

# Illiteracy hurts student, family and community

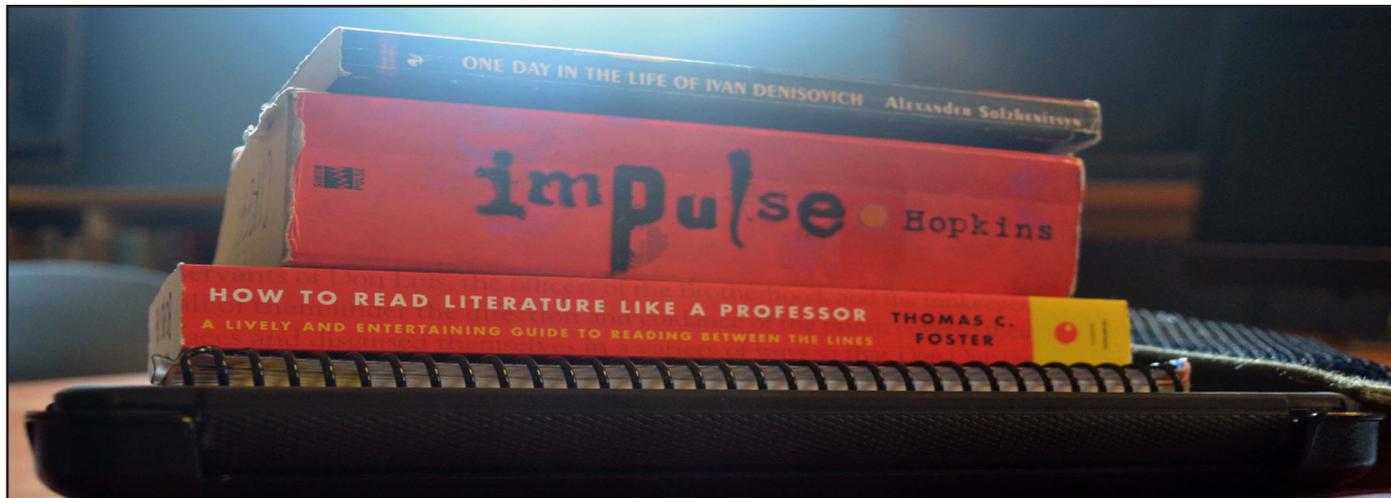


PHOTO: KRISTE DONALDSON

Reading is something that seems so natural to us, something that all of us have been doing since we were little. Consider if you couldn't read this sentence. What if you never learned to sound out words or look something up in Google? Your life would be immensely different and, full of challenges that are hard to overcome because of your lack of skills.

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institution of Literacy, 32 million Americans can't read. 500,000 of those Americans live in Indiana.

What we take for granted, a half-million Hoosiers can't do. Imagine trying to read a foreign language you had never seen to order in a restaurant, to get to a hospital, to read a text. That is illiteracy and its impact is widespread.

In a world where resources are at our fingertips and technology can be used as a learning tool, many Americans, both children and adults, can't read or write, and according to this study, the rate of illiteracy in America hasn't changed in the past 10 years.

Mrs. Lisa Barnes, English teacher, said, "Reading is of the utmost importance." She also explained that reading prepares us for the future, both in college and in the work force. It is something used everyday and needs to be practiced.

"We practice sports to get better and I think we have to practice reading in school," said Mrs. Barnes.

However, while the statistics seem daunting and unconquerable, there are programs to help children and adults increase their reading skills. In Indiana, there are programs including Indy Reads, that helps illiterate adults learn to read so they can pursue a better future, whether it be furthering their education or finding a job.

Indy Reads is a program aimed toward helping illiterate or semi-illiterate adults learn how to read. Each adult is paired with a tutor who works one-on-one to teach the basics of reading. From its website, Indy Reads mission "is to promote and improve the literacy of adults and families in Central Indiana."

United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) also has programs to help people struggling to learn how to read. ReadUP of the UWCI places volunteers in schools around Indiana who help children in the third grade or younger learn

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how to read. "We believe the fastest path out of poverty and to self-sufficiency is through education," said

Ms. Julie Laginess, Volunteer Engagement Associate at UWCI. Indiana requires all third grade students to pass a reading test for them to be able to enter into the fourth grade, so this program helps student practice their reading.

Often, when there is an illiterate adult in the home, it sets back the education of the children. Parents who can't read aren't bringing reading material into the home nor reading to their children.

## Functionally illiterate individuals can't fill out a job application, take a driver's test, check their child's homework.

According to the website educationworld.com, in a 20-year study, having as few as 20 books in the home has a significant impact on a child's ascent to a higher level of education.

Illiteracy impacts all family members, potential employment and the future of everyone in that home. Ultimately, it impacts the entire community. If a person doesn't have the ability to read, how can he or she teach their children to read? How can they get a good education? A job? All of these things are just the obvious effects of not being able to read, but the impact has a ripple effect.

Ms. Alyssa Starr Newerth, deputy director at Indy Reads said, "Functionally illiterate individuals can't fill out a job application, read a prescription, take

a driver's test, or check their child's homework."

Mrs. Barnes sympathized with those who can't read, saying, "It's never comfortable when you think someone's a lot smarter than you or when you're in a situation that you don't understand what you're seeing or hearing but you have to act like you do."

Trojans Matters wants to try to make a difference and we

hope the BCHS community will help.

This year, the Trojan Matters staff plans to partner with a school, where we hope to volunteer through the YMCA after-school enrichment program. We are asking for volunteers who will be trained and will help young students in the program to practice their

reading skills.

We are starting an ongoing book drive. Books will be donated to the schools and IndyReads. We are asking every Trojan to bring in one book (any level for children through adults). Think what a difference you can make. Please bring your donation to Room 210.

Deacon Rick Wagner, principal, has agreed that next month's Charity Spirit Day will allow the donations to go to the cause of combating illiteracy.

Students can volunteer to help Indy Reads and ReadUp. ReadUp is partnered with 89 different schools around Indiana to help improve reading levels of children.

Ms. Newerth said that on average, one in five adults is

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illiterate. Simply, the benefits of learning to read lead to a better life for one and a better community for all. "Becoming literate is a huge step toward enhancing a person's quality of life," she said.

Together, we can make it better for many. Please find your copy of "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" or the John Green novel you have two copies of and make a difference.

# How you can help

## DONATE A BOOK

The Trojan Matters book drive starts today. Please bring in any new or used books to donate.

The books will be donated to IPS schools #42 - Elder W. Diggs School and #87 G. W. Carver School. Any age-appropriate book is welcomed. The programs would really appreciate early reading books written in Spanish for their Spanish-speaking students.

Bring any new or used books to Room 210.

## DONATE \$2

The next school charity spirit day will send the proceeds to the adopted IPS schools or Indy Reads to add to their library.

## DONATE TIME

The Trojan Matters staff has been working with two school coordinators from IPS School #42 at 1002 W 25th St and IPS School #87 at 2411 Indianapolis Ave to form a partnership with BCHS.

Interested students here will work with young elementary students on their reading at their after-school program one day a month.

If you are interested, please see Trojan Matters editor, Jacob deCastro, senior or Blue-Print editor Sian Rhodes, senior or contact Mrs. Tracy Luke, publications adviser, in Room 210.

