

# CHATHAM LITERACY

## I moved...

**Forward!** I thought about that word daily as COVID-19 swallowed my administrative plan for staff, volunteers and adult learners. This has been the most challenging year of my decade at Chatham Literacy.

Not only did our nonprofit reassess our financial security, reconsider services and rethink volunteer engagement, we literally moved our office to a new location.

Staff and volunteers met and exceeded these challenges in dramatic, innovative and proactive ways. We provided essential literacy services by connecting tutors and learners via remote instruction; giving laptops to learners; introducing digital learning apps for instruction; and implementing an online workshop to enhance workplace skills.

The following stories will let you know how Chatham Literacy is triumphing over



*Vicki Newell, Executive Director; Travis Patterson, Volunteer Coordinator; Kayla McCline, Administrative Assistant; DJ Lynch, Bookkeeper; Leslie Ocampo, Student Coordinator*

COVID-19 challenges, and how we will continue to pivot and serve our community into the future. In this vein, this year's Annual Report is only available electronically, instead of in print, allowing us to put more money

toward services. I hope you will help us tell our story by sharing this report with your friends and neighbors.

*Vicki Newell, Executive Director*

### Our Mission

*Chatham Literacy helps adults, living or working in Chatham County, N.C., acquire the literacy and educational skills they need to function successfully in society.*

### Our Vision

*Chatham County will be a community where everyone is literate.*

### Our Values

- Community
- Diversity
- Excellence
- Focus on Students
- Sustainability
- Our Colleagues



*Thanks Enrique for helping to ready our new home!*

## Moving Along

On June 15, 2020, Chatham Literacy officially moved into our new office at 1002 West Third Street in Siler City!

The spacious new office is centrally located to serve the 61% of our adult learners who live in Siler City and is within walking distance of three affordable housing apartment buildings now under construction.

We are delighted that Chatham Habitat will continue to share an office with us. On the day of the move, Chatham Habitat generously provided a moving truck and helpers who moved the majority – okay, *all* – of the boxes and furniture!

The building we now occupy began as the temple of St. Julia Catholic Church. In the nineties, this small parish experienced huge growth with the influx of immigrants from Mexico and Central America. When the parish moved, the building became the home of Chatham Pediatrics where many of the children of longtime residents as well as those newly arrived received care.

It now seems fitting that our new home continues its legacy of welcome and community service!



Rafia after attending her citizenship ceremony.

## Innovation Accelerates

Rafia grew up in the large city of Faisal Abad, Pakistan. She married in 1982 and followed her husband to the United States ten years after he arrived. In 2017 Rafia decided she wanted to become a citizen. "I took the citizenship test, and it was so difficult, I failed," Rafia said.

Later that year, Rafia was again motivated to take the test, but this time she attended citizenship classes with Chatham Literacy to learn the civics questions and improve her English. Her native Urdu language is vastly different from written and spoken English.

Although COVID-19 changed these classes to computer-based instruction, a team of

Chatham Literacy tutors continued teaching with Rafia using Zoom and Facetime and meeting outdoors with masks. This time, she passed with flying colors!

"Chatham Literacy helped me a lot," said Rafia, "The citizenship test was so easy this time around and I am so grateful that I've recommended my friends to the program as well."

Her goal as a new citizen is to sponsor a family member to come stay with her in the U.S. And as a new U.S. citizen, Rafia is excited to cast her first vote in the upcoming presidential election.

## Driving Toward Funding

COVID-19 has impacted Chatham Literacy funding and the lives of our adult learners. As a result, we have had to work quickly and creatively!

After months of diligent preparation for the 2020 Spring for Literacy Luncheon, we were forced to cancel the event. We offered refunds to those who purchased tickets, but in a generous display of support, the majority opted to donate the money to Chatham Literacy, which otherwise could have been a financial hardship – many, many thanks!

Not only was COVID-19 impacting Chatham Literacy and our nonprofit partners; the closures, layoffs, and coronavirus illnesses were having a devastating effect on our adult

learners. Many Chatham residents did not qualify for stimulus checks or unemployment benefits.

That's why Chatham Literacy joined with six other organizations, led by the Hispanic Liaison, to quickly implement the Chatham Solidarity Fund. Through appeals to our networks of supporters, the collaborative raised over \$200,000 and assisted more than 200 families (over 800 individuals) who were facing severe hardships.

Chatham resident Amelia said the Solidarity Fund was a godsend. "I was just out of surgery during that time and my husband was struggling to make ends meet due to his loss of hours," Amelia said. "I was really surprised

and happy when my husband told me he was able to buy me post-surgery medicine and was also able to pay rent for that month."

Chatham Literacy also applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, helping us keep our staff employed and Chatham Literacy on a more solid footing through the COVID-19 crisis.

As we move through this fiscal year we will continue to seek COVID-19-related funding opportunities, as well as support from our donors and grantors to help sustain our services to the community and maintain the viability of our organization.

## Ready, Success, Grow

In spring 2020, Chatham Literacy collaborated with the NCWorks Career Center and Chatham Economic Development Corporation (Chatham EDC) to implement a soft skills enhancement program, entitled "Ready, Success, Grow" (RSG). This course was designed to help adults who are in the job search or looking to improve in their current position.

"From our 2020 Industry Survey that Chatham EDC conducted right before COVID-19, soft skills training was in extremely high demand by our local employers," said Sam Rauf of Chatham EDC.

Sandra was working as part of an on-the-job-training program at the Chatham NCWorks Career Center when she enrolled in the RSG Program. Sandra said the online course immediately made a difference in her

life. "I learned more about the importance of professionalism, maintaining a positive attitude, having good lines of communication and networking in the workplace. I appreciated the importance of having an informative resume and learned that we must get comfortable with Zoom conferencing, electronic learning and virtual interviewing as these things are probably here to stay."

Sandra said that she gained the tools she needed to get back out into the workforce. "The course gave me good insight on how the office experience has changed and will continue to change."

Chatham Literacy will continue to offer the RSG Program and modify the classes as necessary to help individuals best navigate these changing times.



From her home, Sandra completed the first Ready, Success, Grow workshop.



Tutor, Joanne Caye, prepares for her class on Zoom.

# Tutoring in the Time of COVID-19

Those of us who tutor for Chatham Literacy love so many facets of the work. Building a relationship with our adult learners that is supportive, encouraging and challenging feeds the tutor as well as the learner.

Like others, I am adjusting the way I interact with and tutor my learners. I am now a teacher of technology as well as English. I see clearly the struggles our students face daily. Their schedules are even more demanding with children at home. When do adults get the chance to be students? Where do tutors fit into the picture?

There is no simple answer. Tutoring successfully in the time of COVID-19 takes real cooperation and humility from teacher and learner. Cooperation means that my schedule may be fluid. I must also be attuned to the demands

placed on students and alter expectations.

One of my English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) students, Mayra, was glad someone was there to encourage her. "Even though tutoring through technology has been hard to navigate at my age," Mayra said, "I've definitely seen improvement in my English-speaking abilities. My tutor is endlessly patient with me."

Like all tutors this year, I have to roll with the hiccups: the inconsistencies of WiFi, the worksheets that get lost in the mail, and the fact that I am learning new technologies along with my students.

I ask my students to take risks, grow, and celebrate learning. Now I must model the stretch necessary to keep the learning alive. Laughter and pride are just as real across a Zoom screen.

## Connecting the Community

Long-term residents of Siler City are no strangers to St. Julia Catholic Church. With an ever-growing congregation, many of them Latino, St. Julia seemed like the perfect opportunity for Chatham Literacy to reach future adult learners. St. Julia pastor, Friar Julio Martinez, greeted our vision of an educational collaboration with enthusiasm and excitement. As a former ESOL teacher, Friar Martinez knew the impact that Chatham Literacy could have on his congregation.

Students Arturo and Maria decided to take ESOL classes in an effort to become citizens. Due to their advanced age, they were hesitant to begin ESOL class. When they heard about ESOL classes at St. Julia, they were relieved

and comforted that classes were at their home church.

Along with Arturo and Maria, forty-five other adult learners were registered for ESOL class. Chatham Literacy trained ten volunteer tutors who taught seven classes that spanned from beginner to advanced English levels. Classes began in October 2019, transitioning to remote instruction in spring 2020. Arturo and Maria did not let technology get the better of them and continued to learn with their tutor via Zoom.

The couple said their English has improved and they now enjoy better communication with their grandchildren.

Along with Arturo and Maria, Chatham



Maria and Arturo kept learning from home.

Literacy looks forward to being back in the classroom at St. Julia Catholic Church, when it's safe.

**The importance of the work of Chatham Literacy cannot be overestimated. Their mission to promote literacy in Chatham County unlocks a world of opportunity for their clients and helps improve its citizens.**

**Margaret de St. Aubin,  
Wren Foundation**

## The Silver Lining

In the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, many wondered what the world would come to, and many on our Chatham Literacy Team were also concerned with the uncertainties of the days ahead. The What, How, Who, and Where questions loomed ominously. Then came the silver lining.

Now we are meeting as needed using our new-found friend, Zoom. We see each other in real time and carry out the functions of our regular committee and board meetings. We are also helping adult learners in remote areas of Chatham County not previously served, and instead of facing waiting lists, new adult learners are immediately involved with digital applications.

Who knew we would learn to use this pandemic as an opportunity for technical growth and advancement? Our lives have changed dramatically. The opportunities for conference calls, Board meetings, and technical programs have increased, along with our abilities to learn and grow.

We imagined, then embraced, the silver lining of gathering resources, sharing our strong assets and planning for a bright future. This is a new beginning of living and learning during a most unusual, challenging time where, by rallying together, we made the best, better!

# Take Action: Donate!

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, Chatham Literacy is transforming lives through literacy. There are many ways you can continue to help.

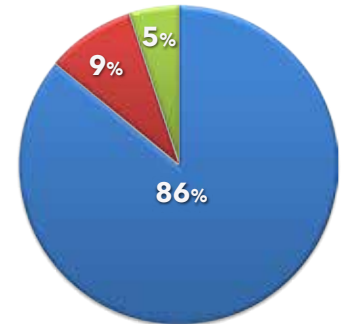
- + Make a financial **gift**, online or by mail.
- + **Become a sustainer** with regular monthly donations through your credit or debit card.
- + Do you have highly appreciated **stock**? We are now accepting charitable stock donations! This could allow you to avoid taxes on gains while also helping out Chatham Literacy.
- + Are you currently taking **required minimum distributions (RMD)** from your IRAs/401ks? Consider making a qualified charitable distribution to Chatham Literacy! This could be a more tax efficient way to donate!
- + **Shop for literacy** online through AmazonSmile.com or iGive.com.
- + **Donate your time as a tutor!** We will provide both face-to-face and distance learning.

# Appropriation of Funds

Fiscal Year 2019-20

**\$238,111**

- Direct Services \$204,790
- Management/General \$20,991
- Fundraising \$12,330



# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



**183**

**Adult Learners Served**  
(85% were women)



**74 (46%) Learners Transitioned to Distance Learning**

- 40 Using a Digital App
- 25 Participating in Remote Instruction
- 9 Doing Both



**3,100**

**Total Tutor Hours**



**106**

**Tutors Volunteered**

**28% of Tutors Transitioned to Remote Instruction**



**6**

**Became U.S. Citizens**



Marcel Pachnowski met with friends to enjoy and discuss Gurganus' book.

# Doing Things Differently

The COVID-19 restrictions may make it feel like life is standing still, but the Chatham Literacy Event Committee continues to move forward. For the 2020 Fall for Literacy Author Luncheon, we changed the traditional format to an alternative no-show phantom event, ensuring safety for everyone taking part, yet keeping it author/literature-oriented, which is our event tradition.

The usual event venue was replaced by the safety of the participant's HOME! The book, *A Fool for Christmas*, by well-known local author, Allan Gurganus, anchored the event and provided a gentle opening to a 2020 holiday season many fear will continue to separate

friends and family due to COVID-19.

Participants received their books prior to this non-event. Some said they read from the comfort of their own home, sporting pajamas while enjoying mugs of tea. Other participants said they were excited to read and discuss this heart-warming little book together with fellow book-loving friends via FaceTime and Zoom.

Moving towards our next event, Spring for Literacy 2021, Chatham Literacy has a blank slate. We may be limited by unknown COVID-19 circumstances, but unlimited by creativity in our quest for an enjoyable, yet safe activity for you – our valuable supporters!



Enthusiastic crowd enjoying the 2019 Fall for Literacy Luncheon at the Western Senior Center in Siler City.



Author and NC Poet Laureate, Jaki Shelton Green, signing her books for fans at the 2019 Fall for Literacy Luncheon.

## THANKS TO OUR GRANTORS AND SPONSORS: JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

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 United Way of Chatham County  
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Chatham Literacy is a United Way of Chatham County member agency and encourages participation in the current annual campaign.

### SPONSORS

**Fall for Literacy, Fall 2019  
 Featuring NC Poet Laureate  
 Jaki Shelton Green**

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**Spring for Literacy, Spring 2020, Featuring Cassandra King Conroy**

**Platinum Sponsor:**  
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“Mountaire Farms is a strong supporter of Chatham Literacy for the valuable help it provides to those who most need it.”

**Mark Reif,  
 NC Community Relations Manager  
 Mountaire Farms**

“Teaching people to read and write unlocks communication. The complexity of words is awaiting discovery and understanding by every new reader. That is the best gift.”

**Diana Hales,  
 Chatham County Commissioner**

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