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Mayor's Award Winner Shows Grit

Myanmar, the Southeast Asian nation long known as Burma, has also long known misery. George Orwell wrote about "corruption and imperial bigotry" of British rule in his 1934 novel *Burmese Days*. After independence, Burma in 1962 suffered a violent military coup. Brutality and civil war have plagued the country ever since. Even after the partial restoration of democracy in 2010, minority groups such as the Muslim Rohingya and the Christian Karen have suffered persecution.

Mu Doh is one of the many Karen who was forced to flee her home to escape the threat of rape, torture, and enslavement posed by the armed forces.



Mu Doh (left) accepts Mayor's Award from Councilman Eskridge.

Then she had to await acceptance into the U.S. as a refugee. (See *Mayor's Award*, p. 3)

Little Learner of the Year Looks to Mom & Big Brother for Inspiration



Rik Minnick (l) with Fabian Ibarra and brother Alexis Ibarra

At the Academy Awards, winners often takes lots of time to thank a lengthy list of supporters. Fabian Ibarra, 7, winner of the Little Learner of the Year Award, was just too shy to give an acceptance speech, but if he had, teacher Rik Minnick feels sure he would have thanked his mom and his older brother Alexis. Fabian just loves to learn.

Pictured at left between Rik and Alexis, Fabian always comes to class eager to read, learn, and participate in activities. His mother, Fabiola, studies English while her sons work on reading in Lincoln Literacy's Family Literacy Activities for Immigrants and Refugees (FLAIR) program. Some kids might want to play all day, but for Fabian, reading time is always "YESSS!" time.

If You Can Read This, You Can Surely Help!

Lincoln Literacy depends on volunteer tutors to get the job done. We offer highly effective training and support to the volunteers who teach our students. Tutors have a wide range of choices, from serving in classrooms or as one-to-one tutors. For more info, click "Get Involved" at our website, www.lincolnliteracy.org.

Bryan Health Named Champion of Literacy

As the largest hospital and health care system in Lincoln, Bryan Health is a leader in its field. By offering jobs to refugees and immigrants, it has demonstrated leadership in embracing the ever-expanding diversity of our community. That alone would be worth recognizing, and indeed Bryan Health received a national award earlier this year as a Workplace of the Year. But the nonprofit health care organization has done considerably more.

Since March 2015, it has collaborated with Lincoln Literacy to offer employees whose first language is not English a chance for weekly classes and conversation groups to improve their communication skills.

This effort, spearheaded by a new English Language Learner Planning Team at Bryan, has had enthusiastic support at every level of Bryan Health's management. Champions of the program include CEO Kim Russel, Vice Presidents David Reese and Jan Garvin, Education and Organizational Development Director Brooke Cose, Human Resources Manager Melissa Carpenter, Environmental Services Manager Jeff DeBoer, Organizational Development Consultant Mary Hoppe and many frontline supervisors. "The extent of involvement by busy executives has been astonishing and inspiring to us and to those who take part in the classes," said Lincoln Literacy Executive Director Clayton Naff. "They really, really care."



From left, Naff, Melissa Carpenter, Mary Hoppe, David Reese and Dr. Mike Eppel

At the end of each term, senior staff put on a celebration for the learners and volunteer tutors, complete with music, food, and lots of laughs and companionship. For all these reasons, on June 25th Lincoln Literacy was pleased to have our Board Secretary Dr. Mike Eppel present Bryan Health the Champion of Literacy Award.

Former Tutor Leaves a Legacy for Literacy



Martha Countryman spent a lifetime in education. After retiring as a schoolteacher, she chose to volunteer as a tutor with Lincoln Literacy. She went through training with us in 2000, and went on to serve as a volunteer tutor for more than a decade. She continued to work with her last student, Brandi Havel, until September 2011, when a stroke forced her to relinquish that role.

Three years later, on November 18, 2014, Martha passed away. Recently, we learned that in her will she left 1.25 percent of her

estate to Lincoln Literacy. That yielded nearly \$1,400 that the board and staff of Lincoln Literacy gratefully received in June of 2016.

This marks the second planned gift that Lincoln Literacy has received. Earlier this year, Lincoln Literacy received a total of nearly \$90,000 from the estate of Helen Roeske. The board has directed that these and other such planned gifts be invested in a fund for the future. We salute Martha Countryman for a lifetime of service and a generosity that transcends her time.

You too can make a gift that lasts forever: Leave a Legacy for Literacy!

You can designate a life insurance policy, set a portion or a percentage of your estate, or look into a charitable annuity to help LL into the future. Contact us for details.

You can also support our present-day work by making a tax-deductible donation online at: lincolnliteracy.org

Donations Hit New Record on May Give to Lincoln Day

On the first Give to Lincoln Day, five years ago, we did nothing and to our surprise, \$6,000 came our way. This year, we put heart and soul into rallying support for our organization on May 26, the fifth Give to Lincoln Day. And boy, did you respond. Our supporters contributed more than 10 times what that first day brought in, allowing us to finish the day with

\$63,128 in contributions. By the time match was tallied, we ended up just a whisker shy of \$70,000. That funding turned our year around; by the end of May we went from deficit to surplus. Thank you Lincoln!



Clay Naff proudly poses with our final check.

◆ Mayor's Award

Continued from Page 1

During all that time she never went to school. Her family simply could not afford to send her. But Mu Doh had a deep hunger for learning. From the moment she arrived in Lincoln in December 2014 she plunged right into English classes. She took beginning classes at Southeast Community College and has since taken every possible opportunity to learn at Lincoln Literacy.

It's not as though she has nothing else to do. Mu Doh is a wife and mother, and she works full-time in a commercial laundry. It's hot, steamy, tiring work, but she goes to classes before and after at every opportunity. She also has an individual tutor.

All that effort has paid off with rapid gains in her ability to speak, read, and write English. In January 2015 she tested at Level 0 on the Basic English Skills Test. By May 2016, Mu Doh had leapt to Level 4. On June 25, on behalf of Mayor Chris Beutler, City Councilman Carl Eskridge, citing her indomitable spirit and remarkable achievements, presented Mu Doh with the Mayor's Award for Language and Literacy Achievement. She beamed.

Tutors and Students Alike Glean Honors

Along with Mu Doh (p. 1), volunteer tutor Jeff Malan (pictured lower right) tops a remarkable roster of winners in the 2016 Lincoln Literacy awards. Jeff, who teaches every Monday afternoon at Bryan Health East (see story on p. 2), was named Tutor of the Year at the Lincoln Literacy Awards Ceremony on June 25th at Grace Lutheran Church. Other award winners include:



Bella Chen (l) gets award from Jana Zvada Kozuchova

25th at Grace Lutheran Church. Other award winners include:

- ◆ Jennifer Henry, Judy Ellingson Award for tutoring excellence; Arlene Rea, Hon. Mention
- ◆ Kathy Najjar, Lois Poppe Award for outstanding volunteer service; Dennis King, Hon. Mention
- ◆ Bella Chen and Oksana Ilina, Student Leadership Award; Robert Hale, Hon. Mention

- ◆ Taty Nlandu, Learner of the Year
- ◆ Fabian Ibarra, Little Learner of the Year
- ◆ Bryan Health, Champion of Literacy; Hon. Mention to Zainab al-Baaj
- ◆ Azhar Sunba and Maria Cruz de Pesina, Bette Boellstorff Service Award
- ◆ Sandra Rojo, Distinguished Service Award



Tutor Jeff Malan teaches English to Bryan Health East employees.



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Our mission is to assist people of all cultures and strengthen our community by teaching English language and literacy skills. Why not join as a member or sign up to become a tutor today?

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Food Bank Helps Families Attending Summer Classes

People who come to Lincoln Literacy with a thirst for knowledge may also suffer from a hunger for food. The vast majority of our students are low-income, and many are in extreme poverty.

When we made this known to the Food Bank of Lincoln, Executive Director Scott Young called together his staff and made a plan. In short order, the Food Bank began delivering dozens of bags of food each week — enough so that every family taking part in our summer classes could take one home every week — provided they attended all their classes.

The weekly food bags contain staples that can last — boxed and canned good selected with the cultural concerns of our students in mind. Additionally, the Food Bank delivers fresh bread.

Each Monday, the bags line the hallways of Lincoln Literacy. Program coordinator Rik Minnick, seen on the left in the accompanying photo alongside Food Bank staff, labels every bag. Then coordinators take them out to our learning sites for distribution to families.

“People have responded warmly to this generous move by the Food Bank,” said Lincoln Literacy Executive Director Clayton Naff, who went into the field to see for himself how the program was working.

That extra incentive of weekly food may have contributed to our most heavily enrolled summer classes to date. As of June, Lincoln Literacy has served 909 people, up 13 percent from the same time last year. And this summer, thanks to the Food Bank of Lincoln, not one of them went hungry.



From left, Rik Minnick and Food Bank staffers Travis Hardesty and Jason Helgren. getting creative with how to store up to 60 bags of food in a small office building.