABORATION, AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

*by Greg O'Neill, Chair, Health Literacy Council of Delaware*



## **What an incredible year for the literacy movement.**

From legislative action to new documentaries to the science of reading podcasts, it is an exciting time to answer the call to action to address literacy needs from all angles. As a proud member of the Delaware Literacy

Alliance, the Health Literacy Council of Delaware has been making strides and building connections throughout the state to help our leaders, organizations, and community support networks bring health literacy best practices to the people who need it most.

This year brought many new members, perspectives, and opportunities to the ongoing mission to improve health equity through health literacy. The Council now has a core group of nearly 20 leaders from major health systems,

community support organizations, state divisions of public health and education, insurance providers, advocacy organizations, community-based health centers, and academic institutions. Beyond that, another 30 leaders, experts, and specialists are participating in the three subcommittees driving the mission: Policy and Advocacy, Education and Training, and Community Outreach and Engagement.

Thanks to generous financial support from Highmark Health Options and the Delaware Division of Public Health, the Council is excited to launch a new website that will serve as an advocacy tool, education resource, and hub for members to collaborate. The Council is working to make recommendations and tools easy to find and use to promote best health literacy practices, policies, and strategic planning. Check it out [here](#), and keep checking back as more tools and options are added throughout the next year!

The Council also worked on specific projects to demonstrate the impact of plain language, including contributions to the recruitment materials





## Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program

used by the Screening for Life Program to promote cancer screenings in vulnerable communities. The policy subcommittee is in the final stages of a new tool to make it easier for any organization in the state to assess internal health literacy strategies and commitment. This will help organizations see the need to focus on health literacy and plan to adopt standard best practices. And as October approaches, the Council is celebrating last year's proclamation for Health Literacy Month and hopes to see that support again this fall.

The education and training subcommittee has designed the website's resources section to include all levels of learning, from the quick 5-minute video to the best-in-class [Health Literacy Specialist Certificate](#) training from the Institute for Healthcare Advancement. In a fantastic sign of progress, the Council and partners have already obtained nearly 100 funded licenses for this health literacy program that empowers new health literacy champions in our community! Anyone interested in this program or training should use the website to ***Join the Movement.***

The community outreach and engagement subcommittee has spread awareness through tabling events and conference attendance/presentations. Soon, a statewide event calendar on the Council website will consolidate all health literacy month-related activities and learning opportunities in one place. Be sure to promote health literacy in your organization, on social media, and in your community this fall.

The Health Literacy Council of Delaware looks forward to another big year in 2025 with additional funding support from the Delaware Division of Public Health and the Delaware Department of

Health and Social Services. Areas of focus in the coming months will be the development of a Health Literacy Partner Champion recognition program, a statewide community-facing campaign to promote health literacy skills and empowerment, incorporation of health literacy into community needs assessments, more cancer prevention-focused initiatives, specialized training opportunities, academic curriculum development for nursing programs, focus programming on rural health and more!

Now is the time to meet people where they are, which means listening to our community, improving our approach to health information, and advocating for investments in plain language.

***The Health Literacy Council of Delaware is ready and willing, are you?***



# ALLIANCE UPDATES



## Health Literacy Council of Delaware

The Health Literacy Council of Delaware is pleased to announce the launch of its new website. This user-friendly platform is designed to provide valuable resources, tools, and information to support health literacy initiatives across the state. Visitors are encouraged to explore the website at [healthliteracyde.org](https://healthliteracyde.org) to discover a wealth of content aimed at improving health literacy in our communities.

In addition, October marks Health Literacy Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of health literacy and celebrating the efforts of those working to make health information more accessible and understandable. Throughout the month, a series of events and activities will highlight the critical role of health literacy in promoting better health outcomes for all Delawareans.

The Health Literacy Council of Delaware invites everyone to take advantage of the new resources on the website and participate in the upcoming Literacy Month initiatives. Together, we can make a significant impact on health literacy in our state.



## Early Literacy

The Early Literacy Subcommittee has been diligently working to support and promote early literacy across Delaware this summer. A key initiative has been the development of a bookmark featuring a QR code that links to a variety of literacy resources aimed at enhancing early reading skills in young children. Chair Diane Frentzel, from the Delaware Readiness Teams, has played a pivotal role in supporting the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) to support the summer reading programs across the state. Throughout the summer, the team has been actively distributing these bookmarks at various events statewide. We are excited to expand our outreach and continue engaging with our partners to drive impactful literacy programs as we move forward. We welcome anyone with additional insights or resources to share them with our committee, as collaboration is essential to our success.





## Adult Literacy Task Force

The Adult Literacy Task Force is pleased to announce Leslie McGowan as the new co-chair alongside Margie Cyr. Leslie, the Operations Coordinator at Literacy Delaware, brings valuable experience in forming partnerships and managing operations to increase organizational capacity. With a background in adult educational programming, Leslie is well-equipped to drive the task force's initiatives. Her dedication to improving access to education and removing barriers aligns perfectly with the mission of the Delaware Literacy Alliance, making her an invaluable asset as co-chair.

In addition to this leadership change, the Adult Literacy Task Force is currently working diligently on policy and advocacy efforts. Recently, a letter regarding funding for Learning Disability Testing was sent to Senator Sturgeon, seeking her support, highlighting concerns, and outlining ideas for existing supports and potential funding solutions. The task force is also collaborating with Joanna Staib, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board, on a universal workforce assessment initiative. These efforts underscore the group's commitment to advancing adult literacy and education in Delaware.



## Events Calendar Now Live!

We are thrilled to announce that our events calendar is now live on the website, serving as a central hub for all literacy-related events across the state. With Literacy Month approaching in September, this is the perfect opportunity for everyone to get involved. We encourage you to submit your literacy events through the calendar—whether they are workshops, reading sessions, community gatherings, or other activities promoting literacy.

To submit your events, visit the [Delaware Literacy Alliance website](#). This will help us create a comprehensive overview of all the wonderful literacy initiatives happening in our community and allow others to discover and participate in these events. We also invite you to regularly check the calendar for updates and make plans to attend the diverse array of events that will be featured throughout Literacy Month and beyond. Let's come together to celebrate and promote literacy in every corner of our state.

### DelawareLibraries



*The Delaware Literacy Alliance is supported through the Delaware Division of Libraries and is a Communities of Excellence initiative.*

*Facilitated by PMG Consulting*

