

Stronger Together

Tri-County Literacy Center
 Serving Warren, Washington, and Saratoga Counties

Hard Work Leads to GED Success & Promotion

Writing and Photos by Jessica McNavich



Scott and Sandy in the Travel & Biography Room at Crandall Public Library.

In May 2024, Scott walked out of the GED testing center convinced he had failed again. He felt that the test just hadn't gone his way. The room had been too dark, the proctor had shown up late, and the clock had run out with a few questions still left unanswered. On his seventh attempt to pass the math portion of his GED exam, he was all too familiar with this feeling. Frustrated, he reached out to his tutor, Sandy, to share the bad news.

"I'll try again in three months," he said. He told her he wasn't quitting, but he wasn't exactly celebrating either. But then he got a text. A self-described joker, he told Sandy that his score was a 144, which was one point below passing. Then he told her the truth. Scott had earned a 148, which was just enough to pass.

"It doesn't matter how much you pass by," Sandy said. "Passing is passing." And while he hadn't passed by much, it was enough to change his life.

Like many adult learners, life had moved quickly for Scott since he dropped out of school at 16. He had worked in a slate quarry, for the highway department, and eventually as a tractor-trailer driver at a correctional facility. He had a reputation for being hardworking and reliable, but without a high school diploma, his opportunities for advancement were limited. He liked his job, but the long hours driving back and forth from the North Country to New York City had started to take a toll, and he was ready for a change. When an opportunity for a promotion with better hours became available, there was only one thing standing in his way; he needed to get his GED.

He met the challenge head on, passing three of the four required tests fairly quickly. The math exam

was a different story. He had always had a hard time with math, and after 30 years out of school, the concepts on the exam were a distant memory, if he had learned them at all. Determined to succeed, he initially sought out group classes, attending at night after a long workday. But the pace was fast, and the material felt overwhelming after so much time away from school.

"I'd say, 'I don't get it,' and we'd already be moving on," Scott said. "You can't do that with math. It's building blocks. If you miss one, everything after it falls apart."

Eventually, a friend suggested he reach out to Tri-County Literacy, and he was matched with Sandy in October 2023.

Sandy has been a literacy volunteer for more than a decade. With a background in IT and training, Sandy was perfectly suited to help Scott with his goals. She not only brought years of experience and a love of math, but also a persistent and patient approach.

"She never gave up," Scott said. "Even when I wanted to. She just said, 'All right, we're staying right here until we get this. We're not moving.'"

Sandy and Scott met twice a week, usually at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls. Sometimes sessions ran long, but Sandy knew when to stop before burnout set in. She also insisted that Scott show all of his work, which was a source of tension in their early sessions.

"He didn't like me at first," Sandy laughed.

But Scott eventually saw why showing his work mattered. Writing out the process helped him to learn and made his mistakes visible. Slowly, concepts that he initially struggled with like variables, equations, and PEDMAS (orders of operation in equations) started to click.

"(Sandy) kept telling me, 'You gotta show your work, you gotta show your work,'" he said. "And I'm like, 'Mmm, this isn't working,' but then it did."

"There's a moment," Sandy said, "when you see the light bulb flicker. And then suddenly it's on."

Scott's hard work didn't stop with their tutoring sessions. Meeting one-on-one was a springboard for him to study every chance he got. He'd show up at work early to get in study time before his workday started. He sought out GED videos online and worked through practice tests on his own. When he got stuck on a concept, he'd write down questions to bring back to Sandy so they could work through them together.

"You're not going to pass if you don't put the time in," Scott said. "I don't care who you are. That math is hard."

As Scott continued with tutoring, his determination didn't go unnoticed. He shared his experience with friends and coworkers. Some reached out to Tri-County Literacy themselves. Others were already receiving tutoring and found motivation in comparing progress and encouraging one another. What began as one person asking for help has grown into a small community of learners supporting each other, a testament to how confidence and persistence can spread.

"When you go one-on-one with a tutor," Scott said, "it's just better."

Earning his GED finally removed the barrier that had been holding Scott back for years. With that requirement met, he became eligible for advancement and was recently promoted to Inmate Training Supervisor. That promotion brought more pay, better hours, and less stress, and also a sense of pride.

Scott's story is far from unique. Across our community, adult learners face the barrier of jobs that demand credentials that they never had a chance to earn, and years of believing they just aren't good at school. Access to patient, one-on-one support makes all the difference. Volunteers like Sandy give their time and encouragement to learners and take a tremendous amount of pride in their learners' accomplishments.

"People hear 'literacy' and think it's just learning to read," Sandy said. "But it's so much more than that. It's opportunity."

Honoring Carol Shippey

A group of volunteers recently gathered to decorate a tree for the 2025 Kiwanis Spirit in the Trees event. This year's tree was created in honor of our dear friend Carol Shippey, who passed away in September 2025. Over the years, Carol served our organization in many roles—tutor, trainer, assessor, and Board Treasurer—and was also one of our founding members. Her dedication and spirit continue to inspire us.



Pictured are Board Treasurer Dan Segrell, past Board Chair and tutor trainer Marilyn Bien, and volunteer Antoinette Jackson.

Scrabble Tournament

Wednesday, March 25th, 2026

Held at the West Glens Falls Fire Hall
 33 Luzerne Road, Queensbury, NY

To register visit our website:
<https://trilitcenter.org/scrabble-registration>

Growing Our Community

Kate Roos

The numbers tell an impressive story. By the end of 2025, 125 individuals came to us seeking assistance, our volunteer tutors contributed more than 5,300 hours of instruction, and nearly 100 tutors dedicated their time and expertise. These figures don't even include the many other volunteers who support TLC through fundraising and organizational efforts.

As a non-profit, these numbers matter — and we are deeply grateful for the community members whose commitment makes our work possible. But the "data" that truly reflects our success are the personal goals our students set and achieve: earning a GED, qualifying for a better job, showing their children the importance of literacy, reading a best-selling book for the first time, keeping accurate household records, singing in a choir by reading from a songbook, enrolling in college, checking a bus schedule, making a grocery list, following the sports page, completing income tax forms, and even writing a love letter—yes, a love letter.

Supporting the Tri-County Literacy Center strengthens our entire community.

Learner Pursues Nursing Dream

Rich March

Linda Muller loves to teach. For 35 years, Linda worked as a registered cardiac care nurse, primarily at Glens Falls Hospital. Part of her work entailed teaching new nurses, sharing her experiences, and conducting weekly lectures. When she retired, she wanted to continue helping others as a volunteer. Her interest in teaching and in literacy led her to the Tri-County Literacy Center.

During her six years tutoring for the Center, Linda has worked to improve the English literacy skills of learners from China, Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine. Her current learner, Anida, is from Laos. Anida wants to be a nurse, and the alignment of her ambition with Linda's expertise is a perfect match.

"She (Linda) has helped me a lot because she used to be a nurse," says 20-year-old Anida, flashing a broad smile. "She has helped a lot with suggestions and advice."

Anida and Linda have been working together as tutor and learner for about a year. Meeting at Crandall Library in Glens Falls, they use a computerized tool set with videos and practice tests from Mometrix, a test-prepping website, to prepare for the TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills) exam. In respect of the library's quiet ambience, the two sit in front of a computer and share a set of ear buds as they study the extensive test materials.

Passing the TEAS exam is a first step in Anida's journey to becoming a nurse. She wants to enter the Capital Region BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) adult practical nurse program, but to do so, she must first pass the TEAS exam.

The two-hour online exam includes questions on math, science, anatomy, English, and language usage. "It has things that are not typically studied in high school," says Linda. "We finished the English, the math, the anatomy. Now we're working on the science."

Test-takers read passages in English that probe their comprehension of complex topics. One set of questions, for example, assesses knowledge of the human body's axial and appendicular skeletal systems. The scope and depth of the questions are enough of a challenge, but learning English at the same time doubles the challenge.

"Everything is hard for me because I have to study the English," explains Anida. "The challenge is going to be for me to think about the material in English. I have to think about it in English and then translate into my own language. Then I have to understand it by myself."

Practice tests are helping Anida build confidence in her English comprehension skills. Anida also has a love for learning. After learning English, she would like to learn Spanish because she believes that knowing multiple languages will increase her opportunities.

"I love to study something new," she says. "English is too hard sometimes. But something that is hard will give you a lot of experience."

In addition to mastering English, Anida is learning to adapt to her new country. She arrived in the United States three years ago. Things were different from her life in Laos, particularly the Upstate New York winter weather.

"I don't like the weather sometimes because it's too cold for me," says Anida. "In my country they don't have winter. They don't have any snow. The winter is beautiful, but I don't like it."

Adapting to an English-speaking world also has been difficult. Anida enjoys talking with people and found it frustrating when she wanted to express herself. A friend told her about the Tri-County Literacy Center at Crandall Library. She completed the forms to become a learner and was paired with Linda. Anida currently works two restaurant jobs. She likes her current work, but she would also like to help people.

"I like to talk with other people," she says. "I would like to be a nurse because I love to help people."

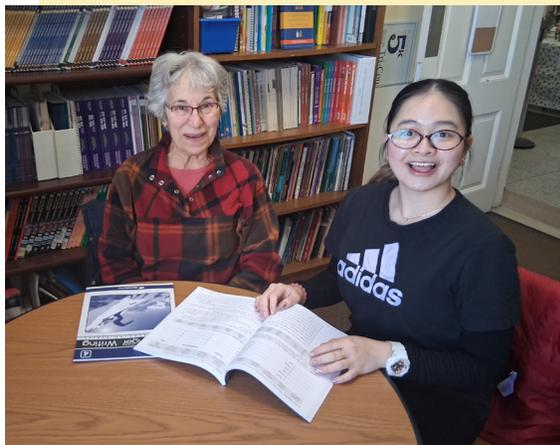
While passing the TEAS exam is a key step for fulfilling her nursing ambitions, it's not the only one. Anida and Linda are also working to secure her high school transcripts from Laos and ensure that they will qualify her for the BOCES nursing program.

"The biggest challenge is the logistical challenge of meeting all the requirements for the (BOCES) application," says Linda. "We have to go through a company to get Anida's high school records from Laos, and then they have to be translated. Then they have to see if they are appropriate."

In case the transcripts are not appropriate, Linda and Anida have an alternative plan to take the GED (General Educational Development) exam to qualify. "Plan B would be to take the GED," says Linda. "The only thing we haven't studied that's on the GED is American History. We would have to study American History and take the GED."

But for now, Linda and Anida are focused on the TEAS exam. If Anida passes that, and her high school and BOCES accepts the transcripts, she will begin the 10-month nursing program in August. The program runs Monday through Friday and encompasses 1,100 hours of classroom and clinical study and practice. Both Anida and Linda are aware that becoming a full-time student in a rigorous program like that will not be easy. But it's a challenge that both are eager to take on.

The whole thing about going to school full-time," says Linda, "that's a future challenge, and I'm sure Anida is up to that."



Linda and Anida studying in the TriCounty Literacy offices, photo by Kelly Crandall

Tutor Training Classes

**Wednesdays - April 8 to 29
6 to 8 p.m. Queensbury Campus**

The need for literacy tutors in our region is significant.

To register for the course, please contact the SUNY Adirondack Continuing Education Department at 518-743-2238 or email them at conted@sunyacc.edu

For more information or if these class times do not work for you, contact trilitcenter@gmail.com or call/text 518-793-7414

Celebrating the Art of Community Juried Art Show

Deadline for art submissions is April 3, 2026 by 4:00 pm.

All pieces are for sale and will be on display in the Friends Gallery in Crandall Library, 251 Glen Street, Glens Falls, NY from May 1 through May 29, 2026 anytime Crandall Library is open.

There will be a "Meet the Artist" reception, Tuesday, May 5, 2026 in the Gallery from 5-7 pm. Light refreshments will be served.

All work is for sale and proceeds will benefit both the artist and Tri-County Literacy Center. For more information visit our website at trilitcenter.org/art-show

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