



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
 MEETING MINUTES
 TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021
 ZOOM MEETING AT THE WDB OFFICE, 1111 MARKKRESS ROAD, CHERRY HILL, NJ

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		1-Dec-20	5-Jan-21	2-Feb-21	2-Mar-21	4-Apr-21	4-May-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	
Cirii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County One Stop	X			X	X	X
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden						X
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District	X	X	X	x	X	
De, Shyamoli	Literacy Volunteers of America		X		X		
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library	X			X		
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.				X		
Hill, Lauren Dr.	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				
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough						
Walker, Eric	RobinsNest Inc					X	X
Young, Jennifer	Verizon	X					
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB		X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Literacy Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:35am. He welcomed attendees and welcomed guest, Scott Tourtellotte, SVP – Senior Relationship Manager, Bank of America, Current President, Haddonfield Rotary Club, and asked for round table introductions. Scott said his experience includes working with United Way and he is attending the meeting to get acquainted with the work of the Literacy Committee and efforts to impact the community with positive efforts in this realm.

Ken asked the committee to review the minutes from the meeting dated Tuesday, April 4, 2021. He said the minutes were sent to the committee with reminders and agenda. He asked if there were any corrections or changes. Ken asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Dick Knopf made the first motion, Marlyn Kalitan, made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried, and minutes April 4th approved.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Frank Cirri, Local Area Operations Director, reported the application to make the Learning Link a testing site for the HighSet, GED, High School Equivalency has been completed, signed, submitted, and awaiting approval.

He said the Learning Link is open and following all safety protocols, doing as much as possible remotely and by appointment for CASAS testing. Customers can increase their job readiness skills via this fee free service and also prepare for the requirements of job training grants which are a minimum 9th grade reading and math level. Customer requests have picked up a little and probably will pick up more as the months progress toward re-opening, but he still encouraged the committee to refer customers. Customers will have the ability to schedule appointment using the One-Stop's newly launched Q'Less system. They will be able to receive updates about their appointment and wait safely in their car until they are called.

Frank said One-Stop staff are still attending the food distribution events. They help with food giveaway and make sure that the Virtual Services Directory is inserted into the bag or box giveaways. He said everyone who gets food gets information about One-Stop and partner services.

Counselors are available to meet with customers by appointment on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

METRIX NJ UPSKILL LAUNCH

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, reported that the Metrix Online Learning Program was successfully launched in some counties around the state during the pandemic. The program allows participants to study free courses online. The licensing for the program is very expensive so through the efforts and lobbying of WDB Directors, the State Department of Labor agreed to purchase the licensing for the entire state for an eight-month pilot period. Training has begun in the local areas to familiarize staff with the program. He asked Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, to give the latest updates to the administrative training and progress of the program. Kathleen said training was completed but there were some concerns brought to our attention about the length of program study. It is very easy to register, and some courses can result in a certification. Some of these types of courses may take more than six months to complete and each participant is registered for a limited six-month period so the WDB is waiting to hear more about the licensing term before widely promoting Metrix. She said some refresher courses are still valuable. Ken said his administrative and accounting staff is interested in the Quickbooks certification and may use some of these modules as a refresher.

LITERACY SHARING & BOOK DRIVE UPDATES

Ken said he had hoped that the committee got a chance to read the recent article about the partnership between the Booksmiles Organization and the Food Bank of South Jersey. Booksmiles donated 10,000 books for distribution along with food needs. The Book Smiles organization continues to garner the attention of county residents and even book publishers are donating to the organization. Booksmiles looks for every way they can distribute the books to families in need. Ken reminded the committee this is the program that Heidi Daunoras, Director, Curriculum, Pine Hill Schools, has been working with as well. He asked if there were any other updates about book drives. Hearing none, he asked for an update about the Library Resource Guide.

LITERACY LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, presented the latest version of the Library Resource Guide created by the committee for the purposes pulling together a comprehensive guide to the location and contacts for all

libraries in the county. She noted there is no such guide online at the county or state level. Kathleen added addition and made edits to the guide as collected and mentioned at the last meeting.

Kathleen also noted she sent a Camden County Needs Assessment presentation along with meeting materials. The reason she included the presentation was that one of the biggest findings learned as a result of conducting the assessments was that residents do not know where to get services. She felt the efforts of the committee to collect the library information and distribute it in outreach will be a great service to the community. As the committee has been discussing, the libraries are a great community space where residents can feel safe and at ease accessing resources and help for literacy, skills development and career planning. Digital resources are being added every day customers can access them from the comfort of their home. She also reminded the committee that the Camden County Library System has offered free digital service library cards to every resident in the county for the duration of the pandemic and until services are fully open and available in-person.

The Committee reviewed the latest draft of the Library Resource Guide. Members of the committee complimented Kathleen's work on the guide. Marlyn Kalitan, Executive Career Coach, Vice Chair, Literacy, said she reviewed the document carefully and had a few more minor edits. She noted some spacing edits and consistency in the way phone numbers are listed. Kathleen said all edits are helpful and welcomed. She thanked Marlyn and the committee for their input and guidance in the preparation of the guide.

The Committee had an open discussion with Scott Tourtellotte about their efforts and outreach in the community to promote literacy services. Ken explained, these efforts were based on Carol Dann, ABS Coordinator, HopeWorks, Camden, and her urging the committee to conduct a Literacy Needs Assessment (LNA). He said the committee enlisted the services of a Rutgers Master's Candidate to assist in collecting data and formatting the LNA. Ken said everyone assumed they would find literacy concerns in Camden City but what turned out to be eye opening through assessment of the data was, there were needs throughout particularly in the southern part of the county. Jeff said the committee formed relationships with the Mayors of those southern townships and offered outreach efforts in those local areas. He said the LNA is posted on the WDB website. Scott spoke about the Rotary Club of Haddonfield and their focus on Literacy in the community. He invited members of the Literacy Committee to present at the next Rotary meeting in June. All agreed the committee could partner with the Rotary Club in some future efforts toward Literacy.

Jeff reported the WDB applied and will likely receive an award from the State to run another Summer Youth Employment Program for youth ages 16-24. He said there are no eligibility requirements this year so the program will be open to any youth living in Camden County. He hoped that members of the committee would volunteer their time as in the past to assist with the weekly skills development workshops. More information will follow. Ken thanked Scott and committee members for attending.

NEXT MEETING: The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 1, 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