



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.

September 2025 Newsletter

Change a Life! Give Today!

BOOK CLUBS AT READ OTTAWA



Holland: **Julie Hoelscher** began a book club with her 3 learners not knowing how it would work. She was in for a delightful surprise. Beginning with building a deeper understanding of vocabulary, Julie saw her learners advance to discuss plots, evaluate characters and even speculate what would happen in the story.

So far this book club has read I Survived the sinking of the Titanic 1912, The Giver, and The Pearl. Julie remarks that the most inspiring outcome was that her learners became leaders who generated the questions in their meetings.

Grand Haven: **Alexa McGuinness** just happened to be on a zoom learning circle when Julie Hoelscher spoke of her book club. Inspired by what she heard, Alexa now plans to begin her book club for emerging adult readers on September 5. She intends to gear the reading material to grades 4-6, working off the interests of the members.

The power of ideas, sharing ideas and watching them grow is truly an inspiration!



Longtime Tutor Returns to Become a Test Administrator



In 2019 Julie Fraiser joined READ Ottawa as a tutor. As a former elementary teacher and reading interventionist, Julie was grateful to use her skills to help her learners. After a while she shifted work to helping Cathy Wolfe in the Adult Education classes, serving adults and assisting them in engaging in the community.

Julie has now returned to READ Ottawa, taking on the role of administering tests to learners. She is glad to join the team!

Married with 2 adult children and 4 grandchildren, Julie has found a rhythm in retirement that includes visiting residents in local facilities and doing pet therapy as well as learning Spanish. "Looking back over the decades," says Julie, "I have always been inspired by and grateful for those that have guided and encouraged me." She is truly thankful for the unique, purpose-filled roles she too can play in this season of life.





The Director's Corner

Pivot and Stay the Course

At READ Ottawa, we recognize that meaningful progress depends on both persistence and adaptability. Over the past year, our Allegan Pilot Program demonstrated the outcomes achievable when committed volunteers collaborate with dedicated learners. From October 2024 to June 2025, we successfully trained 11 tutors and matched 14 learners through Allegan Adult Education. These initiatives led to GEDs, graduations, English credits, job progress, and personal literacy achievements. Six tutor-learner pairs will continue into 2025/2026, highlighting the lasting impact of these partnerships. Despite these achievements, our organization confronts significant challenges due to federal reductions in adult education funding, impacting programs on local, state and national levels. Such decreases present substantial obstacles for organizations like ours, which rely on consistent financial support. When adult literacy funding is reduced, the cost is measured not just in dollars, but in lost potential—for learners, families, businesses, and our community.

Instead of slowing down, we are pivoting—strengthening partnerships with local businesses and organizations, pursuing new funding opportunities, and growing our base of individual donors. Our mission is clear: to ensure every adult has the opportunity to strengthen their literacy skills and transform their future. With your support—through advocacy, sharing our mission, inviting us to speak, or making a monthly gift—we will continue to stay the course.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains unwavering—to adapt, to innovate, and to foster hope in the face of shifting circumstances. Through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and community partners, we are continually finding new ways to empower learners and break down barriers to literacy. Every achievement, whether large or small, is a testament to the resilience and determination that defines our organization. Together, we are not only responding to challenges but also building a more inclusive future where everyone has the chance to thrive.

With gratitude,

Vicki Ellis
Executive Director, READ Ottawa

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
Call Lynn at 616-414-0295

"How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." Anne Frank



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