

History of the Grenada League for Adult Development

Functional illiteracy in our adult population is a serious problem that GLAD seeks to address locally.

The Grenada League for Adult Development (GLAD) has served as the adult literacy council for Grenada County since 1986. After attending a state-wide literacy conference in 1986, the Library Director, Maryhardy McElwain, the Vocational School Director Don Connerley, and key community leaders (Trish Hightower, Kay Townes, Mayor L.D. Boone, and others) began the organizational work which resulted in the creation of GLAD. Bylaws were drawn up and a board of directors was established with permanent positions for the Library and Adult Education program directors in addition to elected officers. In later amendments, permanent board positions were created for the directors/coordinators of funded member programs. In addition, six directors are elected from the community to serve staggered three-year terms. Officers are elected to serve two-year terms. This literacy council is the umbrella under which Grenada community agencies and businesses work together to address local adult literacy and adult education needs, avoiding duplication of effort.

GLAD trains volunteer tutors to work with local adult learners. GLAD is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is registered with the Mississippi Secretary of State's office as an exempt organization. Local donations and appropriations keep adult literacy services free for adult learners and volunteers. A part-time program aide teaches small group classes and conducts some one-to-one tutoring.

In 1986, the Grenada Vocational School sought and obtained a grant through the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which allowed GLAD to move quickly into recruitment and training of volunteer tutors in *The Laubach Way to Reading*. The JTPA program was funded each subsequent year through June 1994. Royal Gober and an AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer, Janie Fox, served the program. A JOBS component was added to the JTPA program in 1993. Four part-time employees served the JTPA program with the aid of volunteer tutors. In 1994, the JTPA literacy program ended statewide and its recruiter and students became a part of the Adult Education (AE) program already at the Vocational School. In October 1997, literacy tutoring (and AE/GED classes through June 2010) began to be held at the Grenada County Jail. After several years, classes at the Jail ended for several years when the classroom/library area was converted into inmate housing and later resumed.

In 1990, the Elizabeth Jones Library made application for and received a U.S. Dept. of Education, Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) Title VI Library Literacy Program grant to establish a local adult literacy program with an emphasis on reaching adult learners in the workplace. Lillian Hayward, the first program coordinator, was succeeded by Valinda Smith in January 1991. Staff were first housed at the Vo-Tech school and then at Holmes Community College-Grenada Center for five years until the Grenada Adult Education Center was established. Grant awards for this program were received each year through FY 1995-96. However, in the spring of 1996 Congress abolished the federal Title VI program. The Library obtained a one-time grant through the Mississippi Library Commission which provided 75% funding for FY 1996-97, with a 25% local match. In FY 1997-98, the Adult Literacy Program became locally funded through donations and appropriations from the City of Grenada and Grenada County. Since that time, annual appropriations and donations make Grenada's Adult Literacy Program services possible by providing program operation funding. The part-time coordinator and a part-time aide serve the adult literacy program with the aid of volunteer tutors. Many competitive grants and awards have been received over the years to provide additional resources. From FY 1998-99 through 2019-20, the AE program provided some literacy-level staff funding. AE funding became available for the literacy program coordinator which paid nearly one-third of her hours through the School District's annual AE contract with the Miss. Community College Board. A one-week AE cut to these hours became effective in 2013-14 and ended on 6/30/2020. Additional volunteers are continually recruited and are trained as needed at the Adult Education Center. From 1991-2012, an annual motorcycle "Ride for GLAD" fundraiser was hosted, first by Gold Wing Road Riders Chapter K and then by A.B.A.T.E Lakeview Chapter. Both chapters eventually disbanded and no other club has adopted the annual Ride.

In the decade of the 1990's, the Adult Literacy Program was successful in establishing on-site workplace programs at local businesses and industries who allowed us to serve their employees needing basic skills improvement for the employee's convenience. Over the years, Pennaco, Heatcraft, the Grenada Lake Medical Center, Sealed Air Corporation, Textron Automotive, and the Grenada County Jail established on-site literacy programs. In addition, volunteer tutor recruitment programs were established at Georgia-Pacific and Newsprint South. However, with the establishment of the Grenada Adult Education Center in 1995, most tutors began meeting with their adult learners in the GLAD tutoring room at that site.

In October 1995, the Grenada School District dedicated the old primary school building at 420 College Street as the "Grenada Adult Education Center," jointly housing the AE program, GLAD, and the Elizabeth Jones Library's Adult Literacy Program. In June 1999, the Adult Education Center was temporarily moved to the east wing of Tie Plant School (809 Tie Plant Road), pending completion of a new Upper Elementary School. The Grenada Adult Education Center moved into its current location in the former Upper Elementary School building (previously known as the "Lizzie Horn School" at 423 South Line Street) in December 2000. The Grenada Rotary Club created a gravel parking lot for the Adult Education Center in Fall 2013.

Effective February 1, 2001, the Grenada Adult Education Center was approved as the GED® testing site for Grenada County. In 2011, we became the first Mississippi GED Testing Center™ approved for GED Wizard which reduced score wait time from a couple of weeks to a couple of days. In late 2013, the Center became a Pearson Vue Authorized GED® Testing Center™ for delivering the test via computer in the computer testing lab here. A 2013-14 grant from Dollar General Foundation helped equip the lab. From Fall 2016 through Fall 2020, the Center also offered the ETS/HiSET® high school equivalency exam in addition to the GED®.

Adult learners in our literacy program are paired with tutors on a one-to-one basis or work in a small group in a classroom setting as appropriate for their skill levels. One room at the Adult Education Center is set aside for one-to-one tutoring, another for small group instruction, and a computer-assisted education lab is shared with the Grenada Adult Education Program.

In addition to low-level adult literacy training, the collaboration that comprises the Grenada Adult Education Center offers AE and HSE prep classes, workplace and college readiness training, family literacy projects, and high school equivalency (HSE) testing. The GLAD board also serves as the advisory board for the Grenada School District's Adult Education (AE) Program.