

THE LITERACY PROJECT

Strengthening Literacy in Tulare County



**“ELIMINATION OF
ILLITERACY IS AS
SERIOUS AN ISSUE
TO OUR HISTORY,
AS THE ABOLITION
OF SLAVERY.”**

Maya Angelou

Strengthening Literacy in Tulare County

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF OUR WORK

United Way of Tulare County addresses issues which matter most in our community by improving lives and delivering meaningful results. By effectively and efficiently investing resources and building partnerships, United Way mobilizes the caring power of our communities to advance the common good.

Everyone deserves opportunities to have a good life, a quality education leading to a stable job, enough income to support a family, and good health. United Way of Tulare County is focused on these sustainable building blocks for a good life:

- Successful Youth
- Strong Families
- Healthy Communities

Unfortunately, the rate of illiteracy in Tulare County has, and continues to adversely impact the lives of youth, families and communities. Without the ability to read, the chance of a quality education are dismal. Without the ability to read, the ability to obtain a stable job are slim. Without the ability to read, having enough income to support a family is a frustrating dream.

Illiteracy is not discussed, not directly identified, but serves as the root cause to many of the negative issues infecting our communities in Tulare County. By tackling the issue of illiteracy, the United Way of Tulare County, can help improve lives and advance the common good in our communities.

All children are born with a hunger for learning.
Help to inspire the future leaders of our community.



“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”

—Margaret Fuller

THE LITERACY PROJECT

Because of its negative impact, United Way of Tulare County is taking a strong stand against illiteracy. Of our three building blocks—Successful Youth, Strong Families, Healthy Communities—**THE LITERACY PROJECT** positively impacts each and every one. By promoting and encouraging reading, and lowering the rate of illiteracy in Tulare County, **THE LITERACY PROJECT** works to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community to advance reading.

The reality is Tulare County has the highest rate of illiteracy in the nation. In Tulare County the adult functional illiteracy rate is 41%, compared to 23% of the rest of California’s population. Tulare County has very few bookstores, and no public four-year universities.

Tulare County’s library system statistics shed further light on the illiteracy problem. The average of library visits in California are 4.41 per person, while in Tulare County they were only 1.25 per person. Further, an average county library spends \$20-\$25 per person, whereas the Tulare County library system spends only \$10 per person.

The lack of books and access to books for children and youth has a long lasting impact. Without a high school diploma, Tulare County residents earn only \$15,000 a year. With a high school diploma, those wages increase by \$10,000 a year.

It is imperative children and youth be engaged in reading, and the rate of illiteracy be lowered in Tulare County. It is key in ensuring successful youth, strong families, and healthy communities.

Statistics prove the effect of illiteracy on children is devastating. Students who don’t read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to leave high school without a diploma. This is the core force behind United Way’s commitment to promote the importance of early grade reading.

Strengthening Literacy in Tulare County



THE LITERACY PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The support of our community—individuals, families, organizations, companies, corporations and foundations—ignite **THE LITERACY PROJECT** providing monetary support for the program. This support in combination with volunteerism keep the flame of literacy burning bright in our Tulare County communities. Fueled by UWTC's **EMERGING LEADERS CIRCLE**, a Tulare County-wide collection of reading materials for the project, and volunteer-led reading efforts in the community, **THE LITERACY PROJECT** is fired up to:

- Obtain donations which allow for the full implementation and guaranteed success of **THE LITERACY PROJECT**.
- Conduct a county-wide book drive providing variety of reading materials for children and youth in Tulare County.
- Provide volunteers to serve on the United Way of Tulare County's **EMERGING LEADERS CIRCLE** and other key community partners to lead the efforts of **THE LITERACY PROJECT**.
- Provide awareness and raise awareness about the importance of reading and the impact of illiteracy with strategic media, social media, and presentation efforts.
- Provide volunteers to read to children.
- Distribute books to children and youth throughout Tulare County communities.

Students who don't read proficiently by third grade are **FOUR TIMES** more likely than proficient readers to leave high school **WITHOUT** a diploma.



HOW TO FIGHT ILLITERACY IN TULARE COUNTY

We can't fight illiteracy in Tulare County without your help. Here's what you can do:

- **GIVE BOOKS.** Contribute books so we can distribute them to children and youth in Tulare County. Hold a book drive at your workplace. Get friends and family to also donate books.
- **GIVE MONEY.** Make a specific monetary donation to **THE LITERACY PROJECT of UWTC** and we will use the funds to purchase the needed books.
- **VOLUNTEER.** Give of your time to read to children, or help **THE LITERACY PROJECT of UWTC** succeed.
- **ADVOCATE.** Go ahead and spread the word about the importance of literacy, and why burning down illiteracy in Tulare County is so important.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED? NEED MORE INFORMATION? Call us at **559.685.1766** or email susan@unitedwaytc.org.