I am sharing here a picture in which I’m holding one of my favorite books: Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi. This smiling picture is one of gratitude for a lot of things, including being able to read. It was after getting involved with the San Diego Council on Literacy that I learned about the state of literacy in San Diego and the work of the affiliated programs to increase access to reading skills, books, and resources across San Diego. I learned that while more than 4 out of 10 third-graders in San Diego county did not meet reading and writing standards, there are a lot of people working daily to improve literacy.

As a result of what I now know, I have a deeper appreciation for reading, for access to books, and access to resources. Reading is a source of joy for me, but most importantly, reading is a skill and a means to success. This appreciation for the power of reading is why I support literacy; it is why I support the San Diego Council on Literacy.

So with this message, I thank you. As a reader, as a parent of readers, and as Chair of the board of directors, I thank you for your support of the cause of literacy. I thank you for your contributions, your partnership, and for your volunteer support which all translate into action towards the goal of making literacy accessible to all.

Idara Inwek Ogunsaju, Board Chair

Dear Partner in Literacy,

Now is the time to roll up our sleeves. We have work to do. Current numbers show that literacy scores of public-school students in California have dropped by 8%. Enrollment in adult basic education programs have dropped by 15%. The main reason for this is…social distancing and heavy reliance on online learning…due to the pandemic.

We call this learning loss, “Covid Slide”. And like “summer slide”, this interruption of programming did not just affect low-income children. It affected everyone, socially, physically, and educationally. It broke up the classroom and affected individual and collective mental health. It took away some of our greatest assets: Relationship-based learning and interactive learning opportunities.

Public school students are returning to the traditional classroom setting. And the 31 affiliated programs of the San Diego Council on Literacy are returning to the instructional formats that have produced the best results for them. Even then, during the height of the pandemic, these programs provided services to thousands of residents.

Given the circumstances, our work together becomes more important. But this is where we as a community bring our best. Thank you for being there for us…all along. We hope you enjoy this newsletter!

Jose L. Cruz, CEO
SDCOL Achievements
Summer 2021 to Spring 2022

- 30,000 new books distributed throughout the region. Thank you to The Molina Foundation and the San Diego County Library (shown above).
- Presentation of first Financial Literacy Superheroes Competition with Mission Federal Credit Union, Kaiser Permanente, Comic-Con Museum, Jill Hall, SOFA, and The San Diego Union-Tribune. The awards event took place at the Comic-Con Museum on March 26.
- Little Free Library (LFL) replenishments w/SD County Library; 6,000+ books for LFL stations in neighborhoods throughout the region.
- Participation w/The San Diego Union-Tribune for the Saturday, August 20, 2022 presentation of “The Festival of Books”. The SDCOL is a beneficiary of funds raised.
- Research and Advocacy: Ongoing calculation of the state of literacy in San Diego County; Instilling the importance of literacy in the community.
- Coordination of the Imagination Library program, with books being mailed monthly to the homes of local children. Over 330 children are receiving books through this program.
- Engagement in the Advancing Health Literacy project with UCSD and partners.
- Information and Referral Services.

Coming Soon!
- Launching of Book Humans of San Diego: Get ready to send photos of friends/family/you in the act of reading!
- San Diego Gives
- SDCOL Volunteer Recruitment Campaign
Literacy in San Diego, real life stories, told by photos!
More than 36 million adults in the U.S. lack basic literacy skills.

28.4% of adults in California read at the lowest literacy skill levels.

23% of San Diego County adults lack basic literacy skills.

Children of parents with low literacy skills have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves.

Nearly 30% of adults with household incomes at or below the federal poverty line do not have a high school credential.

Of adults with the lowest literacy levels, 43% live in poverty.

Every year, 1 in 6 young adults drop out of high school. That is more than 1.2 million.

75% of state prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.

About 50% of the 2 million immigrants that come to the U.S. each year lack high school education and proficient English language skills. This severely limits their access to jobs, college, and citizenship.

Source: Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy

Source: National Bureau of Economic Research

Source: ProLiteracy

Source: The National Institute for Literacy

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Source: ProLiteracy

Source: Center for Immigration Studies, National Commission on Adult Literacy
This June, Denise O’Neal will watch her son graduate from high school and head off to college. When she watches Brenden mark this milestone it will bring her journey full circle.

When Denise was in school, she spent years working with tutors without much progress. As it turns out, she had a learning disability. “Teachers just didn’t recognize it. Everyone just thought I wasn’t good at school,”

While she had enough credits to walk in her 1988 high school graduation, California withheld her diploma until she passed the required state proficiency exams. For years, Denise would take the proficiency exam with hopes of getting her diploma. After eight years, Denise passed. And while she finally had her diploma, she considered herself far from proficient in reading. “My husband is the one who said something long ago. He said, ‘I think you need to get some help,’”

In her mid-30s, Denise sought help at the San Diego Council on Literacy. She was paired with a literacy tutor and they began working so Denise could read with her son. Not long after Brenden started school, Denise started to notice some of the same things that she had gone through in school. Brenden was tested for and diagnosed with a learning disability.

Denise worked as a receptionist at the California Center for the Arts in Escondido. She wanted to learn more about human resources and back it up with an official certificate, so she enrolled at Cal State San Marcos. She completed the program and got her certificate, all while holding a full-time job and taking care of family obligations.

As Brenden got a little older, Denise left work to raise him. When she decided to go back to work, the gap in her resume made it difficult. She went back to school to get her certificate a second time. “Since I’ve had such success, I wish more people would reach out or seek help,” Denise said. “I know how they’re feeling.”

She now shares that student perspective back at San Diego Council on Literacy as a member of its board of directors. And between serving on the board and working full time, Denise is helping Brenden prepare for graduation in June and his next steps. Unlike when she graduated from high school, Brenden has a clear plan for a career in criminal justice and law enforcement.
Raising a Child Who Reads: Essential Ingredients

1. Parenting skills/love/security.
2. Prenatal care to reinforce healthy growth and well-being…and to prevent chronic illnesses.
4. Providing stimulation/learning opportunities, especially in the first 3-years of any child’s life…taking advantage of the child’s optimal learning years.
5. Being aware of and controlling the content we send and the environment we create for children: Emotions, language, tone.
6. Limiting exposure to flat screens: No TV or smartphones for the first two years of the child’s life. For development, children need to experience the 3-D world.
7. Ongoing wellness checks with attention to hearing. A cause of some children not emerging as readers is related to hearing: “Late to hear, early to fail.”
8. Being an adult role model who reads or engages with print. Adult Literacy!
9. Language rich environment: Speaking, hearing, listening…and art and music. Being conversational. A child’s vocabulary comes months before they start using words. They are listening and they know what you are saying!
11. Reading to children. Family reading time and siblings sharing stories.
12. Taking children to the library or bookstores to pick books they want. Benefiting from the child’s interests and curiosity. Putting the child in the driver’s seat of learning.

Once the child is in school…
• Providing a learning space for children.
• Paying attention to the child’s achievement in school. Being aware of potential learning differences
• Providing effective instruction as it relates to the child’s learning needs.
• Being engaged as a parent. Being an advocate.
• And if needed, let someone else, not mom or dad, be the tutor. Resist saying that a child has problems with reading. Keep it fun. Everyone is different. Be patient and positive.

In San Diego, contact the San Diego Council on Literacy: www.literacysandiego.org
The Gap Minders

The Gap Minders podcasts, presented by the San Diego Council on Literacy, the United Way of San Diego County, and Cloudcast Media, brings this new online programming! Leaders in the San Diego community join us to talk about their passion for reading and their concern for resource gaps that affect quality of life for all. Below are photos of prominent guests.

Left to right, from top, Cindy Marten, Deputy Secretary of Education; Richard Lederer, the word man; Dr. Shirley Weber, CA Secretary of State; John Corcoran, author & literacy advocate/the teacher who couldn’t read; Nora Vargas, County Supervisor; Jeff Light, Editor/Publisher, The San Diego Union-Tribune; Dr. Carlos Cortez, Chancellor, San Diego Community College District; Nick Nanton, Emmy award-winning documentarian.

Nancy Sakaski, CEO, United Way of San Diego County, and Jose Cruz, CEO, San Diego Council on Literacy, are the co-hosts of The Gap Minders podcasts.
The SDCOL’s 2022 Presentation of the Financial Literacy Superheroes Competition was a smash! Go to our website to see the winning entries! Thank you to our sponsors! Please join us next year!

At the Comic-Con Museum with proud competition winners and their friends and families.
We’re turning a new page.

Join us in person this year at the University of San Diego.

BOOKMARK THE DATE
SATURDAY, AUG. 20, 2022

ADMISSION IS FREE
Featuring an exciting lineup of authors, poets, activities and entertainment to be announced soon.

SDFestivalofBooks.com
Follow us on social media for giveaways and festival information!

For sponsorship inquiries, email Fiona Leung at fiona.leung@sduniontribune.com.
Voice of Literacy

The 31 Affiliated Programs
Voice of Literacy

Board of Directors

SDCOL OFFICERS (Starting July 1, 2022)
Idara Inwek Ogunsaju, Chair
Carrie Scott, Vice Chair
Kristin Shea-Thiel, Vice Chair
  Chair, Affiliated Programs
  Chair, Nominating Committee
  Chair, Program Committee
Doug Wright, Treasurer
Frank Wofford, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS
Erika Bird
Valerie Brown
Kristie Bruce-Lane
James Canning
Mary Colacicco
Leah Gualtieri
Denise O’Neal
Rachael Orose, Chair, Audit Committee
Janice Reynoso
Lucas Woodward, Chair, Marketing Committee

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
John Corcoran
Valerie Hardie
Helga Moore
Nancy Rohland-Heinrich
Drew Schlosberg

HONORARY BOARD
Greg Cox (former County Supervisor)
Dr. Robert Singer
William D. Lynch
Ron Roberts (former County Supervisor)

Staff
Jose L. Cruz, Chief Executive Officer
Claire Couron, Program Representative
Michael Trebbien, Accountant

We achieve because of your support. Please make a gift to the San Diego Council on Literacy today.

The San Diego Council on Literacy is a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization: 33-0390376

Contact
San Diego Council on Literacy
3245 University Ave., #301
San Diego, CA 92104

www.literacysandiego.org