Dear Friends,

It seems like just last week SHARP was winding down the 2016/17 school year, and now we are gearing up for the beginning of the 2017/18 school year!

This year the SHARP program will impact more than 8,000 K4-5th grade students from 38 public, charter and choice schools in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. We are proud to share highlights for the 2017/18 school year:

- **SHARP’s 14th We Love to Learn book, Aloha Adventures: A Story of Two Friends for K4 and K5 students** is ready for the school year. In this book, children will learn about Wisconsin’s and Hawaii’s unique landscapes, animals and their habitats, plants, food and water sources, and being good stewards of the environment.
- **At 12 different local museums and cultural sites, educational tours will again provide urban students with experiential learning opportunities they otherwise would not have.**
  - Waukesha County: EB Shurts Environmental Education Center, Prairie Springs Environmental Education Center, Retzer Nature Center, Sharon Lynne Wilson Center, Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum.
- **Young Explorers’ Workshops** will use a combination of visual arts, music and movement to help students develop knowledge, engagement and confidence.
- **An after-school program in conjunction with area Community Learning Centers (CLCs)** will again take place.
- **An inter-generational program with the Jewish Home and Care Center Foundation** where seniors and students share stories and experiences with the Jewish Home and Care Center Foundation will continue again this year.
- **A collaboration with the Florentine Opera will use SHARP’s We Love to Learn book A Busy Bee: The Story of Bella the Honey Bee for an operatic performance.**
- **Parental engagement workshops** will strengthen the connection between home and school. Ongoing professional development for teachers will continue to insure that our students benefit from educationally sound practices.
- **SHARP will pilot a new program, Create Art with Code to teach elementary students the basics of coding—widely considered a foundational literacy skill essential for higher education and modern jobs.**
- **To continue to ensure the integrity of the SHARP program, a research-based assessment tool will measure student interests and attitudes, critical thinking and problem solving, as well as demonstrated writing and language comprehension skills.**

All these programs are possible because of your generous and gracious support.

Gratefully,

Lynda Kohler
President/CEO
Teacher Spotlight (SLGI)

2017 marked Joan Rice's second summer working with SHARP Literacy, and children and adults are captivated by her energetic, focused teaching style. This master educator earned her undergraduate degree from UWM to teach early childhood through sixth grade and her master's degree from Mount Mary in early childhood education. She joined the team at SHARP Literacy in 2016 after teaching for twenty-five years, mostly in K3 – K5, and a few years as a 3rd grade teacher. Rice says she was drawn to work with SHARP because she was not only intrigued by the program and its goals but she was also drawn to the ability to challenge herself through learning about different teaching styles and connecting with different grade levels.

Rice described teaching second and third grade students at Journey House for the second consecutive year as a gift because of the strong quality of Journey House's holistic services for kids, and also because of the relationships she was able to develop with students and staff. "From the things I heard the students talking about – extra tutoring in math or reading or heading out to the pool for swimming – Journey House was a nice well-rounded program. SHARP was a great addition to balance the learning they were trying to accomplish in summer because it was something of high interest to kids and kept the learning momentum going at all times." She described the supportive staff at Journey House who helped students make connections from SHARP Literacy to the learning they were doing during the rest of the day. "We touch something in kids through the arts. By talking and sharing and by allowing them to express, we're providing a link to the necessary academic gain that they need to hang onto throughout the summer months." Rice goes on to say what a valuable experience working with young staff members at Journey House has been. "Many of the site teachers and leaders I met the past two summers are young adults who are currently in or are planning to make education their field of study and/or career choice. I think it's an added bonus that we are not only reaching the students we teach, but potentially offering resources, techniques and ideas to future education professionals."

2016-17 Student Assessments

One of the pillars of SHARP Literacy's strategic plan is to be a measurable and accountable organization. 2016-2017 showed an increase in number of students completing both the pre- and post-assessment for SHARP Literacy. With 6,420 students completing assessments, 4% more students took the assessment this year than last year, but more significantly, the number shows a 48% increase in the last five years. Best of all, the average post-assessment score for students increased in 5 of the 6 grade levels tested, K5 – 5th grade compared to last year. Blessed Sacrament School, Northwest Catholic School, and Trowbridge School of Discovery and Technology showed the most significant student gains. We at SHARP Literacy hope to learn from teachers and principals at those schools in order to understand how to replicate best practices system-wide.
K4/K5 Book

SHARP Literacy’s fourteenth We Love to Learn book will be in kindergarten students’ hands this fall. Aloha Adventure: A Story of Two Friends is a flip book for K4 and K5 students. The collaborative project was written by celebrated Milwaukee author Dasha Kelly Hamilton, illustrated in a vibrant, whimsical style by Maui artist Janet Davis, and includes photographs from professional photographers in Hawaii (Cameron Nelson) and Wisconsin (James Netz). Supporting images were contributed by student photographer Kylee Jo Diedrich and Milwaukee artist Sarah Gail Luther. The book includes English text and a Spanish translation on each page.

On one side of the book, a little wolf from Wisconsin travels to Maui and befriends a humpback whale. The fictional story and accompanying non-fiction text support science learning targets appropriate for four year olds who are learning about the difference between living and non-living things. The other side shows the little wolf back at home in Wisconsin, sharing on his tablet the beauty of his forest habitat with his friend the whale. It addresses K5 science learning targets and focuses on plants. SHARP Literacy worked with early childhood educator Joan Rice and a curriculum coordinator in Maui, Lauren Lott, in order to make sure the book’s design and content were just right for our earliest school aged learners to share with their classmates, teachers, and parents.

Summer Learning Gain Initiative

The SHARP Literacy Summer Learning Gain Initiative (SLGI) “The Art of Storytelling” served over 275 elementary school-aged explorers (students) at 9 community sites from June – August 2017. Seven sites chose to focus on building literacy skills in social studies featuring SHARP’s We Love to Learn book MKE: Your Neighborhood, Our City, and two sites focused on building literacy skills in science with SHARP’s We Love to Learn book There Grows the Neighborhood: Agriculture in the City. 2017’s curricular updates included an improved emphasis on student engagement as well as a stronger approach to arts integration and literacy through storytelling and puppetry.

Highlights of the summer included neighborhood walking tours at each of the sites with Milwaukee expert Adam Carr, and work with resident artist Sally Duback at two sites. Duback helped young explorers at Neighborhood House build totems to beautify their outdoor garden and express
their understanding of the meaning of culture. Duback also worked with young explorers at Silver Spring Neighborhood Center’s Browning site alongside seniors from Ovation Chai Point to create a mural through SHARP's intergenerational partnership with the Ovation communities. The mural created by seniors and children to show their intergenerational understanding of community will be displayed on a rotating basis at all three Ovation senior living centers.

SHARP Literacy is grateful to have been able to work with these outstanding community sites this summer: COA Riverwest, Journey House, Kluge CLC, Milwaukee Christian Center, Neighborhood House, Neulife at Gwen T. Jackson, Our Next Generation, and Silver Spring Neighborhood Center (Browning and Thurston Woods sites)

Florentine Opera

SHARP Literacy and the Florentine Opera Company are teaming up! One of our favorite We Love to Learn books, A Busy Bee: The Story of Bella the Honey Bee, is being used to create an operatic performance for children in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. The opera was composed by Ruben Piirainen, and the costumes are being designed by Mel Benson.

This will be a one act opera, approximately 45 minutes long, with four singers and a pianist. The audience will learn about honey bees and pollination as well as life lessons about the importance of perseverance, teamwork, and building community. This unique collaborative production will be open to elementary students from schools all over the two counties. The opening performance is scheduled for February 21st, 2018 at the Miller High Life Theater.

New Board Members

We welcome the following to our SHARP Literacy Board of Directors:

Nancy Mehlberg is a Principal with SVA Certified Public Accountants, S.C. and member of the Business Advisory Services group. She works closely and proactively with clients to improve company profitability and value, protecting their interests. Nancy helps clients establish internal financial reporting procedures and provides year-end financial reporting services and recommends options to streamline business processes. Her expertise includes selection, training, and establishing procedures and reporting for a variety of financial reporting software options.

Dr. William Hughes has over 25 years’ experience in Milwaukee County education. Dr. Hughes leads the development and execution of Seton's academic vision and strategy, including driving a high-expectations culture in which all students are on track to graduate academically and are spiritually prepared for a high-performing high school. Before joining Seton Catholic Schools in 2016, Dr. Hughes focused on building instructional leadership capacity in urban school settings as Managing Director of Leadership Development at Schools That Can Milwaukee and as Director of the Alverno College School Leadership Program. Previously, he was Superintendent of Greendale School District for 16 years.
To register and for more information, visit ANovelEvent2017.EventBrite.com

We are looking for sponsors for all of our fabulous events—contact Nandini Sinha at 414-410-3203 or Nandini@sharpliteracy.org for more information.