



# ACTION READ



**ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

**CHANGING LIVES FOR 35 YEARS**



# People Helping People

## A Note from the Director

For 35 years, Action Read has uplifted people through programs founded on values of lifelong learning, mutual support, and a belief in human potential. We have connected scores of learners, tutors and staff members – in person, online, and through the written and spoken word. Our members have dug deep to break systemic barriers to learning. Moments of personal triumph, large and small, have occurred every day.

Coming out of our COVID “hibernation”, many of us are trying to figure out what it means to be part of a community again. What has changed? What remains the same? What can our 35 years teach us about reigniting the fire of community connection?

People describe Action Read as somewhere they feel welcome, safe, and find a sense of belonging. It is homey and unpretentious. It accepts people from all backgrounds, and is a place where we can learn from each other. Action Read belongs to the community.

As our world has become more interconnected, we have successfully created a sense of inclusion and familiarity through remote learning and meeting. Nonetheless, humans are social creatures and for many of us, the virtual world is not the same. We need to balance our digital worlds with our in-person relationships.

Increasingly, our members face complex mental health issues, not helped by months of isolation and social anxiety. We serve more women and new Canadians than ever before. Demand for employability and digital literacy training continues to grow.

Working at Action Read these past 18 years, I have witnessed acts of extraordinary selflessness and personal resilience. It has enriched my life more than I ever imagined it would. I am forever grateful to this small but mighty organization. This spirit of generosity and openness fuels my certainty that together we will continue to find new ways to build community in these challenging times.

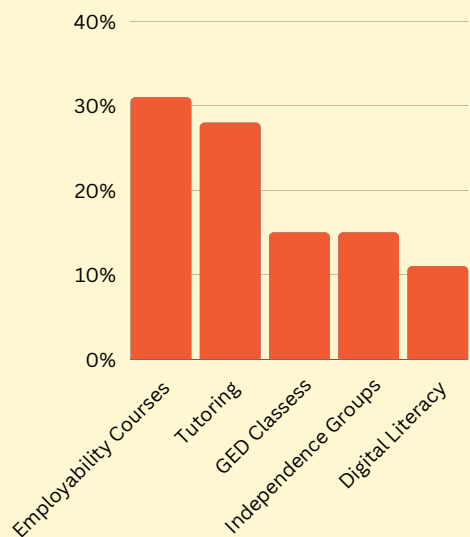
I wish to thank the Board, volunteers, staff and supporters of Action Read for your incredible dedication, perseverance, and generosity these past few years. I wish to also highlight the courage, spirit and determination of our learners. They are the heart of Action Read, now and into the future.

Sincerely,  
*Mira Clarke*  
Executive Director

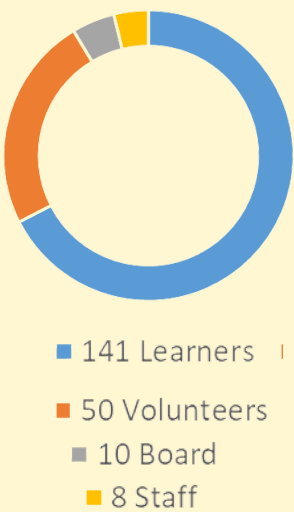


# Adult Program Snapshot

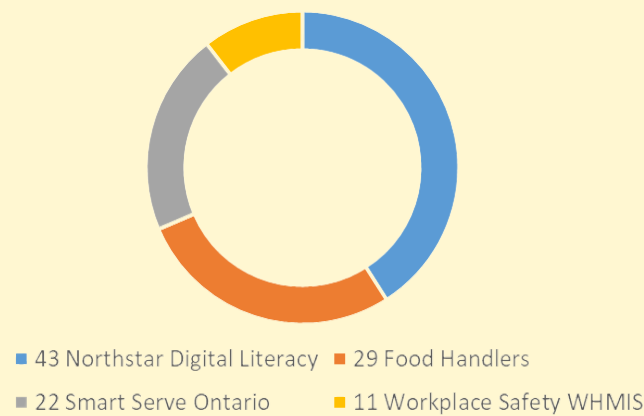
## Overview of Adult Programs



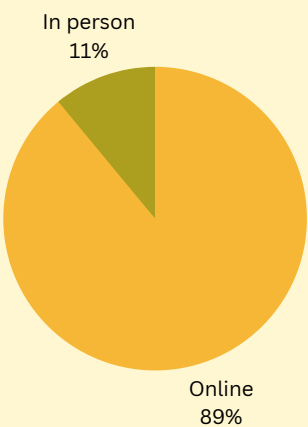
## Who Makes Up Action Read



## Certificates Earned



## How People Participated



## Customer Service Results

- 89% found their learning activities useful
- 97% found that Action Read staff treated them fairly.
- 80% made good progress towards their goals.
- 93% would recommend Action Read to others.

# Together Again

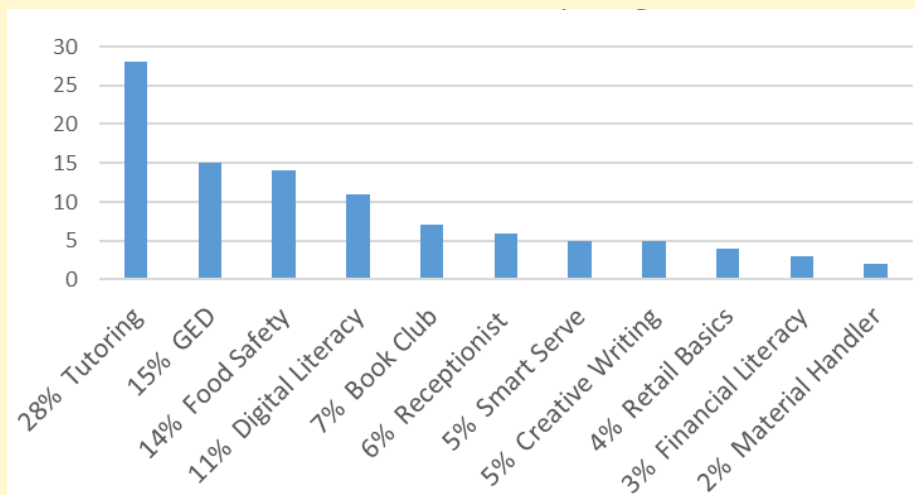
The Arab Women's Society of Guelph, in partnership with Chalmers Outreach, brightened Action Read by being the first in-person learning group in almost two years. It was such a pleasure to see this strong and spirited group of women focused and excited about reaching their goals. Everyone supported and encouraged each other in their learning, and were so happy to come together that spontaneous feasts took place every day at the back of the classroom! All twelve women graduated with a Food Handler Safety Certificate, and each found new confidence and optimism to achieve their goals of employment or of giving back to the community through volunteering.

***"The staff is very cooperative. The teacher Trisha is wonderful and proficient and able to convey information and explain it in an excellent and clear way, especially when we ask about the meaning of the word."***

***"The teacher was amazing. Organized and professional. I am very happy and satisfied."***



**% Adult Contact Hours by Program**





# Skills in Action

This year, Action Read in partnership with Holly Mastrolgiacom from Smitten Apparel, took our Cashier Training Course up a big notch! This course teaches learners the cash register, money math and customer service skills to make successful transitions to employment. Over the years dozens of learners have gained work using the skills they learned in the course. Now it includes a work placement at Smitten Apparel, allowing people to apply their newly learned skills in a thriving local business. Nothing beats real world experience, and learners report even greater confidence and encouragement from the experience than ever before! Huge thanks to Holly for her support!

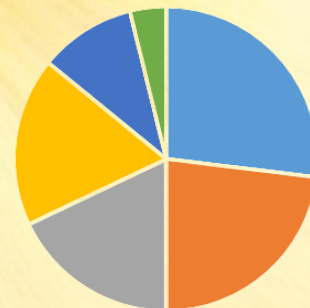
*"They were an amazing group. We had lots of conversations about their talents and how to use them. We discussed where they could find employment and I gave each of them permission to use me as a reference if they wished. I can't wait for the next group!"*

Holly, Smitten Apparel



RentSmart Program with community partners, March 2022

## How Learners Found Us



- 21 Community programs
- 18 Ontario Works
- 14 Employment Support Programs
- 14 Immigrant Services
- 8 Posters and media
- 3 Word of mouth

# Quietly Ahead of the Curve for 35 Years...

As Action Read grew from a project of the Centre for Employable Workers in 1987, to an organization with deep community connections in 2022, certain core values have carried us through the years.



## Learner-centredness

Action Read recognized from the start that 'one size does not fit all', and that learning must be based upon individual goals, strengths and needs. By 1999 we gained enough experience with this approach to publish a book on goal-setting, which became an adult literacy best-seller. Mainstream education has shifted in the last two decades, and now the highly personalized, diversified approach long adopted in adult education is widely applied.



## The Power of Storytelling

In recent years storytelling has become a hot topic in marketing, education and social services. At Action Read, stories have always been an important learning tool. Through storytelling, learners find confidence and motivation in sharing their words and experiences, and come to better develop their own skills, knowledge and opinions. Storytelling remains a powerful tool not only in sharing the impact of our work, but in helping learners achieve success.



## Early Adopters of Digital Literacy

In the 1990s Action Read saw that computers and specialized adaptive technology programs were effective tools in helping learners, particularly those with learning disabilities, and visual, mobility and hearing impairments. Few adult literacy programs had experience with adaptive technologies, so we created a project to understand and share with others how these tools could reduce accessibility barriers.



Many adaptive technologies are now built into computer accessibility features. Still, those early years showed us the unique power that computers have to support learning. Since then, the value Action Read places on digital literacy training has only increased.



## Focus on Teamwork and Communication

When Action Read began, learners made up 50% of committees and the Board. While the goal was to give learners a greater voice, it became apparent that this approach offered invaluable opportunities to build interpersonal skills within both Action Read and the larger community.

In 2022 a global survey found teamwork and communication the most significant soft-skill gaps in the workplace, leading educators and employers to place a renewed emphasis on soft-skills training.

Through the tutor-learner partnership, small groups, Board and committee work, as well as learning programs specifically designed to enhance these skills, Action Read continues to create practical opportunities for learners to strengthen their soft skills in support of their broader goals.



## Recognizing the Whole Person

From our emphasis on providing information and referrals for such things as housing and food security, to offering literacy classes on health and wellness, to recognizing the importance of early learning, Action Read has always taken a holistic approach to learning.

When Action Read started, many learners spoke about a lack of educational support growing up. Many were motivated to join out of concern for supporting and advocating for their children's education in addition to their personal goals. In response, we quickly launched family literacy programs, which we continue to nurture and develop.





# Growing Into Literacy

It's never too early to instill the joy of learning. A strong healthy learning relationship between children and parents and caregivers better prepares children to learn throughout their life. It helps children make successful emotional and intellectual transitions to school. It helps families feel closer, and more capable and engaged.

As the COVID situation changed from month to month, the flexibility and resilience of staff and families carried the day. We offered programs online, outdoors at parks and at the Arboretum, in building lobbies, at community centres, in family bubbles and eventually small groups, and through home delivery of the Rainbow Connections Literacy Kits. These were lovingly created by Program Coordinator Brenda to support early learning during the long days of lock-downs, and personalized with the interests of the children in mind.

Outcomes were strong. 100% of families found that the program supported their children in improving in their literacy and numeracy skills; and 100% of families would recommend the program to others. We served 115 children and 35 families in 2021-2022.

Participants were beyond grateful. For some families our outdoor program was their first social gathering in more than a year. One mom expressed concern with having her son begin kindergarten in the fall having had only contact with his parents for so many months. By the end of the first outdoor session, her son was holding Brenda's hand for the walk back to the car. A small gesture that meant the world to a worried parent.



Handmade book bags from Brenda for Family Literacy Day!

***"I am so grateful that we got connected to this program. We always get new books to read, kids get lots of chances to develop their fine motor skills with paints etc. We can never thank you enough."***



# Awards

## The Doris Middleton Award to Marla Pagliaroli

*This award is supported by Doris' children David, Bonnie and Sherry.*

For many years Marla has developed new skills through her participation in math and reading groups, along with her one to one work with tutors. Marla loves to be challenged and has fun learning new things such as exponents, geometry, spelling, geography and reading her favourite books. And she has seamlessly done it all through the world of ZOOM! Marla exemplifies Doris' infectious desire to learn, grow and overcome challenges with dignity and humour.



Marla's zest for life and her enthusiasm are contagious. She approaches each session with a smile and always brightens her tutor's day. Marla constantly shares her positive learning experiences with her friends, staff and others in the Guelph community. She is a shining example of the power of positivity and a "can do" attitude.

## The Betty Bean Kennedy Award to Leah Sadler

Since day one, Leah Sadler has been an incredible volunteer, leader and friend of Action Read. Leah's impact has been nothing short of awe-inspiring!

Leah has been a tutor, a Board member, and the Board Chair for the past three years. She has provided leadership on numerous committees, led workshops, opened her home to Board meetings and has pushed forward our strategic plan. She's been an advocate for learners, and a great support to staff, all while raising a young family and making a career change.



In every way, Leah is a natural leader, always pushing Action Read to move forward as an organization. She is clear, smart, compassionate and exceptional at thinking on her feet. She always asks relevant questions that bring attention to the most important information. She is a natural bridge builder, making connections to groups that diversify and enrich Action Read. Leah's positive energy, confidence and generous spirit are a gift beyond words to our community. Thank you Leah!

## The Action Read Community Award to Parkwood Gardens

Parkwood Gardens Neighbourhood Group's mission is to provide a "safe place of acceptance and respect, develop a sense of community and enrich the health and well-being of families". They are doing an stellar job!

Parkwood Gardens has been offering Action Read space to run our Early Start Family Literacy Program for over twenty years. This past year they extended their generosity by inviting us to come three days per week. Parkwood Gardens staff are always responsive, generous, genuine, cheerful and helpful. They go the extra mile to make sure everyone feels welcomed, and they are always looking out for the best interests of their community. Staff often leave personalized cards for visitors and they leave out cookies and treats for everyone. Food donations are shared with a generous and open spirit. We are so grateful to Parkwood Gardens and their lovely staff for all they do. Parkwood Gardens - you really make a difference in our community!



# Financials

Year ended March 31, 2022

	2022	2021
opening balance, beginning of year	4,188	1,985

## Revenue

Government Grants (MLTSD)	255,230	284,019
Other Grants (United Way, Rotary, City of Guelph)	80,484	76,483
Fundraising	23,112	5,885
CEBA Loan Forgiveness	10,000	10,000

<b>Total</b>	<b>368,826</b>	<b>376,387</b>
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## Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	256,774	239,423
Office Renovations	12,965	45,406
Rent	34,320	33,860
Learner and Tutor Support	16,853	17,258
Office	7,378	6,791
Materials and Resources	7,079	5,265
Professional Fees	3,136	3,118
Equipment	2,771	3,088
Insurance	3,409	3,002
Telephone	3,997	3,002
Books and Subscriptions	819	1,696
Travel	703	953
Memberships	210	643
Advertising and Promo	706	580
Hospitality	150	99
Organizational Development	0	0
Contingency	20,000	10,000

<b>Total</b>	<b>371,270</b>	<b>374,184</b>
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closing balance, year end	1,744	4,188
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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

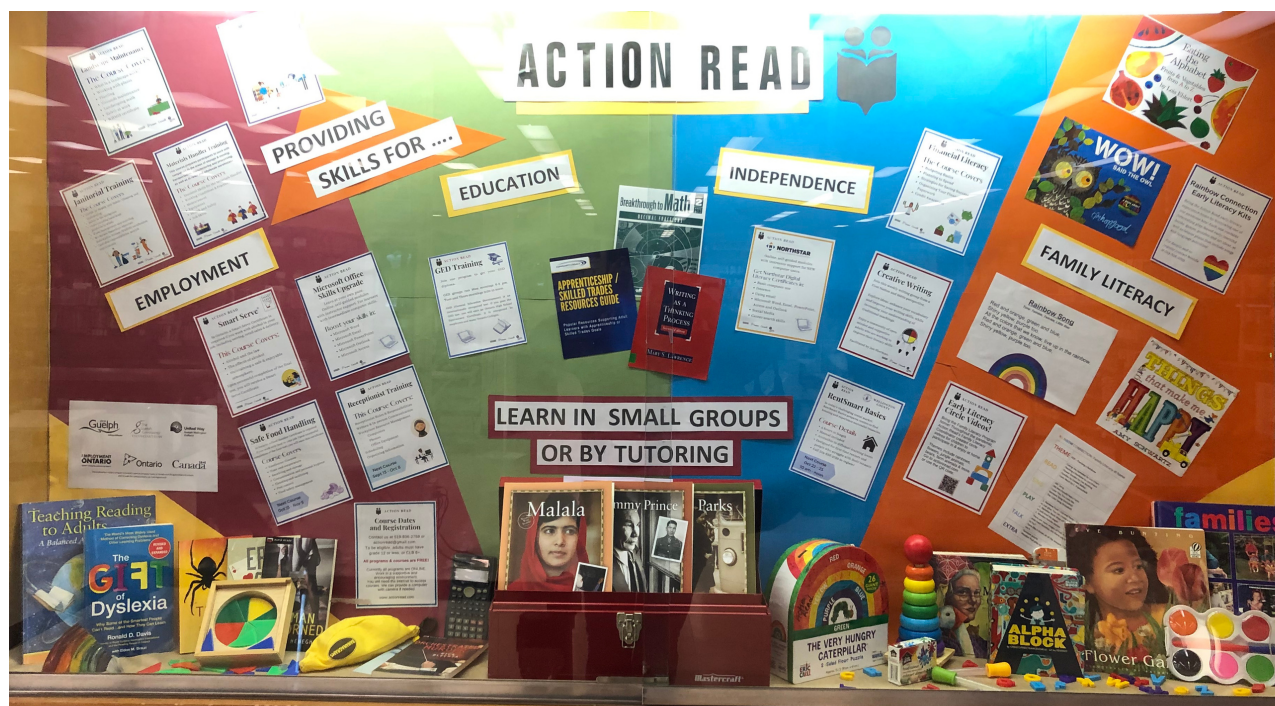


# Donors

Heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our donors!

Adele Clarke, Angelo DeStefano, Ann Middleton, Anonymous, Barbara Chance  
C. Harold Jackson, Canada Helps: Literacy for All Fund, Canadian Red Cross Training  
Services, Carin Headrick, Carol Imhoff, Carol Mundle, Chaplin Renovation &  
Construction, Cristian Hernandez, Colin Chaplin, Colourific Coatings Ltd. (Joy Bartels),  
David Middleton, Gary Hearn, George Cuthbert, Grace Evans, Helen Hoy,  
Howard Kennedy, James Clarke, Jan Sherman, Janet Wood, Jeff Guitard,  
Jeremy Luke Hill, Joanne Morant, John Carere, Joyce Allen, Kate Keilty,  
Kathleen (Vanessa) Hyland, Kathy and Bob MacLean, Leah Sadler, LEX Scientific,  
Linda Marshall, Lynda Lehman, Madhur Anand, Michael Hoffbauer, Michael Lohuis,  
Mira Clarke, Nancy Bligh, Nancy Swinehart, Nichola Martin & Art Kilgour,  
Parkwood Gardens Neighbourhood Group, Phil Sadler, Robert (Peter) & Tonny Bulionis,  
Ross Ireland, Rotary Trillium, Ryan Scott, Sharon Nancekevill, Scott McWhinnie, Sue  
Cavanaugh, Susan Bard, Susan Mawhiney, Terri Townsley, Tom King, The Bookshelf,  
Victor Davis Memorial Court

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](http://www.guelphcf.ca), and click on the secure 'Donate' link.



Library Display, September 2021





## WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

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Mira Clarke, *Executive Director*  
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www.ActionRead.com

8 Cork Street East  
Guelph ON, Canada N1H 2W8

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*We are eternally grateful to our funders for their ongoing support!*

