



The Ripple Effect

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Dear Friends of First Literacy,

Thanks to you, thousands of lives were made better through education in 2015. We are very grateful to you for sharing our belief in the transformational power of adult literacy.

Our mission is accomplished in a variety of ways.

Since our founding 27 years ago, grants to community-based literacy programs have been a cornerstone of our work. This year was no different. First Literacy supported classes and services at 19 programs located throughout the Greater Boston area. Collectively, these projects impacted 1,076 adults.

The First *Literacy Lab* initiative continues to encourage and fund innovation in adult education and is becoming the primary way in which we support programs. 205 adult learners were involved in the 2015 projects, but the real impact is measured in the number of future students who will benefit from this work as other educators incorporate the innovations into their own lessons.

For the fourth year, we planned and facilitated Professional Development Workshops which were attended by adult educators who work in a variety of settings including programs, colleges, libraries, and correctional facilities located throughout the Commonwealth. Data collected shows that the 229 workshop attendees teach, counsel, or direct 6,353 students.

First Literacy's scholarships and mentor relationships give adults extra support, both financial and emotional, in turning their dreams into reality. This year we awarded 20 scholarships.

First Literacy ensures that adults with low-literacy or limited English proficiency have access to high-quality educational opportunities that enable them to thrive as individuals and as family members, in their workplaces, and in their communities.

It is easy to add up the numbers of adults impacted by our work—

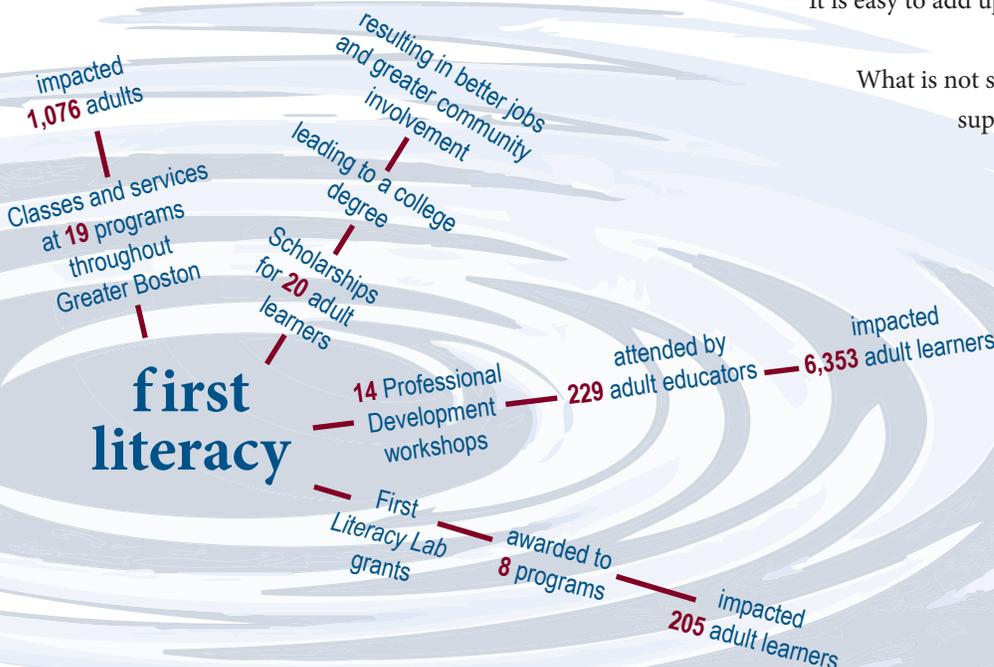
$$1,076 + 205 + 229 + 6,353 + 20 = 7,883.$$

What is not so simple is calculating *the ripple effect* that your support has on children, families, and communities.

You are transforming lives.

Thank you.

Skye M. Kramer

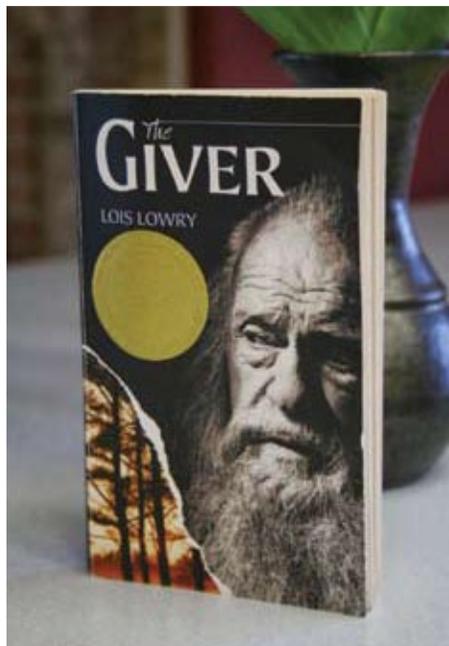


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Program Support

■ The young adults who attend Bridge Over Troubled Water's literacy class supported by First Literacy all read at a 4th to 6th grade level. Their teacher, Jennifer Wilkerson, noticed that her students were not comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions with their classmates orally and were also reluctant to do so in writing. When surveyed, the students reported that they either only "sometimes" or "never" felt interested in what they are reading and only "sometimes" or "never" felt that they had important ideas to share. How could Jennifer both empower her students and help them increase their reading levels?

A First *Literacy Lab* grant to give her time to design and implement a curriculum unit using film to support the literacy skills of her students seemed like a great place to start. Using *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and its film adaptation, Jennifer hoped to increase students' reading comprehension and fluency skills, as well as their writing skills, by guiding them through the mental processes common to both viewing film and reading text. She also hoped that this project would stimulate students' interest in reading and engagement in their learning.



Jennifer found that students showed progress both in their reading comprehension and fluency skills. Their writing also improved. Students' engagement in the class increased, with most becoming much more willing to express their ideas about the novel and its themes in front of their peers. With a teacher's guide now developed, this project will be replicated in the program and may be easily adapted for other classes.

Participating in First Literacy Lab has given us an opportunity to provide better service to our adult learners through the testing of promising approaches. As a small grassroots organization, we have the flexibility to try different approaches to best meet the needs of our students. First Literacy Lab provides the means to turn small successes into larger ones and to share results and resources with ESOL providers across the greater Boston area.

—Lindsay Paredes at The Welcome Project

BY THE NUMBERS

Program Support

- **19** community-based literacy programs received project grants
- **205** adult learners participated in 8 First *Literacy Lab* projects
- **1,076** students attended classes supported by First Literacy's grants
- **627** adults made measurable education progress
- **621** adults demonstrated improved computer skills
- **52** adults entered skills training programs or college
- **141** adults entered or upgraded their employment

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Professional Development Workshops

I commend First Literacy for the initiative taken to provide Professional Development Workshops for teachers. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the ESOL teaching community that the organization has tapped into in a very creative way and made it accessible to adult learning organizations.

—Anonymous Feedback

■ In just four years, First Literacy's Professional Development Workshops have become a key catalyst and valuable resource for adult literacy instruction and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programming in Greater Boston. Seminars on topics such as integrating college and career readiness into classes, experiential writing projects, training and supporting tutors and teachers, and digital literacy instruction provide adult education professionals with creative approaches and tangible resources that lead to more effective instruction and higher student achievement.

Workshops are attended by teachers, administrators, and ABE professionals anxious to learn new ways to help their students. A majority of the workshops consist of two sessions in order to allow participants to return to their program and implement what they have learned in the classroom. The second sessions include reflection, sharing, and learning from peers about their experience in the field.

While hundreds of adult educators and thousands of students have benefited directly from First Literacy's Professional Development workshops, the overall impact is exponential.

Surveys show that a majority of participants not only use the new approaches with their students, but they also share what they take away with their colleagues in other Greater Boston communities and around the Commonwealth, therefore expanding the impact of First Literacy's Professional Development Workshops to tens of thousands of adults hoping to improve their lives through education.



Professional Development

- **100** adult educators completed survey to determine topics
- **14** workshops held throughout the academic year
- **40** hours of professional development presented
- **49** programs from throughout the region represented
- **229** attendees participated in workshops
- **64** educators attended more than one workshop
- **6,353** adult students impacted by teachers' participation

TOGETHER WE IMPACT COMMUNITIES AND IMPROVE LIVES

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First Literacy Scholarships

■ Jason Grant was always a bright student, but fell behind while attending Boston Latin and never caught up, eventually dropping out. He wondered how different his life would be if he had completed high school, realizing that none of the goals he had were possible without a high school diploma. So last fall, Jason returned to the classroom at Jewish Vocational Service's Adult Diploma Program to finish his high school education. Now a student at North Shore Community College, he has become an engaged member of the community—having two poems published in the school magazine and becoming involved with a balloon drone development project on campus. He hopes to transfer to a four-year college when he finishes at NSCC to pursue his dream of becoming an aerospace or mechanical engineer. In recognition of Jason's achievements, he was awarded the Mayor Thomas Menino Scholarship, created to honor the late Mayor's commitment to adult literacy education.

All of First Literacy's Scholars have overcome obstacles to achieve their goals. In fact, it is a requirement for receiving a scholarship, along with proven educational achievements and potential, and a demonstration of community service. What unites these individuals is their resolution to improve their lives through education. While many of these adults are the first in their families to attend college, we know they will not be the last. We honored their efforts and achievements at our Scholarship Ceremony hosted by Boston's Mayor Martin Walsh.

This year we also welcomed Chief of Education Turahn Dorsey who assisted Mayor Walsh in awarding scholarships to the following:

New Scholars

Judelande Antoine
Abdeljelil Bougherah*
Janet Day
Sovely Forestal

Jason Grant
Evgeniia Kagramanova
Joshua Lopez
Lovely Montana*

Prakrit Saetang*
Malquisua Sousa*
Ciro Valiente

Continuing Scholars

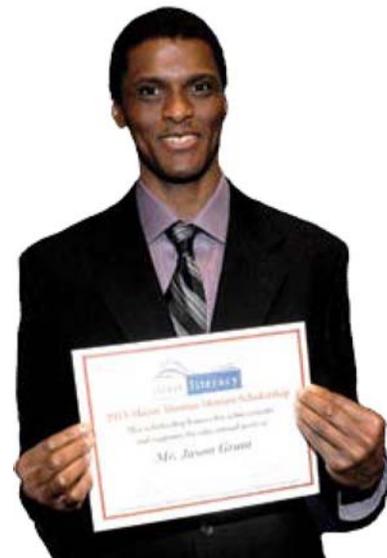
Shabbir Ahmed
Maria Choukri
Tirsit Dessalegn

Vanessa Dorta*
Mohamed Janga
Pei Xia Kuang

Celia Maraschi
Mark Moses
Micheline Ngo Yon

*Named 11-10-02 Foundation Scholars

The scholarships are made possible by the generous support of the 11-10-02 Foundation, Bank of New York Mellon, Citi, and Eaton Vance Management, and the Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation.



BY THE NUMBERS

Scholarships

- 11 first-time scholarships were awarded
- 9 continuing scholarships were awarded
- 5 students were named as 11-10-02 Scholars
- 11 scholars are parents
- 17 attend Bunker Hill Community College
- 1 attends North Shore Community College
- 1 attends Quincy College
- 1 attends UMass Boston

There is no one path. But what we want to make sure is that every path leads to where you want to go and every path leads to a productive life. I commend you for trailblazing your own path to do that and would ask that you continue to set the example for others and make sure that that path is big enough for people to come behind you.

—Chief of Education Turahn Dorsey

First Literacy thanks the individuals, corporations, and foundations who believe in and support our work. The following list recognizes those donors who made gifts between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

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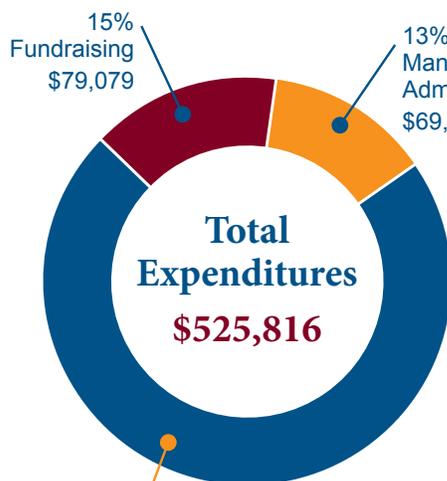
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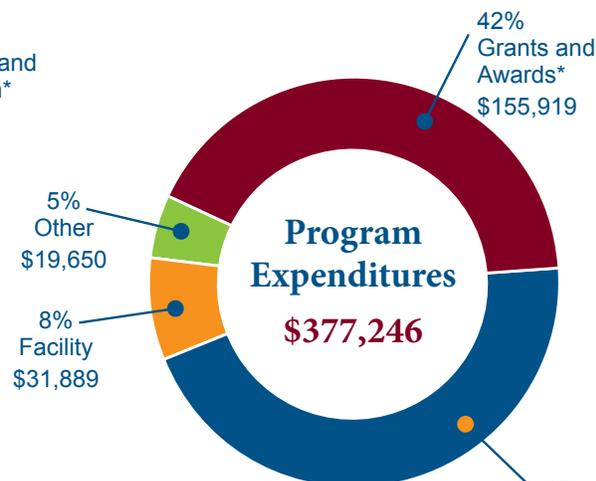
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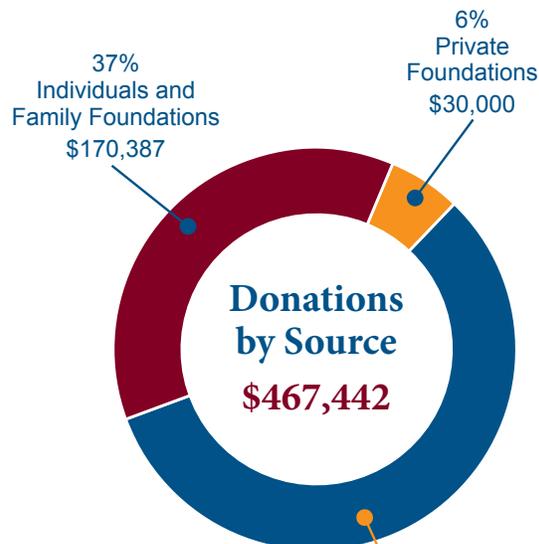
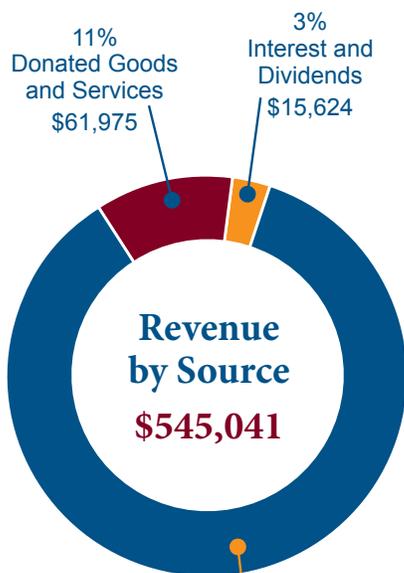
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*Includes donated legal services of \$34,479 to revise Articles of Organization and By-laws.



*Includes \$112,500 for program grants, \$16,886 for First Literacy Lab grants, \$20,600 for scholarships and mentors, and \$5,933 for literacy awareness activities.



Demographics

70% Female | 30% Male

African	91	Caribbean	139	Latino	433
Black (U.S.)	81	Chinese	64	Vietnamese	55
Brazilian	72	East European	9	White (U.S.)	51
Cape Verdean	23	Haitian	330	Other*	55

*Includes learners from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Italy, Korea, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey

*Dedicated to the memory of
William Berman,
a great friend and advocate
for education at all ages and
stages of life.*