



WINNEBAGO AREA  
**LITERACY  
COUNCIL**

## October Newsletter

Happy October! Fall is flying by here at WALC, it has been a busy month!

We had such a blast at Spellbound for Literacy on October 3rd, thank you to everyone who joined us! We finally saw a new team win this year, the Best SpELLERS, defeating the incumbent 4 time champions. We are very happy with the outcomes of the night and were able to raise good money to support WALC and ensure all of our literacy services remain free to our learners.



We had an eventful Tuesday last week at our Women and Children class. Two representatives from Winnebago Health came in to talk to our learners about back to school health and hygiene. We also handed out toothbrushes and thermometers in accordance with the talk. Our new Executive Director, Dr. Chu May Paing, has jumped right into the new role, even stepping in as a substitute teacher in one of our classes last week!



## October Spotlight

### Fernanda Helena Bombonato Athyde & Planet Perk

Fernanda has wanted to live in the US since she was 18 years old, a dream that finally came true 2 years ago when she moved to Oshkosh with her husband and two daughters. Her dream now - for her daughters, ages 5 and 13, to flourish.

Fernanda's time in the US has not been all a dream though, she has struggled with the loss of independence that not speaking fluent English has caused. The lack of communication has caused her to feel dependent on others and unable to talk and engage, something she typically loves to do.



Fernanda is from Brazil and lived there until 2015 when her husband, who works for Amcor, was transferred to Mexico. They stayed in Mexico for 7 years before another work transfer brought them to Oshkosh.

Fernanda began coming to WALC almost exactly 1 year ago and has been working with her tutor Nicole Voytovich since February. It is through her work with WALC's Vocational Services Director, Oxana, and her tutor Nicole, that Fernanda is now working at local cafe Planet Perk.

Fernanda has been welcomed into the Planet Perk community, stating how grateful she is for her co-workers and boss, Planet Perk owner, Ken Osmond. The feeling is mutual, Ken expressed his gratitude for Fernanda, describing her as "very brave, very intelligent, and very humble" as well as commending her thirst for knowledge. Nicole shared the sentiment as well, saying how well Fernanda fit in with the staff, and how talking to her co-workers and customers is helping her practice and gain more confidence in her English.

The welcoming community at Planet Perk and the experience and practice Fernanda will gain from her time there, is a perfect example of a WALC success story. We are equally as grateful as both Fernanda and Ken for this opportunity and potential for future partnership with Planet Perk.

## Country Spotlight

### Syria



Several WALC learners have come to Oshkosh from Syria. Syria is a Middle Eastern country, home to more than 22 million people. It is located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, sharing borders with Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon. The capital is Damascus.

The majority of the Syrian population speaks Arabic, with other popular languages being Kurdish, Armenian, and Turkish. 74.9% of the population identifies as Syrian Arab.



Islam is the religion practiced by the overwhelming majority of Syrians. Sunni Muslims make up 3/4 of the Muslim population.

Syria has four traditional regions - the coastal strip, mountains, cultivated steppe, and the desert steppe. As of 2024, 58% of the population live in urban areas, the other 42% in rural.



Since 1963, socialism has been the official economic policy of Syria. The government controls the vital economic sectors including oil, electricity, railways, and other manufacturing plants. 1/4 of the population works in agriculture, wheat is the main crop.

Education systems have been greatly expanded since 1963 and now 4/5 of



the population is literate.

Contemporary Syrian culture blends Arab, Mediterranean, and European elements. Family is at the heart of Syrian social life.

Syria has a rich history of arts in their culture, and a number of archaeological and historical sites are featured as UNESCO World Heritage sites. Football (soccer) is the most popular sport.

Syria has been in a civil war since 2011 between pro-democratic insurgents and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's long-standing dynastic regime. The Syrian Civil War has created the largest refugee population in the world, constituting over 1/3 of the global refugee population. The UN estimated in 2018 that 40%, 6.7 million people, of Syria's population were refugees.

## Volunteers Needed!

WALC will be tabling at the Oshkosh Farmers Market this coming Saturday 10/19 from 8 am - 12:30 pm. We are seeking volunteers to help out at our booth, talking to attendees about WALC and our mission. If you are interested in helping out, sign up through the button below or email [thompson@winlit.org](mailto:thompson@winlit.org)!

**Farmers Market Volunteer Sign Up  
Here!**

## Upcoming Events

### **WALC at the Oshkosh Farmers Market**

October 19th | 8 am - 12:30 pm | Oshkosh Main St

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You can always get up to date information on upcoming events, locations and times on our website events calendar

**WALC Events  
Calendar**

# Eliminating Barriers to Literacy



## Considering a financial gift?

The community we serve is growing significantly this year - our goal is to respond quickly by expanding class sections and increase services.

Only \$34 covers books and materials for one new adult learner

**Donate Now**

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Connect with us and stay up to date on all things WALC



Winnebago Area Literacy Council | 106 Washington Ave | Oshkosh, WI 54901 US

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