

# LITERACY NETWORK



## 2023 IMPACT REPORT EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY

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# DEAR FRIENDS,

Several years ago, we were invited to a dinner by our friend Cris Raymond, who had been involved with LitNet for a long time. At the dinner, LitNet's former Executive Director spoke about the organization's mission of transforming lives. The citizenship and literacy aspects especially resonated with us. After learning more about the organization and considering the respect we had for many of LitNet's board members, we decided to reach out and work with their team on endowing a scholarship for the citizenship application, which led to the creation of the Matthew and Hannah Keator Family Scholarship for New Americans.



*LitNet is an incredible organization,  
and we are proud to be a part of it.*

It has been wonderful partnering with LitNet. The leadership team has been respectful, and the learners have all been so grateful. One of the residual benefits of being a part of LitNet has been witnessing the special bond that the learners develop with their tutors, and in turn, the rewarding feeling the tutors have for their learners' accomplishments.

There are several reasons why folks would want to support LitNet. It's moving to watch adult learners achieve their American citizenship after working so hard to not only learn the English language but learn about our history and government, too. Secondly, the United States was founded on immigration—it's the backbone of who we are as a country and an important cog in the engine of our economy. We think an organization that helps people realize the American Dream by teaching them English and working through the legal process of obtaining citizenship is something that can be celebrated and supported by all.

*Matthew and Hannah Keator*

Matthew and Hannah Keator

# OPENING DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY...

## ...FOR ONE

When Guadalupe moved from El Salvador to the United States in 2016, her goal was to learn English and then find work as a nurse. She had worked as a nurse for more than 20 years in El Salvador—it has been her life calling since she was a little girl. But because nursing is a constantly changing field, and because regulations and even diseases differ from country to country, she had to start completely from scratch in this country. This year, after completing the prerequisites (in English!), Guadalupe is now in her first semester of the nursing program at Berkshire Community College.

*“I love helping people and I hope to soon give back a little of what has been given to me.”*

Nothing about this process has been easy. But with the guidance of a few LitNet tutors, Guadalupe has become proficient in English, become a U.S. citizen, received high marks in all her courses, and earned several scholarships—all while working full-time at Berkshire Meadows. Guadalupe is currently working with her LitNet tutor, Leslie, on pronunciation, writing, reading,



**Guadalupe has been a LitNet learner since 2018, studying in the areas of ESOL, citizenship, and general education as she works on her nursing degree.**

and her nursing program homework. “She is amazing,” Guadalupe says of Leslie. “She helps me with everything.”

Guadalupe is quick to acknowledge all the people who have helped on her journey: her mother, who helped her raise her son so she could work full time in El Salvador. Her husband, who encouraged her to learn English and helped her secure her nursing assistant certification. Her LitNet tutors and the BCC staff, who mentored her along the way. Guadalupe recognizes that when one person is helped, that guidance ripples out to affect so many others. She is eager to get back to being a surgery nurse and is on course to become an RN by June 2025. Her ultimate goal is to become a nurse practitioner.



## ...FOR SOME

When Samantha came to the United States, he had a five-year plan: find a good job, buy a house, enroll his children in a good school, and help his wife, Indunil, secure work. He wanted to have a comfortable life. “I think I’ve achieved most of that,” he says. And it’s only been two years.

Samantha immigrated to the U.S. from Sri Lanka, a small, developing country in South Asia with a poor economy. He worked for the Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project, a Sri Lankan project funded by the World Bank, but saw little future for his three children, now ages eight, six, and two-and-a-half. In 2019, he applied for a Diversity Visa to work in the United States. When the opportunity came through, he was “jazzed” to come to the U.S. “There was so much opportunity.”

*“It was a big challenge for me to communicate here in the beginning. LitNet made a huge change in my life and on my family.”*

Samantha works for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as a Civil Engineer. He designs and reviews state roads and highways, working with software such as Civil 3D. Although he was already a competent English speaker, he sought

out LitNet for help with his pronunciation. His tutor, Jim, has helped him practice the rhythm and intonation of conversational English. Samantha’s native language, Sinhalese, is a “speed language,” he says. Jim has helped him slow down.



Indunil, Samantha, and their children

Samantha says he is still climbing the career ladder but feels confident in the direction he is heading. In addition, he is brewing ideas for a side business importing Sri Lankan Blue Sapphires. “I have three kids, and I know how much a college education in the United States costs. This would be a good asset for their future.” Like so many LitNet learners, Samantha continues to strive for success so that his children can have a better life and more opportunities.

# EMPOWERING CHANGE...

## ...FOR MANY

Deisy Escobar, once a LitNet tutor, joined our staff this year as a First-Generation College Coordinator and assists immigrant families navigating the college application process for the first time. She says:

“LitNet’s mission is to transform lives, and it’s a statement in its truest form. I’ve witnessed firsthand how a learner can grow to become a teacher and a mentor. Learners like my mom, who is now an advocate for new immigrant families at the Berkshire Hills School District, inspired me to become a LitNet tutor, which



opened the door for me to become LitNet’s First-Gen Coordinator. In this role, I have partnered with former LitNet learners Sandra and Domenica, now leaders in our community, to deliver workshops. We all feel empowered

to help other families and students. It’s a ripple effect: when given a chance and opportunity, multiple lives are changed. I am here to help empower other young people, many of whom were once LitNet learners or whose parents were, and who now have the chance to pave the way for others. LitNet allows us to see ourselves in many roles, not just as learners but as tutors, advocates, mentors, and leaders.”



The English language learners at Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health

## ...FOR OUR COMMUNITY

In 2023, LitNet began group English instruction for staff at Kripalu. Mark Rodovick, Associate Director of Operations + Rooms and Interim Director of Campus Safety at Kripalu, told us of the significant impact the language lessons are having:

“The English program at Kripalu has been a big hit with our staff. Seeing the results and the looks on the faces of my employees as they walk out of class makes it worth it. This program matters because we are investing back into a population that works so very hard for us. We are helping to provide the tools that might lay the groundwork for career advancement, progress in their home lives, and a stronger sense of belonging. We have noticed staff come out of class and share what they learned and how that can help them. Small things go such a long way. Being able to help put this program together with LitNet, seeing people attend classes weekly, and watching each of them leave with their textbooks, notebooks, and smiles on their faces makes me feel proud, joyful, and more determined to continue helping our non-English speaking community.”



# TAPAS, TEQUILA & TANGO

On September 9, LitNet held its annual fundraising celebration, Tapas, Tequila & Tango, at the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge. Nearly 200 attendees showed up to support LitNet! A tango dance demonstration, bright decorations, and yummy Latin food created a festive atmosphere. Two tutor-learner pairs shared their stories—powerful testaments to the transformative nature of LitNet’s tutoring.

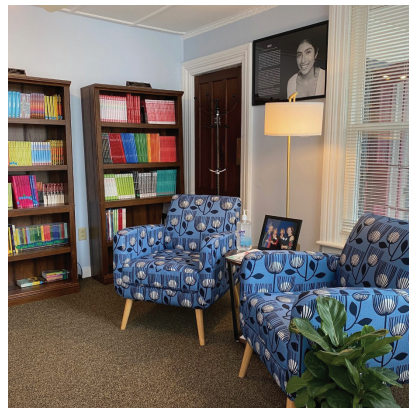
Bank leader and involved community member Bill Dunleavy was honored at our event. Bill’s lifelong commitment to getting things done and making a difference embodies the spirit of LitNet: transform one life, transform a community. “Volunteering and community service are not chores,” Bill said in his speech. “They too are a privilege. ... It has been so satisfying to be part of groups that work together to address challenges, problem solve, and achieve goals.”





# CELEBRATING ONE YEAR OF THE SUSAN WEINTRAUB TUTOR RESOURCE CENTER

Thanks to the founders of the Susan Weintraub Tutor Resource Center (SWTRC), the Literacy Network has gained a new identity and has enjoyed an increased sense of professionalism. From learners having a place to enroll in our services to tutors being trained and having access to LitNet staff and resources, all our work begins at the SWTRC. We're so pleased to honor Sue's legacy in perpetuity by having a home for our growing community. The SWTRC has strengthened our offerings, partnerships, and how LitNet connects with the Berkshire County community at large.





## IMMIGRATION & LITERACY IN MASSACHUSETTS

According to federal census data, there are about **1,277,488** foreign-born individuals living in Massachusetts—about **18%** of the state’s population. About **6%** of Berkshire County’s population is foreign-born.

Of Massachusetts’ foreign-born residents:

- **44%** speak English “less than very well.”
- **20.7%** have less than a high school diploma—compared to **5.7%** of the U.S.-born population.
- **18.9%** have a bachelor’s degree, compared to **27.1%** of the U.S.-born population.

## LITNET IN 2023

LitNet served **330** learners through its 1:1 tutoring programs. We served an additional **30** individuals—first-generation college hopefuls and their families—through our bilingual FAFSA and college application essay pilot workshops. LitNet learners ranged in age from **17** to **79**, came from **37** different countries, and spoke **20** different languages.

What some of our learners achieved this year:

- **12** LitNet-Keator Scholars became American citizens.
- **25** learners advanced in their careers.
- **11** learners passed a test that granted some kind of licensure, such as a driver’s license or CNA certificate.
- More than **80** tutors indicated their learners demonstrated improvement in speaking, comprehension, reading, and/or writing.

LitNet is excited to be partnering with Berkshire Community College, Latinas413, Railroad Street Youth Project, and other Berkshire institutions and organizations to launch the following initiatives in 2024:

- Bilingual FAFSA Workshops for First-Gen College Hopefuls
- College Application Essay Tutoring for First-Gen Applicants
- Workplace-Related Curriculum
- Internship and Professional Certificate Support

## WHAT OUR LEARNERS HAVE TO SAY

“I’m now confident in holding conversations, expressing my opinions, and defending my viewpoints. I still make mistakes, but they no longer deter me; instead, they serve as valuable learning opportunities. —Viviana

“The impact of my LitNet English classes on my life and the success of my business is indisputable. Now I clean 24 homes and eight commercial businesses every week. I have hired several people to work with me. I can talk clearly with my clients and write to them via text or email. Because of my improved English skills, I can also manage the many special requests that my clients make, and that has helped my company grow and be successful.” —Maritza

“For me, the tutoring program is like meeting up with a friend, reading books together, and having conversations about interesting topics. I feel like it’s more of a discovery together, which I enjoy a lot.” —Max

# THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

THIS LIST INCLUDES SUPPORTERS WHO GAVE TO LITNET FROM JANUARY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023.

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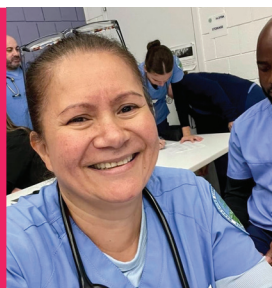
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Thomas Haskins-Vaughan  
Suzanne Hatch  
Leslye Heilig  
Linda Hensel  
Janna Herman  
Shannon Hickey  
Tricia Hickey  
Bess Hochstein  
Judy Hoffman  
Charlotte Holubar  
Jed Horowitz  
Marc Hurel  
Marilou Hyson  
Leslie Ioffredo  
Jane Jacobs  
Leslie Jameson  
Hanna Jensen  
Charles Joslyn  
Sandi Kafenbaum



Gigliotti Kate  
Joan Katter  
Gloria Katz  
Kevin Kavanah  
Robi Kellerman  
Frank Kern  
Julie Kern  
Sylwia Ketchen  
Ella Khalsa  
Lily Khalsa  
Sara Kiesel  
Kristina Kisiel  
Laurie Kropkowski  
James Lawrence  
Donna Leep  
Jeanne Lemlin  
Anne Lesser  
Genevieve LeVasseur  
Aline Libassi  
David Lippman  
Juliana Lopez  
Mackenzie Loring  
Michaela Loring  
Michael Lucia  
Wendy Mackey  
Marcy Mann  
Laura Mars  
Barry Martin  
Maria Martin Arenas  
Colin Mathews  
Lise Mayer  
Julie Medeiros  
Edwin Meek  
Tom Menner  
Adrienne Miesmer  
Nancy Miller  
Margaret Mitchell  
Diandra Mongeon  
Donna Morelli

Anne Morrill  
Anne Most  
Leslie Murray  
Mary Navin  
Patricia Neri  
Alejandra Nozyce  
Janet O'Brien  
Barbara Palumbo  
Carol Parrish  
Katherine Pasco Frisnia  
Wendy Pearson  
Stephen Pelletier  
Kristin Piasecki  
Andrew Pincus  
Diane Piraino  
Joanna Pooi  
Elaine Radiss  
Miranda Ralph  
Tarcisio Ramos dos Santos  
Janice Robbins  
Chandra Rodrigues  
Mayra Rodriguez  
Fernando Rojas  
Marc Rosenthal  
Alice Roth  
Linda Russell  
Aimée Saint Hilaire  
Nancy Salz  
Diane Saunders  
Ella Saupe  
Suzanne Sawyer  
Gary Scheft  
Paul Schieber  
Catherine Schwartz  
Barry Shapiro  
Leslie Shatz  
Marc Siegel  
Betty Siegenthaler  
Beatrice Smith

Alison Sneider  
Barbara Snyder  
Tina Sotis  
Maureen Spollen  
Barbara Sproul  
Eleanor Strehl  
Ron Strickland  
Lenore Sundberg  
Karen Taylor  
Ron Terry  
Janice Toran  
Debra Trautmann  
Jessica Treat  
Michael Trelawny-Cassity  
Samuel Trelawny-Cassity  
Joan Ury  
Edward Valentine  
Kathleen Van Orman  
Reinout Van Wagtenonk  
Mary Verdi  
Tom Verdi  
Elsa Vivero  
Jeff Waingrow  
Nancy Walters  
Hannah Weeks  
Joyce Wezell  
Mary Williams  
Melanie Willins  
Kathryn Wilson  
Sally Wittenberg  
Julius Wool  
John Wright  
Debbie Youngelman  
Elisabeth Youngerman  
Bruce Zarnoch  
Barbara Zheutlin  
Dee Zimmer



# INVEST IN THE FUTURE

## LITNET'S LEGACY CIRCLE

Have you considered including LitNet in your will? We offer many ways to share your legacy with an organization you are passionate about. A planned gift is often a major gift that involves integrating personal, financial, and estate planning concepts with a donor's plan for a lifetime or testamentary giving. Through planned giving, you can ensure that those adults most in need in our community will have access to educational opportunities for generations to come.

Prior to making a legacy gift, we recommend you consult your attorney or tax advisor. To speak with LitNet about your intentions, please contact Executive Director Leigh Doherty at [ldoherty@litnetsb.org](mailto:ldoherty@litnetsb.org) or (413) 243-0471.



"LitNet has helped me to be more effectively involved in my community."

—Sandra, LitNet Learner



"Some of my most meaningful work has been as a volunteer at LitNet. LitNet has positioned itself as an important resource in the community where it continues to train and match learners with volunteer tutors like me. LitNet improves our community as it improves the lives of its residents." —Linda Russell

"We want LitNet to continue to thrive even after we are gone. That is why our planned giving includes LitNet in our will." —Frank Russell



"As an English major and an editor, LitNet seemed to be the right place for me to give back to my community. I joined LitNet as a tutor in ESOL and coached applicants for citizenship. Soon I was appointed to the LitNet Board. My work for LitNet is ongoing as I now have included this amazing institution in my legacy with a gift of \$50,000 to help defray costs for students applying for citizenship and otherwise for LitNet's unrestricted use."

—Cris Raymond



# INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY! LITNET NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER TUTOR

LitNet is always seeking tutors in the areas of ESOL, U.S. citizenship test preparation, adult basic education, and/or high school equivalency test preparation. No experience is necessary, just patience and a willingness to learn. Training and ongoing support are provided. You do not need to be bilingual. Tutors typically meet with their learners for one to two hours per week. Visit the “Becoming a LitNet Tutor” page on our website or email Miguel Silva at [msilva@litnetsb.org](mailto:msilva@litnetsb.org).



## PARTY

Come support our mission of investing in our community while having a great time at our annual celebration, to be held in fall 2024. Check back with LitNet in the spring for the exact date.

## DINE

On February 7, dine-to-donate at 51 Park Restaurant in Lee and on May 16 at Frankie's Ristorante in Lenox! 10% of dinner proceeds (eat-in and take-out) go to LitNet.

“Working with my learner is one of the most satisfying and rewarding things I’ve ever done.”  
—Barry, LitNet Tutor

## DONATE

LitNet relies on the generosity of individual donors, local businesses, and foundations to advance our mission. LitNet can accept donations of cash, checks, or securities. Checks can be made payable to Literacy Network. Mail to Literacy Network, 32 Park Street, Lee, MA 01238 or visit [litnetsb.org/](http://litnetsb.org/) donate to give online. Contact Executive Director Leigh Doherty for more information at [ldoherty@litnetsb.org](mailto:ldoherty@litnetsb.org) or (413) 243-0471.



## NO TAX DEDUCTION LIMITS IN MA FOR CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

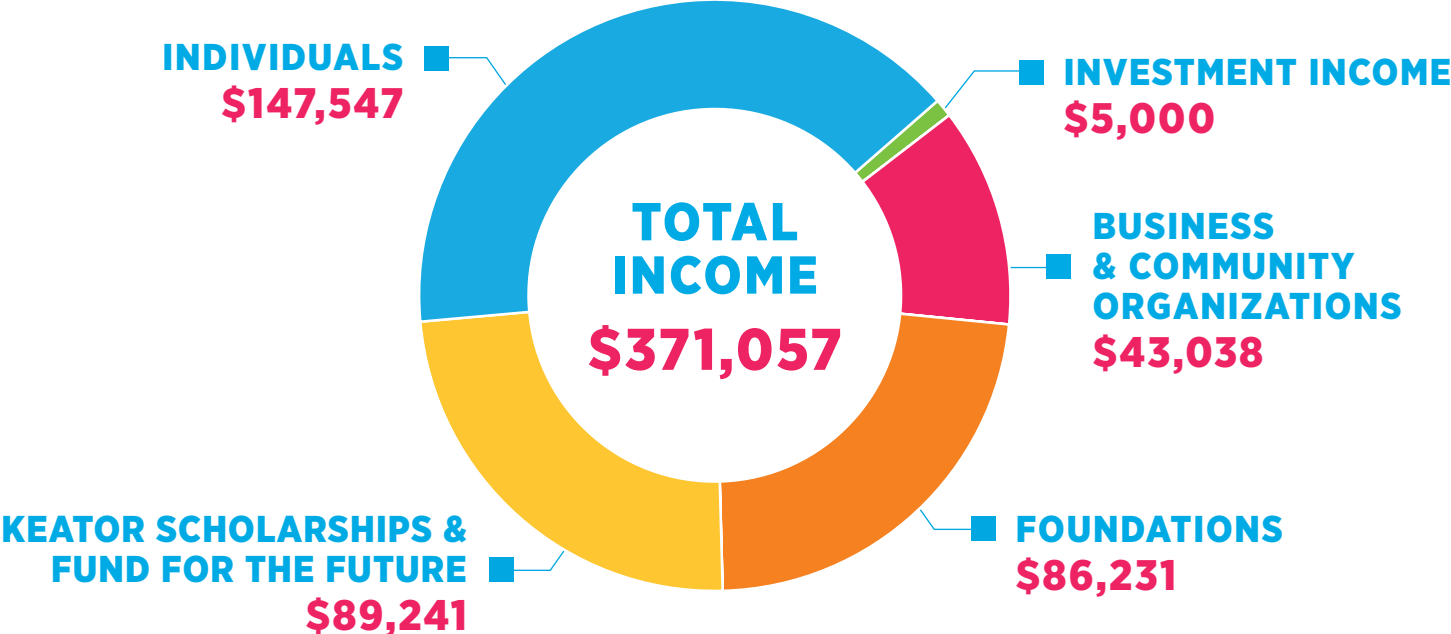
Massachusetts has a new charitable contributions deduction. It’s available to all taxpayers, whether you itemize deductions on your federal return or not. Keep track of your contributions and report them on the state tax return you file in the first part of 2024. They’ll be deducted from your taxable income. This deduction is universal and permanent, so you can utilize it every year going forward.

## MAKE YOUR GIFT GO FURTHER

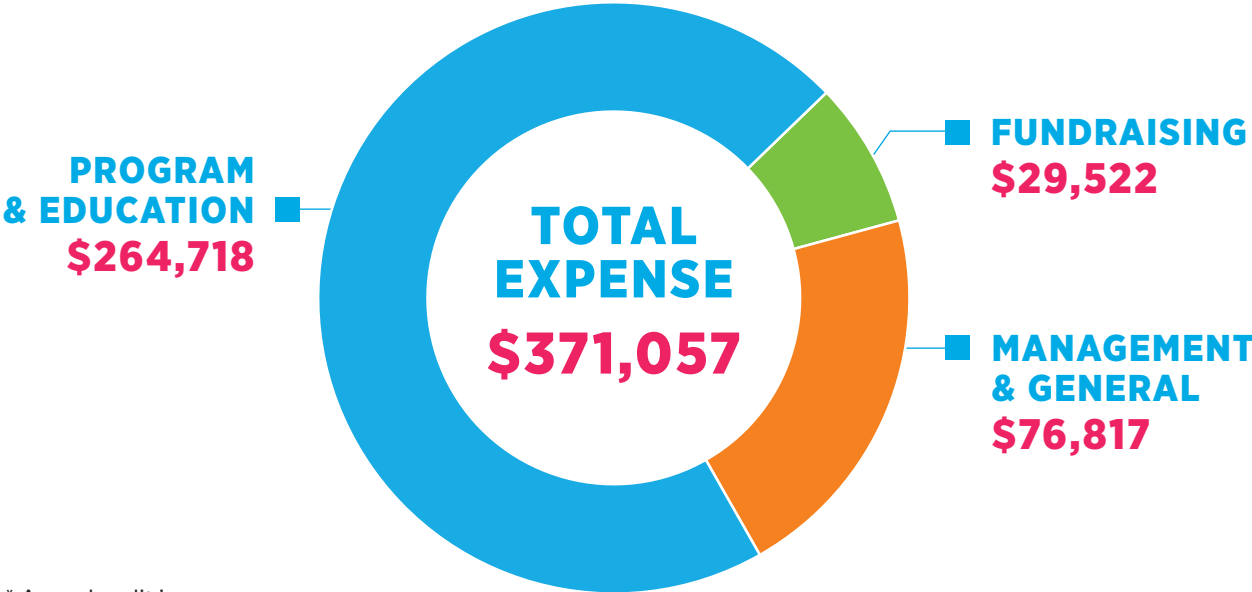
Your contribution to Literacy Network may be eligible for a **matching gift** from your employer. Contact your company’s Human Resources department to learn about your matching gift program. Please send us the matching gift paperwork provided by your employer. We will certify that we received your donation and return the requested materials to your employer. This can usually be completed online.

# FISCAL YEAR 2023\*

## INCOME:



## EXPENSE:



\* Annual audit in process





## OUR VISION

An engaged, welcoming, and literate Berkshire community

## OUR MISSION

To transform the lives of adult learners, both immigrant and U.S.-born, through the power of literacy, education, and advocacy.

## WHAT WE DO

LitNet provides free, individualized, one-on-one instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages, U.S. citizenship test preparation, high school equivalency test preparation, and basic education.

Our professional staff and trained team of volunteer tutors offer generalized educational support and promote access to a network of community resources.

## OUR CORE VALUES

We believe everyone has a right to an education.

We believe in the power of literacy to transform lives.

We believe challenges in life and learning should be met with patience and flexibility.

We believe a connected community is a stronger community.

# LITERACY NETWORK

32 PARK STREET  
LEE, MA 01238



# EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY



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