

Annual Report 2024



Literacy transforms communities

Our vision:

We envision a society where everyone has access to life-changing learning.

Our mission:

To provide adults with personalized instruction in writing, reading, and English communication skills.

With the support of trained volunteer tutors, our adult learners achieve goals such as getting a better job, passing a driver's test, becoming a US citizen, earning a GED, and playing an active role in their children's education.



Art class participant, Ulster County Jail. D Pod, March 2024

A Word From Our Board President

Lately, I have been thinking about what motivates people to get involved, to want to make a difference, to vote, and to reach out to those in need. Three years ago, a friend asked me to get involved with Ulster Literacy Association (ULA). After researching the organization and meeting with the Executive Director and Board President, I was motivated to join the board of directors. While I hoped my nonprofit and board experience would be helpful, my motivation has always been an interest – no, a need – to make a difference.

What inspired me about ULA from the start was seeing the many people dedicated to advancing the cause of improving lives through literacy in Ulster County. I saw motivated tutors working to change the course of their learners' lives and learners seeking a better path forward. I saw staff members working tirelessly to inform our community about the work of ULA and a board of directors that helps oversee and guide the work. And, of course, our supporters who ensure we can reach our goals. All this was truly motivating.

I am proud to say that in 2024, we achieved several new milestones. We completed a strategic plan to guide our work for the next several years. We issued an annual report and held a spring fundraising appeal, both firsts. We added an art therapy class to our successful and effective program in the Ulster County Jail. Ulster Literacy Day inspired County Executive Jen Metzger to proclaim Ulster County Adult Literacy Week, helping to raise awareness of our programs. Kingston Mayor Steve Noble and the office of State Senator Michelle Hinchey seconded the proclamation, and Congressman Pat Ryan issued a certificate in support. The week culminated with county bookstores donating a portion of sales to ULA and with our own Teresa Detweiler winning the Story Slam competition organized by the Woodstock Book Festival.

I want to thank the ULA staff – Amy, Sabrina, Teresa, Lisa, Giuditta, Joann, and Margaret. I want to thank the board of directors – Marianne, Bruce, Debra, Luis, Antoine and Mike. We at ULA are deeply grateful for our valued donors, advisors, and partners. We know you have many demands for your time and money, and we are honored that you chose ULA. Our work continues. I am excited and motivated about the new year and in our work to build a more literate and empowered Ulster County.

Kristin Wenger
Board President

A Word From Our Executive Director

Reflecting on the 2023-2024 program year, I am delighted by the continued growth and impact of Ulster Literacy Association in our community. I want to thank the board of directors, staff, volunteers, donors, and partners who contributed to the achievements highlighted in this report. Your dedication and support enabled us to serve 376 adult learners last year, a 44% increase from the previous year.

Our Correctional Education Program at the Ulster County Jail expanded to include creative writing, art therapy, and GED preparation classes, thereby increasing opportunities for incarcerated adults to enhance their literacy skills, prepare for high school equivalency exams (GED), and engage in transformative social interactions. Our digital literacy program began to take shape with our Digital Literacy Navigators providing assistance with tasks such as accessing email, managing passwords, emailing attachments, identifying spam, and using new devices. We also dedicated time to planning for our future, developing a strategic plan that provides a roadmap to further our mission and ensure we can effectively support our adult learners and volunteer tutors while better connecting with community partners in the coming years.

The true highlights of our year, however, are the accomplishments of our adult learners, who with the support of their committed volunteer tutors:

- 62 learners completed at least 30 hours of instruction
- 50 improved at least one literacy level
- 16 obtained or improved their employment
- 12 obtained a library card
- 6 received a driver's permit
- 3 applied to community college
- 3 obtained US citizenship

Learners also reported that they learned how to use Google Maps, take a bus for the first time, understand medical insurance forms, and enroll in a retirement savings plan. Other learners also began reading for pleasure, completing books such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *The House on Mango Street*, *Beezus and Ramona*, and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent*.

While it is important to reflect on this past year's achievements, perhaps the most valuable achievement is the time and energy our tutors and learners spend toward building a stronger community. Cate Berg, a tutor who was interviewed for this report, said it best: "It expands your world, and you can help someone expand their world by being able to read, speak and understand." Thank you to Cate, and to all of our tutors and learners, for showing us how building relationships through literacy can truly transform communities.

Amy Lenard
Executive Director

Our Programs

One-to-One Tutoring

We offer **Basic Literacy** instruction to adults who speak English and wish to improve their reading and writing skills, and **English Literacy** instruction to adults who want to learn English.

We are the only provider of one-to-one literacy tutoring for adults in Ulster County. Our program matches a learner with a trained volunteer tutor. Together, they create a personalized plan for their sessions that is tailored to the learner's personal and professional objectives. Meetings are arranged at a mutually convenient time and location, enabling us to support learners who have work schedules, transportation limitations, or other barriers that prevent them from attending classes elsewhere.

Helping all adults reach the equivalent of a 6th grade reading level is likely to generate an additional \$2.2 trillion annually to the US economy.

Barbara Bush Fund for Family Literacy



Erin Schulman, a volunteer tutor, is meeting with her learner. Erin has worked with four adult learners since 2019. Last year, 105 tutors volunteered 2,245 hours to the One-to-One Program.

English for Parents Classes

We provide classroom instruction for parents and caregivers, with on-site childcare available for young children. Classes take place in Ulster County public schools, libraries, churches, and community centers. Learners work with a lead teacher and a team of volunteer tutors to develop their English skills, empowering them to engage more actively in their children's education and community.

Teresa Detweiler, a teacher, remarks: "When I first visited an Ulster Literacy English class, I remember watching Linda, Ann, and Margo and marveling at how these people who were taking time out of their day to volunteer had built such lasting connections with the students in the class by creating a welcoming classroom environment. That's when I knew that Ulster Literacy was the place for me."



Teresa Detweiler teaches one of our English classes at the *Broadway Bubble* in Kingston, NY. Learners from twenty-four different countries attended our classes last year, in addition to twenty-two children who accompanied parents or caregivers who would otherwise not have been able to participate due to a lack of childcare.

A parent's literacy is the number one predictor of a child's future academic success, outweighing other factors such as family income and neighborhood.

US Department of Health and
Human Services

Our Programs

Correctional Education Program, Ulster County Jail

Ulster Literacy Association's relationship with the Ulster County Jail started 21 years ago. After an interruption due to the pandemic, our classes resumed in April 2023 conducted by Ulster Literacy's lead teachers, assisted by volunteer tutors.

Our **GED Program** is intended for adults over the age of twenty-one who have not obtained their High School diploma. Certified instructors teach classes for 10 hours each week supplemented by volunteer tutors who provide additional instruction. The **Writing Workshop** encourages individuals to use creative writing as a way to express themselves in a manner that encourages introspection. During each weekly workshop, participants discuss a topic prior to writing about it and then share their writing with the class. Writing topics have included appreciation, empathy, ambivalence, loneliness, and resilience. Finally, the **Art Therapy Workshop** focuses on self-expression through art and conversation. Participants sketch something inspired by a print or particular theme introduced by the instructor. They then go on to discuss their aesthetic decisions with the instructor and class. Conversation and encouragement are core parts of each class.

Ultimately, our desire should not be to seek to be loved but rather love one another as if no one else mattered.

Following this way of life will inspire others to do and live right.

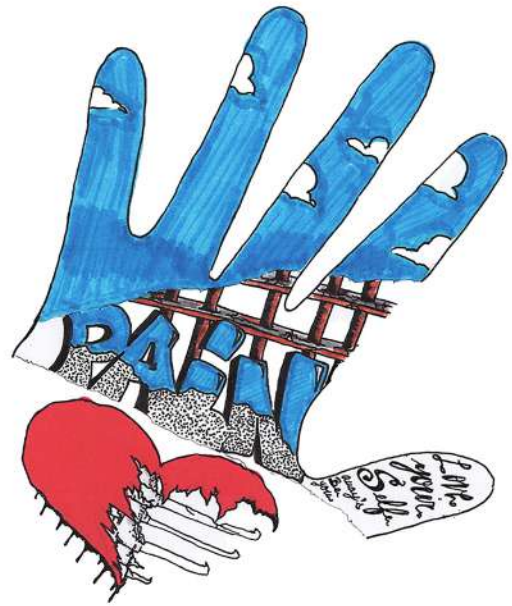
Participant in G Pod
October 2024

Appreciation

*When it was hard
We had you
Your take us away from reality
Into a small and peaceful room
Where you always changed our mood
Smiles and laughs to fill our blues
It's always good when we see you*

*Some people are good
However you're the best
I thank you for being here
As we go through our dark and
lonely quest*

Participant in I Pod
October 2024



My Past and Future Hands

In a session of the **Art Therapy Workshop** participants discussed the idea of second chances. They were then encouraged to create artwork that conveyed a vision for their future within the outline of a human hand.

Some participants, however, chose to look to their past as a way to express their desire to leave it behind.

A Conversation Between Kristin Wenger and Cate Berg

Cate is a tutor with Ulster Literacy Association. Kristin is ULA Board President

Kristin: How did you learn about Ulster Literacy Association?

Cate: I learned about ULA 20-odd years ago. I don't know where I heard about it. I was aware that people needed to learn how to read, and this was a great thing in the community. I tutored two people back then but then left for 20 years. Now I have time to take on a learner.

Kristin: Was there anything specific that prompted you to reach out after taking that break?

Cate: Long ago, I was a college English instructor, not ESL or anything like that. It was basic composition and literature classes. I realized that I missed teaching, and I was also aware of a lot of Spanish speakers coming into our country. I felt like I had something to give. I also knew I would gain a lot from working with someone one-on-one.

Kristin: Did you have any concerns before you began tutoring?

Cate: I didn't have any big concerns. The team at ULA made me feel comfortable. I just needed to understand what had changed in the 20 years since I last tutored. I did want a learner who would work as hard as me. That is what makes a good match.

Kristin: What are you working on with your learner?

Cate: We are using the *Ventures* books as a basis. Teresa, a ULA staff member, guided us on where to start as she had my learner in a class. My learner is very motivated. She does the work in the books but also on her own. And she'll bring in questions from her life. I also use an English-language newspaper, and we read through articles. Or she will want to work on her listening skills because her written and reading skills are above what she can hear and understand. I let her guide the work. There have been times we've spent 45 minutes on questions she encountered outside the classroom.

Kristin: What kind of questions does she have?

Cate: It's more like, what does this idiom mean? Or why does my husband keep saying, "What's the matter?" She doesn't always comprehend where something is

coming from. We also talk about Ecuadorian culture versus here. She had been working in childcare, but now she's starting a job as a home health aide. We spoke about wages and how things are done here versus there, just anything to get her talking. She's always saying, "give me more homework."

Kristin: Do you discuss her specific goals?

Cate: Yes. She has an incredible resume. She was in finance back in Ecuador, and had a high-level job working at a multi-million-dollar factory. Here she has been working in childcare. When she got her work permit she was trying to find comparable work here, but she gradually realized that her English skills were not quite there yet. Her abilities are stellar. I would hire her in a minute for any finance role in a company; but because she'd have to deal with vendors and things like that, over the phone, she's not there yet. My goal is to get her talking and have conversations. It could be about anything - her daughter, who is studying to be a doctor, decorating for Christmas, or having conversations with her husband.

Kristin: How has the experience compared to what you expected?

Cate: It's much richer than I thought it would be. I see that to watch someone blooming into a new life is really rewarding. I also love that I get to experience her culture, as I have not traveled much. Also, I'm a writer but I have to look up words because she'll ask me what does this mean. For example, we were discussing withholding because we were reading an article on laws in the United States for work, and I was trying to explain withholding, like you withhold taxes. But I said you can also withhold affection. And she said, "What?" And you know, going into it makes me more aware of the English language as well, having to assist someone in getting more fluent. So, it's been very rewarding. The team here at ULA - Theresa and everybody's been wonderful. I feel like they have my back.

Kristin: I'm getting the sense from you that this experience is mutually beneficial.

Cate: I mean, we're not friends outside of here, but I care about her. She's a very warm person, and it's just wonderful to meet a new person, just on that level, and to make the commitment that we meet each week for two hours.

Kristin: How do you know you're making an impact?

Cate: I'm looking for her feedback. Today, she was just really happy to understand certain phrases that didn't make sense to her. I remember earlier, I said, "Guess what?" And she said, "What does that mean? Guess what?" And I tried to explain that it's usually something good, like, guess what? - I got a job. Guess what? - I won the lottery. And now she uses it. She just texted me and said, "Guess what?" I feel those small things. I'm not saying that I'm the best tutor, but we get along well. She says she appreciates how I correct her, and I try to do it with kindness, but I want her to be understood more and more and to get more confidence.

Kristin: What would you tell someone who's thinking about becoming a tutor at ULA?

Cate: Do it! Try it! There's a lot of support. The training is now online, and it is very well organized. The team here is great. They provide a lot of support. I've gone to Teresa asking how do I teach this? And she's given me something to help me figure out how to present a topic. This experience just widens your life. It's just very fulfilling. And it's fun.

Kristin: Is there anything else you want me to know?

Cate: I appreciate the work that Ulster Literacy does. It's an extraordinary community resource for people, and I think it's all about connecting people and removing any stigma. You realize that people are people; if you have one thing you can give, they also give you something. It expands your world, and you can help someone else expand their world by being able to read, speak, and understand.

Kristin: Thank you so much. Thanks for chatting with me, and thanks so much for what you do.

"If one is seeking a truly satisfying, fulfilling, rewarding experience, I cannot recommend better. Tutors are needed here. You won't be disappointed. I promise"

*Pete Donnolo
Volunteer Tutor*



Cate Berg, a volunteer tutor since 2024, meeting her learner.

Accomplishments in 2024

We have **376** adult learners,
a **44%** increase from last year

52% enrolled in **English Literacy** instruction
(from 30 different countries)

48% enrolled in **Basic Literacy** instruction

There are **102 learners** enrolled in
One-to-One Tutoring

There are **110 learners** enrolled in
English for Parents classes

There are **164 learners** enrolled in
The Correctional Education Program

We have **105 active tutors**

Our volunteers donated **3,240 hours**



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE *Proclamation*



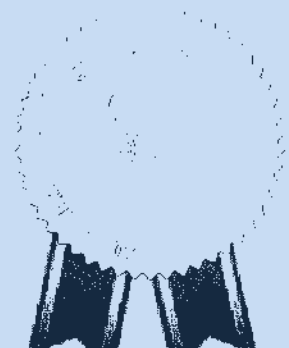
- WHEREAS** *in New York State, approximately 3.9 million residents are working towards improving their literacy skills, with 25,000 of these dedicated individuals residing in Ulster County; and*
- WHEREAS** *Adult Literacy is essential to the prosperity, well-being, and empowerment of our community; and*
- WHEREAS** *the strength and vitality of our local economy and democracy depend upon a literate community; and*
- WHEREAS** *the Ulster Literacy Association provides adults with personalized instruction in reading, writing, and English communication skills, fostering growth and confidence; and*
- WHEREAS** *the Ulster Literacy Association supports nearly 400 learners and 100 volunteer tutors, including 22 children who attend classes with parents or caregivers who would otherwise not have been able to participate due to lack of childcare, and continually expanding services to meet the growing needs of Ulster County; and*
- WHEREAS** *the Ulster Literacy Association has re-established its Correctional Education Program at the Ulster County Jail, providing creative writing, art therapy, and GED preparation classes to more than 165 participants over the last year, thereby offering transformative opportunities for incarcerated adults; and*
- WHEREAS** *the Ulster Literacy Association's efforts have fostered a more inclusive and supportive community, where every individual has the opportunity to improve their literacy skills and overall quality of life; and*
- WHEREAS** *the Ulster Literacy Association envisions a society where everyone has access to transformative learning opportunities;*

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jen Metzger, Ulster County Executive, do hereby proclaim September 16-22, 2024 as

ULSTER COUNTY ADULT LITERACY WEEK

throughout Ulster County, New York, and I encourage all businesses and community members to take advantage of the valuable resources offered by the Ulster Literacy Association and to support its programs by becoming volunteer tutors.

THE HONORABLE JEN METZGER



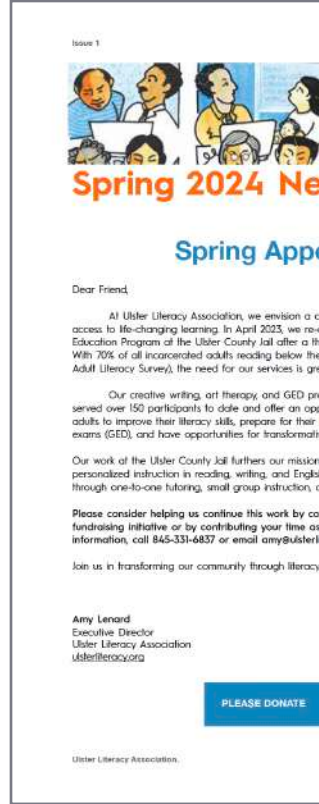
Accomplishments in 2024



Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger is accompanied by Kristin Wenger, Board president, and Amy Lenard, ULA Executive Director.

Ulster County Adult Literacy Day Proclamation

On September 16, County Executive Metzger proclaimed the start of Ulster County Adult Literacy Week at the Kingston Library. Kingston Mayor Steve Noble and State Senator Michelle Hinchey joined the event with their own proclamations.



Spring Newsletter

We published our first Spring Newsletter. We encourage further participation from our volunteers and donors.



Tutor Appreciation Day

We celebrated the contributions of our volunteer tutors with a luncheon held at Mohonk Mountain House in June.



Teresa Detweiler absorbs the news that her story won first place in the Woodstock Story Slam.



Amy Lenard, Executive Director, makes the case for supporting Ulster Literacy Association.

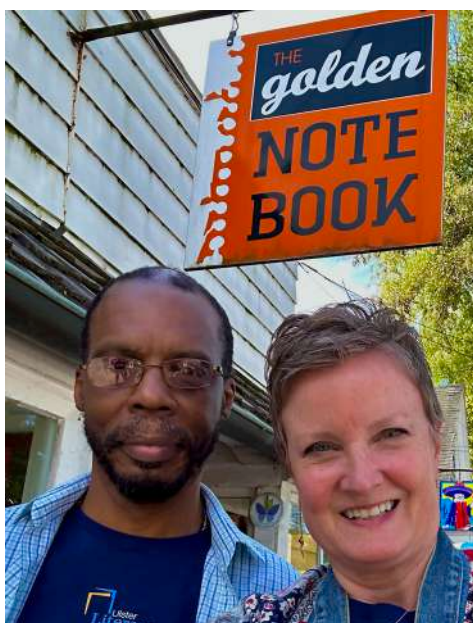
Woodstock Story Slam

To raise awareness of our programs, this year we were among the sponsors of the event. It was a fitting way to close Ulster County Adult Literacy Week.

ing Newsletter to
ation among our



Volunteers representing ULA at county bookstores: Margaret Delfino and her son at Inquiring Minds, New Paltz; Kristin Wenger and Antoine Hepkins at The Golden Notebook, Woodstock.



Amy Lenard and her daughter, Teresa Detweiler, and a learner talked about ULA on Radio Kingston.

Ulster Literacy Day

The 3rd edition of Ulster Literacy Day took place on September 21. Nine bookstores from across the county joined our effort to raise awareness of how literacy transforms lives, and each donated 10% of their sales on the day to ULA.

Financial Information

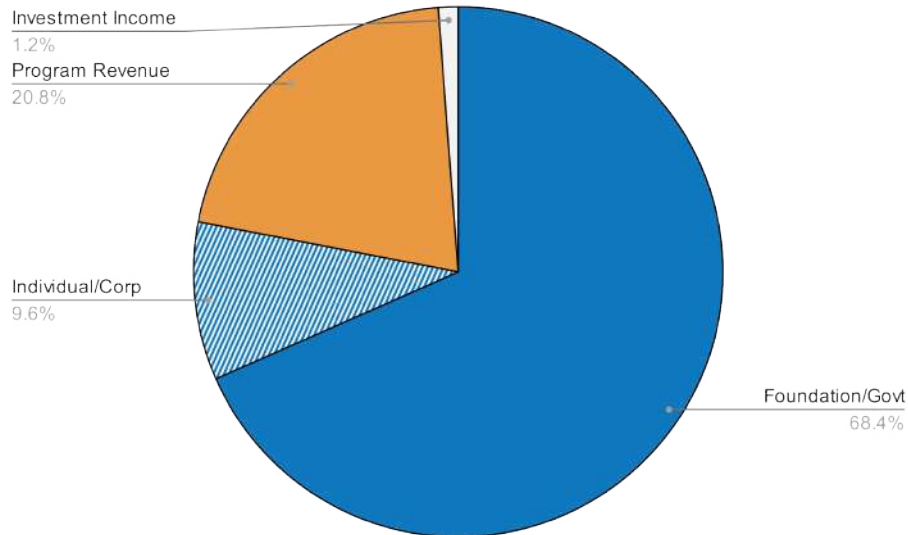
Revenue

Foundation / Government Grants	\$200,459
Individual / Corporate Donations	\$ 28,253
Program Revenue	\$ 60,841
Investment Income / Returns	\$ 3,554
Total Revenue / Support	\$293,107

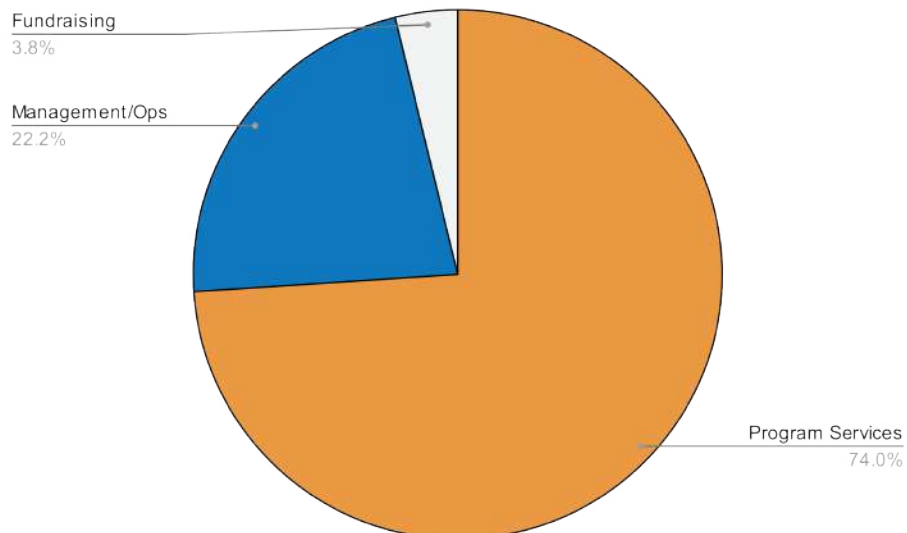
Expenses

Program Services	\$223,038
Management / Operations	\$ 67,027
Fundraising	\$ 11,488
Total Expenses	\$301,553

Revenue



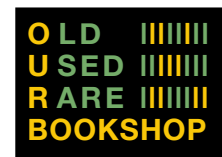
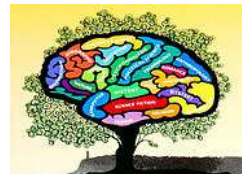
Expenses



Our Supporters



COUNTY BOOKSTORES PARTICIPATING IN ULSTER LITERACY DAY



Our Individual and Business Donors

Book Level

Anonymous
Marianne Berry
Merle Cosgrove
Timothy & Susan Delaney
Janis M. Leas
Albert Penick Fund
Jane & Thomas Struzzieri
Kristin & Kenneth Wenger

Chapter Level

Eli Basch
P. Gail Bradney & Lowell
Miller
Kathleen & William Cloonan
Robert Dittus
Sam Freed
Rachel Gans
The Golden Notebook
St. Gregory's Episcopal
Church
Robert Hlavaty
Inquiring Minds Bookstore
Rachel & Bruce Jackson
Kvistad Foundation
Stephen MacDonald
Dominick Mercurio
Thomas A. Polk & Elizabeth
W. Jordan
Charles Roszko
Rough Draft Bar & Books Inc
Cindy Sato & Luis F. Rueda
Saugerties Lions Club
Mercedes Velasco

Paragraph Level

Marie Barnes
Chris & Sheila Beall
Patricia J. Berlanga
Blue Heron Books NY
Tom Bullard
Neal Calvin
Catskill Hudson Bank
Katherine Crost
Tory Ettliger
Rachel Gans
Richard Goldman
Patricia Goodwin
Gunther/Klein Family Fund
H. Houst & Son, Inc.
Half Moon Books
Harriet Iles
Indigo Mist Books
Ryan Lynch
Kaden Maguire
Robert Mance
Gary Marder
Mirabai Books
Debra Moskowitz & Elin
Menzies
Mary & Robert Netter
OUR Bookshop
Ann Patty

Paragraph Level (cont'd)

Donald Pollock
Jeffrey Rubin
Sarah Ryan
Manuel Blas Sanchez
Marc A Schain
Valerie Spreng
Eileen Sweeny
Timely Signs
Judith Turkel & Jennifer Costley
Lawraine Valle
Susan R. VanParys
Vision Excel Eyecare

Sentence Level

Michael L. Angstrom
Evelyn Baer
Barbara Bash
Rena Blumenthal
Boiceville Pharmacy, Inc.
Susan Botti
Fredda & Timothy Brennan
Anna M. Brett
William Brinnier
Patrick & Anne Buonfiglio
David & June Cartmell
Robert Claus
Richard E. & Dianne T. Craig
Carol Davis
Tina DeGiuli
Robert & Lynn Dennison
Jennie W. Fleck
Lynn Formica
Daniel D. Gagnon
Mitchell & Susan Gordon
Raleigh Green
Linda Greenow
Hannaford Community
Bag Program
Herbert Hekler
Deborah & Richard Heppner
Atilla Ilkson
Joseph M. Ingarra, Esq., P.C.,
Nancy Jainchill, Ph.D.
Rose Jambrone
Robert Kane
Marianne Kearney
Stephanie Kearns
Maureen Keegan
Lucinda Khaus
Cheri LaGrange
Bruce Levine
JoAnn Margolis
Una & Stewart Maurer
Maria Mendoza
Elizabeth Miller
Abby S. Newton
Joyce D. & Robert L. Nicol
Lisa Olsen
Sandra & Matthew John Ostoyich
Kristine Pedersen
Amee & Warren Peterson
Nancy Piore
Barbara Pokras

Sentence Level (cont'd)

Maxanne Resnick
Donna Rutlin
Karen Sato
Michael Sayre
Erin Schulman
Toby Schulman
Gayle Schumacher
Linda Sherwin
David Smilow
Paul & Cynthia Sonnenberg
Myra Sorin
John Stone
The Bicycle Rack
Puja A.J. Thomson
Charles Townsend
United Reformed Church of
Rosendale
Susan R. Vanparys
Christine Van Benschoten
Jeffrey S. & Maureen K. Viglielmo
Cari Weisberg

Word Level

Barbara D. Arrindell
Nelsie Aybar-Grau
Jeanette M. Baggot
Stephen Bangert
Kathleen Banks
Robin Berger
Pasquale A. & Rae F. Bottino
Astrid Cernos
Carol Davis
Paul Delisio
Linda Diamond
Kasia Donohue
Theodore Griese
Elizabeth Horn
Tara Johannessen
Tessa Kleeman
Kara LaComb
Howard Leibovitch
Sarah Mecklem
John A. Mower
Gaela Pearson
Riva Pearson
Joseph & Sandra Perna
Heather Robinson
Judy Alexander Samoff
Kathy & W. K. Shuter
Carsten Warnes
Karen & Paul Wereszynski
Michael Yeager

Thank You!

We are grateful for our donors whose generous support make our work possible, and to those who provided in-kind services totaling over \$10,000.

Staff

Amy Lenard	Executive Director
Lisa Hantes	RSVP Program Director
Sabrina Joray	Program Manager
Teresa Detweiler	Volunteer Coordinator
Giuditta Tucci	Outreach Coordinator
Joann Dayton-Wolf	Correctional Education Program Coordinator
Margaret Delfino	AmeriCorps VISTA Literacy Leader

Board of Directors

Kristin Wenger	President
Marianne Berry	Vice President
Robert Jackson	Treasurer
Debra Benn	Secretary
Luis F. Rueda	Director
Antoine Hepkins	Director
Mike Sayre	Director



Ulster Literacy Association
480 Aaron Court
Kingston, NY 12401
845.331.6837
www.ulsterliteracy.org
info@ulsterliteracy.org
f @ulsterliteracy

