

## Literacy Can't Wait

"What's in a tag line? "Literacy Can't Wait" – the new tagline for Wisconsin Literacy's tutor recruitment campaign – has several messages. The first, and most obvious, is the sense of urgency. Literacy Can't Wait because it is a "root cause," or foundational issue, that leads to so many other societal challenges of our time like poverty, unemployment and underemployment, incarceration rates, health disparities, and increasing dropout rates. Given the break-neck speed at which "the times are a changin'," it needs addressing quickly! To help improve these issues, we have to collaborate to resolve the origin of the struggle. Low or limited literacy is connected to, and often a cause of, all the above mentioned challenges of our day.

Literacy Can't Wait because of the cyclical nature of illiteracy and the importance of addressing it cradle to career. The more we learn about early brain development and the impact of oral literacy (talking, singing, rhyming, and engaging young children in words and language), we realize that literacy, in fact, can't wait. Nearly 85 percent of a child's brain infrastructure is already complete by the tender age of 18 months! Even if parents aren't readers, talking, singing and rhyming from day one of their child's arrival has life-changing consequences!

Literacy Can't Wait because of the critical need to help the more than 700,000 Wisconsin working adults who are currently underemployed or lack the necessary job readiness or language skills to help replace the Baby Boomers during their mass exodus from the workforce, now and during the next 10-15 years. Who will we count on to fill the labor shortage that is already upon us?



*Crossroads Literacy tutor helping a learner prepare for his GED tests.*

Literacy Can't Wait because the Millennials in the U.S. scored near the very bottom of 24 industrialized nations in their ability to problem solve in technology rich environments. This was surprising news from the PIAAC study given the technology resources in our country. With the pace of innovation, our economy and position as a world leader surely can't wait! ("Literacy Now", 2017, p. 1)

You can have an impact on this important issue right in your local community. ICAA Crossroads Literacy has programs in Rusk, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties. In addition, there is the Taylor County Literacy Council in Medford and the Burnett County Family Literacy program in Webster. All of these programs are seeking volunteers willing to tutor and adult learners desiring to learn. Get involved in your community!

### SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT:

**You can donate** to adult literacy two ways:

1. Round up your bill when you check out at your local ICAA Connections Store. The extra money will go towards literacy programs. The Connections stores in Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer and Rusk are all participating in a "Round Up for Literacy" campaign!
2. You can send a donation through: [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com). Just enter "Crossroads Literacy" in the designation field. Or, mail literacy designated donations to Indianhead Community Action Agency, PO Box 40, Ladysmith, WI 54848

**You can volunteer** your time tutoring at a local agency: Visit [www.wisconsinliteracy.org](http://www.wisconsinliteracy.org) to find a local program. Or email [nancy.wheeler@indianheadcaa.org](mailto:nancy.wheeler@indianheadcaa.org) for more information.

**You can call, email, fax, or write letters** to your state and federal representatives: Tell them that this is an issue you care about and it can't wait. Visit [wisconsinliteracy.org/get-involved/advocate](http://wisconsinliteracy.org/get-involved/advocate) or [www.indianheadcaa.org/advocacy](http://www.indianheadcaa.org/advocacy).

Literacy Can't Wait. (2017, April). *Literacy Now*, 1.