



Providing adults who live in or near Ottawa County with an opportunity to improve and transform their lives by strengthening their reading and language fluency.

January 2025 Newsletter

Change a Life! Give Today!

Celebrating our Tutors and their  
Years of Service

**5+YEARS**  
Gayle Parmalee-9  
Ann Antanya-6  
Julie Fraiser-6  
Carol Schotthey-6  
Jean Ryan-7  
Mary DeWeerd-5



**15+ YEARS**  
Paul Martin-16  
Bruce Baker-16

**10+YEARS**  
Robin Myers-14  
Kathy DuVall-13  
Jean Grossnickle-13  
Cassie Karr-13  
Renate Watters-13  
Janet Weissner-12

A Letter from Ally Velderman



Greetings, READ Ottawa Community!

I hope 2025 finds you well and ready for a new year of opportunities and hopes.

As 2024 comes to a close, so too, does my time serving as READ Ottawa's Executive Director.

I'm taking my leave from this work to begin serving as President of City on a Hill Ministries in Zeeland, MI.

I leave this fantastic organization full of gratitude for the time I got to be a part of it and with deep confidence and hope for its continued success.

In reflecting on 2024, the summary of READ Ottawa's activity is full of huge joys:

There was such affirmation of the mission and model of READ Ottawa's life-changing programming.

- The READ Ottawa staff (Marisol, Lynn, and Richelle) led with excellence, compassion, and curiosity.
- Volunteers hit new metrics in all categories: years of service, hours volunteered, number of learner pairs, goal pathways, number of volunteers, etc.
- And learners. Though each story is so inherently unique, each tells of great dedication, courage, fortitude, accomplishment, and hope.

2024 was an exciting and trail-blazing year for READ organizationally.

- In partnership with Allegan Adult Education and the Allegan District Library, READ Ottawa established a pilot program that those Allegan-based partners will be launching into their own, independent program later in 2025. We celebrate their courage to launch a non-profit so that Allegan County learners can receive the free, one-on-one language and literacy tutoring that has been so effective here in Ottawa County.
- READ Ottawa was awarded important grants providing a stable financial footing by which to both sustain and scale programming.
- Generous donors also invested in our work. Gifts from \$5 to the end-of-year \$20,000 matching gift were joyfully received from the READ Ottawa community who knows first-hand the impact and value of our work.

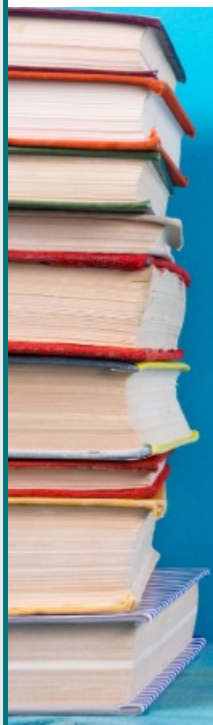
For this and so much more, I thank you for your support of and investment in READ Ottawa. The work of non-profit organizations requires scrappy can-do attitudes, a broad network of community and stakeholders, and a deep belief in the work to be done. The READ Ottawa community, each of you, has that and more. And how beautiful that that's the case because the work has only just begun!

I hope that 2025 will be another year that repeatedly proves the place for and value of READ Ottawa. I imagine that will happen through each of you!

Warmly,

Ally Velderman

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# 2024 Literacy Stats

80 new learners enrolled  
25+ different languages  
67 new tutors trained  
110 current tutor-learner pairs

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Interested in becoming a tutor? RSVP through one of the following:  
Filling out the form at <https://readottawa.org/volunteer>  
Email Lynn Groothuis at [lynn@readottawa.org](mailto:lynn@readottawa.org)  
Call Lynn at 616-414-0295

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*"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." Martin Luther King*

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Website: [www.readottawa.org](http://www.readottawa.org)  
Email: [info@readottawa.org](mailto:info@readottawa.org)

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