



-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

LITERACY NETWORK OF SOUTH BERKSHIRE ANNOUNCES ITS “COMMUNITY CARES INITIATIVE” ASKING LOCAL BUSINESSES TO TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN SUPPORTING ITS AMERICAN DREAM CAMPAIGN.

Lee, Mass. (September 7, 2017)

The Literacy Network of South Berkshire (LitNet) is proud to announce the September 7 launch of its “COMMUNITY CARES INITIATIVE”—an opportunity for local businesses to participate in LitNet’s American Dream Campaign. The American Dream Campaign is a fundraising effort that celebrates the core values of courage, strength, and determination upon which our country was founded. Whether our families have lived here for one generation or ten generations, our ancestors came to this country in search of new opportunities and worked hard in order to succeed. Their shared hope for a better life is the essence of the American Dream.

Beginning September 7, LitNet volunteers will be calling upon local merchants to donate \$50 to the campaign. They will receive a decal to place in their windows to demonstrate their participation in the initiative and share their support of our local immigrant community. Matt Masiero of Guido’s Fresh Marketplace stated, “At Guido’s, we’ve worked with LitNet for many years, and we know how important their services are to our community. We’re thrilled to see that the American Dream Campaign is reaching out to our local businesses and shop owners to share the LitNet mission.” Melissa Bigarel also welcomed the opportunity by saying that, “Louisa Ellis is pleased to support the Literacy Network of South Berkshire and its many volunteers and students who live and work in our town. LitNet’s Community Cares Initiative is a great way to show that the shop owners of Great Barrington are committed to fostering a vibrant, year-round community for all.”

Though some would argue that the American Dream is a thing of the past, LitNet’s tutors and staff can attest that **the American Dream is alive and well in our community.** It is plain to see in the daily lives of our students, about 90 percent of whom are immigrants, who have come to America seeking better lives and new opportunities. Lisa Landry and Flavio Lichtenthal, co-owners of No. 6 Depot Roastery and Cafe in West Stockbridge added, “We know first-hand the challenges of being immigrants, as well as the richness that immigrants bring to their new communities. No. 6 Depot is proud to be a partner in the Community Cares Initiative.”

By supporting this campaign, local merchants will also have the opportunity to say “Thank you” to their own patrons who are LitNet tutors and who volunteer hundreds of hours to enrich the lives of adults within our community. Business participants will also be listed as LitNet Community Partners on the LitNet website and given special visibility at the organization’s October 14 gala at Berkshire Country Day School in Stockbridge, where LitNet tutors will be the honorees.

LitNet volunteer tutors—many of whom have their own family stories of immigration--comprise an ever-growing network of over 150 professionals: bankers, physicians, librarians, horticulturists, business owners, editors, teachers, lawyers, speech pathologists, nurses, actors, artists, journalists, scientists, graphic designers, playwrights, nonprofit leaders, and social workers. They are the mentors, teachers, and friends who help their LitNet students—slowly, but surely—to achieve their American Dreams.

LitNet has been offering free, one-on-one tutoring sessions for adults since 1991. LitNet's flexible, personalized approach to tutoring enables adult learners to succeed in their jobs, support their families, and engage with their local communities. The organization began by teaching reading skills, and LitNet quickly expanded its curriculum with lessons in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), citizenship test preparation, and adult basic education to better serve the large population of immigrants who live and work in the Berkshires. **To learn more about LitNet's American Dream Campaign, including a \$30,000 matching grant offered by the Gilson Family Foundation, and to purchase tickets to the October gala, please visit www.litnetsb.org or call 413-243-0471.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW
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Mission

To serve the needs of immigrant and U.S.-born adult residents of Berkshire County by providing free, individualized, one-on-one instruction in reading, math, high-school equivalency test preparation, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and citizenship test preparation, and by providing generalized educational support and access to a network of community resources, all through a professional staff and a trained team of volunteer tutors.

Impact

In the past 9 months, LitNet students have reached various milestones on the path to becoming thriving members of this community:

- *Male ESOL student has enrolled at Berkshire Community College*
- *Female ESOL student with a newborn can now state her address, call for a taxi and say where she wants to go, and read 'Goodnight Moon'*
- *Female ESOL student declined a translator at a recent medical appointment*
- *Male ESOL student has received his Green Card and started a new job*
- *Female ESOL student with no previous knowledge of English or of the English alphabet can now count to 100 and use common greetings*
- *Male reading student has mastered 90% of the Dolch list of basic sight words*
- *Female ESOL student has received her certification in medical coding*
- *Female HSE student received her high school equivalency certificate*

Student Enrollment

Current Students	153
<i>On Hold But Planning to Return</i>	17
<i>Pending Tutor Match</i>	7
<i>Active</i>	132

Active Student Demographics

Age Range of Students	20 to 72	
Subject	<i>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</i>	91%
	<i>High School Equivalency (HSE)</i>	4%
	<i>Adult Basic Education (ABE)</i>	2%
	<i>Citizenship</i>	3%
Number of Native Countries	29	
Number of Languages Spoken	17	
	<i>Spanish</i>	63%
	<i>Portuguese</i>	9%
Number of Local Berkshire Communities	16	

Data as of 7/11/2017