



Enriching the quality of life and learning for adults and families through individualized literacy instruction and community building



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Northern Waters



UPDATE

Winter 2009-'10 Newsletter

Northern Waters Literacy Receives \$22,000 Grant

On Monday, November 23rd, Northern Waters Literacy received exciting news that it was awarded a \$22,000 grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation. With times so tough, competition so tight, and foundations with fewer dollars, NWL is privileged to accept this award.

Executive Director, Jill Leahy states, "This is a huge gift to the people and communities in Polk and St. Croix County to enrich lives and build community through education from our volunteers. Otto Bremer Foundation

exemplifies the idea of community building and reinvestment. They are an extremely professional, fair, and generous foundation."

The foundation has awarded over \$2 million this year to communities, organizations, and schools throughout Wisconsin. This is the second grant that NWL has received from Otto Bremer Foundation. In 2007, NWL was awarded \$25,000 for general operational support.



Spotlight on Tutoring

By Leanne Waterworth,
Program Director



Peg Frey is a tiny woman with an enormous heart. Her resume includes public school teacher for 28 years and volunteer tutor for 39 years bringing her a grand total of 67 years promoting education and literacy! And my guess is that her enthusiasm is just as apparent now as it was

when she first began her journey as a teacher.

Peg (Margaret) grew up in Roberts WI and after high school, earned her teaching degree from the UW-River Falls. She went on to teach 1st grade and Kindergarten for the next 28 years until she retired.

But that didn't seem to slow her down any, as her love for teaching spurred her on to start a literacy program in the tri-county area of Calumet, Winnebago and Outagamie. With another retired teacher, they recruited other fellow colleagues to become volunteer tutors and help in their mission.

In 1986 Peg moved to

Amery WI. She quickly contacted the local Community Ed Director to inquire about a literacy program. At that time there wasn't one, but Peg with all of her experience was willing to help get something started. And shortly after, in 1988, the *Polk County Area Literacy Council* (now called Northern Waters Literacy) was established!

I asked Peg to think back and share a memorable experience from all of her years of teaching. She immediately recalled a man she tutored who was in his 50's. After working with this student for a few years, he showed up on her door step unexpectedly with a newspaper in hand declaring, "I'm 57 years old and I can finally read a newspaper!" This obviously made a great impression on Peg and gave her far more than money ever could. And that's what many of our volunteers tell us when asked, "Why do you do what you do?"

Peg says with great emotion, "Teaching is so rewarding and I would do it all over again if given

the chance." Even at her age, she still feels the nostalgia and excitement every September as school resumes. Unfortunately however, time has taken its toll on Peg and her eye sight is declining so much that she uses a magnifying glass to see. For this reason, she officially retired from tutoring this past November, 2009.

I got to observe one of her final tutoring sessions with an ESL learner named Aicha. "Peg is a great teacher. She's a very special lady- and patient too!" says Aicha. Both women showed great determination as they poured over the workbook that day. The pair will be saying their good-byes after working together for 3 years.

But the fruit of Peg's labor will continue to grow among her countless students over the past 67 years. On behalf of ALL of us at Northern Waters Literacy, we want to thank Peg for her passion for learning and the willingness to share her gifts and talents with so many.

From the Executive Director

By Jill Leahy

The holiday bells are ringing and the time for giving is upon us again. At this time of year, I am especially reminded of the blessings that surround me and the desire to give back to those less fortunate than myself. I hope that you find this holiday season one of blessings and gratefulness also in spite of the gloomy economy.

I am extremely grateful to work for Northern Waters Literacy and the opportunity to meet so many people with their hearts in the right place. I'd like to pay special tribute to the NWL board of directors, old and new, for their support and enthusiasm this past year as we have moved from a mostly voluntary organization to a more professional organization. Chris Byerly, board president and Frederic Library Director, graciously finds time to organize, facilitate, and record our meetings with an uncompromising value for literacy. Bonnie Frederickson, Job Center Office Manager, wisely advises and suggests new ideas and adherence to best practices with a great sense of humor. Barb Kass, local philanthropist, kindly supports and shares her endless knowledge of philanthropic work and people while she knits. New member and HR Manager for Durex Companies, Lynda Flores, calmly offers her professional advice and recommendations for our policies as well as shares her experience as a Peace Corp volunteer and wife of an ESL learner. Molly Kessler, Head Start preschool teacher, shares her support of family literacy when she is not teaching children or parenting her 4 children. Roger McGrath, retired executive director, generously volunteered most of his time and knowledge to NWL for 12 years and honorably recommended me to take his role. Roger has also continued to consult me on whatever I need and I appreciate his continued support of NWL.

I am also grateful to our partners, contributors, and volunteers that are the true foundation of NWL. NWL learners are successful in their goals because people and organizations have believed in the importance of tutoring by NWL for any age or ability for over 24 years. The testimony of retired tutor, Peg Frey, demonstrates just this. This inspires Leanne and me each day we go to work, and we love our jobs.

Thank you and Happy Holidays.