



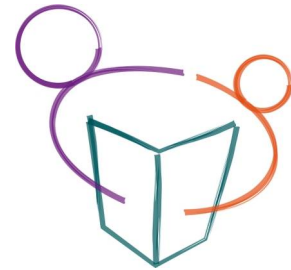
United Way
of Bradley County

Grant helps promote reading comprehension of medical forms

(Seventh in a series detailing the 14 programs receiving United Way of Bradley County grants made possible through the Bradley Memorial Health Endowment Fund)

For many people, filling out forms at doctors' offices can be difficult, but imagine doing this if you have reading or vocabulary comprehension difficulties.

A new project created by the Learning Center for Adults and Families will develop training for these individuals to put them more at ease when visiting their physicians or medical facilities. It also helps to provide accurate information on the forms that must be filled out when visiting a doctor.



The project is being made possible through a grant from the Bradley Memorial Health Endowment Fund, which is administered by United Way of Bradley County.

"This grant is two-fold," explained Learning Center Executive Director Candace Lewis. "The staff wrote the first curriculum that is based on doctors' forms, patient information sheets, medical history, and those types of forms.

"The second curriculum is geared more toward Medicare and Medicaid forms, living wills, and medications," she added.

Lewis said that this is a community need that had been identified and the LCAF staff began working on the curriculum in 2009.

"I was told of a situation where someone had gone to a doctor's office and could not read the form and he asked for assistance and was told that was not something they could do," she said. "He then had to go into the lobby and find another patient who could help him, but people were very wary of helping because they didn't want to be held liable (if something was entered wrong)."

Lewis said that she understands that doctors are not liable when a patient fills out a form with incorrect information. She adds that regardless of that, all physicians want to make sure forms are as accurate as possible when prescribing medication or making diagnoses and having proper information on intake forms is of utmost importance.

"I understand that the staff surveyed several doctors' offices and got their comments on issues patients face when filling out forms, and they also did a student survey to determine their areas of difficulty with these forms," Lewis explained.

That led to development of the first curriculum which is being called "Reading for Better Health." Lewis said that the program was written by LCAF staff and is copyrighted, and the second curriculum in the project is being written now and should be complete by the fall.

"We plan to have a pilot program in the fall with about 10 to 15 students and run a test class with them," she said. When seeking the grant, LCAF stated that they hope to see improvement in at least 75 percent of all who are instructed in the curriculum, in healthcare vocabulary comprehension and in the ability to independently fill out forms.

Though the pilot program will not start until the fall, the Learning Center is already getting requests to purchase the materials.

"We sent out emails to other literacy centers in the state, and in surrounding areas, and got great response," she said. "We sent them a copy of the first chapter to review, and now have sold the first curriculum to several centers."

She said this includes both a student study guide and an instructor guide book.

“The first guide book has six lessons: patient information, billing information, insurance information, financial policy, medical history and privacy practice,” Lewis explained.

LCAF staff did not expect the project to get such quick response outside this community. In fact, they thought that the marketing of the materials would coincide with the pilot program in the fall.

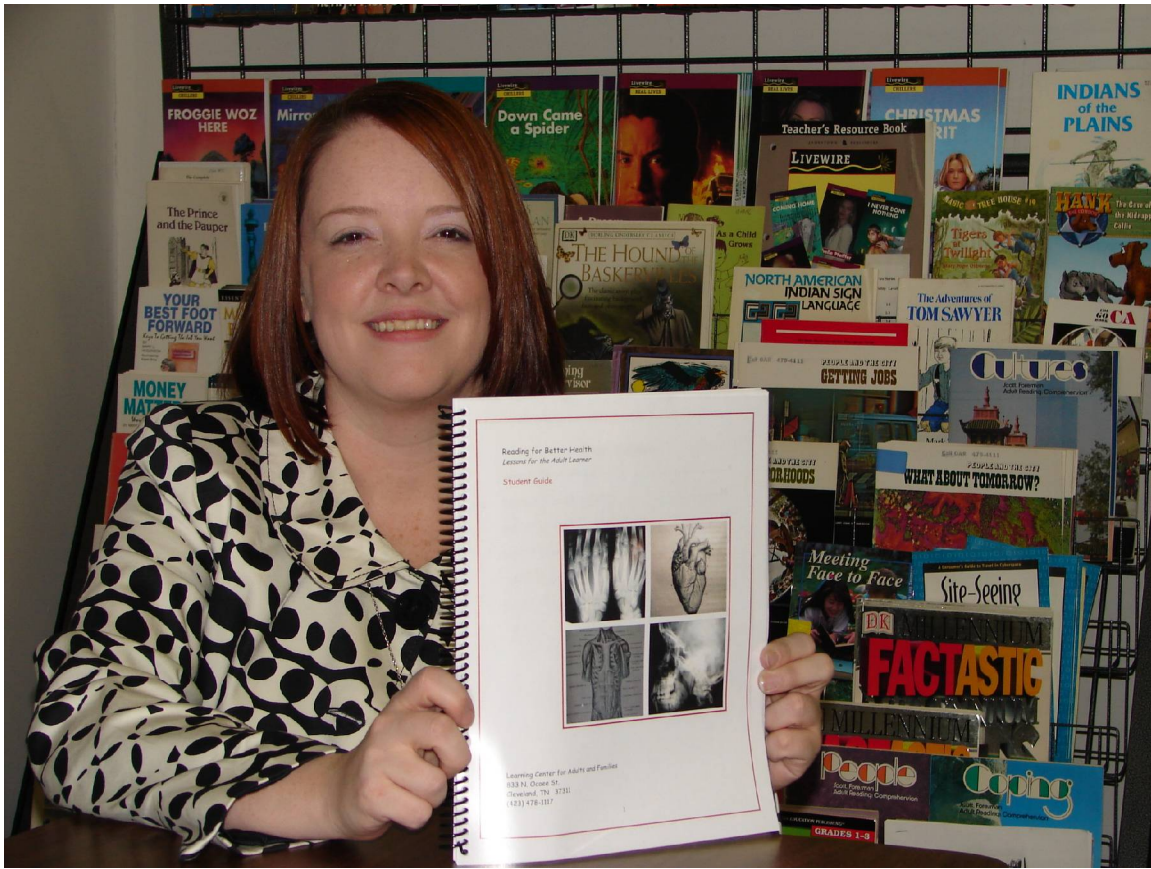
“This is something that is very much needed,” she said, adding that the cost to others is minimal – the majority of the cost covers the printing of the guides – so it is perfect for other non-profit organizations to purchase and use.

Matt Ryerson, Vice President of Community Investment Strategies for United Way of Bradley County, agreed that this is a project that will address a very specific need.

“We’ve all been in a situation where we don’t understand or have trouble comprehending medical and insurance documents, so it is exciting to see a program developed to specifically address this issue, particularly for those who cannot read or struggle with reading,” he said. “We are honored to fund this needed and important program for the citizens of Bradley County.”

To find out more about the program, contact Candace Lewis at the Learning Center for Adults and Families at 478-1117.

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READING FOR BETTER HEALTH – Candace Lewis, Executive Director for the Learning Center for Adults and Families, holds the first guide in the project the center is creating to assist individuals in comprehending and filling out forms at physicians’ offices.