

ACTION READ



Community Literacy Centre of Guelph

**ANNUAL REPORT
2019-2020**



Action Read
COMMUNITY LITERACY CENTRE



Cover: Tutor-learner pair Lois and Kevin

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Recently, the song *'Movin' it on'* by singer and civil rights activist Odetta has been stuck in my mind. For me, this song speaks to the current times, and their constant need to problem-solve in order to remain safe and healthy. It also speaks to a long overdue reckoning for racial and social justice.

Literacy learners have always had to problem-solve and push to be heard. Living with literacy challenges means constantly having to seek out solutions to daily barriers. These solutions may come in the form of a supportive person, a technology, or an organization where help is always available. *'Movin' it on'* is just what learners do.

At the start of the pandemic, it took a few weeks for Action Read to figure out how to continue to serve learners. How do we remain relevant when our work is largely done in person? Action Read staff showed tremendous leadership in figuring out an answer to this question, and many learners and volunteers responded with ready openness. Within a few weeks groups and one-on-one tutoring resumed online, with all the learning curves that go with this.

Prior to the pandemic, 2019-2020 had been a highly productive year for Action Read. The Board created a five-year strategic plan with the input of over 76 community members. Action Read started several new programs and projects, and met or exceeded all its goals.

While these past few months have thrown us all, they have also led to growth and reflection, and a practical reevaluation of how we work. We will continue to seek out creative solutions that allow us to serve the community. Perseverance has carried the day, and will carry us into tomorrow. As Odetta says *'If you can't walk, crawl'*.

Here's to keeping our learning spirit bright and strong as we figure out our new normal.

MIRA CLARKE

Executive Director

*"IF YOU CAN'T
FLY, RUN*

*IF YOU CAN'T
RUN, WALK*

*AND IF YOU
CAN'T WALK,
CRAWL*

*ANYWAY YOU
MAKE IT, BABY*

*KEEP ON
MOVIN' IT ON"*

ODETTA



YEAR AT A GLANCE



Mission

Action Read is dedicated to changing the lives of adults and families through improved literacy, numeracy, computer, and other essential skills.

We Believe

- Everyone can learn
- Tutors and learners are active partners
- Diversity makes us strong
- We must continually reflect to remain relevant and meaningful

915 PEOPLE were directly impacted by our adult and family literacy programs

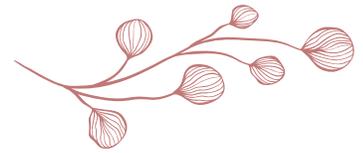
110 ACTION READ VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED 9500 HOURS to our community. This is equal to \$190,000 of donated time!

92% of LEARNERS MADE GOOD PROGRESS on their learning goals at Action Read



Action Read's Strategic Planning Day
September 2019

EARLY START PROGRAM



"Brenda is full of great ideas for learning. I love the small consistent group." Caregiver

Our family literacy program builds resiliency. Young children are wired to learn, and our play-based approach meets them where they are at. The program eases the transition to school by creating age-appropriate skills-building opportunities, and by making first structured learning experiences upbeat and exciting. Through the learning activities completed, the friendships made, and the information shared, the Early Start Program helps our community stay healthy and connected.

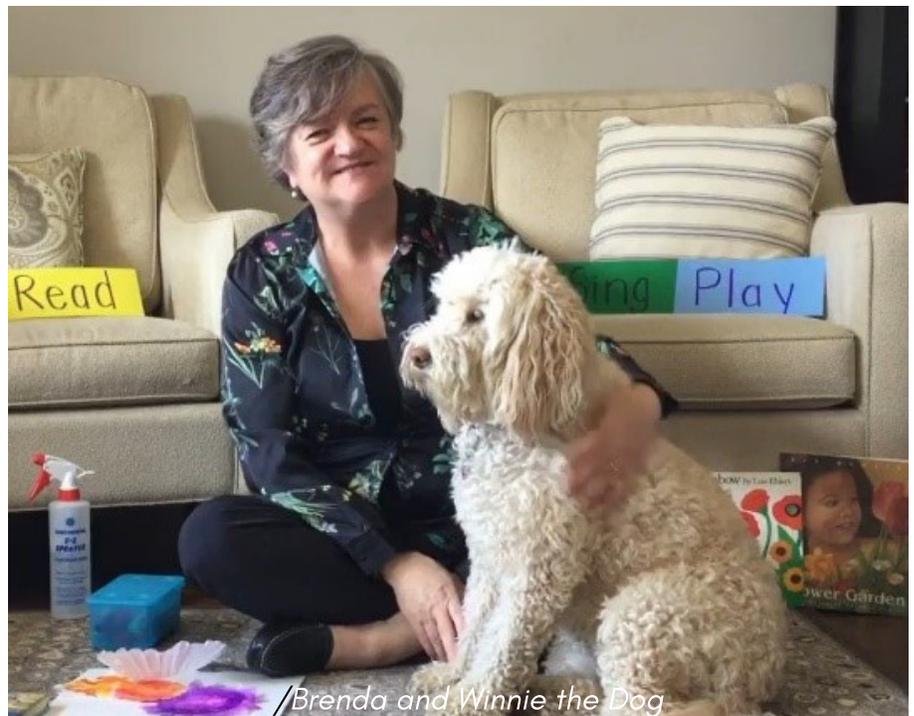
"My child really loves it and waits the whole week for it." Parent

In 2019-2020 the Early Start Program served 153 children, with 79% age 3 or under. Children showed a 93% increase in letters and language play, and 80% showed "significant improvement" in their literacy and numeracy skills. Of the 69 adults served, 65% were parents, 24% were caregivers and 11% were grandparents. 87% gained valuable resources and strategies, and 100% of adults would recommend the program to others!

350 hours of programming were provided at 6 locations across Guelph. Due to the pandemic, programming moved to an online format, with Brenda creating weekly YouTube videos and emailing learning activities in order to support families during a difficult time.



Celebrating Family Literacy Day



/Brenda and Winnie the Dog

ONE-TO-ONE TUTORING

"I've been to many places in my life. Lots of therapies because I have social anxiety. Action Read has been the best place I've ever been. I got so much out of my time there. Everyone was so helpful. I always felt like it was a safe space and that helped me learn." JR, Learner

The One-to-One Tutoring Program matches trained volunteers with learners, and supports the development of skills related to individual goals and interests. It's a highly customized, effective way to provide instruction, support and mentorship.

2019-2020 program highlights include:

- Achieved 100% of our learner target.
- 95 learning pairs met throughout the year.
- 275 learning assessments were completed.
- 54% of learners had employment goals such as passing work tests, obtaining a GED or improving reading, writing, spelling and math to meet the demands of the workplace.
- 21% of learners had goals related to independence such as passing the driver's exam or writing for self-expression.
- 25% of learners had goals related to further education.
- We recruited, screened, trained and matched 55 new tutors. In total we supported 95 active volunteer tutors.
- We increased our outreach to key community partners. As a result we saw an overall increase in referrals, including a 178% increase from the County of Wellington, Ontario Works.

"One of the skills that I've gained is the ability to really pay attention and recognize a learner's stumbling block. Sometimes you try one way and it doesn't work out, so you have to figure out another way. You always try to relate to the learner where they're at." Kathy MacLean, Volunteer

"To see those light bulbs go on, and hear their feeling of pride and success, it's just amazing. I feel like I'm opening a door for them."

Mike, Volunteer



GROUP LEARNING PROGRAM

"The Safe Food Handling course was incredibly prepared and delivered. I would say it was the best course I've attended." Mario, Learner

"Action Read is remarkably responsive to learner request for additional programs, workshops and resources that fall within their mission". Community Partner, 2019 Strategic Planning Survey

Action Read offers both short and year-long small groups. Group learning is a great place to share knowledge, experience and to learn from others. It's a comfortable learning environment where everyone has a chance to participate. In total Action Read offered 1710 hours of group instruction time to 110 learners.



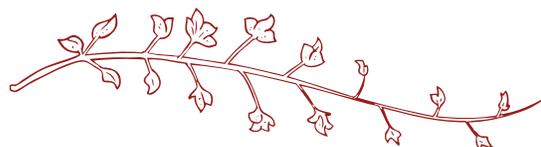
Year-long groups offered

Book Club; Real Life Writing; GED Group (3 classes per week); Aboriginal Writing Group; Northstar Digital Literacy Certificate Program (3 classes per week); Math Group; for a total of 1460 hours of instruction.

Short-term groups offered

4 Cashier Training courses; 4 Safe Food Handling courses (including one for the Personal Support Worker Program at the school board); 3 Art Therapy sessions; 2 Receptionist Training courses; 1 Janitorial Training course; 1 Rent Smart course; for a total of 250 hours of instruction.

Short-term courses take place over 3-4 weeks. The decision of when to hold courses is based on demand and labour market trends. Some courses offer certificates such as a Safe Food Handling or WHMIS.



AWARDS

Doris Middleton Award to Scott Everett



This award was inspired by Doris Middleton, a much loved member of Action Read who had a sparkle for life and a passion for learning and growth.

With some skepticism, Scott Everett was referred to Action Read to improve his reading and writing skills. A couple of weeks later Scott was matched with his tutor Christine. During their first meeting they found a common interest – motorcycles! Scott has embraced the learning process ever since. When his tutor was unable to meet, he would come in and ask for activities to work on by himself, or read quietly. Scott attends all of our events and will bring family along with him. His sense of humour is contagious.

The past several months have been difficult for everyone. COVID has affected some of his family members but through all these struggles, Scott, who was computer shy, is now meeting with his tutor over Zoom each week! His tutor Christine commented “Scott and I are each other’s first match. He has made my responsibilities so much easier by being incredibly motivated. He is a quick learner and is a lot of fun to work with. We have similar interests which we will find interesting ways to implement the topic into our sessions. I’m so proud of Scott and excited for his further progress as we carry on.” Congratulations Scott for your wonderful learning spirit. We wish you continued success.

The Betty Bean Kennedy Award to Joyce Allen



This award was inspired by a passionate and tireless literacy volunteer.

They say that a great mentor is someone who leads by example. Joyce Allen is one such person.

Throughout the four years she has volunteered at Action Read as a tutor, board member, committee member, editor and fundraising volunteer, Joyce has consistently lifted others up. Whether she’s meeting with her learner or with a committee of the board, she’s been an ever-patient and active listener, and a keen observer of what’s going on around her. That Joyce always gives you her full undivided attention speaks to the tremendous respect with which she treats others. At the board level, Joyce gently helped guide difficult conversations to an effective outcome. Her input is always insightful, smart and relevant, and draws upon years of grassroots public service work. She provided invaluable guidance and countless hours to moving the strategic planning process forward. It has been a real pleasure and an honour to work closely with Joyce Allen on the Action Read Board of Directors, and in the day to day work of the learning centre. The example she provides of resilience, grace, strength and humour make her the best kind of mentor. Thank you Joyce!



The Action Read Community Award to the Retired Teachers of Ontario, Wellington District 31

For many years the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO), Wellington District 31, have generously supported Action Read through a book drive of high quality new or gently used books held by their members. Part of RTO's 'service to others' mandate, Action Read is extremely appreciative of this practical and meaningful gesture. We always look forward to meeting with Nancy Baker and the other lovely people who coordinate the project. The day the books are delivered feels like Christmas, and as staff go through them, we start linking them up to the various interests and reading levels of the individual learners we support, both adults and children. We often pay this gift forward on Family Literacy Day, when we give each of the children in our Early Start Program a beautiful new book. Their glee at receiving this gift is huge, as seen in this picture of our volunteer Amelia being 'swarmed' by toddlers eager to be read to (as parents waited patiently to leave). The 'Retired Teacher's Wellington District 31' stamp inside each book reminds our members of the generosity of our community, and that the vocation of teaching does not stop at retirement. This is further demonstrated by the fact that many of our amazing volunteers are retired teachers.

Warm thanks to the Retired Teachers of Ontario, Wellington District 31 - deserving recipient of the 2020 Action Read Community Award.



The Shirley Almack Award to Colleen Harper

Shirley Almack was an Action Read member who inspired others with her courage, strength and leadership.

By all measures, Colleen Harper has been an excellent leader. She approaches learning with a level of commitment and focus that inspires everyone around her. She has been a dedicated Board member since 2018; a kind and welcoming presence to new members in the centre; she answers phones and greets people when we are short on front desk volunteers; and she helped organize a dyslexia workshop with her tutor Mel. Truly, she never hesitates to roll up her sleeves when she sees a need!

Colleen has spoken on behalf of Action Read many times. She has touched countless lives with her charismatic and cheerful personality, her quick wit and her amazing storytelling skills. She even reached out to CTV, who then featured Colleen and Action Read in their 'Community Heroes' news segment. Colleen explains with clarity how Action Read makes a difference in people's lives. In speaking from the heart and from lived experience, she connects naturally to people and makes them feel happy, appreciated, and motivated to do more for others. Recently her talent for public speaking was recognized when she won the 'Speaker of the Year Award' at the 2019 United Way campaign celebrations.

Colleen enriches the life of everyone she meets. Congratulations and thank you Colleen!

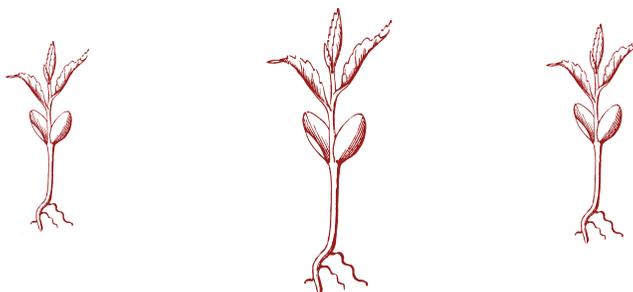


FINANCIALS

Year ended March 31, 2020

	2020	2019
Opening balance, beginning of year	1,606	-11
Revenue		
Government Grants (Ontario MLTSD)	260,132	258,230
Other Grants (United Way, Rotary, City of Guelph)	73,140	74,745
Fundraising	18,595	20,316
Total	351,867	353,291
Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	256,546	237,435
Rent	29,714	29,669
Learner and Tutor Support	21,816	23,676
Office	8,302	9,131
Materials and Resources	5,304	2,816
Professional Fees	3,100	3,010
Advertising and Promotion	3,001	3,225
Hospitality	2,990	3,271
Insurance	2,983	2,989
Telephone	2,838	2,585
Books and Subscriptions	2,273	3,336
Travel	985	665
Equipment	795	13,303
Memberships	446	856
Organizational Development	395	5,707
Contingency Fund	10,000	10,000
Total	351,488	351,674
Closing balance, year end	1,985	1,606

This statement is a summary of the Income and Net Assets Statements as they appear in the Financial Statements provided by Curtis-Villar Chartered Accountants. Copies of these Financial Statements are available upon request.



DONORS



Heartfelt thanks to our generous and thoughtful donors.

Action Read Volunteers	Grace Morrison	Nichola Martin and Art Kilgour
Adele Clarke	Grey Rock Clothing Co.	Paramjeet (Pam) Arneja
Amanda St. Jean	Grinham Architects	Patrick Wilke
Amy Newman	Guelph District and Labour Council	Paul Baker
Ann Middleton	Guelph Music	Paul and Ann Wilke
Anne Near	Helen Hoy and Thomas King	Peter Amy
Anonymous	Jack Kesselman and Amy Baskin	Peter Cameron and Karen Farbridge
April Anderson	James Clarke	Play with Clay
Arboretum Press	Jan Sherman	Pretty Chic Boutique
Arrive Yoga and Mindfulness Centre	Janus Books	Qualicare Family Homecare
Art Gallery of Guelph	Jeanette and Gord Hines	Radhey Singh
Barbara Chance	Jeff Guitard	Reids Candy and Nut Shop
Barbara Rogers	Jerry Schramek	RBC Gordon & Kortright Branch
Barbara Stefaniak	Jim and Sue Chiarelli	Robert (Peter) and Tonny Bulionis
Basilica of Our Lady	Jim Reed	Ross Ireland
Beth Pollard	Joan Warren	Sharon Nancekivell
Blooms + Flora	Joanne Morant	Shirley and Wayne Bluhm
Bonnie Rimmer	John Carere	Sip Club
Brian Allen	Joseph and Lillian Mokanski	Stephen Aspinall
Buon Gusto	Joug (Jugglers of the University of Guelph)	Sue Cavanagh
C. Harold Jackson	Joyce Allen	Sunrise Bookstore
Canadian Scholars Press Books Inc.	Julia and Larry Porcellato	TAMBRO Construction Ltd.
Capistrano Bistro and Espresso Bar	Kathryn Dore	Trish and Cristian Boos
Carole and Howard Beamer	Kathy Maclean	The Albion Hotel
Cathy Quinton	Kim Counsell and David McConell	The Bookshelf
Chaplin Renovation & Construction	Kris Marchetti	The Casual Gourmet
Charlotte Mingle	Leah Sadler	The Common
Chi Liu	Leon and Dianne Bradshaw	The Handmade Den
Colin E. Chaplin	Loretta Wilke	The Retired Teachers of Ontario;
County of Wellington	Liz Morant	Wellington District 31 (RTO 31)
Courtney Townsend	Lumos and Nox:	The TEN Spot
Cybergrants, LLC:	Breakfast House and Chamber of Spirits	The Wooly Pub
Suez Water Technologies & Solutions	Lynda Lehman	The WORKS Gourmet Burger Bistro
David Atkinson	Margie and Mike Misurka	Theresa Terisigni
David Middleton	Marilyn E. Ortwein	TREMCO Roofing and Building Maintenance
David and Stacy Wilke	Marilyn Clarke and John Hicks	United Way Waterloo Region Communities
Dawn Matheson	Mary E. Cunningham	University of Guelph Department of
Dorothy M. Fisher	Maureen Busby	Mathematics and Statistics
Downtown Guelph Business Association	Matthew Hodge	Upper Grand District School Board
Earl and Pat Famme	MCW – Custom Energy Solutions Ltd.	Vicanie's Fine Lingerie & Luxuries
Edward Fobert	Middleton Family	Victor Davis Memorial Court
Elizabeth Hansen	Mike Ellis	Vocamus Press
FLOW 2019 Poets and Performers	Mira Clarke	Mr. Walters and student Jaden at
Foggy Rock Fibres	Modern Tourist	College Heights Secondary School
Friends of Action Read	Murray and Anne Matheson	Wellington Brewery
Gary and Irene Hearn	My-Thai Guelph Restaurant	Wellington Cakes
Goose and Gander	Nancy and John Bligh	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
Gordon Hill Press	Nancy Swinehart	William (Liam) Winegard
	Nate Cole	WriteDesign

Thanks also to donors of the **Action Read Community Literacy Centre of Guelph Fund** held at the **Guelph Community Foundation**. Anyone can make a donation to this fund and no gift is too small. To donate, please visit the Guelph Community Foundation's website at www.guelphcf.ca, and click on the secure 'Donate' link.

Special thanks to Action Read's incredible volunteers. We couldn't do it without you!



WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leah Sadler, *Chair*
Cindy Garland, *Treasurer*
James Gray, *Secretary*
Colleen Harper
Courtney Townsend
Jeff Guitard
John Dack
Joyce Allen
Paul Mesman
Vanessa Morton

STAFF

Adam Gonsalves, *Group Learning*
Brenda MacDonald, *Family Literacy*
Charlotte Teece, *U of G Placement*
Don Peters, *Computer Support*
Hazel Bernez, *Computer Facilitator*
Jan Sherman, *Literacy Facilitator*
Joanne Morant, *One-to-One Tutoring*
Lynda Lehman, *Finance Manager*
Lynn Veronneau, *Admin Assistant*
Mira Clarke, *Executive Director*

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**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**
Ontario's employment and training network.

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This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the government of Canada and the government of Ontario and through the Canada-Ontario Job Fund Agreement.

 **United Way**
Guelph Wellington
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 **The Guelph Community
FOUNDATION**

 **City of Guelph**
Making a Difference

