



AMERICAN YOUTH LITERACY FOUNDATION

BY JENNIFER HETRICK
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What is your name and role with American Youth Literacy Foundation? R. Kali Woodward, Founding Executive Director. Our main location is in Collegetown. We are a distributed, nationwide virtual network of volunteers spread out across the U.S., working collaboratively via online communications tools and platforms.

Tell us about the work your organization does. The American Youth Literacy Foundation, or AYLF, was created to solve the children's literacy crisis in America. More than 20 million children in public schools are either completely or functionally illiterate. Those children drop out of school at a rate of more than 1 million per year (25% of all students become dropouts, primarily because they can't read). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020), 54% of U.S. adults 16-74 years old (about 130 million people) lack proficiency in literacy, reading below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level. The devastating downstream effects of illiteracy are a scourge on our nation, but because of the



work that AYLF has done over the past 12 years and research and development beginning more than 17 years ago, the opportunity to reverse this crisis is within immediate and tangible reach. [] In January of 2021, AYLF launched the patented FUNetix 12-Hour Reading App in the App Store and Google Play, which teaches any child how to read in just 12 hours of total play time. More than 100 wonderful people spent all of 2020 designing, engineering, and testing the app, which is the digital encapsulation of our patented reading curriculum we have been using to teach thousands of children



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from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, nationwide, through our network of reading tutors, since 2012. Now the app, a gamified, fully narrated, tastefully animated, simulated 1-on-1 tutoring experience consisting of more than 2,000 screens (40 modules) of content, can be downloaded and played by any child, anywhere, for FREE!

Can you share some examples of your nonprofit's local impacts? Before going nationwide in 2012, we tutored children throughout the community at South, Evergreen, Royersford, and Limerick Elementary Schools, Lower Providence, Royersford, and Lansdale Public Libraries, and many other locations. The more than 100 students we tutored after school at these locations is just a small representation of the widespread —crisis of literacy— impacting children from every sector of American society.

Is there anything else you would like to share? My journey began as a Spanish and Arabic linguist for the 101st Airborne Division in the U.S. Army. When my own son struggled with reading, I homeschooled him for a year during second grade to teach him how to read. That led not only to the insight that the 2,000-year-old diacritic method used by the Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Farsi languages could be applied to English, but also that in doing so, learning-to-read time

could be compressed into a matter of hours, spread out over a few short weeks. We have just rebooted our nationwide tutoring program after five years of app development work. Middle school and high school tutors can now work with children anywhere in the country, teaching them how to read in just 12 hours via Google Meet or Zoom, using the FUNetix app. Sign up at www.FUNetix.org.

If you know a local nonprofit worth nominating, please send contact information for it to jkovaleski@bestversionmedia.com.

