



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
 MEETING MINUTES
 TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2021
 ZOOM MEETING AT THE WDB OFFICE, 1111 MARKKRESS ROAD, CHERRY HILL, NJ

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		7-Jul-20	1-Sep-20	6-Oct-20	10-Nov-20	1-Dec-20	5-Jan-21
Brahl, Ken CHAIR	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X	X	X	X	X	X
Patti Beach	Learning Link, Camden County One-Stop Career Center	X	X	X	X		X
Girii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County			X	X	X	
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden		X	X			
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District			X	X	X	X
De, Shyamoli	Camden County Library			X			X
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library					X	
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.						
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Director, Adult Basic Skills, Camden County College			X	X		X
Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X	X	X		X	X
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc			X	X		X
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough	X					
Young, Jennifer	Verizon	X	X	X	X	X	
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB, Executive Director		X	X	X	X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB, Administrative Assistant	X	X	X	X		X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Literacy Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:42am. The Committee discussed challenges with the roll out and distribution of the new Covid-19 vaccine. Ken said that Ravitz family Markets-Stoprite locations in the local area have been designated to administer the vaccine. The Committee reviewed and unanimously approved the minutes dated December 1, 2020.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Patti Beach, Instructor, Learning Link, reported the One-Stop is implementing the QLess scheduling system which will make it easier for customers to make appointments for virtual resource center and learning link services. The One-Stop is also seeking and accepting referrals. She said most One-Stop services can be accessed virtually. Counselors are available to meet with customers by appointment on a case-by-case basis.

Patti reported that a team has been formed and is dedicating time to compile the narrative and materials for an application to approve the One-Stop to become a testing site for the HighSet or GED. Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, reported WDB directors around the state are also researching the possibility of becoming a testing site for multiple credentialing certifications. He said this would be a great advantage for the local area

as most testing sites are located a good distance away and that creates a barrier to individuals looking to gain a certification upon completion of training. He forwarded this information to Frank Ciri, Local Area Operations Director, One-Stop. Jeff said there have been discussions about obtaining a regional license to be certified for testing so all the One-Stops could proctor these types of credentialing tests. Patti also reported that two customers were successfully referred for training.

Follow this link to the Camden County One-Stop Career Center -Virtual Services Directory:

<https://www.camdencounty.com/service/employment/job-training-placement/>

LITERACY SHARING & BOOK DRIVE UPDATES

Heidi Daunoras, Director Curriculum Pine Hill Schools, complimented Larry Abrams and the Book Smiles Organization for their commitment to literacy and distributing books to the local community. She said many youth including her son Jake have hosted book drives and they are looking to provide a more permanent site in the Pine Hill area to collect and distribute books. She said the level of interest has increased mainly due to residents being in a clean out phase of their lives and seeing how valuable the program has become. The Book Smiles initiative is expanding into other local communities as well and beginning to collect adult books. There has been a steady flow of books being donated at drop-off locations. It has been a very constructive program for children during this period of remote learning.

Heidi shared a personal story about her oldest son who was headed for a four year degree and was offered an opportunity to enter a certification program to become a home inspector. While she would normally think about steering her son toward a degree, she is finding this trend in today's workforce toward non-traditional career path as a viable alternative that leads to very well paying jobs. She also noted that certification testing is a real challenge because the slots fill up quickly and the distance to testing sites is far. She is in favor of anything that can be done to open up local options for credentialing. The Committee discussed challenges to testing and all agreed it is well worth the time and effort to create a more centralized process. Jeff said One-Stop Counselors are focused on doing a better job of explaining the credentialing process to customers before accepting training grants. Heidi also noted that certifications often lead back to a college degree as a person advances in their career path. Ken asked how the committee could help advance this initiative. He said Ravitz Family Markets participated in a grant to pay for GED testing. Jeff said there are supportive funds to pay for testing and transportation. The challenge is awareness and understanding that credentialing is a two-step process. It's not enough to complete the training; the individual must also complete the testing in order to receive an industry recognized credential. The training vendors do a good job with training and job placement but often are placing students into positions that do not require a credential. It is not until the individual moves on do they realize other employers in the same field will require a credential such as Certified Medical Assistant to give an example.

2021 GOALS AND OUTREACH

Ken said that while in person outreach will continue to be a challenge, he wanted the committee to focus on more ways to partner with the libraries in the county. He suggested that a focus of the committee could be centered on getting residents easy access to a library card and the virtual services offered by local libraries. He said it's amazing how many people still do not possess a library card or understand the array of virtual online

offerings they can access. Ken researched the Camden County Library site and found many advantages such as movies, study class, and e-books. He noted that some townships such as Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, and Haddonfield have their own libraries. Marlyn Kalitan, Career Consultant, Vice Chair Literacy, reported that the Cherry Hill Library conducted a library card drive and gave out prizes for sign ups. All persons signing up to obtain a library card were entered into a raffle drawing for gift cards. She said it was an effective campaign. Ken suggested the committee work on creating a one-page, central source document listing all library access in the county and would like to see this resource guide promoted at much as possible. The Committee discussed all types of virtual services provided by libraries and the value of obtaining a library card including checking out museum-passes, tools and electronics. All agreed promoting library services was a great goal for 2021 until in person outreach could resume.

Dick Knopf, Marketing Professional Services, asked when 2020 Census Data would be made available to the public and help the committee update the Literacy Needs Assessment (LNA) for the county. The Committee discussed and agreed that data would probably be made available later in the year 2021.

The Committee discussed the idea of hosting a virtual open house through the Library to promote all One-Stop partners and virtual services that are available. All agreed that the public may not be aware of such services as Career Coaching, 55 plus, DVRS, Learning Link, and CCC Adult Basic Skills are available. Jeff said the video orientation of services posted to the county and WDB websites could be used for this purpose. Ken asked that the video be shown at the next meeting. Ken suggested a Facebook live tour of the One-Stop could be arranged.

FINANCIAL LITERACY UPDATES

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, WDB, reported Youth One-Stop (YOS) Counselors are in the process of adapting a presentation created by Dr. Lauren Hill, former manager, YOS, and developing a virtual workshop on Financial Literacy geared toward youth participants. The workshop will be created and offered in house so the YOS will not have to send youth customers out to another location for this service.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Dr. Lauren Hill, Director Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Camden County College, circled back to Patti Beach's earlier comments about the HighSet testing site application. She said there is a real challenge in the local area to testing access; firstly because it was shut down for several months, during the pandemic, and also that there is a high volume of individuals waiting for testing. The current testing site has reached its capacity for testing so there is a backlog through the end of the year. For some students, the current testing location presents a transportation challenge. The College believes the application presents a great opportunity to serve customers in and around Camden County. She also reported the college ABS program did achieve 7 successful GED completions in December and the vouchers for testing have been extended into 2021. She offered her continued assistance to help move the testing application forward as soon as possible so some 40 more participants who are waiting for testing can be scheduled for their high school completion.

Other agencies represented on the committee reported they are still operating virtually and offering safe access for document exchange and virtual service. Danielle Mitchell, Orchards Family Success Center, said the centers are participating in food distribution and other direct services as made possible by volunteers and donations.

Ken thanked the committee for attending and wished everyone a healthy, safe New Year.

NEXT MEETING: The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 8:30am. The WDB will send out meeting materials and Zoom conferencing information prior to the meeting.

Submitted by

Kathleen Varallo

Administrative Assistant