



2025 Impact Report



READ
OTTAWA

READOttawa.org

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Literacy Empowers Adults to

build better futures.

While the year brought many challenges, READ Ottawa remained committed to providing adults who live in or near Ottawa County with the opportunity to improve and transform their lives by strengthening their reading and language fluency.



The year in review

*A look back at the moments,
milestones, and momentum
that shaped our year.*



As I reflect on this past year at READ Ottawa, I am filled with deep gratitude and pride. Each season brought growth, challenges, and new opportunities, yet one thing remained constant—the determination of our adult learners who showed up ready to build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

Adult literacy work often happens quietly, one learner and one tutor at a time, but its impact is profound. This year, learners gained the confidence to support their children's education, advocate for themselves at work, and navigate daily life with greater independence.

This meaningful work would not be possible without the incredible READ Ottawa staff, who are truly the backbone of our organization. Their dedication, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to our learners ensure that our programs operate with care, consistency, and heart. I am equally grateful to our volunteer tutors who meet learners where they are and generously give both their time and compassion.

I am also deeply appreciative of our Board of Directors and volunteer support staff whose leadership, guidance, and belief in our mission continue to move us forward.

~ Vicki

Winter Highlights

Even in the coldest months, learners showed up consistently—demonstrating commitment, resilience, and a belief in their own potential.

Highlights

- 56 Learners obtained personal goals related to employment, education, and family support.
- Staff and Board welcomed our new Executive Director.

Summer Highlights

Summer brought learner milestones, commencements, and deeper community connections.

Highlights

- 14 READ Ottawa Learners earned their ESL Certification, GEDs, M-Tec Certificates through the Zeeland Adult Education program.
- We partnered with Free Friday Nights for a free community concert in downtown Grand Haven to advocate for our cause.

Spring Highlights

Learners reached major milestones—reading independently, completing job applications, and supporting their children's education

Highlights

- Our 7th Annual Scrabble Tournament was a success with raising over \$5,000 in team registrations, auction items, and sponsorships
- Over 61% of our learners improved their reading scores.

Fall Highlights

Fall was a time to celebrate accomplishments, strengthen support, and prepare for the year ahead.

Highlights

- We completed our pilot with READ Allegan, helping launch a program modeled after READ Ottawa.
- READ Ottawa partnered with The Bookman for a Great Gatsby themed soirée at the Lilley Mansion.

“From the very beginning, my tutor brought creativity, energy, and dedication to every lesson. Each session was thoughtfully planned and tailored to my learning needs, which made even difficult material easier for me to understand. More than anything, the encouragement and support I received helped build my confidence along with my language skills.

~ Maria, READ Ottawa Learner

825

learners have acquired our services since READ Ottawa’s 2008 inception

4,656

total tutor volunteer hours

85

new learners began their journey in 2025

<i>Event</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Scrabble 2025	9 Sponsors	\$3,500
Friday Night Concerts	250+ in attendance	\$1,500
The Bookman’s Great Gatsby Soirée	Sara Dalboni, our learner, read the last passage	\$900



Expanding Literacy

The READ Allegan Pilot

Bringing the READ Model to Allegan County

In 2024, READ Ottawa partnered with Allegan Adult & Online Education (AAOE) to launch the READ Allegan Pilot Program, extending READ Ottawa's successful volunteer tutoring model to support adult learners in the Allegan community.

Through this partnership, READ Ottawa trained volunteer tutors, matched them with adult learners, and provided ongoing coaching and support to ensure meaningful, goal-focused tutoring relationships. AAOE educators identified students who would benefit from individualized literacy support and helped guide learners toward educational and career goals.

Tutoring sessions took place at AAOE and the Allegan District Library, whose partnership also helped support volunteer recruitment, training space, and community awareness. Together, these partners created a collaborative model that strengthens adult education and expands literacy support beyond traditional classrooms.

These outcomes demonstrate how individualized literacy support can impact not only education and employment, but also personal confidence, family relationships, and community involvement.

Pilot Impact

- 12 volunteer tutors trained by READ Ottawa
- 16 AAOE learners matched with a tutor during the pilot initiative
- 6 active tutoring pairs continuing into the 2025-2026 school year

Learner Outcomes

- Supported meaningful progress for adult learners:
 - 4 learners passed the GED exam
 - 3 learners graduated from the Adult Education Program
 - 1 learner improved their employment situation
 - 1 learner strengthened a relationship with their grandchild through newly developed reading skills

TUTOR MOMENT

"Working with my learner has been incredibly rewarding. Watching her confidence grow week by week reminds me why literacy matters."

2025 Finances

REVENUE **\$83,391**

Community Support	\$54,913
Grants	\$14,500
Fundraisers	\$7,850
Investments/Endowment	\$6,129

EXPENSES **\$94,292**

Education Materials/Training	\$6,010
Fundraising Expenses	\$462
Operations	\$84,785
Volunteer Expenses	\$3,035

In 2025, READ Ottawa used a portion of previously accumulated funds to support operations and mission delivery.



Community Support

\$42,714

Individual
Donations

\$8,554

READ Allegan
Pilot Program

\$2,500

Community
Groups

\$1,145

Business
Contributions

READOttawa.org

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Together *we can do more.*

Partnering for Adult Literacy

The demand for literacy support is rising, but so are the challenges. Increased costs for materials, loss of Federal Funding, fewer resources to support our tutors, and more learners than ever before have pushed READ Ottawa to operate at its absolute leanest. Without additional support, we risk turning away those who need us most.

Our Impact

- 4600+ total volunteer tutor hours in 2025
- 85+ new learners served
- 100+ learners improved their English Language skills
- 70 learners obtained better employment

The Need

42,472

Ottawa County adults are at or below a third grade reading level.

- National Center of Education Statistics

The Challenge

- \$6,000 annual cost for curriculum and training
- \$ 746 annual cost to tutor one learner
- \$84,700 operational costs for 2025

Advocate

Corporate Sponsorship

SCAN ME



Donate

Volunteer

We'd like to thank our partners and donors for their *generous support.*

Personal Donors

Char Alexander	Matt & Hannah Everett	Joyanne Huston-Swanson	Ronald & Yvonne Olmsted	Diana Spriks
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				Tina Zellman

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 Zeeland Adult Education

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 The Bookman
 The Pivot Group Network
 Twelve Corners Vineyards, LLC

Grants

Dollar General
 MACAE ALOF



2026 Literacy Champion
 Corporate Sponsor



2026 Scrabble
 Game Sponsor



2026 Scrabble
 Word Sponsor



2026 Scrabble
 Word Sponsor

We'd like to thank our volunteers & staff for their *gift of time.*

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Volunteer Support Staff

Jodi Deur, *Accountant*
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Carol Wilhelm, *Training Developer*

Staff

Vicki Ellis, *Executive Director*
Lynn Groothuis, *Training Coordinator*
Richelle Hofman, *Pair Coordinator /
Assessment Coordinator*
Jacquie Karr, *Pair Coordinator
(through August)*
Marisol Stork, *Pair Coordinator*

