

Mission Statement

The mission of the Marinette & Oconto Counties Literacy Council is to provide adults of Marinette and Oconto Counties with programs and services to improve literacy in reading, writing, comprehension, health, speaking English, math, digital skills, and cross-cultural awareness. The power of literacy will enable adults to become self-confident, contributing, members of their community and work force and positively impact their families.

Vision Statement*Our vision for the organization*

Marinette & Oconto Counties Literacy Council actively assist those with a literacy need and remains committed to those we serve and to our organization. Community outreach is ongoing and involves many organizations within Marinette and Oconto counties. The marketing effort is strong and has many available resources at its disposal through grants, fundraising and human resources, such as volunteers.

Our vision for the region

Within the communities, there is an increase awareness of the resources that are available to individuals who are in need of literacy services. Community organizations, together with individuals, have become advocates for those in need of literacy services. The literacy rate continues to improve through the willingness of individuals to accept assistance without fear.



Tutor Talk

A Newsletter for and about the Marinette & Oconto Counties Literacy Council, Inc.

Spring, 2025
Volume 11
Issue 2



Francis Lewandowski

*Thanks, to a true
Original*

Francis Lewandowski, featured on our first page, is an original charter member of the board of directors of our literacy council in 2012. He gladly served for 10 years and this is our way of saying "Thank you" to him.

Francis was born and raised in Pound and was the oldest and only son of 6 children on a bi-lingual dairy farm. Francis' father was also a radio repair technician and had his "shop" in the basement, a separate room from where the potatoes were stored. His parents' farm was one of the largest potato producers in the area. In fact, Francis remembers that, yearly in the fall, the school children were allowed a "potato vacation" for one week to help dig up potatoes from the fields. Francis has memories of being in the basement "radio room" at his home when growing up, with a special memory of listening, with his family, to the end of WW II in 1945.

Francis' parents received periodicals in the mail and allowed him to order one so Francis ordered *Boys Life*. It was in this magazine that he saw the directions for making a wooden work bench. He did make this as a boy and still uses it as a workbench in his own basement. He inquired about entering it in the Marinette County Fair but was told it was too large.

Continued on page 2:

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Marinette & Oconto Counties
Literacy Council, Inc.
1605 University Ave.
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Francis Lewandowski, continued from page 1:

Francis was then off to college, spending his 1st year in Marinette, then the next 3 years at UW-Wisconsin, Madison. This was where he met and began dating, Mickey Bommer, another student. Francis and Mickey were married in 1961, then moved to Beaver in 1965 after buying a farm. Francis and Mickey went on to own and operate a successful dairy farm, raise 5 children (who are all college graduates) and volunteer as leaders of the Four-Leaf Clover 4-H Club.

Francis and Mickey retired from farming in 2001. Francis then began doing photography, building his own dark room in his basement, purchasing some nice cameras where he could develop his own photos. He still enjoys this hobby.

In 2012, when the M&O Counties Literacy Council was forming, Francis was known in the area as being a man of wisdom and kindness with a sense of humor. Because of these qualities, he was asked to be on the literacy Board of Directors. Although often quiet through many discussions, when asked his opinion, he would often give a profound answer. It was Francis who pointed out that the farm magazine, *Hoard's Dairyman*, sometimes ran a Spanish page on an article that could help our Spanish-speaking students who were farm workers.

In 2022, when Francis stopped his volunteer work with this literacy council, he still kept busy. He and Mickey now have 11 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. His most recent venture is becoming an author. He has written two books, a history of his family and the history of Beaver. The first book was titled "This I Remember" (but, in Polish).

Pearls of wisdom Francis chose to leave for younger folks:

- 1) "Choose your ancestors well"; and,
- 2) "Be observant and act accordingly."

*Thank you, Francis,
for your time and service in helping form
the Marinette & Oconto Counties Literacy Council.*

**Vicki & Bud brighten up the Fair**

Bud Bartel and Vicki Dobratz sponsored a table at Bellin Health's Senior Wellness Fair held January 29, 2025 at the Bond Community Center, Oconto. The event was well-attended and Bud & Vicki passed on the literacy council's information to interested people.

Thanks to Bud & Vicki for letting the people in our communities know about the services provided by our literacy council!

ENGLISH CLASS

For those wanting to improve their spoken and written English

DATES: Wednesdays, for 6 weeks, from April 9 to May 14
TIME: 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM
PLACE: NWTC--418 Hwy 141 Crivitz, WI 54114

We provide the books and materials. If you sign up, please try to attend all 6 classes. We do ask for a \$20.00 donation to help pay for the books (some have already paid). No other cost. Learning can be fun!

*If planning to attend, please call or text:
Janet at 920-373-1035 or email: moliteracy2012@gmail.com*

TUTOR TEA

DATE: Wednesday, April 23
TIME: 10:30 AM
PLACE: The Shop On Main--821 Main Street in Oconto.

Please bring any tutoring ideas you'd like to share or a question you may have.

Plan for a discussion with drinks and treat, followed by lunch of soup, sandwich, or salad. Our treat as a **BIG THANK YOU** to our great tutors.

*If planning to attend, please call or text by April 15th
Janet at 920-373-1035 or email: moliteracy2012@gmail.com*

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Friends of M&O Counties Literacy
*Claudia Bartz
 Jill Cholewa
 Nancy Crevier
 Romelle Delzer
 Francis Lewandowsk
 Daniel Slater
 Judy Sytsma
 Chris Verges*

CONNECTIONS:*We support or are supported by:*

COAB-Coalition on Adult Basic Education
 Coleman Municipal Building
 Crivitz Woman's Club
 Jack's Market supports Rounding Up
 North Coast Marine Manufacturing Training Center, Marinette
 NWTC Marinette
 Oconto Falls Senior Center
 Oconto Falls H.S. FBLA & Business Class
 OEC Grant
 Pirates of the Northwoods Parrot Head Club in Lakewood
 ProLiteracy
 Peshtigo National Bank
 Stephenson National Bank
 Wisconsin Literacy Council, Inc.
 WVCA Wisconsin Volunteer Coordinators Assoc.



Upcoming EVENTS

April 15, Tuesday 1:00 P.M. Literacy Board Meeting at the Coleman Village Hall, 202 E. Main Street.

April 9, Wednesday, 4:00PM English classes start at NWTC

April 23, Wednesday, Tutor Tea
 10:30AM at *The Shop on Main*, 821 Main Street, Oconto.

May 20, Tuesday 1:00 P.M. Literacy Board Meeting at the Coleman Village Hall, 202 E. Main Street.

June 17, Tuesday 1:00 P.M. Literacy Board Meeting at the Coleman Village Hall, 202 E. Main Street.

July - No Board Meeting in July

August - No Board Meeting in August


CONNECTIONS:

Library Support
 Coleman Area Library
 Crivitz Area Library
 Gillett Public Library
 Lakes County Public Library
 Niagara Public Library
 Peshtigo Public Library
 Stephenson Public Library, Marinette
 Spies Public Library, MI
 Suring Area Public Library
 Wausauke Public Library
 Oconto Falls Community Library



January 2025 Tutor/Student of the Month Students: Yves and Guy

Tutor: Sue Lewis

Sue was first trained as a literacy tutor in 2018; however, her background is in teaching so she truly knows what sharing education is like. She has had previous students but since October 2024 has been tutoring Yves and Guy. Since the men are from Haiti, French has been taught to them in school and, guess what foreign language Sue taught in school? That's right: French! So, although she's enjoying having the chance to use her French again, she also wants the men to learn their advancing English skills. Sue says she enjoys her time teaching the men, who are intelligent, courteous, and considerate. She is able to somewhat adjust her schedule according to their work days. They meet at the Stephenson Public Library in Marinette and Sue always comes well-prepared and ahead of time for them to have a productive class together.

Students: Yves and Guy

Being from Haiti, Yves and Guy were both educated in French in Haitian school and also taught beginning English. They also speak the Haitian national language Creole. And, Yves spent some years residing in Cuba so he also is fluent in Spanish.

Yves and Guy both are employed at Saputo Cheese in Lena, working the night shift. They like their work but are trying to adjust to sleeping during the day. However, they always make sure they have time for class with Miss Sue as they value her efforts and service to help them. They work hard at their lessons and feel their English is improving, both for them in the community and at work. They don't just say that Sue is a good teacher, they say, "She is the best!"

Congratulations to Sue, Yves and Guy for being chosen Tutor and Students of the Month for January 2025!



Irley, a student from Haiti, was surprised when his tutor, Marsha Mellen, presented him with a new quilt from Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Marinette. The quilting group handmade this lovely quilt for him. He received it during some of the coldest days in January so he was very pleased. He also is very impressed that a group of women who volunteer to make quilts would put their time and energy into giving one to someone they had never met. What a great area we live in! Irley is very thankful for this beautiful quilt that will now help to keep him warm.

February 2025 Tutor/Student of the Month

Ruth & Milka



Tutor: Ruth Riesch

Ruth has been a trained literacy tutor since 2016 and has several student success stories since then. Ruth and Milka became a match in September 2024. Despite Milka's work hours they have tried to meet whenever they can. Ruth has Spanish as a second language background and that helps with her understanding and translation of Spanish in their classes. However, Ruth also knows the importance of using English in class time. Ruth helps Milka to learn English words and terms that are important for use in her work at the Mexican grocery store. Ruth is patient and kind and also has a terrific sense of humor so laughter is definitely a part of their class time. Ruth loves teaching and that sense of joy comes through in her classes. Ruth is glad that Milka keeps a positive frame of mind about her continued learning.

Student: Milka

Milka has been a student of this literacy council since August 2024; then in September she was matched with Ruth. Milka is bright and eager to learn. She has family members who are also learning English and she has a desire to mix with her community. Milka is employed at the local Mexican grocery and loves trying to help her customers, both English and Spanish speaking. Milka is working hard on learning terms and sentences to help customers find and purchase items in the store that are needed for certain recipes so she enjoys working with Ruth on learning those names. She is proud that she has learned common greetings, time, and numbers. Since Milka's children are learning English at school, they help each other along in their progress. Milka enjoys her class time with Ruth and feels she is learning much from her.

**Congratulations Ruth and Milka
for being chosen as February 2025 Tutor/Student of the Month!**

THIS & THAT



Our Savior's Lutheran Church Quilting Group donated several quilts for the students and infants. They are very much appreciated. These quilts will be given to the students in the near future.

Under construction:
a new web page

Under consideration: The board may be hiring a first-time paid position to help run our Council. Stay tuned...

Tutor student count: about 30 tutor/student pairs. Some tutors have more than one student. Janet has 4 students pending that have not been assigned a tutor at this time.



March 2025 Tutor/Student of the Month Jennifer & Billie

Tutor: Jennifer Nowack

Jennifer is a volunteer who began in 2023 when she witnessed another literacy tutor teaching a student in the library and had questions about it. She was enthusiastic about teaching a student, in fact, she has a teaching background. Jennifer was matched with Billie and they meet at the Stephenson Library in Marinette. Jennifer enjoys a student who also likes to learn new things and they can share stories about family and hobbies. Jennifer teaches using stories and humor, which Billie very much enjoys. Jennifer keeps her class time enjoyable.

Student: Billie

Billie was born and raised in Germany and met her husband-to-be when he travelled to Germany. Billie then moved to the USA and began with our literacy council to improve her English in 2014, becoming a USA citizen in 2019. She has had several different tutors but her match with Jennifer seems to be a match made in heaven, so to speak. Billie's spoken English and her comprehension of the language has greatly improved. She was now given a text so she can improve speaking and understanding local slangs and know how to answer questions, such as, "Ayyy, wat's happenin?" or, "What's the latest scoop?" Billie loves to cook and bake so will gladly share her good German recipes with Jennifer. If you expect to find a very quiet class with Jennifer and Billie, think again. They have fun and share some good laughs. This is what makes their learning sessions fun and enjoyable as they continue to learn together.

**Congratulations Jennifer and Billie
on being named March 2025 Tutor/Student of the Month!**

