



# NEWS RELEASE

## Utah State Board of Education

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### September is Adult and Family Literacy Awareness Month in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY – Governor Spencer Cox declared September as Adult and Family Literacy Awareness Month in Utah. September 19-25 also marks the annual Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, hosted by the National Coalition for Literacy. This week exists to remind us all that reading, writing, and basic math remain an elusive target for 43 million adults nationwide, including 14.5 percent of adults in Utah.

Utah Adult Education is part of a national network of organizations that work to change lives and communities through the power of adult literacy. According to ProLiteracy, the leading membership organization advancing the cause of adult literacy and basic education in the nation, more than 43 million adults in the U.S. cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third-grade level. Utah Adult Education works with more than 10,000 adult education students each year to raise literacy skills to help students meet the demands of today's workforce.

"Our adult education students work hard to overcome barriers in their lives to complete their high school diploma. We're proud of the efforts they make and encourage other adults who need to complete their diploma to reach out to an adult education program in their community," said Stephanie Patton, State Adult Education Director at the Utah State Board of Education. "For instance, Erik Silsby came to adult education during the height of the pandemic. He had been to adult education before, but like so many of our students, life got in the way of completing his diploma. Erik knew he needed his diploma to move forward in his dreams of further education and new career paths. He dedicated his time and worked hard to complete his high school diploma even though he was working 40-60 hours a week. Erik became a passionate spokesperson for adult education and is now working as a student advocate in adult education."

Literacy helps families to be healthier and safer and provides opportunities for adults to support themselves through work, contributing ultimately to the economic growth of our

region and our country. “Low literacy costs the nation more than \$2.2 trillion each year in lost productivity, as well as an additional \$1-2 billion in health and safety issues,” said Kevin Morgan, president and CEO of ProLiteracy. “Every dollar spent on adult literacy and education provides returns to the country through higher employment, added tax revenues, reduced welfare payments, and less crime.”

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