



Family Literacy Academy at Lake Wales

Newsletter

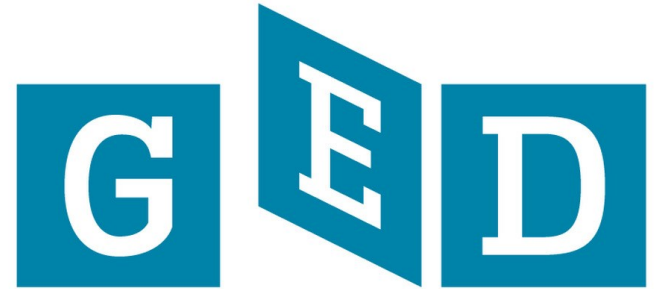
January
2023

Executive Director's Comments

The break for the holidays is a fleeting memory as our classes resume and activity brings our preschools back to life. The Academy continues its schedule with focus on practice tests and final subject tests, leading to passing the GED exam itself. We already have two students who have passed their GED and we see many more by the end of the school year.

Our ESOL programs continue to help people with English as their second language gain confidence in their ability to function in everyday activities. Our preschoolers like the new additions of activities to their learning experience. It is not unusual to hear preschoolers express displeasure at having to leave at the end of the day, as only children can do. There is a lot of learning going on in both the daytime and evening throughout the Academy.

There is a lot going on in the community involving the Academy, as well. It is only the beginning of the semester, and we are planning on a very successful one. This short newsletter gives you an idea of what we will accomplish. Please read on.



Meet Our New GED Graduates

Two students have completed their High School Diplomas so far this year, **Michael Ocasio**, whom you have already met, and **Jessica Shrum**, whom you are now going to meet:

Jessica Shrum

Jessica Shrum joined the Academy in the fall two years ago with her preschool daughter. She was a serious student, making rapid progress toward the GED, passing three of the four required tests while with us the first year. Then a combination of factors occurred, including family matters (she has five children) and Math ! Jessica overcame both to pass her math and become our second GED of this year--- and our 121st overall.

We wish Jessica the very best while she mulls over her options, including enrolling at Polk State.

MEET OUR NEW STUDENT FROM AFRICA

Djan Solomon Asuako is an 18-year-old from Ghana. He came with his family and currently lives in Winter Haven. His father, a math teacher, is under contract with the Polk County School system, having taught at Mclaughlin Middle-High School last year, and is currently teaching at Padgett Elementary in Winter Haven.

Solomon wants to complete his high school by attending the Academy's Math class Monday night and Tuesday during the day. He also attends ESOL class Tuesday nights to improve his already good grasp of English.

REPORT FROM OUR ESOL PROGRAM

From our daytime ESOL instructor, Donna Barringer:

Students attending the daytime ESOL class are a friendly, cohesive group. They support each other in their efforts to improve their English skills and share personal experiences to help each other. Our discussions in English often lead us to talk about parenting or experiences with our schools and helping children with homework. Improving their English skills gives parents more confidence working with teachers and school administrators in order to support and guide their school age children.

MEET SOME OF OUR STUDENTS

Aurora Rendon is from Mexico and has seven children. Five of her children are students in Lake Wales public schools and two happily attend the Family Literacy Academy's preschool. Aurora is a dedicated student and

has been attending ESOL classes for several years. Her hard work enables her to help her children with homework and communicate with her children's teachers. Aurora's confidence in her English skills shine when she translates for new ESOL students who begin attending the class.

Evelia Mota is also from Mexico and has four children - three grown and a 10-year-old daughter in public school. Evelia is also a grandmother and beams when she talks about her family. Her parents are currently visiting, and she is enjoying the family reunion. Each day Evelia feels like she has learned something new in class, which motivates her to continue learning. She wants to help her daughter with schoolwork and be able to translate for other Spanish speakers. Evelia shares in the supportive learning experience with her loyal attendance.

Students in the ESOL daytime class have found an educational community where friends gather to cheer each other on in life and learning.

From our evening ESOL Program instructor, Sondra Annotti:

Willy Morrisseau is from Haiti. Willy worked in construction in his native country. Since he is residing in the United States, he wants to learn the English language. Also, he wants to get a better job and realizes he must learn to speak and write better.

Marcelo Taniquiti came from Brazil to work. Marcelo is a pilot in Brazil and is working on US certification to achieve his dream of being a full-time pilot in the United States. Vocabulary acquisition, improved pronunciation, and grammar are three goals that he has for this year.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PRESCHOOL?

This has been a dynamic year in the preschool, with many chances for exposure to new challenging and fun activities and learning experiences. For a period of time, our preschoolers could operate and shop in their in-class grocery store, complete with boxes of a variety of items and a small, functioning cash register.

Please read the latest venture and learning opportunity from the head of our preschool, Robin Jolley:

Do you have sick pets? No problem. Hurry on over to our Veterinary Clinic and we will take good care of them.



The students in our childcare program are having so much fun experiencing the job of a vet during our Pets/Wildlife unit. Right now, we are a clinic that is taking care of pets. In



the near future, it will change to a clinic that takes care of wild animals.

It is so heartwarming to watch the students take such good care of our toy pets. Throughout their play, they share so many stories about their own pets. The conversations are endless.

This has been particularly special with one of our students. She has been in the program in the past and the family has recently returned. Even though she will play and join in the activities, she has been very hesitant to talk. The Veterinary Clinic has completely changed her. She really enjoys this center, as well as talking during her playtime, she is sharing so many stories about her own dogs. Her face lights up and she even giggles while she talks about them.



Has this center been a success?

Absolutely !!

And who knows, maybe we are planting a seed that will grow and result in a future veterinarian.



ARTS COUNCIL BRINGS “MOMMY AND ME” PROGRAM TO THE ACADEMY

The Academy has contracted with the Lake Wales Arts Council to initiate a “Mommy and Me” class each week with the mothers and children of our preschool.



“Mommy and Me” is an early childhood story time art program for parents and children under 5. Toni Doku, an artist, author of children’s books and an expert early childhood educator, is the instructor. Our preschoolers and his/her parents will enjoy



interactive music, movement story time with a mixed media art. Parenting tips will be discussed during “parachute time”. Painting, drawing, sculptures, music, puppets, children author guest activities will be built around themes such as weather, animal antics, transportation, Cityscapes, food art and abstract art. Families will receive a copy of the book shared during story time each week. This program is made possible by a grant from the GiveWell Foundation.



ACADEMY OPENS FOOD PANTRY FOR OUR STUDENTS

Lake Wales has already been designated as a food desert, a problem we hope will be remedied, in part, by our joining forces with the All Veterans Center, United Way, the Lake Wales Care Center, and Polk County to set up a food bank in South Lake Wales. None the less, availability is becoming a greater problem with rising costs and access to current resources.

Snack Pack and Food Bank Program

With the start of the new semester on January 10, we initiated a new project to help our families. In writing assignments and following discussions with our students, we have confirmed how seriously the rising food prices have adversely affected our students and their children. Although there are a number of food banks in the community, many of the students have difficulty accessing them due to transportation and scheduling issues. So, with assistance from Thrivent Financial, we began the Snack Pack Program. Every Thursday, Academy families with

children are able to take a bag of healthy snacks home for the weekend. The parents return the bag and get it refilled each Thursday. So far, the reception of the families has been very enthusiastic. We seem to have eased the food budget squeeze.

As far as the transportation and scheduling problems related to accessibility to food banks, the Academy has provided a box for food donations (mostly from staff, Board members and class members themselves) that all students can utilize if they have an immediate need.

Last week we were excited to receive some snack foods and baby food, as well as soap, diapers and cleaning products (so welcomed because they are not covered by food stamps) from the Polk County Sheriff's Department. Our partnership with the All Veterans Center began with bags of food, cases of drinks, snacks, sweets, school supplies, and a myriad of household and personal items. We thank the Sheriff's Department and the All Veterans Center for their contributions and welcome any donations of food and household products to meet our families' needs.

Thank You !!

MORE PICTURES FROM OUR DECEMBER PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES

You'll be happy to know that I subscribe to the rule (if not the practice) that a picture is worth a thousand words. Timing in December did not permit thorough coverage of all the activities of the preschoolers. Many of you asked for more, so....



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FUNDRAISING REPORT

As we begin to close our fundraising initiative for this year, we want to publicly express our gratitude to all of you, our supporters - individuals, companies and foundations - who have made this a very successful year, enabling us to continue our mission of improving lives through education.

If you have not yet had the chance to participate, and want to, you can respond to: P. O. Box 3852, Lake Wales, FL 33859.

ACADEMY COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Our efforts are not confined to the classrooms at the Mary Campbell Center. The Lake Wales Mardi Gras celebration will be in February. The Mardi Gras organizers are interested in making the celebration more family oriented, leading to their decision to work with the Academy. Therefore, members of our staff will volunteer to work with activities for children attending with their parents.

Then, the following week you will see us tending the Children's Tent at the Annual Lake Wales Arts Festival, where we will provide canvases to enable children attending the Festival to paint their renditions of butterflies. We will also distribute to attending children books related to the arts.

And that is all for January !!

Stay tuned for our February edition.

Please don't hesitate to send your comments and recommendations.

And best regards to the Academy's good friend and supporter - Aunt Martha!

Our Sponsors are



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as well as:

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