



2024-25 Chatham Literacy Community Impact Report

Our Year

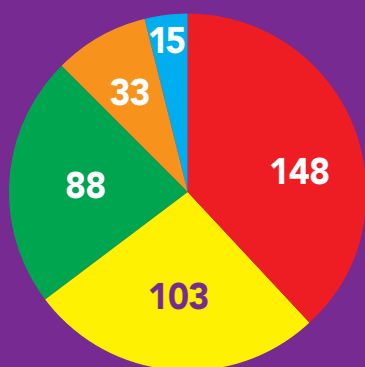
344
Learners served

85%
Achieved a short-term literacy goal

79
Tutors volunteered

33
Non-tutors volunteered

11,128
Volunteer hours,
valued at
\$387,143!



■ ESOL
■ Financial Literacy
■ Digital Literacy
■ Citizenship
■ Adult Goal-Based Education

Pathways to Opportunity: Unlocking Potential Through Literacy

A Letter From Vicki Newell, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

At Chatham Literacy, we believe literacy is the key that opens doors to new opportunities – educational, economic, and civic. Over the past year, we have grown in reach and impact, opening new pathways of opportunity for learners throughout our community. By building stronger programs, reaching more adults, and forging vital partnerships, we have helped create opportunities that change lives.

Expanding Opportunities for Learners

We are proud to share that we served 344 adult learners this past year – an increase of 63% – through the dedication of our remarkable team of 79 volunteer tutors. Together, they provided 5,934 instructional hours, an 8% growth in learning opportunities. These numbers represent more than statistics; they reflect lives empowered through knowledge and skills.

Our programs continue to evolve to meet real and pressing needs. This year, we launched a Digital Literacy program that helps learners build needed skills in using technology – navigating devices, communicating online, accessing information, and completing everyday tasks that increasingly require digital know-how. In today's economy, digital literacy is as critical as reading and math for accessing education, finding employment, and engaging fully in civic life.

Building Stronger Pathways with Partners

Our work is only possible because of meaningful partnerships across Chatham County. This year, we are especially proud of our strategic collaborations, which

have extended both our reach and our impact. Through our partnership with United Way and their Bold Goal initiative, we are working collaboratively with local nonprofits to provide families with services that empower them to succeed.

We are also energized by collaborations with local businesses, such as Brookwood Farms, which bring literacy directly into the workplace. By offering classes on-site, we provide employees with essential skills that strengthen their opportunities and enhance their workplace – helping literacy open doors for even more families and community members.

Beyond these, we continue to work closely with nonprofits, civic agencies, and other community organizations which help connect us to learners and extend educational access – especially in rural communities that are often underserved.

Gratitude for Our Community

Our success is only possible because of the extraordinary people who stand with us. To our staff, whose commitment and compassion drive this work; to our tutors and volunteers, who generously share their time and talent; and to our donors, whose support sustains everything we do – we are deeply grateful.

Thank you for believing in the transformative power of literacy. Together, we are creating pathways to brighter futures for individuals, families, and our community.

Warmly,

Mission Statement

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.



A Path Forward to Job Success

At Brookwood Farms, a family-owned business in Siler City, barbecue isn't the only thing being handled with care. Thanks to a partnership with Chatham Literacy, employees are offered new pathways to opportunity through English and computer classes hosted right at their workplace.

For many, like Rosemary G., coming to class after a long day of work is a challenge, but she sees the on-site classes as a chance to invest in herself and her future. "When I started, I was nervous because I didn't know if I could learn," she shared. "But little by little, I feel more confident. I can understand more, and I'm not afraid to speak." That growing confidence shows not only in the classroom, but also on the job, where communication is key to safety and teamwork.

Her classmate, Deann T., agrees. "Before, I stayed quiet because I didn't want to make a mistake," she said. "Now, I can talk with my supervisor and my coworkers. I even help interpret sometimes for other employees." For Deann, the lessons go beyond language. Learning computer skills has opened new doors: "I can use email now, and I'm not afraid when I see a tablet or a computer. It makes me feel proud that I know how to use them."

These results are exactly what Brookwood Farms hoped for when they began partnering with Chatham Literacy. Company leaders recognized that many talented employees were held back from promotions or new opportunities because of language or technology barriers.

By bringing classes directly into the workplace, they invest not only in their business, but also in their people.

"We have seen employees become more confident in reading, writing, speaking English, as well as taking on new roles and responsibilities," Katelyn Clark expressed. "Some have moved into positions with more leadership, such as helping with other employees on the computers." Stephen Wood, Operations Manager agreed, "We have seen increased confidence, engagement and digital inclusion. Our business is transitioning to tablets and a lot more technology. This is allowing employees to have the confidence to want to jump in and learn it, and that could also increase their chances of career growth. It's been really beneficial."

The results speak for themselves. Employees who once felt uncertain now step forward with confidence – ready to take on new roles, support their families, and engage more fully in their community. As Deann put it, "English gives me more freedom. I can do more for myself and for my children."

For Brookwood Farms, the partnership is about more than workforce development; it's about empowerment. For Chatham Literacy, it's proof that when community organizations and local businesses come together, opportunities multiply.

Through dedication, support, and the courage of learners like Rosemary and Deann, the pathway to opportunity is clear – and that pathway starts with literacy.



A Quest for Knowledge

Abimael, who everyone calls “Abi,” sits comfortably in a chair next to her Chatham Literacy tutor Lynett Tempest (“just call me Tempest”). They have worked together for three years. In that time, Abi has grown from someone with shaky English into someone who has become a U.S. citizen and who speaks her mind openly.

Abi's journey has not been easy or straightforward. She praises her parents for instilling a strong work ethic in her. “I have worked since I was seven years old,” she says, smiling proudly. Abi's first job in the U.S. was in New York, where she worked in a factory making fishing poles. She followed that with a stint in fast food. Several of Abi's relatives live in North Carolina, so she moved and got a job in the kitchen at Governors Club.

Early on, Abi considered studying to become a citizen but realized she had to learn English first. Tempest interjected, “Once Abi gets a plan into her head she

doesn't stop until she gets there.” She had previously left school in third grade in El Salvador, so going back to school as an adult was a huge step, but she was determined.

Abi heard about Chatham Literacy from coworkers who had taken classes with volunteer tutors and decided to reach out. She has never regretted taking that step. “The way Tempest teaches has helped a lot. Now I can ask questions at the clinic or at work.” Abi's children know Tempest and are proud of their mother's efforts to learn. “Chatham Literacy gives you everything! All you have to bring is your willingness,” Abi says with a smile on her face.

Abi's message to other potential learners is simple: “Don't be afraid. This is an opportunity. You establish friendships, (nodding at Tempest), you learn so much. Talk to the people at Chatham Literacy. They changed my life.”

Take Action: Donate Today!

Thanks to your generosity, Chatham Literacy transforms lives through literacy. Here are ways you can continue to help.

- Make a financial gift, by mail or online at chathamliteracy.org/donate.
- Become a sustainer with regular monthly donations through a credit card, debit card or ACH transaction.
- Make a charitable stock donation. This could allow you to avoid taxes on gains while also helping out Chatham Literacy.
- Make a donation to meet your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRAs/401ks.
- Include Chatham Literacy in your planned giving.
- Donate your time as a tutor! We offer both in-person and distance learning.
- Become engaged as a Board Director or Committee Member.



The Road to Having a Voice

Laura Valdez Escalante's family came to California from Mexico when she was eight. Her father obtained a green card through a program developed in the 1980s called State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants. It allowed individuals who were working in the U.S. without documents to obtain a permanent resident card. Slowly, the rest of the family was sponsored by him to obtain legal residence, which took many years.

Once Laura obtained her permanent resident status, she started to contemplate becoming a citizen. She admits that she got serious about taking classes and saving the money when the political climate began to change. Laura encouraged her sisters to start studying to become citizens as well.

Laura went to high school in the U.S., but wanted to learn more than just the civics questions necessary to pass the test. She wanted to understand politics. Laura's youngest daughter pushed her to pay attention to the news. "My daughter is really smart, and uses words and asks questions that I can't answer sometimes."

Laura discovered Chatham Literacy and soon started taking classes on Zoom with her tutor Joanne Caye.

She chose Zoom so that she could be at home with her daughters while taking classes. She really liked learning beyond the test answers. Joanne laughed and added that Laura's questions pushed her to broaden how she taught. "Laura wanted to know about the 14th Amendment, presidential immunity, state laws, how the Supreme Court works! It really kept me on my toes."

On July 28, 2025, Laura became the first of her siblings to pass the citizenship test. "The examiner was so nice. He said I passed my interview with flying colors. He said I answered some questions correctly that most people get wrong!" She completed the Oath of Allegiance ceremony on August 22, 2025. A major goal in her life had been met.

"Everything is possible when you become a citizen," Laura said. "Fight for what you want. Chatham Literacy gave me the tools I needed, and now I have more rights. People respect me more, and I finally have the power to vote."

Congratulations, Laura!



A Journey of Growth

Tutor Elaine Beck arrived at Chatham Literacy in 2024, looking for a new opportunity to connect with her community. Recently retired, she was hoping to donate her time to a learning center. At Chatham Literacy, she discovered the Adult Goal-Based Education program and met her student, Rossilyn B.

Referred by her grandmother, also a learner with Chatham Literacy, Rossilyn hoped to improve her reading and fluency skills. What she gained, however, was not only academic support but also a trusting relationship and an opportunity to develop her growing soft skills. For Elaine, "I thought I had retirement all figured out, but I didn't. I'm finding that human connections are really important and valuable to your life. It has meant a lot to get to know Rossilyn."

Rossilyn's progress has been steady and inspiring. With Elaine's patient guidance and encouragement, she not only improved her reading but also embraced the learning process. "I now feel confident reading out loud in a classroom setting," Rossilyn shared. "I realize that other students also make mistakes, and not everyone is perfect. It's ok to hit a bump or two." Their sessions became a space where questions were welcome, mistakes were part of the journey, and growth was celebrated.

For Elaine, the experience has been equally meaningful. "She's really made good strides. She's progressed a lot." Since working with Elaine, Rossilyn has become more composed in both classroom discussions and everyday conversations. Her growing confidence has allowed her to express herself more clearly, ask questions without hesitation, and actively participate in group settings. Now enrolled in Cosmetology classes, Rossilyn is applying the communication and critical thinking skills she's developed through tutoring to her coursework and hands-on training. With each step forward, she's gaining the knowledge and confidence needed to pursue her goal of earning a Cosmetology license and building a career she is passionate about.

Together, they represent what makes programs like Chatham Literacy so impactful: the power of connection, the importance of access to education, and the belief that you never stop learning. Whether it's working on new vocabulary or preparing for a career, growth begins with opportunity and thrives with support. As Rossilyn continues toward her Cosmetology license, and Elaine continues to volunteer, their story reminds us that change often starts with a single step – and someone willing to walk alongside you.

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