



Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2021-2022



100% Literacy for All

Our Mission

Our mission is to build the literacy, English language, and job readiness skills to empower adults and families to reach their full potential.

Our Vision

100% literacy for all.

Our Core Values

Student-Centered

We adapt our curriculum to meet the needs of individual students to ensure they can envision their own paths forward.

Innovative

Both forward-thinking and flexible, we model best practices in adult education and nonprofit management, aspiring to excellence in everything we do.

Inclusive

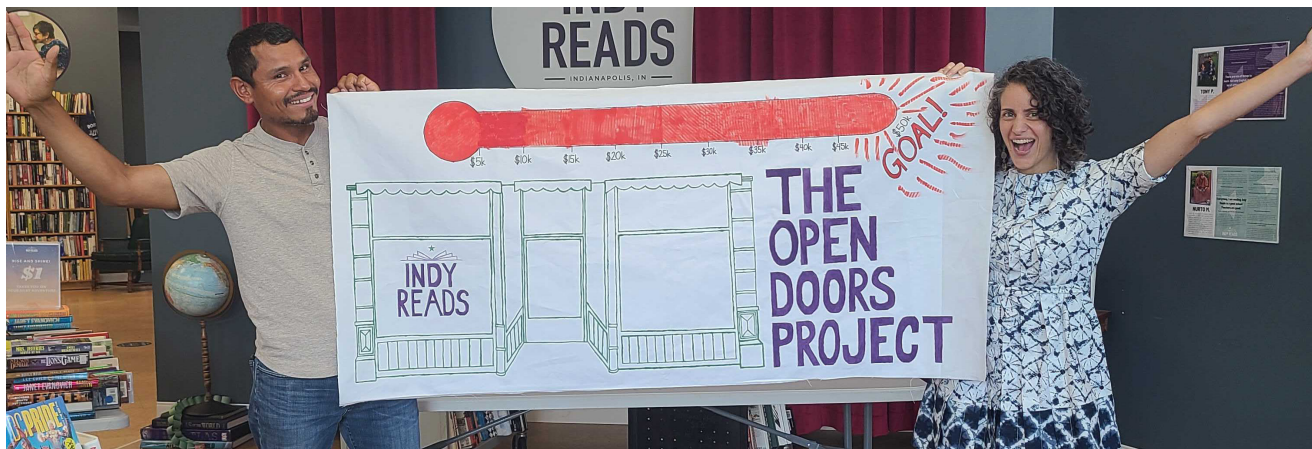
We create welcoming environments where students, volunteers, and supporters from diverse backgrounds gather.

Literacy

Our programs help people develop basic literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, and comprehending) and apply them in all aspects of their lives.

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Indy Reads' Student Ambassador, Tony P., with Chief Executive Officer, Ruba Marshood.

Letter from Our Chief Executive Officer

Tess, one of our High School Equivalency graduates, recently said, "Community means being connected with people. It's being aware of your surroundings and being a part of something bigger than yourself."

I am honored and proud to say that Indy Reads embodies this spirit in all it does to empower, uplift, and advance education equity in Indianapolis and beyond. Tess' words come to life as we reflect on the last year.

Community Means Being Connected to People

In December, I accepted the privilege of serving as Indy Reads' Chief Executive Officer. The first time I stepped into Indy Reads' as yet unopened space in Fountain Square, I knew I wanted to be a part of this mission. I envisioned our students from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Mexico, and down the street, reading their own stories or sharing family recipes on our community bookstore stage to an audience of peers and the wider Indianapolis community. When people from vastly different walks of life share space and story, stereotypes are broken down. Standing in that quiet room, I knew that, together, we could make this vision a reality.

Community Means Being Aware of Your Surroundings

Amid a pandemic, we realized that our students needed virtual options for programming and a way to improve their digital literacy skillsets to access those options. As we begin to offer in-person programming once more, digital literacy skills and virtual options remain a priority for Indy Reads.

One of the highlights of this past fiscal year was launching our Customer Service Skills Program, thanks—in large part—to the generosity of the Margot L. Eccles Arts & Culture Fund. This intensive program, which integrates our bookstore programming with our Community Classrooms programming, supports students in earning while they learn, preparing them to receive a Customer Service Credential while working in the bookstore at a living wage. This

program is another step towards filling that once quiet room in the heart of Indy Reads with students from all walks of life, offering adults in this program the opportunity to succeed.

This year, Indy Reads also received recognition from a national foundation for the first time in its 38-year history. Support from the Welcome.US Fund allows us to forge even stronger connections with our neighbors, particularly immigrants and refugees, as we offer more language options, advance student recruitment, and engage more volunteers. This support is an important indicator that Indy Reads is increasingly recognized as an equitable and accessible community space for all.

Community Means Being a Part of Something Bigger Than Yourself

In my first year as Chief Executive Officer of Indy Reads, I have witnessed a fervent commitment to our vision of 100% literacy for all. For decades, we have been dedicated to empowering adults and their families to confidently attain economic prosperity, as well as personal fulfillment. From this crucial beginning, there is so far to go.

I am deeply grateful to work with our students, board of directors, volunteers, staff, and all of our supporters. This community has demonstrated a real passion and enthusiasm for the implications of our vision: the adults and families who make up our community have limitless potential for societal impact. Once we all have access to literacy, we all have access to civic engagement, to community development, and to use our skills, credentials, and talents to help our neighbors.

Together, we are writing a future informed and shaped by all of our stories. Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Ruba Marshood

Chief Executive Officer

Our Programs and Impact

English Language Learning (ELL)

Offered both virtually and on-site around Indianapolis, ELL Community Classrooms help adults to master reading, writing, and comprehension of the English language. Our students work hard to unlock a future of greater potential through access to better job opportunities and increased confidence. In addition to Indy Reads' ELL Community Classrooms, we are an ELL adult education provider to the Immigrant Welcome Center's Pathway to Literacy Program, where adults with limited literacy in their native language can grow fundamental literacy skills before beginning their English studies in an ELL class.

High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE)

More than 14% of Hoosiers in Indianapolis do not have their high school diploma and will earn an average of \$8,000 less per year than their peers with a diploma. Our virtual and on-site HSE Community Classrooms prepare adults to earn their HSE diploma by passing all five sections of the HiSET exam (reading; writing; math; social studies; and science).

Certifications

We offer two industry-recognized online job certification courses: a Paraprofessional Training Certification and a Customer Service Certification. We also offer a unique Customer Service Skills Program where students gain real-world work experience in our community bookstore, at a living wage of \$15 per hour, while earning the Customer Service Certification.

Literacy Foundations

Our Literacy Foundations program is designed for adults who would like to improve their English reading or language skills to achieve personal life goals, and are either not interested in or not quite ready to join our HSE or workforce certifications programs. This one-on-one or small group tutoring program provides flexible, personalized instruction to adults seeking to gain independence through literacy.

339

students served.

85%

of post-tested Indy Reads students made at least one Educational Functioning Level gain.

9

earned their HSE diplomas. Seven additional students passed a portion of the HiSET exam.

100%

of Certifications students, who took the exam, earned their credential.

86%

of our students are living under 200% of the federal poverty line or identify as low-income.

57%

of students have children under the age of 18.

Our Students



Cindy's Virtual ELL Class



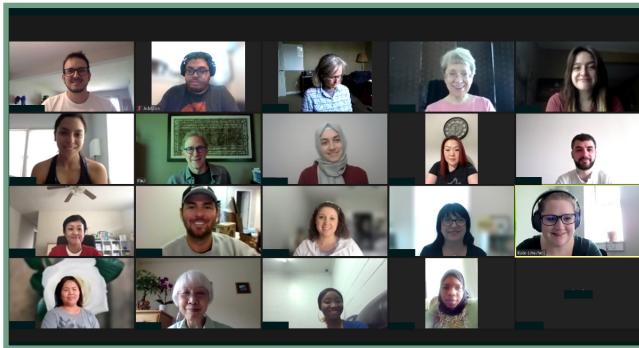
David's Virtual HSE Class



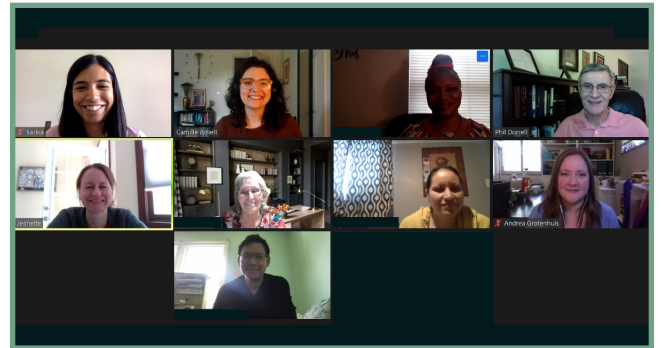
Lauren's In-Person ELL Class



Paul's Virtual ELL Class



Paul's Virtual ELL Class



Sarika's Virtual HSE Class



Sarika's Virtual Pre-HSE Class

Who We Serve

Top Countries of Origin	Top Student Languages
1. United States	1. Spanish
2. Mexico	2. English
3. Venezuela	3. French
4. Burma	4. Arabic
5. Honduras	5. Dari
6. Afghanistan	6. Hahka Chin

*47 countries represented *47 languages represented

Student Success Stories



Kierra D., *Paraprofessional Certification Graduate*

Kierra is an Instructional Assistant at a childcare center who works with 3-5 year old children. She came to Indy Reads to earn her Paraprofessional Certification.

With two young daughters and more than 11 years of experience in the classroom, Kierra will use this certification to qualify for a pay increase in the short-term. Kierra's long-term goal is to promote equity through early childhood education by opening her own childcare center.

"I think education is important," Kierra said. "I'm Black; I'm a woman; and I come from the inner city. I don't think you can do a lot of things in life if you don't have education behind you," she continued.

"In five years, I definitely want to have my own childcare center," she said. "Early childhood education is like the foremost important education, because it kind of sets the foundation of where you can go," Kierra finished.



Tess H., *High School Equivalency (HSE) Graduate*

Tess completed Indy Reads' Fast-Track HSE program in only a few months. An advocate for the power of community, her High School Equivalency diploma is the first step

in her journey to spreading positivity through missionary teaching.

"When I passed the HSE exam, I almost fell out of my chair," she said. "I've been accepted to Liberty University which is a Christian college. And I'm going for my Bachelor of Science in Biblical Education, so I'm one step closer to my dream of being that missionary teacher. This is blowing the roof off of my expectations for myself. There's so much more potential in me than I ever expected," Tess continued.

"I'm considered disabled according to the United States government," Tess said. "I was actually told by my therapist that at my age, I should be sitting in a mental facility, staring out the window, drooling. That was my future. So I said, 'I don't think so.' I've gotta be so much more than that," she finished.

"This is blowing the roof off of my expectations for myself. There's so much more potential in me than I ever expected."



Michelle S., *Literacy Foundations and Pre-HSE Student*

Michelle came to Indianapolis in 2017 with her husband after he was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. After he passed later that year, she joined Indy Reads' Literacy

Foundations program. Two years ago, she also joined our Pre-HSE program. A dedicated student and mother, Michelle is determined to move through the Indy Reads program to get her own house, find a fulfilling job, and attain her HSE diploma.

"My goals was to hopefully learn how to read completely and to move on from there," Michelle said. "Find me a job and a nice little place to live. I do want to get my high school diploma. You know, it's something I should have got that I missed out on getting and I would appreciate to have it," she continued.

"At Indy Reads, you get a chance to be around other people that's having the same issues that you got," Michelle said. "None of us are judgmental; we don't make fun of each other and stuff like that. When I came to this program, it was open arms for me," she finished.



Ngun Z., *English Language Learning (ELL) Student*

Ngun, originally from Myanmar, came to Indianapolis in 2020 with her husband and daughter. Ngun is determined to improve her English language skills, attain her High

School Equivalency diploma, and pay it forward.

"When I was a child, my parents couldn't communicate with my school teachers, because language and literacy difficulties," Ngun said. "Our language, Chin, is not the first language in Myanmar. So I have a lot of sad memories when I was a child. I decided to be a Mom who can support her children when they need my financials or giving advice," she continued.

"I want to be useful and valuable citizen for our community and for the country," Ngun said. "Right now, we get some help from other people. But I want to be the person who could help other people in five years. I have been helping my neighbors help their children doing homework. Or sometimes reading the important letters from the mail. I wish in five years, I could help in different ways or bigger ways. I'm really happy to help people," she finished.

Our Community Bookstore

Indy Reads offers community programs for adults and their families in our community bookstore in historic Fountain Square. The bookstore sells a wide selection of gently used books, as well as new inventory.



Financial Literacy Series

Financially literate individuals use financial knowledge to make better financial decisions. From everyday spending to long-term financial planning, effective money management means using money to further your personal goals—no matter what they are.

This series covered six workshops: Understanding Your Paycheck; Banking Services; Budgeting; Saving & Spending; Credit Basics; and Identity Theft. Workshops were led by Centier Bank: Indiana's Largest Private, Family-Owned Bank, in partnership with Indy Reads.

Poetry Open Mic & Slam with Booth

Indy Reads and Booth (students, faculty, and alumni from the Butler University MFA program) partner to host our community Poetry Open Mic & Slam each month. We welcome poets of all ages. The Open Mic & Slam is family-friendly—no curse words or explicit language are permitted.

The Poetry Slam is a competition where each contestant performs a poem and judges award points to select a winner. The Open Mic is a welcoming space for all poets to perform pieces without an element of competition. Prizes for the Poetry Slam include a subscription to Booth for one year and a free used book from Indy Reads.



Workshops, Author Events, and More!

Indy Reads partners with local artists, writers, and other facilitators to provide a rotating calendar of activities. From book launches to creative writing workshops to yoga between the shelves, we aim to offer programs for all members of our community.

Just a few of the highlights included a reading of *The Brightest Star* by James Morehead & Andrea Morehead Allen (pictured left); Writing for Mindfulness with Manon Voice; and Write Like a Writer with Julia A. Whitehead & Michael S. Maurer.

Indy Reads also hosts a weekly, all-ages Chess Club with Colin Hargreaves, regular bilingual storytimes, monthly Drag Story Hours, and local artists and vendors during the First Friday Book Donation Drive each month.

Number of Used Books
Donated to Indy Reads:

8,709

Number of Programs
at Indy Reads:

42

Number of Program
Attendees at Indy Reads:

551

Our Reflections

“It feels amazing when students accomplish their goals. It is cool to see them go from doubt to self-fulfillment, not just academically, but emotionally.”

—**Andrew Tanner**
AmeriCorps WorkLiteracy Coach



“When I was an elementary/special education teacher, I saw how deeply many of my students were impacted when their parents/guardians struggled to support them academically at home. I joined Indy Reads in 2017 because I wanted to help break that cycle. Just today, a student told me how challenging it can be to help her kids with their homework. I really want to empower all my students! I have also loved how connected I feel to the community by working for Indy Reads.”

—**Sarika Agarwal**
Indy Reads Instructor

“During one of my earliest volunteer shifts, I had the opportunity to observe English Language Learner Program graduates after they had just celebrated together with cake in the back room. They were excitedly taking photos together and perusing selections of books to bring home and continue their studies. I was reminded, yet again, of all the valuable work Indy Reads does for our community, inclusive and open to folks from all walks of life with diverse backgrounds. It has been an honor and a fulfilling experience volunteering at Indy Reads.”

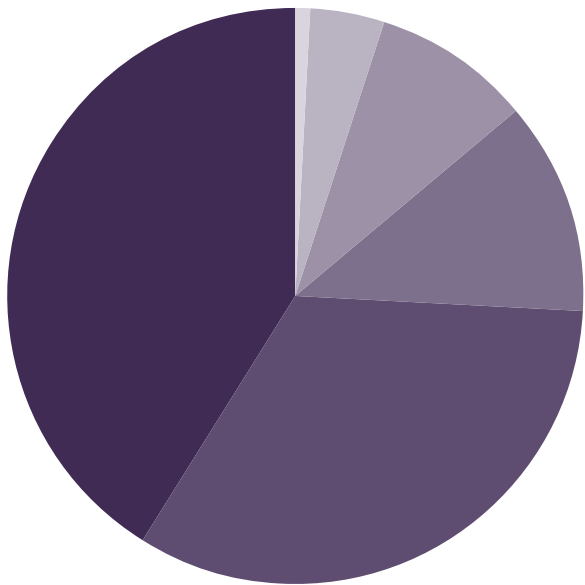
—**Cherylynn Schilling**
Indy Reads Bookstore Volunteer



Organization Financials

Revenue

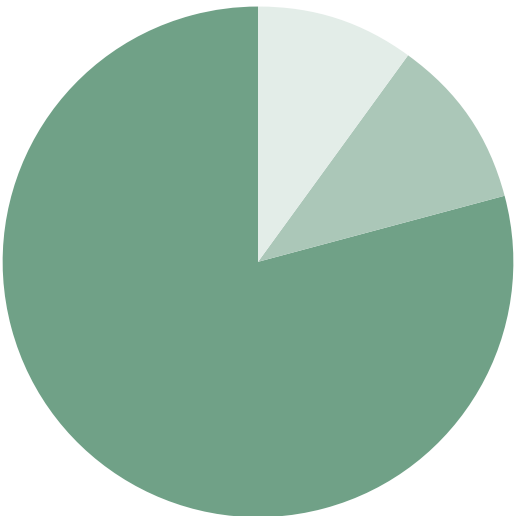
\$1,426,719.61



- Government Grants: 41%
- Foundation Grants: 33%
- Individual Giving: 12%
- Bookstore Revenue: 9%
- Corporate Giving: 4%
- Other (Earned Income & Interest): 1%

Expenses

\$1,264,827.65



- Program: 79%
- Fundraising: 11%
- Administrative: 10%

Number of Volunteer Hours
Donated to Indy Reads:

2,262

Our Board



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Board Chair

Crowe LLP,
Senior Audit Manager



Rachel Spehler
Board Vice Chair

CNO Financial,
Vice President &
Deputy General Counsel



Adarsh Mantravadi
Board Treasurer

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Director, Business
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Development



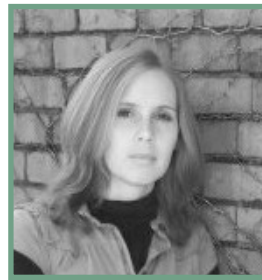
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Lydia Johnson
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Sarika Agarwal
Instructor



Catherine Cardwell
Bookstore Program
Director



Bryant Coffing
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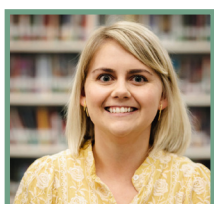
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Instructor



Raquel Ravinet
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Instructor



Cindy Reinhard
Instructor



Chris Simmons
Student Navigator



David Turner
Instructor



Daisy Velez Collazo
Intake/ELL Coordinator



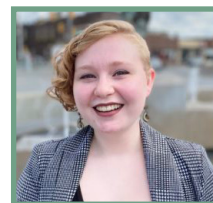
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Andrew Tanner
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Addison Wolfe
AmeriCorps
WorkLiteracy
Coach

Our Donors

Every single donor who supported Indy Reads has ensured that the 1 in 6 Hoosiers who struggle with English literacy get the support they need to live more fulfilling, independent lives and to provide for their families. These donors have made, and continue to make, Indy Reads a safe space for learning, growing, and empowering our neighbors, which makes Indiana a better place for all of us.

We are so grateful for the generous financial support of our Literacy League members, who donate each month, our Corporate Sponsors, and our annual fund donors who have invested in our vision of 100% literacy for all. An investment in Indy Reads is an investment in a brighter tomorrow for each one of our students, community members, and Indiana. Thank you!

Literacy League

Dr. Vasantha Aaron & Dr. Sean Gussick	Susan & Robert Garelick	Deborah Lawrence	Sean Sall
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