

The Value of Cooperation

In October 2013, Jim Heiser, Director of Operations – United Way of Tuscola County sent an email to Rawson Library Director Kate Van Auken and Cass City Literacy Director Connie Iwankovitsch. The email referenced a meeting of the Tuscola County Human Services Collaboration Council. Jim was unable to attend the meeting, but while reading the meeting minutes saw an item he wanted to pass on. Mark Karwowski, Living Word Pastor, stated he was seeing a need for dyslexia tutoring in the Cass City community. He wanted to collaborate with other organizations in the hopes of offering some type of after-school dyslexia program. Mark and his wife, Lisa, had worked with the Barton System, a program that helped their dyslexic son.

Mark, Lisa, Connie and Kate met in November 2013 to discuss how to get the Barton System program started in Cass City. After just a few meetings, it was decided to seek funding from the Pinney Foundation and begin the dyslexia program. The Pinney Foundation donated \$1,500.00 towards the purchase of the first five boxes of materials. Lisa was already a tutor for the program and Connie completed training for screening very quickly. The next step was the actual screening process for area children. Lisa and Connie organized a few after school screening sessions to identify students with this reading challenge. As of today, they are tutoring students with the Barton System.

In early 2014, Kate noticed a great deal of tutoring activity by the Cass City Literacy Council happening in the library and formulated a plan to transform an area in the library into two small study rooms. This would free up the Pinney Room which is the large meeting room used by all groups. In May 2014 the Barbara Hutchinson and Reva Little Study Rooms were complete and are being used by the Cass City Literacy Council and others who need a small, private area for study.

What started as a suggestion to help an underserved population in our community has turned into a thriving program for the Cass City Literacy Council. With the help of the Pinney Foundation purchasing materials for the dyslexia program and Rawson Memorial Library for transforming an area in their facility, this is truly a successful collaboration!

Kate Van Auken