

Expanding Our Impact – Join The Reading Action Program

Education is the key to unlocking human potential. The acquisition of skills and knowledge enables people to overcome poverty, disease and other social ills. It empowers communities and gives individuals the confidence needed to shape their own future. The volunteer sector plays an important role in providing education –viewed by many experts – including the United Nations – as one of the root causes of the cycle of poverty. As a former educator, married to a career teacher, I place a high value on education and I consider the ability to read as the foundation to an education. It is a gift Lions can give to children and adults around the world.

If you can read this sentence, then you are not only literate, you are considered highly literate. The basic definition of literacy worldwide is the ability to write your name, and read at a 10 year old level. Yet even using that basic definition, nearly one billion people worldwide are illiterate. That's 26 percent of the world's adult population, or one out of four people of reading age. But illiteracy isn't a challenge just for developing regions. Even in the United States where I am from, one in seven persons can barely read a billboard sign or a recipe, which makes them functionally illiterate. Twenty-one million in my own country can't read at all. To reverse the situation we need to reach more children at risk.

According to the Gates Foundation, children develop the skills they need to succeed in school and life, during their first five years. Many children lack basic language and behavioral skills—such as knowing letters and colors, following directions, getting along with others, and exhibiting impulse control. Unfortunately, when children start behind, they often stay behind, leading to an achievement gap in elementary school and beyond.

Lions Can Help Through The Reading Action Program (RAP)

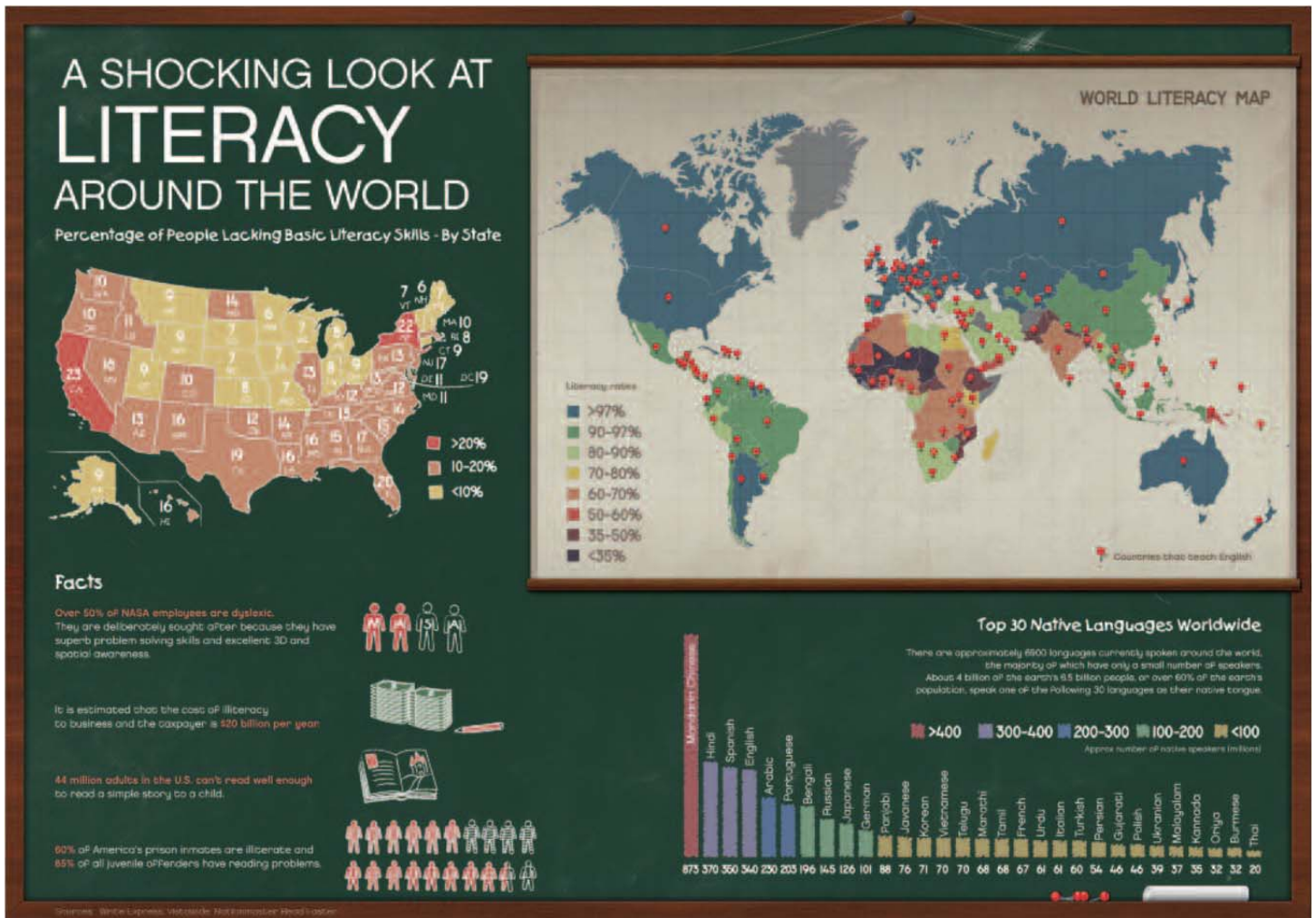
So Lions, are you ready to expand our impact by jumping on board the Reading Action Program?

There are many ways Lions can help in their respective communities. Consider the following:

- Developing after school reading programs
- Reading to children at local libraries
- Contacting your local school and asking how you can help
- Donating books and/or computers to your local school or library
- Volunteering as tutors through a local school
- Working with local literacy experts and agencies
- Working to promote braille literacy

(See the Reading Action Program guideline for suggestions and ideas)

Or, perhaps your club can come up with its own program. However you choose to approach the problem of illiteracy, be pro-active, not reactive.



Reading Action Program Awards

Each club that documents a reading or other literacy activity through the online service activity reporting system will receive a specially designed "Reading Action Program" club banner patch. Each district governor whose district achieves at least 50% club participation in literacy programs will receive a "Reading Action Program" award to commemorate their success. In addition, artwork will be available on the LCI web site that will enable clubs to download diplomas and bookmarks for clubs to present to students and adults that participate in club sponsored literacy programs.

The “World of Service” Awards

Our world of service is as large as the number of communities we serve. I will be honoring Lions service across a range of service priorities through the World of Service Awards. The World of Service Awards, to be given at the International Convention in Hamburg, Germany, will recognize achievement by clubs and districts in the area of service.

Categories include:

Best Long-Term Reading Action Program Project (club, district or Leo club)

Best Reading Action Program Rap Video (club or Leo club)

Best Youth Engagement Project (by club or district)

Outstanding Service to the Blind or Visually Impaired (club, district or Leo club)

Outstanding Environmental Impact Project (club, district or Leo club)

Best Hunger Relief Program or Activity (club, district or Leo club)

Lion and Leo of the Year

*See the World of Service Awards flyer on
the LCI web site for more information.*

Make A RAP Video

And here’s one way to have fun while doing something meaningful. Each club has an opportunity to make a RAP video. If your club sponsors a Leo club, this would be a fun joint venture. The video can be no longer than 2 minutes, and the subject must be about how to get children to read. Videos can be submitted via the Lions Clubs International YouTube channel. The top winning video will be played during one of the plenary sessions at the International Convention in Hamburg, Germany, and the club will receive a special recognition award.