



*Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce*

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Matthew Verney, Board Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2021  
ZOOM MEETING

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		4-May-21	1-Jun-21	6-Jul-21	3-Aug-21	14-Sep-21	5-Oct-21
<b>Brahl, Ken CHAIR</b>	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X		X	X	X	X
Patti Beach	Learning Link, Camden County One-Stop Career Center		X	X	X		
Cirii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County One Stop	X		X	X	X	X
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden	X			X	X	
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District		X	X	X	X	
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library		X				
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.						X
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Camden County College			X	X	X	X
<b>Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair</b>	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X		
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X		X		X	X
Martin, John	Rotary Club				X		
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc						
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough			X	X		
Walker, Eric	RobinsNest Inc	X		X	X		
Young, Jennifer	Verizon			X		X	
Levitt, Alex	WDB			X	X	X	X
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:40am. Ken asked the committee to review the minutes dated Tuesday, September 14, 2021. He said he reviewed them and did not see any errors. He asked if anyone else had any corrections or changes. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes, Dr. Lauren Hill made the first motion; Dick Knopf made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried, and the minutes September 14th, were approved.

NJ SkillUp

Ken asked for updates about NJ SkillUp. Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, WDB, reported she received a call from Scott Stetzer, Tech Support Manager, One-Stop, that he made application for the state to license staff to be able to access the learning platform for in-house learning and to support customer engagement with the program. Other than that, the WDB is continuing to promote the NJ SkillUp program on social media platforms. Follow this link to the NJ Career Services Website: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/education-training/skillup-nj/index.shtml>

The Committee discussed rolling dates the State has announced for reopening to customer access. Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, said the State was talking about bringing staff back around October 18<sup>th</sup>. As of now, customers are being served virtually and by-appointment as needed for learning link testing. All county staff has been reporting to work since June. The Committee also discussed challenges with referrals due to continuing state waivers. Jeff said the Board of Social Services was the biggest pipeline to referrals. They are doing all they can to outreach and encourage clients to participate in voluntary work activities. Antoinette Fugee, Center for Family Services, asked if customers are able to take the CASAS test online. Dr. Lauren Hill, Camden County College, confirmed that customers are taking the test onsite at the One-Stop. This test cannot be administered remotely with current technology. Kathleen reminded the committee that Dr. Hill and a team at the One-Stop did make application to the Department of Education to approve the One-Stop as a testing site for the GED and HighSet. She said we will be looking forward to that approval later this year.

#### LITERACY LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE & OUTREACH

Ken asked for updates about outreach as the Clementon Memorial Library. Jeff said that Kathleen did contact Holly Strobl, Councilwomen, Clementon Borough. Kathleen said there is a fire prevention day scheduled at the firehouse; however the Library has not yet re-opened. She said it was the general consensus of the committee that we wait until the library opened and perhaps participate in some sort of grand opening outreach. Jeff and Ken agreed the committee could participate in their opening ceremony. The Committee discussed hosting a book fair at their opening. All agreed to wait for that announcement, then work with the library to help plan some type of opening event on a Saturday. Jeff suggested Kathleen coordinate with Holly. Kathleen said there were some funding issues surrounding re-opening plans. She will convey the committee's idea to Holly.

Ken asked for updates about partnership opportunities with the Rotary Club of Haddonfield. Jeff reminded the committee that the club was kind enough to provide a sponsorship to support the cost of printing the Library Resource Guide. The WDB received a lot of good feedback about the guide. He said we will continue to work with them on projects they may have in mind to support literacy services in the County.

Ken reported Ravitz Family Markets-Shoprites, did participate in another book drive for the Book Smiles Organization. This was part of their Cheerios Fight Hunger Program. They also worked with the Mount Laurel Rotary Club on a food drive as well. A car wash event was included in this effort. The South Jersey Food Bank participated and received a good amount of donations. Jeff said the WDB will be attending events at the Winslow Township High School and the Mastery Charter High School. The WDB will be presenting information about the Atlantic City Electric Training Initiative and other One-Stop career services. Jeff said the WDB

is beginning to attend more outreach opportunities as public events open up and we always promote literacy and career services. Kathleen said the latest version of the One-Stop Virtual Services Directory was sent out with meeting materials. She encouraged the committee to include this information with any outreach efforts. Jeff also presented a flyer sent to the committee promoting a New Start Career Network. The program was launched by the Heldrich Center, Rutgers, to help the 45 plus population with career services. It is a free service to assist New Jersey residents over the age of 45 who have been out of work for at least six months. There are lots of activates, tips and resources to help these individuals with career opportunities. He encouraged the committee to promote the program. Dick Knopf, Independent Business Consultant, asked if there were mentoring opportunities. Jeff noted the contact information on the flyer. Kathleen told Dick there is another network associated with the Heldrich Center called the Community Coaching Network. She will send him the information about that program.

#### ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Jeff reported for Frank Cirri, Local Area Operations Director, as stated above, the One-Stop is open and county staff are seeing customers virtually and by-appointment as needed. He said there has been a slight uptick in customer traffic since the Cares Act funding expired on September 4<sup>th</sup>. Staff are following all safety protocols and using the QLess scheduling system to make customer appointments. The system gives updates to the customer. State partners are still seeing customers virtually only. Follow this link to the Camden County One-Stop Career Center -Virtual Services Directory: <https://www.camdencounty.com/service/employment/job-training-placement/>

#### COMMITTEE UPDATES

Jeff announced the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) will be hosting its annual training conference virtually on November 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. The information can be found on their newly launched website. [www.gseta.org](http://www.gseta.org). He said there promises to be some very good national presenters and workshops planned for the conference. He will check to make sure the website has posted the information. Jeff said the presentations will be pre-recorded, but the speakers will be available live to answer questions.

Kathleen said the WDB contacted the County Library System to see if a new Director of Literacy Volunteers had been named. No Director has been named yet. She encouraged the committee to forward any qualified candidates to the Library. She also contacted Hispanic Family Centers to get a contact for their new Director. They were a partner to the Literacy Committee a few years ago. All agreed they should be invited again to participate with the committee. Dr. Lauren Hill, Director, Adult Basic Skills, Camden County College, said the new director's name is Veronica

Martinez. She said she will mention the committee to her at their next monthly meeting with the ABS Consortium.

Dick Knopf asked if the County is connecting with immigrants. He said there may be a number of immigrants being moved into the area from Afghanistan through repatriation efforts. The Committee discussed immigration processes and sponsorship as something to study and get more information about. The Committee agreed some research could be a part of the work of the Literacy Committee.

Frank Cirii joined the call and reported on One-Stop activity. He said there has been a slight uptick in customer flow and getting individuals prepared for training. He said Patti Beach, Counselor, Learning Link, is still on leave. Frank went on to say there has been a special interest in CDL Driver training and in healthcare fields. There are also plenty of positions open in retail, so there has been some active job placement in that area. He said there has also been interest in tech career placements. Frank said staff is doing the best they can to promote opportunities and increase capacity especially since benefits are expiring. He said we should see more engagement over the next month or so and it will continue to pick up as the months go by. He said it has been shocking to both the One-Stop and local employers that more people are not rushing to apply for jobs. Ken read from a statement released by SHRM for Human Resource Managers, on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The State reported that 362,000 more people filed new unemployment claims during the month of September. This is an increase of 11,000 from the previous weeks. Although new claims are significantly down from this time last year, they are still elevated from 2019 weekly reporting. New claims have increased over the past weeks due to business disruptions caused by Hurricane Ida. Some Economists believe that the current pace of job growth, and unemployment claims will reach pre-pandemic levels by mid-2022. Ken said that the growth level will not be seen until July-2022 when things might get back to normal. He noted a friend's son who has been out of work since last year, collecting benefits, has paid off his car, and is sustaining a large savings amount in his bank account. He is said to have no intentions of returning to work, and taking a job from someone who needs the work. The Committee discussed the unusual job market under current conditions. All agreed the new normal is yet to be seen, and will build slower than expected. Frank said grants can be extended by work activities, so he does not see applicants for the employer anytime soon.

Ken thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee discussed the next meeting falling on Election Day. All agreed to meet the following Tuesday after. Antoinette Fugee made the first motion; Jeff Swartz, made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative the motion was carried and meeting adjourned at 9:12am.

NEXT MEETING: The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9th, 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