



SUMMER 2023

# WORD *on the* STREET

**INTRODUCING  
TASHA EVERMAN**  
Your New Board President!

**COMPUTER SKILLS**  
For Life

**MEET A TUTOR**  
Go, Ellie, Go!

**ANNUAL AWARDS  
CEREMONY**  
Brings Tutors, Students, and  
Community Together

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Brings Together Lincoln  
Literacy Family

# Board of Directors

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## Introducing Tasha Everman, Our New Board President!

*Dear Members of the Lincoln Literacy Community,*

I had the opportunity to meet many of you at the Open House last month, but if we have not yet had the opportunity to meet, I sincerely hope we can rectify that soon. In the meantime, allow me to introduce myself as Lincoln Literacy's new board president. It is with immense honor and excitement that I take on this role, and I am eager to contribute to the remarkable work being done by this organization.

My connection to Lincoln Literacy is not new. Over 30 years ago, my journey began as I taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to Indo-Chinese refugees at the Phanat Nikhom Refugee Processing Center in Thailand.

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# Computer Skills for Life

**Coordinator Natalia Bohuta with students during a class.**

Lincoln Literacy recently expanded its computer literacy offerings, creating three classes that each meet twice a week. As a result, enrollment has jumped significantly from the spring semester.

Ukrainian Services Coordinator Natalia Bohuta is one of the teachers, and she said that merging computer skills and English-language learning has enabled students to improve in both areas.

Jayanta and Sarmistha Chakraborty have a computer at home, but only recently have they made good use of it.

The couple, from Mumbai, India, took a computer literacy course this summer at Lincoln Literacy.

“In class, the teacher is very disciplined. In our house we have an iMac but we are diverted,” Sarmistha Chakraborty said.

“They are teaching us the basics; what is hard disk, what is monitor, what is click.”

Another student, Taina Castillon, immigrated from Haiti three months ago. “I really like the computer class,” she said.

After just a few classes she created a 14-slide PowerPoint presentation about healthy foods that included text, photos, and a variety of transitions between slides.

The class not only makes students more job-ready but also helps them feel more connected to their new community.

“The teachers are very nice and I have learned many things,” Jayanta Chakraborty said.





## Meet a Tutor: Go Ellie, Go!

Ellie at the Division III national meet in Rochester, NY

It was a question Ellie Akough didn't expect.

The Lincoln Literacy spring intern was working with a five-year old who had previously been very tight-lipped, but the little girl's curiosity was too great, so she looked up at Akough and asked, "Why are you so big?"

Akough, who grew up in Elkhorn, is taller and stronger than the average tutor, with abilities she put to use becoming a three-time state champion discus and shot put thrower in high school. She likely would have added to that total but the Covid-19 pandemic cancelled her senior season.

Akough, 20, earned a track scholarship at Oregon — one of sport's elite institutions — but Akough said being an athlete was more like a job.

"I didn't feel like there was anyone in my corner," Akough said. "I didn't have any mentors, and with Covid, I couldn't connect with my professors. I was able to make friends and focus more on school, and it was hard to be at a school that didn't prioritize that."


Akough transferred to Nebraska Wesleyan last summer, and though the facilities and the level of competition were a step down, she fell in love with the campus and her professors.

And she's still very good at hurling large objects a long distance. At the Division III National Championship Meet in May, Akough finished fourth in the discus and eighth in the hammer throw, earning her All-American honors in each event.

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# Annual Awards Ceremony Brings Tutors, Students, & Community Together

A photograph of two men standing indoors. The man on the left, Shafi Karwan, is wearing a dark blue polo shirt and holding a certificate. The man on the right, Bryan Seck, is wearing a blue t-shirt under a dark blazer and glasses, smiling. The certificate Shafi is holding is from 'LINCOLN LITERACY' and mentions 'Learner of the Year' and 'In recognition of all his effort, dedication, and great progress as an adult learner.'

Shafi Karwan receives his Learner of the Year award from Bryan Seck. We've just hired him as a driver!

On June 17, a standing-room only crowd gathered at Pilgrim Hall in First Plymouth Church to celebrate our Annual Awards. Our 150+ volunteer tutors and 1,100+ students work together to learn across all levels of English and workplace skills. This event celebrates everyone and highlights the work of some outstanding tutors and students.

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A photograph of a large group of people, including students, tutors, and staff, gathered around a long table covered with a blue cloth. The table is laden with various food items, including bowls of salad, trays of bread, and containers of dips. People are standing and talking, some looking at the food. The atmosphere appears to be a social gathering or potluck lunch.

Students, tutors, and staff enjoying a global potluck lunch.



# Open House Brings Together Lincoln Literacy Family



Open house attendees gather, including Tasha Everman (back third to the left).



The front of the new Lincoln Literacy building, located at 1023 Lincoln Mall

On June 29, over 200 people gathered to celebrate the Open House for Lincoln Literacy's new building at 1023 Lincoln Mall. Tom Beckius from the City Council, Board Chair Tasha Everman, Capital Campaign Chair Janet Eskridge, former student Isai Gonzalez, and Jennifer Cintani from the Cintani Family Foundation all shared remarks to the gathered crowd of tutors, students, staff, current and former board members, elected officials, and community members.

Tom Beckius spoke about the City's support of newcomers and its \$700,000 ARPA grant to Lincoln Literacy that kick-started our campaign. This allowed us to purchase the building, begin renovations, and establish a maintenance reserve.

Isai Gonzalez shared his inspiring story of coming to Lincoln without knowing English and learning through our classes. He went on to earn a computing degree from Southeast Community College and is now an IT professional for the Nebraska Department of Labor.

Jennifer spoke about her family's long-time commitment to Lincoln Literacy and to helping our newest neighbors learn English, find employment and connect to their community. After the speakers, attendees visited the building's first and second floors. The new building provides improved office space for staff and four classrooms to serve our students — all in the same neighborhood where many of our students live.

Thank you to everyone that attended! If you would like a tour, please contact the office at 402-476-7323. If you would like to make a donation to help us reach our goal of \$1.9 million, please visit [LincolnLiteracy.org](https://LincolnLiteracy.org) to donate or mail your donation to 1023 Lincoln Mall, Ste. 104, Lincoln NE, 68508.



# Annual Awards Ceremony (continued)

Joel Antonio Lopez Lopez receives the Mayor's Award for Language & Literacy Achievement.



Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird (top right) provided the opening remarks and talked about how Lincoln welcomes our newest neighbors as our friends, neighbors, and co-workers. She also presented the Mayor's Award to Joel Antonio Lopez Lopez.

Joel and his siblings arrived in Lincoln from Guatemala in 2016 and he worked in restaurants, in concrete construction, and later in roofing to support his family here and people back home. He and his siblings started taking classes at Lincoln Literacy in 2022 and attend six classes a week as their work schedule allows.

In six months, he gained two levels in his English skills — which is amazing!

Joel now owns his own business, Family Roofing, along with his siblings and cousins. Joel is an amazing example of an immigrant coming to our community in search of a better and new life, taking care of his family, learning English and a new skill, and now starting his own business.

It was inspiring to hear about each person's journey to Lincoln Literacy. And we ended with an epic potluck lunch with food from all over the world.

## 2023 Annual Award

### *Winners*

#### **Judy Ellingson Award for Excellence in Tutoring:**

Matt Hammons and Sue Petersen Nedved

#### **Lois Poppe Award for Dedication in**

**Volunteering:**  
Mark St. Clair

#### **Tutors of the Year:**

CJ Zimmer and Jeri Brandt

#### **Tutoring Team of the Year**

**Award:** Bernadette and Paul Korslund

#### **Little Learners of the Year:**

Neda Alizay and Kira Hlyniuk

#### **Mayor's Award for Literacy and Language**

**Achievement:**  
Joel Antonio Lopez Lopez

#### **Learner of the Year:**

Shafi Karwan

#### **Student Leadership Award:**

Aya Abdelwahed and Mariam Al Mansour

# Paid internship available for spring semester!

Are you or someone you know excited about how Lincoln Literacy is impacting the community? We're looking for interns to join our team.

Beginner class at Trinity Lutheran



Email your resume to  
[info@lincolnliteracy.org](mailto:info@lincolnliteracy.org)  
to apply in the spring!

## Meet Ellie (continued)

"I came away happy, especially with hammer," she said.

She also excelled in the classroom where she finished her degree in gender studies in just three years.

"I wish I didn't speed through my degree; I wish I had another year there," Akough said. Her internship with Lincoln Literacy has ended but her time as a tutor has not.

Akough continued to teach an online class this summer while she pondered her career future.

"I love Lincoln Literacy," she said. "I really like teaching, and I learn probably as much as they do. The students really want to be there."

Looking for a way to give?  
Scan the QR code or go to  
[LincolnLiteracy.org/Ways-To-Give](https://LincolnLiteracy.org/Ways-To-Give)







Tutor CJ Zimmer teaches Intermediate English at Bennett Martin Library.

With 150+ volunteer tutors, 1,100+ students, and 100+ classes at 17 locations, Lincoln Literacy has continued to strengthen our community by teaching English Language and workforce skills for 51 years. We're always looking for volunteer tutors to lead one-on-one and small-group classes.

## HELP US HELP OTHERS THRIVE

Volunteer and  
change lives forever!  
Visit [LincolnLiteracy.org/  
Tutor-About](https://LincolnLiteracy.org/Tutor-About)  
or scan the QR code.



# Tasha Everman (continued)

Working within The Consortium, a U.S. State Department-funded program, my primary focus was on teaching Lao, Khmer, Mien and Hmong students who were soon to be resettled in the United States. After six total years of teaching ESL in Thailand and Taiwan, I returned to Lincoln to pursue a law degree.

It was during this period that I first became a tutor with Lincoln Literacy for one hour per week. A year later, I joined the board and had the privilege of being part of the hiring committee that selected Clay Naff to lead Lincoln Literacy forward. The growth that Clay oversaw as Executive Director is truly remarkable. He assembled a talented team and led them with passion, intelligence, and empathy.

Last fall, after Clay's retirement was announced, I once again had the honor of serving on the hiring committee for Executive Director, this time with the seemingly impossible task of finding a candidate who could fill Clay's shoes. Miraculously, Bryan Seck emerged, and Lincoln Literacy's upward trajectory has not skipped a beat! I look forward to the coming years of collaboration.

The stories emerging from Lincoln Literacy's classrooms give me goosebumps, revealing the transformative power of language acquisition — stories of career advancement, improved quality of life, and healthcare professionals realizing their dreams of becoming nurses and doctors, thanks to the support of our volunteers.

I sincerely hope to have the pleasure of meeting each of you at our next Lincoln Literacy event. Also, don't forget to give at [LincolnLiteracy.org](https://LincolnLiteracy.org) or by check to help us support our record-breaking number of students.



## LINCOLN LITERACY'S GLOBAL CELEBRATION

*Join Us*

**November 9, 6-8pm**  
**Cornhusker Hotel | 333 S 13th St**

**Buy tickets online at**  
**[LincolnLiteracy.org](https://LincolnLiteracy.org) or**  
**scan the QR code.**







1023 Lincoln Mall  
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**OUR MISSION:** To strengthen our community by teaching the English language and a variety of literacy skills to people of all cultures.

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit

**PROUD TO BE AFFILIATED WITH:**



**ProLiteracy**



United Way of Lincoln  
and Lancaster County