



Celebrate International Literacy Day!



Thanks to literacy, women in Bangladesh gain a window on the world. (UNESCO)

On Sept. 8, 2014, in observance of International Literacy Day, the *Lincoln Journal Star* [carried the following op-ed essay](#) by Lincoln Literacy Executive Director Clayton Naff:

Listen to this: "We were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trod. The good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine."

Through the gift of literacy, you can still hear the words of Capt.

Meriwether Lewis in your head, more than two centuries after the Lewis and Clark expedition ended. Almost as remarkable, 75-year-old Alton Schulz, who claims collateral descent from Lewis, is now learning to read the words of his notable ancestor.

Despite a developmental disability, Alton learns a little more every week with his Lincoln Literacy tutor, Donna Sabatka. When she first met him eight years ago, the best he could do was to make out the single word on a stop sign. Now they work their way through news, history and the weather forecast.



Schulz, who lives in Wahoo, is a lifelong Nebraskan. His childhood in Yutan was a far cry from that of "Laila," whose education in her native Afghanistan was disrupted by the Taliban, an Islamist group violently opposed to the education of women.

Widowed and driven from her home, Laila eventually found refuge in Lincoln. While caring for her children and struggling to make a living, she made time to study English language literacy with volunteer tutor Fred Schelert. Fred, though thoroughly American, is himself a former refugee, having been brought here as a child by his mother, who fled Germany with her two young sons in the chaos following World War II. With Fred's help, Laila recently gained admission to Southeast Community College, where she plans to study to become a pharmacist.

Cathy Sayre is much too young to have been caught up in WWII, but as a volunteer tutor since 2003 she has been deeply affected by the lives of the women to whom she has taught English. Often, the role of tutor grows into something more: ambassador, trusted guide, even friend. Rarely does it go quite as far as it has for Cathy.

She found herself in the delivery room with her student from China. "Wei-xin" was shy and quiet throughout her pregnancy. When it came time for her to give birth, she was terrified. Unable to understand what

medical staff were telling her, she begged her tutor for help. Cathy raced to the hospital with a picture dictionary and book on pregnancy from Lincoln Literacy. As it happened, a C-section was necessary, and Cathy helped Wei-xin understand and get through it.

After another of her students had a baby, Cathy and her husband, Chris (a notable local musician) were invited to be the guests of honor at the 100-day celebration for her Korean student's infant. At the table, they looked to their hosts for a cue, but their hosts just stared back, as did the others. Finally, Cathy and Chris realized that as guests of honor they were expected to take the first bites.

The Sayres survived their intercultural experience, and Cathy has gone on to tutor whole groups of international students. The company she works for, Verizon, supports her volunteer activity and contributes to Lincoln Literacy.

What lessons do these stories have for us? They show that literacy is a global challenge, one that affects both homegrown Americans and the burgeoning international population among us. They also demonstrate that, through the good will and hard work of literacy volunteers, it is not only a solvable challenge but one that leads to deeper mutual understanding, friendship, and a stronger community.

If you can read this, you too can help.

To learn more about becoming a Lincoln Literacy tutor, [click here](#).

To support us by becoming a member, renewing your membership, or making an additional contribution, [just click here](#). THANK YOU!





Let's Ignite Something Beautiful!

Along with four other nonprofits, Lincoln Literacy has been fortunate enough to make the finals of this year's Ignite Lincoln competition! At stake is a \$6,000 prize. We need you to help us win. Ignite Lincoln takes place Thursday, Sept. 18th, from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the beautiful Rococo Theater.

Please purchase a ticket and attend.

The winner will be determined by audience texts. We need your vote. To refresh your memory about why we deserve your support, here is the tweet that got us into the finals: "Our learners nominate us for #IgniteLNK cuz we give a gift that can never be lost & only gains in value over time."

THANK YOU!



What's the Most Fun You Can Legally Have with Scrabble?

Scrabble Scramble, Lincoln's only team Scrabble competition returns this fall at a new location! Mark your calendars now for Scrabble Scramble on Sunday, Nov. 9th, from 1:00 - 5 p.m. in the sunlit fellowship hall at Holy Trinity Church, 60th & A Sts.

Lincoln Literacy
(a 501c3 charitable organization)
745 S. 9th St.
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 476-7323
lincolnliteracy.org

Our Mission: To assist people of all cultures and strengthen our community by teaching English language and literacy skills.

