

The Reading Center

Dyslexia Institute of Minnesota

www.TheReadingCenter.org



Spring 2017

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DYSLEXIA INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

"Toward Literacy for All"

New Ulm High School Sophomore Gains Confidence Online Tutoring enables Alexa Zinniel to soar!

All parents of struggling readers want to help their children learn to read. But imagine if you lived 100 miles from The Reading Center, and the help you knew your child needed was two hours away – each way.

Thankfully, for Amy and Terry Zinniel, help for their daughter Alexa was only a high speed internet connection away. On the other end of the line, for 76 lessons, Alexa has worked with Lora Keller, a staff tutor at The Reading Center. In that time, Lora reports that Alexa has gone from being a shy sophomore to **a self-assured young woman able to advocate for her needs at school.**

Investment in Online Tutoring

In 2016, The Reading Center increased our online tutoring capacity 49% by training and hiring more OG tutors and training more of them to go online. The investment has paid dividends in more ways than one. In early 2017, **28% of our tutoring sessions are provided online.** They can be students who live many miles away like Alexa or those that find it difficult logistically to meet with a tutor in person during the week.

Alexa knows that without the resources of The Reading Center to provide specialized tutoring online, she would have no access to a trained Orton Gillingham tutor. **For Alexa and the many other kids in Minnesota who need 1:1 help, The Reading Center is the only resource available.**

Early Signs of Dyslexia

Like so many other students we know, Alexa had trouble reading when she was entering kindergarten. She was slow to pick up sounds and letters. She remembers being tested for special education services in the second grade. She received services at school, but they were not what she needed to bridge the gap with her peers.

Fast forward to 10th grade. **Can you imagine going through 10 years of school struggling with no effective help?** It is fortunate that Alexa did not give up on herself. Alexa's family was relieved to find The Reading Center and to learn that Alexa could be helped online. It was the difference between receiving no help at all and getting the OG tutoring that Alexa needed to succeed!



Alexa Zinniel

Online Tutoring reaches Cathedral High School student Alexa Zinniel

Strengths Shine Through

Alexa still struggles with reading, and she knows that she has to work harder than her peers. Sometimes she still "struggles with spelling and gets knocked down." But she's developed a great connection to language and is eager to read new things. **It feels great to understand that the reason she struggled was NOT because she was incapable but because she hadn't been taught in the right way!**

She excels in technology, arts and crafts. She loves music and plays guitar, violin and piano – without sheet music! Now that she has gotten to know Alexa, her tutor Lora sees how her creativity allows her to solve problems imaginatively. She has always been an A to C student but she would have to work very hard after school until late at night to get her homework and assignments done. **Now she gets mostly A's and has time after school to enjoy voice lessons, Timberwolves games, and high school activities.**

While it is great to see how Orton Gillingham tutoring has helped Alexa become a more proficient reader, it's equally exciting to see that her increased confidence has made a difference in school as well. Alexa now understands how she learns best and what she needs to be successful. She is seeing the correlation of what she has learned in tutoring and can easily apply it to her everyday work in school. **Her teachers really enjoy her advocating for herself.** She asks her teachers for notes and for extra time on assignments.

(continued on p7)

Greetings from the Chair

Reading Center in Year Two of Capacity Growth Initiative

First, I want to congratulate the staff, tutors, volunteers, donors and board members--all of whom help make The Reading Center what it is – a respected nonprofit that makes a difference in the lives of thousands of dyslexic children. The recent recognition of our efforts by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce as the Nonprofit of the Year is an honor we all share. Congratulations!

The public recognition of The Reading Center could not have come at a better time. In 2016, we embarked on a well-thought-out plan to train more tutors through our renowned and certified Orton-Gillingham Training Institute, hire more tutors and reach more students through 1:1 tutoring. The Reading Center has worked hard to reach more students through outreach efforts, tuition scholarships, online tutoring, and the development of strong relationships with partners resulting in the Rochester Reading Champions collaboration with the Rochester Public Library, the Boys & Girls Club and others. These efforts have paid dividends, and we are growing at a nice pace.

Here are some highlights:

- We have trained and hired more tutors to help reduce our waiting list.
- We served 165 students for 1:1 tutoring services, 5% more than the previous year.
- The number of tutoring sessions we provided was up by 18% - indicating that some of our new students are receiving much more robust interventions.
- As tutors are trained in the online platform, almost 25% of our students are receiving tutoring services online.
- We provided almost \$74,000 in scholarships directly to students for services, an increase of 24% over last year.
- And in June of this year, our Basic Orton-Gillingham Training Institute will have its first class of adults taking the training online!

I look forward to seeing how much we can grow in 2017!



Kirk Kotschade
Board Chair

From the Executive Director's Desk



Cindy Russell
Executive Director

On February 21, a group of Reading Center staff and families went to the Minnesota State Capitol to join in the Dyslexia Day Rally, hosted by Decoding Dyslexia. It was such an awesome experience for the 300 people from across the state that I wanted to share my impressions with you, and I encourage you to **consider taking the day off from work and school next year to join us!**

1. The newly renovated capitol rotunda was beautiful! And it was more so when it filled up with children, teens, parents and teachers, waving handmade signs supportive of students with dyslexia. **Kids with dyslexia felt encouraged. Students realized that they are not alone.**
2. Swag. Students with dyslexia who attended received medals, and family members received lanyards with the Decoding Dyslexia logo. **The Reading Center provided ribbons to bedazzle their lanyards with slogans like, "Dyslexia Proud," "I ♥ someone with dyslexia," and "Reading Center Family."** The students who came along with us to meet legislators got capitol hats and their very own legislator face book.
3. TRC student Luca Presa spoke at the Rally, met with our legislators 1:1, and testified at the Senate E-12 Education Policy Committee hearing. **He had a confidence-building experience, and he is helping thousands of students with dyslexia by sharing his story with legislators.**

The Reading Center was a sponsor for the event because we feel that it is important for people with dyslexia to be visible and have a voice.

Bonding update: The Reading Center is again seeking approval of a \$1.5 million bonding request from the state of Minnesota to be used toward a new building. This contribution by the state, should it be approved, would be matched by private donations. The Minnesota Senate passed a comprehensive bonding bill that is much the same as the one worked on last year – and The Reading Center provision is included! Thank you to Senator Carla Nelson for authoring our provision. And thank you to Senator David Senjem for continuing to support it as Chairman of the Senate Capital Investment Committee.

In the Minnesota House of Representatives, our own Rep. Nels Pierson has submitted a bill with The Reading Center specific provision (thank you!), and it was signed by Rep. Duane Sauke (Rochester), Rep. Bob Dettmer (Forest Lake) and others. The House of Representatives has not yet offered a comprehensive bonding bill this session – something we need to keep the process moving. **If you would like to help The Reading Center in our quest for a new building, please encourage your Representative to urge the passage of a bonding bill this year and to ensure that The Reading Center/Dyslexia Institute of Minnesota project is in it.**



Dominic, Luca and
Maria Presa in the state
capitol rotunda



Great to see so many
enthusiastic faces
around the capitol
wearing these!

Many thanks!

3rd Annual Dyslexia Day at the Capitol

300 families gathered in St. Paul to tell stories about dyslexia.



Luca Presa testifying before the Senate E-12 Policy Committee

with the four Rochester area legislators (Representatives Nels Pierson, Duane Sauke, Duane Quam and Tina Liebling) to encourage support of our bonding bill and education policy bills supporting students with dyslexia.

The highlight of the day was 5th grader, and current **Reading Center student Luca Presa, who bravely testified before the Senate E-12 Policy Committee.** Luca spoke in favor of a bill to invest money in training teachers about dyslexia. **He said that getting tutoring “helped me to know that I am not stupid and that it’s not that I am not trying hard enough. It’s that my brain works differently and that there are lots of things that I can do really well.”**

On **February 21, 2017, the grassroots parent advocacy group, Decoding Dyslexia, organized a day in St. Paul to increase awareness about dyslexia.** The Reading Center participated as an event sponsor; and staff and Reading Center family, Valerie, Dominic, Luca and Maria Presa attended.

For more information on the grassroots efforts of Decoding Dyslexia, go to their webpage www.decodingdyslexiamn.org and join them! Together, we can move the needle for kids with dyslexia.

More than 300 families from across Minnesota were there to bring awareness to the issue of dyslexia. In the morning, we gathered in the newly renovated capitol rotunda for inspiring speeches from students about their experiences with dyslexia. **Senator Carla Nelson** (Rochester) spoke to the group where she highlighted Maria Presa’s sign (see photo below). **Representative Bob Dettmer** (Forest Lake) spoke about his granddaughter, who was screened and tutored by Jan Hagedorn this winter. **He said of Jan, she “put the sparkle back in her eyes.”** What an extraordinary compliment!



Senator Carla Nelson (Rochester) with Maria Presa’s handmade sign in the rotunda



An impressive group of students participated in the rally

In the afternoon, we broke off and spent the next hours visiting with representatives. **Our group focused on meetings**

Basic Institute is Premiering ONLINE!

We listened to your input and heard you when you said how difficult it is for some to get to Rochester for in person training. For the past year, a small group of dedicated staff headed by Director of Teacher Training, Barbara Zelinske, restructured our Basic Training Institute with practicum so that it can be taken ONLINE! **This is the same high quality program with a national reputation and Academy accreditation.** The difference is convenience. The course is spread out over 11 weeks, and trainees are able to learn the material on their own timeline. Call today to add your name to the list for notification for when the online Basic Institute will be open for registration.

Since 1951 The Reading Center / Dyslexia Institute of Minnesota has trained more than 1,700 adults in the Orton Gillingham approach through our training institute and public school infusion programs. Our 120 hour program (with practicum) is designed to teach the fundamentals of written language to adults so they may help those who struggle unexpectedly learning to read, write, and spell.

We have welcomed regular education teachers, special education teachers, retired teachers, ELL teachers, reading specialists and interventionists, speech/language pathologists, paraprofessionals, home educators, parents, and even grandparents to Rochester for training over the years.

Will the Reading Center be offering its classic “In person” Summer Orton Gillingham Training Institutes this year? Yes! We are currently taking registrations.

Register for our in person Basic and Advanced Institutes. You can find the link on our website. **To be notified when the online Basic Institute course is open for registration, please email Barb Arens at barbarens@thereadingcenter.org or call us at 507-288-5271.**

Fill up your child's summer with friendship, reading, and fun!

Best of Basics Summer Program 2017

Children and youth from pre-K to 12th grade can start the next school year with a **boost to their skills** when they enroll in The Reading Center's Best of Basics Summer Program. The 23rd year of **Best of Basics will be held from July 10 to August 4**: Choose from one, two or four intensive weeks of Orton-Gillingham-based intervention!

Class sizes are kept very small, and all instructors are experienced Orton-Gillingham tutors. Many of our offerings are ONLINE this summer so you don't need to be in Rochester, or have a ride to class, to attend!

Classes for teens will be held in the afternoon at a Rochester location TBD. All elementary classes are held at Calvary Evangelical Free Church in the mornings.

If the approach to teaching used at school has not been working for your child, try a different approach, such as the one offered at The Reading Center.

For a full listing of Best of Basics Summer Program classes and registration information, please go to www.TheReadingCenter.org or see our enclosed flyer. Limited scholarships are available for families with a demonstrated need.

Colette Miller,

July 26, 1935 to February 15, 2017

In Memory

It is with great sadness that we report our beloved tutor, Colette Miller, passed away in February after a short battle with cancer.

Colette took Orton Gillingham training at The Reading Center in 1958. Her career took her elsewhere, however; and she spent more than 40 years working with pre-schoolers. It was not until 2001, after her first retirement, that she returned to The Reading Center for her second career.

Colette was always one of our most enthusiastic participants at Reading Center events, including walking and running in the Dyslexia Dash. Last fall she walked with one of her old preschool students, Megan Jirik, and former Executive Director, Nancy Sears. Colette enjoyed Zumba and rock climbing, and she traveled extensively but gave generously of her time to The Reading Center. She had a full life and made a difference in the lives of 36 students and countless more in the Reading Readiness program and her preschool career.



Cindy Russell, Colette Miller, and Fay Van Vliet at the Tutor Appreciation Luncheon in 2016 where Colette was honored for her 15 years of service.

The Reading Center helps hundreds of students in 2016

Changing lives, helping students achieve success

- **Scholarships worth \$74,907** were provided to **61 students and trainees** (33 in tutoring, 10 in testing, 7 in Institute, and 11 in student classes). This is an increase of 24% over 2015. **18% of our students are receiving scholarship assistance.**
- **35 elementary teachers** from Rochester and Byron received Orton-Gillingham training customized for the classroom during the 2015-16 school year.
- **80 adults and children** received nationally-normed testing to identify their reading struggles. **10 received scholarships.**
- **29 young students** received free Reading Readiness screenings. **23 young learners** attended Reading Clubs with their parents.
- **8,662 sessions** of Educational Therapy (tutoring) were provided to 165 students to improve their reading ability. We increased the number of lessons taught **18% over last year**. **25% of our sessions are now being delivered online.**
- **59 students** were enrolled in our Best of Basics Summer Program to sharpen their skills over the summer.
- **37 educators and parents** were trained in the Orton-Gillingham approach at The Reading Center's Basic and Advanced Institutes – the gold standard of OG training.
- **3,217 parents** and others attended one of 18 outreach educational presentations offered by The Reading Center or stopped by one of 7 Reading Center displays to learn about dyslexia and our services from a Reading Center expert.

The Reading Center honored as Nonprofit of the Year

The Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce presented the award February 2.

In front of more than 700 members of the business community, **The Reading Center was given the award for 2016 Nonprofit of the Year.** The award ceremony, held February 2 at the Rochester International Event Center, was the final stage in a process that took The Reading Center from one of many nonprofits nominated by community supporters, through an interview process, and finally to being one of three wonderful local nonprofits considered for the honor the night of the event.



Cindy Russell, Executive Director of The Reading Center, accepted the award at the dinner meeting. In her acceptance remarks, Cindy noted:



Cindy Russell, alumna Joe Powers and Dr. Terri Edwards

“The Reading Center has a 65-year history of changing the lives of students with dyslexia, a condition that impairs their ability to learn to read. **Dyslexia affects 1 in 5 people, so almost everyone here tonight either knows someone with dyslexia or is dyslexic themselves.** I see some alumni here, so you know that dyslexia isn't about lack of intelligence or laziness but that they need to be taught differently. Reading Center instruction helps students gain confidence and unleashes them to succeed. Thank you again to the Chamber for your support and for this honor, and to our tutors and donors for making success stories of Reading Center students.”

Special thanks to board member **Dr. Terri Edwards and Reading Center alumnus Joe Powers** for helping the award committee understand the impact of The Reading Center in the community. **Reading Center Alumnus, Ben Tilson, received the Small Business of the Year Award** for Tilson's Auto Repair that night. At the young age of 25, Ben received the same award that Alumnus Joe Powers received when he was 25. Coincidence?

2017 Bright Futures Campaign Leadership Announced

We need you to ensure that scholarships and tutors are there for students in need!

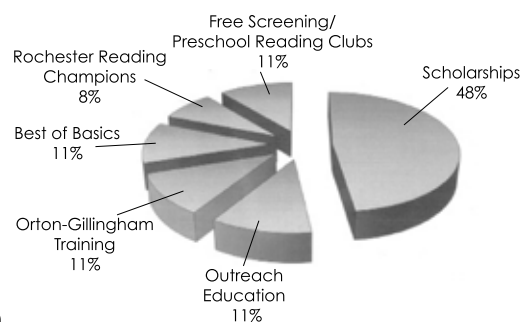
Help a child reach his or her potential one lesson at a time through the 2017 Bright Futures Campaign. **Last year, thanks to donors, The Reading Center provided scholarships to students whose families could not afford OG tutoring, amounting to 18% of our students.** We are committed to reaching underserved, at-risk youth; and this campaign is crucial to meeting that mission.

Matching funds will leverage the impact of your gift, thanks to the Al Koenig Memorial Fund, sponsored by the Rochester Scottish Rite Children's Foundation, and Jeff Price with Rochester Concrete Products. Even if you do not pay on your pledge until the end of December, any pledges received during the Bright Futures Campaign will be matched (up to \$500 per person). First come, first served while the matching funds last!

Funds raised during the Bright Futures Campaign provide scholarships for children whose parents are unable to afford testing and tutoring and to underwrite our OG Training Institutes and Best of Basics. It's all about making sure that children can read. Children deserve a Bright Future; reading is a key piece of attaining that goal.

Nicole Blegen is serving as the General Chair of the 2017 Bright Futures Campaign for The Reading Center. The Leadership Council for the Campaign includes John Caldwell, Chair of the Board Campaign; Lora Keller, Chair of the Staff/Tutor Campaign; and Danny Bucknell, Chair of the Friends Campaign.

How we'll invest your dollar



Nicole Blegen



Danny Bucknell



John Caldwell



Lora Keller

Many Thanks to Our Contributors

November 19, 2016 - March 2, 2017

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of you who have so generously pledged or donated to The Reading Center. We strive to list our donors accurately, but occasionally we make a mistake. If your donation has been omitted, your entry is misspelled or put in a wrong giving level, please contact Sarah Carlson-Wallrath at scarlsonwallrath@thereadingcenter.org.

If you would like to make a contribution, please use our secure online server at www.TheReadingCenter.org, contact us at 507-288-5271, or use the enclosed envelope.

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Erik and Eileen Thorpe

Have you included The Reading Center in your will? Let us know and we'll include you in the Paula Rome Legacy Society. Email Sarah Carlson-Wallrath, Director of Development at scarlsonwallrath@TheReadingCenter.org. Thank you for considering a legacy gift to continue the mission of The Reading Center.

If you'd like a brochure on writing an effective will, indicate this on the return envelope in the newsletter and send it to The Reading Center. You will be sent one with no strings attached.

Donor Spotlight Judy and Jim Sloan

Tutor Gives her Time, Talents and Resources to support The Reading Center's mission



Photo of Judy Sloan

How does a recreational education major, minoring in speech, end up teaching struggling readers? **For those that know Judy, it's hard to imagine her doing anything other than share her talents with students** at The Reading Center.

For the first part of her career, Judy taught theater and speech to adults and children through Community Education. But it just so happened that Judy and her husband Jim Sloan lived next to a tutor at The Reading Center. That led to an invitation where she met other Reading Center founder Jean Osman, and Sharon Rome. **She was intrigued by the conversation, and the idea of working with dyslexic kids grew on her.**

For the past 26 years, Judy has been tutoring students at The Reading Center – 41 students at last count. She says she continues because it “keeps her mind sharp” and she enjoys using her

creative talents with each individual student. She finds ways to use her years of improvisational training with students – to their delight.

At the Tutor Appreciation Luncheon last spring, Judy said “What a wonderful gift it is to be able to make a significant difference in a person's life! . . . Most [of my students] will remain close to my heart. I am passionate about all the great things happening at The Reading Center... especially our students.”

Judy and Jim do a lot to support dyslexic students. They donate through a Fidelity Investment Account Charitable Gift Fund to both The Reading Center and also to their alma mater, University of Wisconsin-Madison. They fund a scholarship for education students at UW interested in working with students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities when they graduate. They have also sponsored two UW education students so they could attend Basic Institute. **Thank you Jim and Judy Sloan for your commitment to the mission of The Reading Center! You are truly making a difference for dyslexic students!**

(continued from p1)

She's learned techniques on her computer that work for her. She works best in a quiet space away from classroom distractions.

Alexa is thankful for the opportunity to receive tutoring online from The Reading Center. For the first time she is receiving direct instruction the way she learns. This shows in her school work, reading, self-esteem and confidence. **Her advice, “Get help. It's never too late.”**



Alexa says,
“Get help. It's never too late.”



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9:00 am to 5:00pm

**Kids Reading
Kids Succeeding**
•
The Reading Center

**These classes and events are open for registration
now at www.TheReadingCenter.org**

Save the Date!

- International Dyslexia Association, Upper Midwest Branch Conference ... **April 22, 2017**
Twin Cities, Minnesota
- Academy of OG Practitioners and Educators Conference **April 28-29, 2017**
Boston, Massachusetts
- Online Basic Orton-Gillingham Training Institute **June 7-August 19, 2017**
- In person Advanced Orton-Gillingham Training Institute **June 15-29, 2017**
- In person Basic Orton-Gillingham Training Institute **July 13-August 3, 2017**
- 23rd Annual Best of Basics Summer Program for students **July 10-August 4, 2017**
- 4th Annual Superhero Dyslexia Dash **October 7, 2017**
- International Dyslexia Association Conference **November 8-11, 2017**
Atlanta, Georgia

*Bright Futures
Campaign ending soon!*



*Don't miss a chance to
double your donation with
matching funds!*