

A Legacy of Learning

From humble beginnings in a church basement to a thriving educational hub, The Literacy & Learning Center has spent over 30 years empowering learners of all ages on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau—one book, one student, one future at a time.



For over three decades, The Literacy & Learning Center has been a cornerstone of educational support on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. What began in 1993 as a simple, unofficial ef-

fort by a handful of volunteers to provide free reading resources for children has blossomed into a comprehensive organization enriching lives and expanding knowledge across all ages.

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This growth has been sustained primarily by the generous support of local and part-time residents—a testament to the community’s commitment, given that TL&LC is a grassroots organization, not part of a larger national entity with broader funding reach.

By 1995, the growing need formalized into the Literacy Council of Highlands, a 501(c)(3). Operating initially from the Highlands United Methodist Church basement and Hudson Library, the council steadily expanded, eventually occupying multiple rooms at the Peggy Crosby Center to accommodate its burgeoning student base.

A significant turning point arrived in 2017 with Bonnie Potts joining as Executive Director. Under her leadership, programs diversified and student participation soared. The after-school program, for instance, expanded from two to five days a week, opening to all students needing academic assistance—including math and science—and

forging a key partnership with Highlands School for referrals based on academic need.

Recognizing the limitations of shared spaces, the council embarked on a new chapter in 2018, transforming the “Old Post Office” building into its dedicated Learning Center. Despite temporary relocations during construction, the vision for a permanent home solidified, culminating in 2019 with TL&LC’s programs and administrative offices settling into their new, modern facility next to Bryson’s Food Store. This period also saw the rebranding to The Literacy & Learning Center, reflecting its wider range of programs.

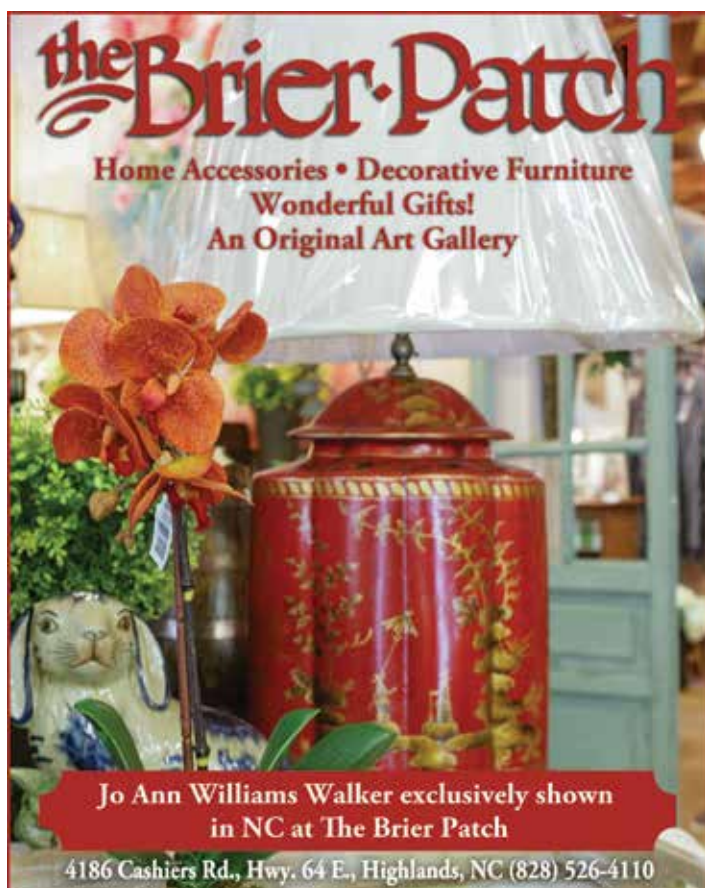
Today, The Literacy & Learning Center thrives, serving a vast student base and directly addressing evolving community needs. In 2023 alone, programs supported 50 after-school students, 50 summer campers, 25 tutoring participants, 12 ESL students, and five GED students.

Beyond direct instruction, TL&LC distributed 1,000 books through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and 2,000 more at community Halloween and Christmas events, supported in part by Highlands’ Mountaintop Rotary Club.

This remarkable journey, sustained by 32 volunteers contributing 640 hours in 2023, reflects the unwavering dedication of staff, board members, and supporters. As these efforts continue, TL&LC looks to the future, including the recent addition of a new Pre-K program—reaffirming its mission to promote lifelong learning and foster an informed, empowered community.

To learn more about TL&LC’s programs, please visit TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org or contact Caroline Cox at CCox@TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org or (828) 526-0863.

*by Anna Norton,
The Literacy & Learning Center*



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