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## **Literacy Council at MSCC Sets Tutor Training Workshop for March 19**

The Literacy Council of Crittenden County at Mid-South Community College will conduct a free Tutor Training Workshop on Saturday, March 19, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., in Magruder Hall on the South Campus. Lunch will be provided for participants interested in volunteering their time and talents to help adult non-readers.

Prospective tutors must have a high school diploma (or equivalent) and must be 18 years of age or older. Good reading skills are also important. Previous teaching experience, while helpful, is not necessary.

“Almost anyone with a passion for helping others can become a literacy volunteer,” said Ruth-Kathryn Rains, Literacy Council Coordinator. “We basically teach the students the things they want to learn, and it’s a very rewarding experience.”

“Some people want to learn to read the Bible; others want to learn to read recipes. We try to do whatever we can to help people who want to improve their reading and writing ability. Most of us take basic comprehension skills for granted, but our students struggle with common tasks every day. Reading job applications, maps, and directions on medicine bottles can overwhelm people with low literacy skills.”

As many as one in three Crittenden County residents is considered functionally illiterate. About 25 percent of Arkansas adults read at or below a fifth-grade level (far below the level needed to earn a living wage), and an estimated 20 percent of adults nationwide operate at the lowest level of literacy. The effects are devastating.



“Literacy tutoring literally has the power to change lives,” Rains pointed out. “Particularly in today’s economy, adults need basic skills to help them compete for jobs and to help keep themselves and their families healthy. Many of our adults operate at the lowest level of literacy, and that’s anywhere from zero to the fifth or sixth grade. It’s devastating.”

“But by assisting adults with their reading skills, we’re giving them additional opportunities for personal and professional growth. That, in turn, helps their families, their neighborhoods, and their communities. We’re not just working for today; we’re working for years down the road.”

The Literacy Council meets with students and tutors to determine the best possible matches to facilitate the teaching/learning process. Tutors generally meet with their students every week, usually on a one-to-one basis.

“It’s important for our students and tutors to form a bond because that helps encourage the non-reader to pursue continued improvement in reading, writing, and/or language skills,” Rains explained. “As a tutor, you will find that the bond works both ways. Our tutors, as well as our students, find themselves inspired.”

The most common reasons students can’t read well are lack of education/quality education, poor learning environment, learning disabilities, and/or language barriers. The Council provides a variety of learning opportunities to meet the specific needs of its students who are diverse in age, gender, race, employment, economic status, interests, abilities, experiences, and goals.

For more information on becoming involved with the Literacy Council of Crittenden County, visit the office in the Arkansas Workforce Center on MSCC’s North Campus, 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call (870) 733-6763, or email [rrains@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:rrains@midsouthcc.edu).