

Lights, Camera, Action!

On October 19, New York City filmmakers Leeor Kaufman and Álvaro Guzmán Bastida came to Center for Literacy (CFL) to interview staff, students and a tutor for a documentary they are producing about adults enrolled in literacy programs. By creating portraits of students over time their goal is to shed light on the many low-literate individuals in America and to point to solutions.

They interviewed Michael Westover, chief executive officer, CFL and student Ronald Ernst. They also filmed a tutoring session between Pat McGovern Gorchov and Theresa Cade, and a classroom led by teacher Larry Hastings.

During his interview, Michael was asked an unexpected question: "What would you do if you were mayor of Philadelphia?" His reply was that he would "invest in programs to increase adult literacy skills and to devote more resources for pre-K education."

Ronald was interviewed at length, and Leeor and Álvaro returned to Philadelphia to film "a day in the life of Ronald." Ronald valued the experience saying it was "something new for me."

A recovering addict, Ronald Ernst, 60, came to CFL in April 2014. He is determined to get his GED and has moved up two levels in reading, from 7th grade to 9th grade. When classes are in session, he travels to CFL on his bike, a 40 minute ride from West Philadelphia, in order to spend time before class starts in the computer lab to practice his computer skills and work on his resume. Before he got a bike he walked to CFL, a two and half hour trek.

Ronald grew up in North Philadelphia with alcoholic parents. He had to work in high school to feed himself. Ronald quit school because it was too difficult to balance school and work. He started using drugs and alcohol in 1979, when he was 24 years old, but has now been clean for 946 days. He lives in a recovery house and works part-time, two days a week, delivering circulars. Ronald's goal is to get his GED and then to enter a trade school where he can learn to be an electrician or an auto repair technician.

The filmmakers also went to New Britain, Connecticut; Elizabeth, New Jersey; and the Bronx, New York to interview students from other adult literacy programs. We are honored to be chosen and look forward to the broadcast of the show!