

## NORMA THWARTS GROWING INTERNET THREAT TO HER KIDS

### Learning to read English lets parents stay engaged in, and in charge of, their children's lives.

It was every parent's biggest fear. Norma walked into the room to discover her twelve-year-old daughter chatting on Facebook with someone she didn't recognize. This alone would make most parents concerned. Can you imagine the extra anxiety and frustration if you couldn't read what the conversation was about?

***Literacy means safety for families.***  
***"Now I am a mom again," says Norma.***

Norma, a single mother, moved to Houston from Mexico with her two wonderful children in 2010. Without basic English literacy skills, Norma was forced to rely on her bilingual children for information. She was navigating parenthood blind, and found it difficult to act as the head of the household.

***Students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades, attend school regularly, show improved behavior, and graduate*** - Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Norma enrolled in the free ESL classes at Literacy Advance and took her power back. She studied tirelessly to gain skills that she could immediately apply to make her a better parent here in the United States. Norma practiced mock parent-teacher phone calls with her volunteer tutor, Soren,



*Norma takes advantage of the computer lab. Reading and computer literacy enable parents to keep a watchful eye on their children.*

to build her confidence, and spoke English as much as possible with her fellow students.

Currently enrolled in our most advanced English class, she can now read everything that her children post online. She's involved in their school, volunteering, and speaking with their teachers as much as possible. Thanks to friends like you, Norma is the parent again, keeping her kids safe.

*Read more about the power literacy brings to our learners in Byron's story on the page 4.*

### YOUR BONUS INSIDE...

**Read the birthday card Norma's daughter gave to her! Thanks to you, Norma can read it too.**

Only two years ago, Norma couldn't have read this adorable birthday wish from her daughter.

Your ongoing support and volunteer hours changed everything. Thank you! Take a peek on page 2 and feel the joy.

### TRIPLE YOUR INVESTMENT!

**When you donate in support of free literacy classes at Literacy Advance, your gift triples in the community!**

1. Norma learned to read and write in English.
2. Norma can now communicate with her children's teachers. With a more involved parent, her two kids have a higher chance of graduating high school.
3. Norma is a volunteer in her community, helping Spanish-speakers fill out online job applications in English. Her literacy skills mean jobs for dozens of other Houstonians.

Dear Friends of Literacy,

We hope you've had a wonderful summer; we most certainly have! As in summers past, our team swelled with interns, fellows, and volunteers bringing with them new insights and new stories.

One of the best gems of the summer was learning more about our story of origin and the amazing volunteers who started it all (page 3). Stay tuned over the next year to learn more about how we got to our amazing Golden Anniversary milestone and to celebrate those who have been with us along the way.

And who has been with us? What does literacy mean to them? Some learners define literacy as strength and safety (page 1), and others embrace literacy as hope and freedom (page 4). And how would you, beloved reader, define literacy? For me, our learners have taught me repeatedly that literacy is a basic human right. Literacy is courage. Literacy is power. Literacy is self-determination.

And for our learners, literacy is now something tangible. Thanks to you and your commitment.

We couldn't do it without you,

*Melanie*

Melanie Fisk, MSW, MBA  
Executive Director



Have you LIKED us yet?  
[www.facebook.com/LiteracyAdvance](http://www.facebook.com/LiteracyAdvance)



We're worth following!  
[www.twitter.com/LiteracyAdvance](http://www.twitter.com/LiteracyAdvance)

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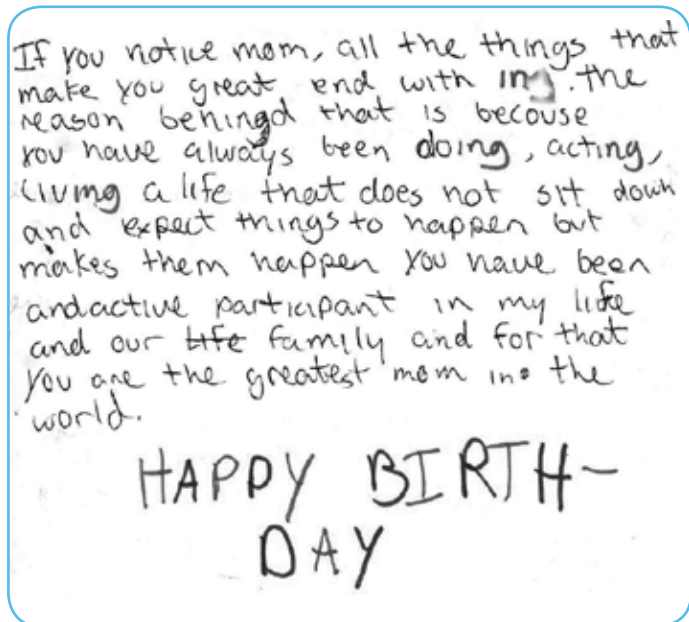
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From the cover...

## READ NORMA'S BIRTHDAY CARD. NOW SHE CAN TOO!

**You gave Norma a wonderful birthday gift – the ability to read her daughter's homemade birthday card in English.**



*"You have been an active participant in my life and our family, and for that you are the greatest mom in the world."*

Even at 12 years old, Norma's daughter already understands the incredible impact that Norma's hard work and newfound literacy skills will have on her family's life.

Literacy strengthens families. To donate to Literacy Advance and help more families like Norma's achieve their dreams, please give online by visiting:

[www.literacyadvance.org/give](http://www.literacyadvance.org/give)

Or make checks payable to:

**Literacy Advance**  
**2424 Wilcrest, Suite 120**  
**Houston, TX 77098**



Story Time  
Literacy Advance of Houston

#### **Tour Literacy Advance!**

Mission-based tours held monthly.  
Visit [www.literacyadvance.org/storytime](http://www.literacyadvance.org/storytime)  
and sign-up today!



*Excitement for Family Literacy Night builds at Clemente Elementary School. Studies show a parent's literacy drives their child's success.*

## CAN YOU HOST A BOOK DRIVE FOR KIDS?

**Back to school means Family Literacy Night for kiddos across the city – and volunteer opportunities for you!**

Each year, through our Family Literacy Nights, we give away thousands of donated books to children in our community, and provide parents with the skills and resources they need to read to their children.

In low-income neighborhoods, there is only 1 book per 300 children. Can you host a book drive and help bring the excitement of reading to hundreds of children?

To help, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Anna Zubkova, at 713.266.8777 or [volunteer@literacyadvance.org](mailto:volunteer@literacyadvance.org).

### JOIN US FOR A FREE BREAKFAST!

*Opening Opportunities Breakfast - October 3, 2013*

Join us for a fundraising breakfast and celebration! The event is free, and there is no obligation to give. Come eat the Junior League's famous orange rolls and cheer on our students' successes.

8:15am – 9:15am

RSVP Required

The Junior League of Houston

Josh Beasley, Development Director

1811 Briar Oaks Lane

[jbeasley@literacyadvance.org](mailto:jbeasley@literacyadvance.org)

*And mark your calendars for other upcoming events...*

### Reader Cup Celebrity Golf Tournament

A special event in honor of Larry & Judy Dierker  
February 20, 2014 at TopGolf

### Scrabble and the City

Scrabble is back with a vengeance! Will you be ready?  
June 12, 2014 at Saint Arnold Brewing Company

**Rare and never seen archival documents!**

## 50 YEARS OF HISTORY UNCOVERED

**Sumeeta devoted her summer to recording and cataloging your rich legacy of literacy in Houston.**

Deep in the Literacy Advance archives is 50 years' worth of history waiting to be explored. In honor of next year's 50th anniversary we decided it was time to crack open the vault and celebrate the countless volunteer hours and learner successes over the years. So Sumeeta, our Volunteer Houston summer intern funded by Shell Oil Company, set out to do just that.

Her research took her through musty binders and into the back corners of the Texas Room at the Houston Public Library, where she found articles from the 1960s we didn't even know existed! As we continue to compile a full history of Literacy Advance throughout the upcoming year, we want to hear your story.

What is your connection to Literacy Advance? Were you a tutor or volunteer ages ago? Are you a former student? Please get in touch with our Development Coordinator, Nick Stinson, to share your remarkable story and be a part of our 50th anniversary!

Share your Literacy Advance story by email at [nstinson@literacyadvance.org](mailto:nstinson@literacyadvance.org) or call 713.266.8777.



*Volunteer Houston intern Sumeeta buried alive under 50 years of Literacy Advance history. Your generosity has provided free literacy services to adults since 1964.*

# DECADES AFTER ABANDONMENT, BYRON LEARNS TO READ

**45 years after being abandoned by his school and forced to mow the principal's lawn, Byron learns to read.**

Byron graduated high school, but his education stopped in the 2nd grade. Identified as a slow learner by his teachers, he was sent off to a special school and forgotten. It would be another 45 years before Byron would walk into a Literacy Advance classroom and find help from literacy lovers like you. Thanks to your support, and instruction from his tutor John, Byron can now read this paragraph.

Placed in a classroom with children who had severe mental and physical challenges, Byron's individual needs were ignored in school. He spent his elementary years playing with toy trucks in the corner instead of learning math, science, and reading with his peers. When Byron reached high school, his school work consisted only of performing yard work for the administration.

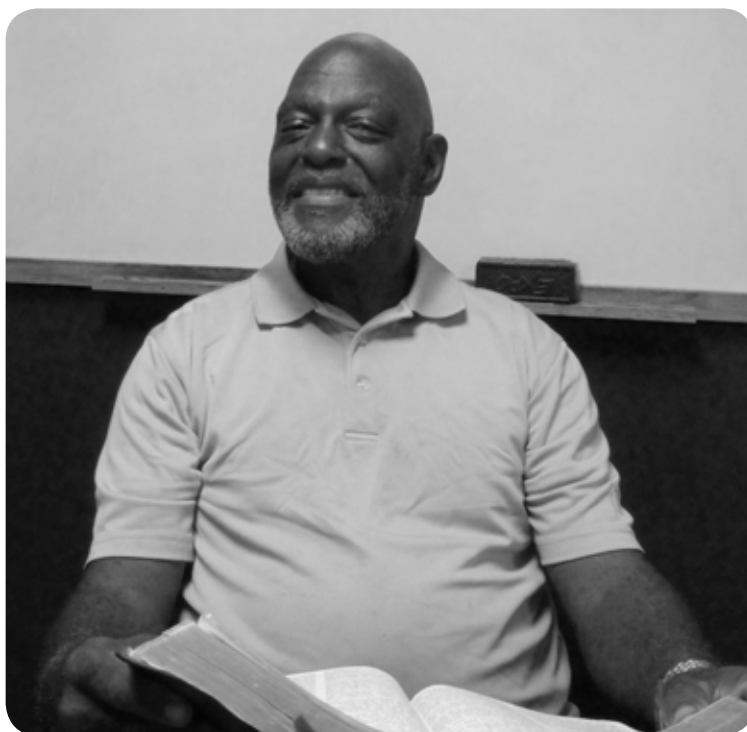
***"I knew I couldn't read or write so I went to work for a moving company. They used me for my back."* – Byron**

"They took us to the principal's house to cut his hedges, work the flowerbed. Until about 2 o'clock. Then we'd go home, and the next day we'd go to the assistant principal's house," Byron recalls.

After a mock graduation ceremony in the school cafeteria, Byron entered the adult world. Unable to read or write more than a few words, he began a lifetime of struggle, fear, and embarrassment. Byron's lack of literacy skills was a chain that tied him down for decades. Constantly afraid that his secret would be discovered, at church he'd hide in the back or leave for the bathroom to avoid being called to read scripture.



*Byron, on the right, celebrates with his tutor, John. With your support, volunteer tutors like John will gift over 1,500 adults students with fundamental literacy skills this year.*



*The joyous satisfaction of reading! Literacy Advance learner, Byron, pours over his favorite book, which he can read on his own for the first time.*

Not anymore! Two years ago, Byron came to Literacy Advance. And, for the first time, he was given the instruction and free resources he needed to do the remarkable: learn to read.

***"You will help us achieve a better life. You will help us tremendously," says Byron to anyone considering volunteer tutoring.***

His goals were simple, yet profound: He wanted to learn to read to take care of his family, learn how to manage his finances, and learn how to use the computer. With extraordinary progress on the first two, it's now time to tackle the third in our on-site computer lab.

When Byron describes the feeling of learning to read, you can hear the power and joy achieved through his new-found literacy skills: "I feel good, I feel so good! No more hiding... I can read now. I am free."

**THANK YOU TO OUR MANY DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS WHO MAKE STORIES LIKE THIS POSSIBLE!**

*Literacy Advance of Houston is an Accredited Affiliate of ProLiteracy and a member of Literacy Texas, the Houston Center for Literacy, the United Way of Greater Houston and the Better Business Bureau.*

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