

Hi, I'm Emma Breacain, executive director of the Humboldt Literacy Project, with a KINS community comment.

Because I can read, I know what it's like to live in a dirt floor cabin on the American frontier, I know what it's like to go into outer space, I even know what it's like to be beaten up by a gang of bikers. I got to experience all these things and more, from the safety and comfort of my own couch, because someone taught me to decode letters and interpret messages left for me in writing.

Of course, my literacy helps me with lots of other things. I can prepare a new recipe I found online, I can safely take a medication as prescribed; I can read traffic signs as I'm driving down your street. I can enjoy that clever tee shirt you're wearing. Listen, studies show that my literacy skills even make me less likely to resort to criminal behavior and get incarcerated, less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy, and less likely to find myself relying on social services paid for with your taxes!

One thing that's a little hard for me is understanding that not everyone is as lucky as me. In the United States, about 15 percent of our adult population is functionally illiterate. In Humboldt County, that means about 14,000 of us are struggling with literacy barriers that are often embarrassing and sometimes dangerous. With numbers that high that means whether you know it or not you probably have a coworker, friend or relative who is bombarded every day with the awkward challenges of illiteracy. How does it happen? It's easy, almost too easy. You might have a

learning disability, you might have transferred schools too many times as a kid and fallen through the cracks, you might even have experienced a brain injury that's forcing you to start over and learn these skills a second time.

When a person gets tired of wrestling with their literacy and says enough is enough and decides to better their lives, Humboldt literacy project is there to help. We provide free, confidential, one on one English literacy tutoring for adults who want to expand their skills, expand their ability to communicate with coworkers, care providers, family and friends, expand their employment and educational opportunities, and better contribute to their community.

Being able to more fully participate and help in our community is a major goal cited by our learners when they come to us for assistance. If you've been thinking about getting involved in your community too, you can call us at 445-3655 or go to [www.humlit.org](http://www.humlit.org) to learn more about how to give or get help, share crucial life skills and the unparalleled joy of a good read.

On behalf of all the volunteer tutors and learners and staff of Humboldt literacy project, I wish you a holiday season filled with joy and light. Thank you for listening and have a bright 2016. I'm Emma Breacain, executive director of Humboldt Literacy Project, and this is my KINS community comment. Thank you for listening.