

Bridgerland Literacy is now part of the CPD

JoLynne Lyon

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Alice Shepherd, Bridgerland Literacy program coordinator

Bridgerland Literacy recently joined the Center for Persons with Disabilities family. And while it is now under the umbrella of the CPD at Utah State University, Bridgerland Literacy's location will remain at Bridgerland Technology College's West Campus. Its mission also remains unchanged: helping improve the literacy of people 16 and older.

The services are free and confidential.

Program Coordinator Alice Shepherd said the program has served 30 students per year for the last two years. Many of the people who walk through her door come with a goal in mind: passing the GED, learning to understand the specific content language of an industry like health care or commercial truck driving, learning to better comprehend English when it is a second language, meeting the entrance requirements for a program at BTech.

Shepherd hopes that with the new alignment with the CPD, the number of both people served and volunteer tutors will grow. "Here in Cache Valley, functional illiteracy rates are between 11 and 14 percent," she said. "That's about 15,000 adults."

Functional illiteracy is defined as being unable to engage in all those activities that require literacy for effective participating in the community, like reading manuals, using a dictionary, or reading too slowly for practical use.

Children of parents with low literacy have a 72 percent chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves, Shepherd said.

Low literacy has consequences: nationwide, \$323 billion in health care costs are linked to low adult literacy. People at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels have a higher unemployment rate and, when they are employed, they tend to earn lower wages than average. And 75 percent of state prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.

"It impacts a lot of what goes on around us, and it's pretty easy to fix," she said. "It takes a little time with someone who can help them."

Shepherd, who received her degree in special education from Utah State University, uses data and proven methods while working with students. She researches methods for specific problems and collaborates with other teachers. The important thing is to not give up.

"It might take a little research," she said. "There's a way to do it."

To find out more about Bridgerland Literacy's services, or to sign up as a volunteer tutor, contact [Alice Shepherd](#).



Bridgerland Literacy was established in a Richmond garage in 1987 by Cindy Yurth, a VISTA literacy volunteer. It moved more than once before settling into its current location at BTech's West Campus on 1000 West and 1400 North in Logan. Shepherd has been its coordinator since December 2016.