



Meet Ashley Hayes,  
GED grad  
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Congratulations  
to volunteers  
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# SIENA LITERACY CENTER NEWSLETTER

## Calendar

### APRIL 29

St. Catherine of Siena Feast Day  
Open House, 10 am-2 pm  
([page 3](#))

### MAY 26

Building closed—Memorial Day

### JUNE 19

Building closed—Juneteenth

### JUNE 30-JULY 1

End of 24-25 school year/  
beginning of 25-26 school year—  
student enrollment re-opens

### AUGUST 21

Bingo Night ([page 6](#))

### SEPTEMBER 1

Building closed—Labor Day

### SEPTEMBER 11

Benefit Evening—save the date  
([page 3](#))

### OCTOBER 17

Spaghetti Dinner ([page 6](#))

### ONGOING

New student sign up:

[www.sienaliteracy.org/signup](http://www.sienaliteracy.org/signup)

New tutor orientation:

[www.sienaliteracy.org/tutor](http://www.sienaliteracy.org/tutor)

Dear friends of Siena Literacy Center,

As champions of adult literacy, we are no strangers to change, growth, and transformation. That’s why I don’t hesitate to share with you that as we celebrate our 30th anniversary, Siena Literacy Center itself is entering a new stage in our history.

The Adrian Dominican Sisters, who have sponsored Siena since its founding, have made the difficult yet necessary decision to end sponsorship of their six remaining literacy centers. Moving forward, we will continue to operate as an independent 501(c)3, and I anticipate that very little will change in our day-to-day operations. Siena is working closely with ADS legal counsel and our board of directors to make this transition with the Internal Revenue Service, with expected completion by the end of 2025.

You may have read about this news already in the Crain’s Detroit Business article, “[As nuns’ ranks shrink, Catholic order spins off nonprofits to carry on charity work](#),” published on February 6. As I shared in this article, we are committed to carrying on the Adrian Dominican Sisters’ legacy of education and social justice. And we will continue to honor our special relationship with the Adrian Dominicans by referring to them as a *legacy institution* once the end of their sponsorship is finalized.

I am confident that our belief in a growth mindset – the same approach we try to impart on the adult learners who engage in our program – will help us embrace this moment.

With the right people and the right support, change can be inspiring. Empowering. Transformational. Please help us lift up literacy for the next 30 years by joining our 30 Years of Learning campaign and becoming a monthly donor to support our literacy program. You can learn more about this campaign and how to get involved on page 6.

As always, I am grateful to have you here with us.

With deep gratitude,

Caitlyn Pisarski, Executive Director



# Student Spotlight: **ASHLEY HAYES**



*In November, Siena Literacy Center began offering evening GED classes in our satellite location at St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Community Resource Center. Nearly 20 students so far have enrolled in the program, meeting for three-hour instructor-led classes twice a week.*

*Student Ashley Hayes (pictured with her 8-month-old, Kamille) joined Siena's GED program in January and quickly became it's first graduate. She was interviewed below by Executive Director Caitlyn Pisarski about her experience.*

**Congratulations! What are your goals now that you've completed your GED?**

Continuing my education, whether it be childcare or the nursing field.

**What did it mean to you to complete your GED with Siena?**

It meant a lot because I've tried to do this over and over and over for years, so it felt good to finally complete it. And also I wanted to show my kids whatever you do, don't give up.

**I know you have a lot of responsibilities as a mother. Can you tell me a little more about your family?**

Well, I have five kids, and we stay with my grandma. She helped me with them, and you know they help motivate me. My grandma, she's always got my back and makes sure, you know, I stay motivated, so I'm very grateful for my support system.

**Can you tell me how you learned about Siena's GED program?**

My daughter's actually in kindergarten in KIPP [Detroit Imani Academy] downstairs, and that's how I found out. Actually...it was a flier going around the neighborhood, and I got the flier and I'm like, well, this [GED program is] down the street.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next six months to a year?**

I...just want to continue furthering my education and showing my kids a great example of what you can be. You could do whatever you want to.

**What would your recommendation be to current GED students in our program?**

You can do it. It took myself a couple of times and I came out [with my GED completion].

**Interested in earning  
your GED?**

Join the waiting list for our next cohort:

[www.sienaliteracy.org/signup](http://www.sienaliteracy.org/signup)



# St. Catherine of Siena FEAST DAY OPEN HOUSE



SIENA LITERACY CENTER

Join us as we celebrate the feast of our patron, St. Catherine of Siena!

Tuesday, April 29, 10 am-2 pm

All friends of Siena Literacy Center welcome!

Siena Literacy Center Presents

## Lavender Nights

2025 Benefit Evening

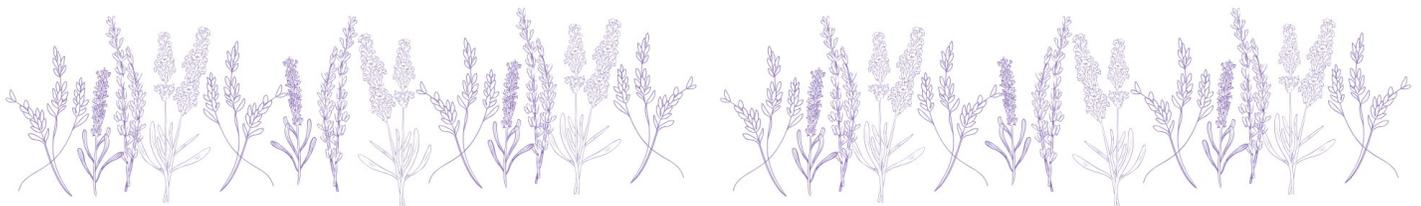
Save the Date

Thursday - September 11 - 6pm

Bayview Yacht Club

Cocktails, appetizers, entertainment, silent auction, and more!

[www.sienaliteracy.org/benefit](http://www.sienaliteracy.org/benefit)



# Volunteers honored at annual awards ceremony

Siena Literacy Center depends on more than 60 hardworking volunteers who provide one-to-one tutoring, office support, grant writing, and other services. Staff showed their gratitude April 9 at the second annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony.

The event was held at the North Rosedale Park Community House and included drinks, a dinner catered by Chef Bee of Sisters on a Roll, and a keynote address by Jeana Harper-Kirkland of the SEMI Foundation.



## 2025 Award Winners

English Language Tutor of the Year:

Lisa Grow

Math Tutor of the Year:

Jim Petersen

Reading Tutor of the Year:

Anne Thomson

Rising Volunteer of the Year:

Angel Bender

Volunteer of the Year:

Lee Bosek

Sr. Lenore Boivin Adaptive Teaching Award:

Mary Brown

Sr. Mary Hemmen Lifetime Service Award:

Anne Van Amerongen



*With gratitude to all our amazing volunteers!  
We appreciate you!*



# New CNA training program to support ESL students

In partnership with [Nursing Detroit](#), Siena Literacy Center launched a new program in March to help advanced English language learners train to become Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs).

The intensive program will run for nine weeks with the goal of helping a small cohort prepare to pass the state CNA exam and enter full-time employment.

Siena Executive Director Caitlyn Pisarski worked with Nursing Detroit CEO and founder Felicia Vannstrand, BSN, RN, LRRT, to create a program that will offer economic opportunity to English language learners.

“This is a passion project Felicia and I have been working on for over a year,” Pisarski said. “To see it actually launch has been the highlight of my year so far.”

The program combines workforce preparation, including math and computer skills; English language



education; and training curriculum through Nursing Detroit. All instruction will be provided in person, and is designed specifically to support advanced English language learners. Annual cohorts will run for the next three years with funding from the state of Michigan.

The program will lead to increased employment opportunities for students who successfully complete their classes. CNAs in Michigan earn a median salary of \$18.72 per hour, and employment in nursing and residential care facilities is expected to grow by more than 10% in Metro Detroit in the next five years. The certification can also be a stepping stone to earning more advanced medical credentials.

## Welcome new staff: *Serigne Lo & John Morris*

We’re excited to welcome two new staff members who have recently changed their roles at Siena Literacy Center.

**John Morris** had been a volunteer tutor with Siena Literacy Center since 2022. In November, he joined Siena staff as a part-time math instructor with the GED program and now leads a class on Tuesday evenings. John is a former Detroit police officer who also has experience teaching high school math and as an adjunct professor at Lawrence Tech.

If **Serigne Lo** looks familiar, it’s because he was featured in our newsletter last year as one of our students. Serigne has now joined Siena staff as a program support associate and works with registering new students and helping them in the computer lab. In particular, Serigne’s skills as a translator—he



*John Morris*



*Serigne Lo*

speaks French, Wolof, and Fulani—have been extremely helpful in communicating with ESL students and making them feel welcome at Siena.



## 1995-2025: Celebrating 30 Years of Learning

Since 1995, Siena Literacy Center has been CHANGING LIVES and CREATING BELONGING through the power of education. Help us celebrate #30YearsofLearning!



### Come Celebrate with Us—Save the Dates

#### Bingo Night

Thursday, August 21



#### Spaghetti Dinner

Friday, October 17



Christ the King Church • Koelzer Hall  
20800 Grand River, Detroit, MI 48219

**Help support Siena Literacy Center for another 30 years!**

Your recurring donation helps meet ongoing adult literacy needs in Northwest Detroit.



[www.sienaliteracy.org/donate](http://www.sienaliteracy.org/donate)

# With Gratitude to Our Generous Donors

## Major Funders

[Adrian Dominican Sisters](#) • [Adult Literacy Opportunity Fund](#) • [Alliance Catholic Foundation](#)  
[Catholic Foundation of Michigan](#) • [City of Detroit Neighborhood Opportunity Fund](#) • [Corporation for a Skilled Workforce](#)  
[Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation \(DESC\)](#) • [Dollar General Literacy Foundation](#) • [DTE Energy Foundation](#)  
[Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity](#) • [Michigan State Bar Foundation](#) • [ProLiteracy](#)  
[St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat Center](#) • [St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Community Resource Center](#)  
[The Village Club Foundation](#) • [Young Woman's Home Association](#)

## Donors

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## In Honor of

Sr. Lenore Boivin  
 John Kluka  
 Sr. Maureen Mulcrone

## In Memoriam

Mike Chall  
 Sr. Margaret Stechschulte, OP  
 Sr. Mary Anna Riley  
 Sr. Rita Shaffer aka Sr. Albertus

## In Appreciation of Siena's Board of Directors

Sue Witham, *Chair*  
 Alfred Robertson, *Vice-Chair*  
 John Kluka, *Secretary*

Bill McKnight  
 Greg Cascione  
 Ron Eady

Steve Wasko  
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Through a grant from the [Michigan Arts and Culture Council](#), artist Pat Millender helped us put together a Siena quilt! Comes see it installed at our St. Catherine of Siena Feast Day Open House on April 29 ([page 3](#)).



**SIENA LITERACY CENTER**

Follow us: @sienaliteracy

