



**Friday, December 18, 2020**

**Virtual Meeting: 9-10:15 a.m.**

**Present:** Bill Flanagan, Tara Tinder, Rachelle Elliott, Nick Dimassis, Debbie Fischer, Gloria Heiss, Sarah Lock, Ana Montoya, Drew Pennington, Brenda Plakans, Kathy Pohl, Mary Porter, Lisa Sandoval, and Shirley Williams

### **1) Welcome and Announcements from Tara Tinder, Executive Director, SCF**

The Foundation received a Christmas gift close to \$20,000, supporting basic needs: food, shelter and clothing. Apply via our [Discretionary Grant](#) process. In late March, there will be 4 billboards from LAMAR up at various prime locations in the community (2 in English/2 in Spanish). A piece in BDN telling our history and story is forthcoming to explain the importance of our brain bag project. This will entail a kit of a book,

### **2) Business Partnerships: Bill Flanagan, BLFLI Chair**

This initiative has existed for slightly over 4 years and in efforts to put together a published piece, we are compiling input from all of our partners. Particular focus is on our history and examples of impact within your organization and collaboration with other partners for the betterment of the community. Monica Krysztopa, our internal marketing guru, will help tell our story, ETA sometime in January with theme: Where have we been, where are we now, where are we going? It will be difficult to get support unless people know the positive outcomes of our mission thus far, capitalizing on the momentum of our work in 2020. Please mention your significant experiences during partner reports or submit to [jamie@statelinecf.com](mailto:jamie@statelinecf.com) for inclusion (see **ADDENDUM**).

Bill's vision of our literacy initiative success is 3-fold: Community Pillars (health systems, library, city, schools and businesses) will continue to work together to impact the skill set required for kids; Connecting with families in neighborhoods where low literacy is most prevalent; and Sustainability, whereby leaders (Bill and Tara) can walk away in confidence that measures continue in perpetuity.

### **2) Literacy Updates: Rachelle Elliott, Director of Early Literacy, SDB**

New resources were shared within the Talking is Teaching website: [Indoor Activity Toolkit - PDF](#), [Indoor Activity Toolkit - PDF \(Spanish\)](#) and their [Community Campaign](#) (login not required).

Rachelle reported on the continued concern for healthy, developing children amidst the virtual instruction caused by the pandemic. A few focus points are to push for coaching families and providing them with long-term resources, and continued purchases to replenish our book desert using a recently discovered low-cost book distributor (will share contact with Gloria Heiss). Another opportunity for savings and a perk of our coaching goal is a 10% increase in state grant funding by demonstrating 87.5 hours of family literacy engagement per month. Currently SDB has utilized \$5,000 in 4K take-home bags but Rachelle is unsure of funds for K-3 support. Another larger chunk has been allocated for "grab and go" bags at various instructional levels.

Additionally, the SDB is seeking to change its measure of Kindergarten readiness from PALS (reading only) to [IGDIS](#) which considers math and social-emotional learning as additional literacy tools beyond reading. With PALS, there is also a noted drop in Kindergarten entrance skills after the summer break because book skills (or the literacy glue) haven't been retained.

### 3) Partner Reports:

- **Kathy Pohl (St. Paul Soup Lunch Bunch)** They serve roughly 120+ weekly “to go” meals and anticipate 150-200 for Christmas week, and recently acquired new books from SCF to be available for holiday handouts. Positive feedback from their advent/literacy calendars!
- **Lisa Sandoval (Early Start/Head Start)** – Had to leave before being able to share
- **Gloria Heiss (UW-Madison student/Literacy Advocate)** She recently met with SDB interim Superintendent Dr. Daniel Keyser and Board President Kyle Larsen to discuss a district vehicle being converted and available for use next summer as a Beloit Bookmobile. It will make stops at neighborhoods and venues, thus collaboration with nonprofits to extend impact is vital. Made possible with an initial \$2,000 grant, she hopes for additional funding to cover the cost of gas and potential use for special events year ‘round. Keeping book costs minimal would also allow for addition of an intern (college student) a few hours/wk to allow the program to continue moving forward. Tara noted this literacy project is like cream being poured over the community!
- **Shirley Williams (NAACP/Community Advocate)** New Zion Church has an active food pantry and is working diligently to find ways to connect additional generations with literacy support as it is often the grandparents and great grandparents who are helping to raise the children.
- **Mary Porter (Retired SDB Professional Educator)** Mary is thrilled to join our initiative and looks forward to how she and other retired educators can contribute.
- **Ana Montoya (Community Health Systems, Inc.)** Ana added that racial justice work and YWCA programming are successful collaborations in BLFLI history. Currently, books from SCF continue to fly off the shelves to clients, another indication of community need and interest.
- **Drew Pennington (Director of Planning and Building, City of Beloit)** City Hall remains closed to the public, so no new updates, a notion not unique to Beloit.
- **Sarah Lock (Director of Strategic Communications, City of Beloit)** While public events are still not possible, she referenced Parks & Recreation winter activities (At home bags, baking contest, virtual 5K event) to follow success of their downtown story walk.
- **Nick Dimassis (Beloit Public Library)** A few adaptations from the pandemic have brought awareness to a navigator theme where change is not visible at first. One of the major “buy ins” to our initiative was to provide more manipulatives for interaction in the children’s section (Dr. Navsaria training). Due to COVID-19, these have been temporarily removed and he looks forward to being able to re-install them as future guidelines will allow. Blender Café has been a student-entered food service provider. Knowing the number of homeless students in our community, he has reached out to Robin Stuht (SDB Homeless Liaison) to see if the café could become a food distribution point for this cohort. Lastly, the library is working on an implementation plan to go “fine free” in 2021 for juvenile materials. With the growing need to have books in the hands of kids, this is good PR and has allowed costs to be built in budget.
- **Brenda Plakans (Welty Environmental Center)**– The virtual adaptations (or “lemonade”) of COVID, such as use of cameras, recording, editing, and internet for Zoom field trips, has helped so many nonprofits become creative in their community service.

4) **Calendar:** Next virtual meeting date is Friday, January 22 at 9 a.m. - [RSVP required!](#)

**2021 Dates:** January 22, February 26, March 26, April 23, May 28, June 25, July 23, August 27, September 24, October 22, November 19, December 17.



## Rudder Group Meeting Minutes – BLFLI History

Bill Flanagan, BLFLI Chair / Tara Tinder, Executive Director SCF  
Wednesday, December 9, 2020

### General Historic Points:

- Grass roots movement – organic, people in the trenches are doing the yeoman's work.
  - We have found that this creates a sense of buy-in
  - We hope it will create sustainability.
  - We work for all kids; this is their movement!
- Started with the goal of impacting 4K scores and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores. We are currently focusing on kindergarten readiness scores as measured by PALS (which SDB is planning to return to as their data point)
- Started with 2 branches: BLFLI Literacy Partners and Rudder Group
- Internet presence:
  - BLFLI page on SCF website
  - Calendar on website chronicles community literacy events (Cones with Cops, Fries with Firefighters – both at Culvers)
  - Facebook page
  - Posting minutes/communication with 183 followers via Mailchimp
- Initial talk focused on playgrounds as way to promote, now has morphed into wrapping busses, messaging via billboards.
- Local day care and early childhood support is strong with leadership of Rachelle Elliott, SDB, Director of Early Literacy
- Questions we started with / Referenced again in June 2019:
  1. How can we ensure commitment from partners will continue into the future?
  2. How can we create an infrastructure that will continue to foster early literacy?
  3. What can we read at the professional level (with guiding principles) that describes communities who have done this before? Looking for data driven literature!

### Local observations:

- Not for profit partners have increased their collaboration efforts, more effective results
- All community sectors have answered the call, offering own ideas, twists and successes.
- Books are a calming tool (and reward) for children, especially in dental/medical spaces.

- Pillar groups support our vision: plans evolving to coalesce around our common goal.
- Awards for literacy recognition/promotion an effective activity
- Important for health & well-being of our workforce. Needs to stay in the forefront!

### **Highlights from some of our literacy partners:**

- SDB – increased staff for 4K / increased family engagement
- RSVP – America Reads – K-3 reading volunteers
- City of Beloit – Bookshelf
- Todd – Books on buses
- Blackhawk Tech /Stateline Literacy together help Even Start
- Early Head Start – 8 home visitors with focus on literacy
- St. Paul Lutheran –Soup Lunch program (stories, adult literacy)
- Little Free Libraries – Y2Y4 Change replenishing w/books from Foundation
- Beloit Health System – Reach Out and Read
- Downtown Beloit / Library– story walks
- Blackhawk Tech – Students in intermediate school make bookshelves
- Beloit Public Library – Parent engagement activities (manipulatives)
- Farmers’ Market – Book give away
- Welty – community leadership/collaboration
- BIFF – No Small Matter showing, February 2020
- Nutrition & Health Associates (WIC) – book give outs and playdates w/SDB
- Community Health Systems, Inc. – bookshelves, giveaways at events, pediatric literacy wall
- United Way – Dolly’s Imagination Library Grant (see recent [documentary](#) on program)
- Gloria Heiss: student engagement, grant for book distribution//bookmobile project

### **Literacy experts that have increased our collective knowledge**

- Dr. Navsaria
- Dr. James Heckman
- Carolyn Heinrich, Ph.D.
- Michelle Erickson (Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.)
- Quint Studer (Studer Community Institute)
- Dr. Ronald Ferguson

Quint Studer’s Tag Line: **Build a Brain, Build a Life, Build a Community!**

### **Plans/Considerations:**

- Billboards (4 locations: 2 also in Spanish)
- Brain Bags – WIC, Community Action, Health System
  - Creating local book for brain bags
  - Recommend training with OBGYN nursing staff for optimal implementation
  - Assembly with KANDU (awaiting quote)
- Potential QR code w/label (or inside books) linked to literacy information. This will assure that when the books are passed from one family to another Beloit Literacy for Life will be a part of the legacy of the book and spread the word of our initiative.

- Book Mobile: Gloria Heiss is working with support of interim School District of Beloit superintendent Dr. Daniel Keyser and Board President Kyle Larsen. The district will provide a vehicle that Gloria can drive for temporary use. The book mobile stops will be identified via yard signs and distributed literature with a QR code for scheduled stops, also coordinating with a district food truck. Gloria's grant is \$2,000 to accommodate gas, van materials (shelf fitting, magnetic sign), and handouts.
- Reach out to people in the community who are unaware of Literacy for Life, increase momentum
- Rachelle met w/Library: LENA Smart (wordbit- fitbit with words). 10-week course for family with literacy strategies. Would have been \$25,000 commitment. Other partners are inquiring, Kathryn Clark will be discussing with them, prices have come down. Potential opportunity!