



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2021
ZOOM MEETING AT THE WDB OFFICE, 1111 MARKKRESS ROAD, CHERRY HILL, NJ

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		5-Jan-21	2-Feb-21	2-Mar-21	4-Apr-21	4-May-21	1-Jun-21
Brahl, Ken CHAIR	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X	X	X	X	X	
Patti Beach	Learning Link, Camden County One-Stop Career Center	X		X	X		X
Cirii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County One Stop			X	X	X	
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden					X	
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District	X	X	x	X		X
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library			X			X
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.			X			
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Camden County College	X		X	X		
Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X	X		X	X	
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc	X					
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough						
Walker, Eric	RobinsNest Inc				X	X	
Young, Jennifer	Verizon						
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Marlyn Kalitan, Executive Career Coach, Vice Chair, Literacy, called the meeting to order at 8:42am. She welcomed attendees and reported she was filling in for Ken Brahl, Chair. She asked the committee to review the minutes dated Tuesday, May 4th, 2021. Marlyn asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Heidi Daunoras made the first motion, Patti Beach, made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried, and minutes May 4th approved.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Patti Beach, Counselor, Learning Link reported there are not many changes to operations, customers are begin served virtually and by-appointment as needed. The application to make the Learning Link a testing site for the HighSet, GED, High School Equivalency is still awaiting approval by the NJ Department of Education. The Learning Link is getting some referrals for services and training. CASAS testing is available in-person by appointment and counselors are meeting with customers virtually. Marlyn asked if customers are still referring to the test as a GED. Patty said they are but she explains the HighSet test and High Scholl Equivalency once customers are enrolled. Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, asked if referrals were increasing. Patty said right

now the numbers of referrals are low. She received two phone calls last week about High School Equivalency and sent out registration information but the customers did not get back to her. Patty said customers are more concerned with contacting Employment Services because they are required to do so while collecting unemployment compensation. Customers are given the information and they will call but they do not follow through.

Jeff said One-Stop staff are still attending the food distribution events and make sure that the Virtual Services Directory is inserted into the bag or box giveaways.

Counselors are available to meet with customers by appointment on a case-by-case basis.

Follow this link to the Camden County One-Stop Career Center -Virtual Services Directory:

<https://www.camdencounty.com/service/employment/job-training-placement/>

METRIX NJ UPSKILL LAUNCH

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, WDB said she hoped the committee got a chance to look over the Metrix Online Learning Program. She said there are many courses available on the site and some employers are considering signing staff up for refresher courses in Quick Books and other office applications. It is going well and the sign up is very easy. Registration is easy and users are assigned a user name and password which they can change once they are in the program. It is still not known if the six month registration can be extended to accommodate some of the certification courses that may take longer to complete. The program is open to all New Jersey residents, not just those collecting unemployment. The State has purchased the license for an eight-month period as a pilot program. The WDB will keep updated about licensing and send new information to the committee as it is received. The Committee discussed the program. Marlyn asked if there have been many sign-ups. Jeff said Ken Brahl was promoting it to his administrative staff for some refresher courses. Marlyn said she reviewed some of the courses and it seemed to be a great program. Jeff said he will get more clarification from the State about the licensing.

LITERACY SHARING & BOOK DRIVE UPDATES

Heidi Daunoras, Director, Curriculum, Pine Hill Schools, reported the Book Smiles Organization is continuing its partnership with the Food Bank of South Jersey and distributing books at the different food distribution sites around the County. Heidi said the biggest news was that Booksmiles did reach its fund raising goal to purchase the 16 foot box truck to assist in the larger collection and distribution of books from various areas all over South Jersey. They are also collecting in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. She said there is a 24/7 book collection site set up at Springdale Farms in Cherry Hill as well as two collection bins added in Gloucester Township at their Municipal Building location. She noted the Booksmiles website lists all collection sites. She encouraged the committee and others to visit the website. Follow this link for more information:

<https://www.booksmiles.org/> Heidi said that Booksmiles is continuing to offer smaller volunteer collection opportunities to youth. All agreed Booksmiles is getting lots of good press and the Committee was happy to support the organization in its earlier days and these growing efforts. Heidi said it continues to grow and there is a college working on organizing a collection bin as a student service project. Marlyn thanked Heidi for her involvement in Booksmiles growth and for the updates.

Jeff asked Marlyn if the Cherry Hill Library was going to host its annual book drive. Marlyn said they did host an outdoor book sale a few weeks ago. It is open for donations and they are accepting all kinds of adult and children's books. She was not sure what the Library is planning for the summer months. She said the library accepts music offerings such as vinyl albums and CD's and they are sold for a .25 cent donation. Paperback books sell for \$1.00 and hardback books sell for \$2.00. Marlyn said she will forward the information to the committee once it is announced. Jeff said the WDB will post it to their social media sites as well. Jeff asked if the County Library System would be hosting any book sales for drives. Jennifer Druce, Associate Director, Camden County Library System, said the county system is not currently planning sales or accepting donations.

LITERACY LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, presented the latest draft version of the Library Resource Guide created by the committee for the purposes pulling together a comprehensive guide to the location and contacts for all libraries in the county. She reminded the committee there is no such guide online at the county or state level. Kathleen said she added addition and made edits to the guide as collected and mentioned at the last meeting. Marlyn noted she asked Patti Beach about defining the GED test earlier in the meeting. She suggested it be clearly defined in the One-Stop ad contained within the guide. The Committee discussed and agreed that the new terminology for the test should be clearly stated as "Prepare for your High School Equivalency and Training. Marlyn gave Kathleen some additional minor punctuation edits. Kathleen welcomed Marlyn's edits. She noted the consistency of phone numbers and that she added a few more pictures to broaden the offering for seniors and students. She also asked the committee if they thought it was still appropriate to show the wearing of masks in one inserted picture. The Committee discussed and agreed that some customers are still more comfortable with mask wearing in public places, so the picture was appropriate. Jeff also asked Jennifer to show the document to Linda Devlin, Director, Camden County Library System, any additions or further edits. Jennifer confirmed.

Kathleen also noted she sent a Camden County Needs Assessment presentation along with meeting materials. The reason she included the presentation was that one of the biggest findings learned as a result of conducting the assessments was that residents do not know where to get services. She felt the efforts of the committee to collect the library information and distribute it in outreach will be a great service to the community. As the committee has been discussing, the libraries are a great community space where residents can feel safe and at ease accessing resources and help for literacy, skills development and career planning. Digital resources are being added every day customers can access them from the comfort of their home. She also reminded the committee that the Camden County Library System has offered free digital service library cards to every resident in the county for the duration of the pandemic and until services are fully open and available in-person.

The Committee reviewed the latest draft of the Library Resource Guide. Members of the committee complimented Kathleen's work on the guide. Marlyn Kalitan, Executive Career Coach, Vice Chair, Literacy, said she reviewed the document carefully and had a few more minor edits. She noted some spacing edits and consistency in the way phone numbers are listed. Kathleen said all edits are helpful and welcomed. She thanked Marlyn and the committee for their input and guidance in the preparation of the guide.

The Committee had an open discussion with Scott Tourtellotte about their efforts and outreach in the community to promote literacy services. Ken explained, these efforts were based on Carol Dann, ABS Coordinator, HopeWorks, Camden, and her urging the committee to conduct a Literacy Needs Assessment (LNA). He said the committee enlisted the services of a Rutgers Master's Candidate to assist in collecting data and formatting the LNA. Ken said everyone assumed they would find literacy concerns in Camden City but what turned out to be eye opening through assessment of the data was, there were needs throughout particularly in the southern part of the county. Jeff said the committee formed relationships with the Mayors of those southern townships and offered outreach efforts in those local areas. He said the LNA is posted on the WDB website. Scott spoke about the Rotary Club of Haddonfield and their focus on Literacy in the community. He invited members of the Literacy Committee to present at the next Rotary meeting in June. All agreed the committee could partner with the Rotary Club in some future efforts toward Literacy.

Jeff reported the WDB applied and was awarded a grant from the State to run another Summer Youth Employment Program for youth ages 16-24. He said there are no eligibility requirements this year so the program will be open to any youth living in Camden County. He said the program has started and youth interviews are being conducted over the next few weeks. Employers are lined up to host youth. There are 25 applicants so far but hope to place up to 45 youth in summer work experiences. Youth will be paid a stipend of \$12.00 per hour for 20-25 hours of work for eight weeks. He encouraged the committee to forward the information to any youth in their sphere of contacts. Jeff said the information is posted to the WDB website and social media platforms as well. Kathleen asked committee members to volunteer as they did last year for some of the work-readiness workshops. She will send out information and a schedule. Marlyn said she would be happy to participate again this year.

Jeff announced the Quarterly Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 23rd, via Zoom at 8:30am. The meeting will include the installation of officers and a representative from the New Jersey SkillUP program will be on the call to present more information about this free adult learning program being offered to all residents. Jeff also reported all WDB committees are staying very active. The Abilities Committee is planning to host a live event at the Camden County Boat House on Tuesday, October 5th, 2021. The Event targeted to Employers and Human Resource Professionals addresses the subject of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Veterans and in the workplace especially since the onset of the pandemic. Kathleen added that a Team from Cooper University Healthcare, Military Field Training in PTSD has offered much of the content for this year's workshops. It will be very interesting and include a panel of Veterans who will share their stories. Resources and Tools for helping co-worker cope will also be shared. She will share the "Save the Date" flyer with all committees. She said the content is valuable and the Abilities Committee wants to host the event live although seating may be limited.

Jeff reported the Atlantic City Electric Training Initiative was stalled by the pandemic but will be re-started with the Line Training taking place for those participants who passed the WISE and GIE Courses. He said the WDB opted not to run any additional classes until the first two cohorts completed the line training. The program will resume in 2022 and recruitments will begin later this fall. He said it is an especially great opportunity for young women in the Utilities industry as well as young men ages 18 and older. Kathleen said ACE will be adding some additional curriculum to address new green energy jobs.

Heidi reported that Pine Hill schools will be working with Camden County College to offer some curriculum in the area of non-traditional career paths such as cosmetology or HVAC. These programs will prepare students during their High School years for certification and testing once they turn 18 years of age. Her personal and professional experience has made her more aware that a four-year college degree may not be a fit for every student so she is happy to be creating this partnership with the college. These programs will also help to meet families and students where they are and address some workforce concerns about filling positions in non-traditional careers. The Committee discussed some personal stories about their own career paths that did not start out with obtaining a regular college degree. Heidi said the school is also engaging career mentors that will help students see other career opportunities and options. Jeff offered the WDB to present at any career nights or back-to-school events. He attended other similar events at schools around the county and it was well received

Jennifer Druce announced the Camden County Library System will go back to almost normal hours on June 21st. She noted that two libraries open on Friday nights, will not be open during those evening hours and the downtown Camden City Library will be open during limited hours because the Rutgers Campus is not fully opened yet. She said other than those minor exceptions hours of operation at most of the county libraries will be getting back to normal. She also announced that Shyamoli De, Director, Literacy Volunteers of America, Camden County, has retired that the County is currently in search of her replacement. The Committee extended their well wishes to Shyamoli De. Jennifer said she will be missed.

Hearing no further updates, Marlyn wished everyone a happy June and July 4th holiday weekend.

NEXT MEETING: The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 6th, 2021 at 8:30am. The WDB will send out meeting materials and Zoom conferencing information prior to the meeting.

Submitted by

Kathleen Varallo,

Administrative Assistant