



Southside Literacy Roundtable

February 24, 2010 Information Exchange Summary Report

Southside Community Partners convened the Southside Literacy Roundtable on February 24, 2010, 11am – 2pm, at the Prince George County Human Resources Building in Prince George, Virginia. Attending were some 30+ participants from a spectrum of local and regional nonprofit and governmental organizations representing education, human services, employment services, faith-based, libraries and funders.

Wendy Austin, Director, Southside Community Partners of the Appomattox Regional Library System, opened the meeting by welcoming attendees, and thanking the program funders, The Cameron Foundation and the John Randolph Foundation, the lunch sponsors, Southside Programs for Adult Continuing Education (SPACE) and Regional Literacy Coordinating Committee (RLCC), and the meeting host, Bill Gandel, Director, Prince George County Department of Social Services, who provide a brief welcome. Wendy then introduced the presenters and provided a brief a summary of Southside Community Partners programs including Learning & Leadership training, Nonprofit Resource Center and ConnectSouthside.org. Wendy highlighted the program's focus on supporting the local community of nonprofit and community-based organizations and leveraging collaborative opportunities to support positive community change.

Randy Howard, President, 501 Advisors, Inc., opened the discussion period with an introduction of the purpose of the meeting - looking for outcomes that support low-level literacy adults in the Southside region. Randy referenced the girleffect.org [video](#) as an example of how one small action can start a larger movement toward positive change. He asked attendees to be on the lookout through the meeting for the one small action that they might take toward improving literacy in the Southside region.

Vickie Sanborn, Literacy Specialist, Virginia Adult Literacy Resource Center, presented an overview of the statistical picture of literacy in the Southside region where significant numbers of adults do not read well enough to perform basic literacy tasks such as completing an employment application, reading the newspaper, reading a medication label instruction, or reading to/or with their young children. In Petersburg, the high school graduation rate is only 46%. Vickie provided numerous resource tools including Proliteracy.org, Thinkfinity.org and Fairdata2000.org and discussed the difficulty in obtaining local statistics. Vickie also discussed information from her [article](#), *Virginia's not-so-hidden secret: The Adult Literacy Crisis*.

Carol Holmquist, Director, The READ Center, [presented](#) information on the low-level literacy assessed adult, the skills that they need to function in today's world and some of the best practices for current adult education. Carol pointed out that most adult

nonreaders experience reading difficulty beginning in 2nd grade and that it requires approximately 100 hours of instruction for an adult to move one grade equivalency in reading skill. She presented several possible strategies for reducing barriers and increasing success.

Chuck Koutnik, Consultant Librarian, lead the introductions of representatives of each program or organization in attendance. Each attendee also shared a description of his/her interaction with low level literacy adults and what they see as an outstanding need for their clients who may be low-level literacy adults.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Randy Howard and Chuck Koutnik facilitated the discussion/feed-back portion of the meeting. The following information, feed-back and suggestions were provided during the discussion session:

- The opportunity to learn about the resources available was very beneficial
- What would help when encountering an adult with low level literacy?
 - Referral information
 - Volunteers/Tutors – to bring the help to individual/specific sites
 - Central contact point
 - Libraries
 - 2-1-1
- Communication - outreach
 - Outreach through schools to parents – some may not read themselves
 - Increase public awareness
 - Organized regional campaign
 - Public Service Announcement: TV – radio
- Need to improve ability to put people who suffer with low level literacy together with teachers/tutors – key is communication between service organizations and quick action when encountering an adult in need
- Follow up
 - Provide speakers to present on literacy program availabilities
 - Literacy Resource Guide for service providers
 - Provide more opportunities to share more information about resources
- Next Steps
 - Compile and distribute a report on the meeting
 - Convene a follow up meeting to continue to move toward actionable initiatives
 - Create an email communication group to facilitate sharing information specific to adult literacy issues