The connection between literacy and poverty

Based on the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, earnings with only a high school diploma average $16,897 per year.

One might ask why United Way is in a long-range financial-planning vein and resources to this topic. The answer is found in the direct link between literacy (or lack thereof) and financial well-being in poverty, need, and literacy skills. We can see this represented locally through the most recent data on Columbia Public Schools with the particularities students graduating, grad rates, and first-year college graduation rates. In addition, United Way has provided support for advancing literacy in our community.

There are so many things we can do to improve lives in our community.

• Builds organizational capacity for the community.
• Raises awareness of community issues.
• Secures community dollars.
• Increases the capacity of the community to respond to issues.

We see proof locally that when a child succeeds, there must be support for strengthening that child’s literacy. Devoting time and resources to this topic is one of these forms. In addition, we see that United Way funded programs:

- 83% of 3rd grade students proficient in reading.
- 26.3% of our 6th grade students scoring proficient in math.

ExEcutivE DirEctor / cPo
Andrew GrAbAu
Heart of Missouri United Way

In 2019, approximately 32 million Americans have no high school diploma. Based on the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, earnings with only a high school diploma average $16,897 per year.

Someone living at or below the poverty line has a 1 in 4 chance of living in a single-parent family. 8 in 10 children in single-parent families live in poverty.

Our community wins by Living United: By responding to changing community needs. By forging strategic partnerships, we can make a difference.

We fight to improve lives in our community.

A Heart of Missouri United Way publication in partnership with the Columbia Daily Tribune.
When I was asked to write about literacy for this article, I had a stream of consciousness that took me in different directions. My first inclination was to ask about reading as the focus of literacy. From there, I would start to think about the ways I never anticipated as my son started to think about the work of literacy. From there, I would have a stream of consciousness that took me in different directions. My son had a stream of consciousness as he transitioned from one in Columbia to commit to reading the book no matter which direction it was turned. It worked perfectly. Zach would exhibit an adorable and fun to watch his eyes moved from left to right. Zach would turn the page and repeat this again and again, seemingly uninterested with the book. When he reached the last page, Zach started the book all over again. The pages were upside-down, yet he saw the same intense focus so it might seem like he was reading if you did not look closely. Perhaps that was simply his understanding of how to read a book. Zach seemed to enjoy the book no matter which direction it was turned. It worked perfectly. I thought it was adorable and fun to watch him stay so absorbed in the book even without understanding a single word on the page. If I think about some of my own experiences as an adult, I may sometimes have the appearance of having an understanding or literacy in a situation when I might be closer to reading the book upside-down. If someone would ask me to “tie you a chance to read the email I sent about the AC,” I might assume what AC refers to and respond from there. It was turned. It worked perfectly. Zach would exhibit an adorable and fun to watch his eyes moved from left to right. Zach would turn the page and repeat this again and again, seemingly uninterested with the book. When he reached the last page, Zach started the book all over again.

I recently had the opportunity to equip every student in Missouri with reading materials. The Heart of Missouri United Way “funds programs and services in early childhood, literacy and academic readiness, literacy and academic literacy for children of all ages. The community is committed to investing in people and places.”

The nature of evolving technology not only influences the development of new literacies, it impacts how people learn.

Collective commitment to develop community literacy

Invest in people and places.

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What is health literacy?

Almost 9 out of 10 adults have trouble finding, understanding, and using health information to help them make decisions about their health.

Rose isn't sure exactly where the hospital building is. She has a medical appointment today. Rose looks with high blood pressure and diabetes, and her regular doctor told her she needs to go see a specialist for some tests. It was somewhat about her kidneys – Rose doesn't remember exactly.

The specialist's office is in the big hospital in town. Rose isn't sure exactly where in the large, sprawling hospital building the office is. The signs aren't clear, and she has to ask a few different people for directions after making a wrong turn. Rose doesn't want to be late, and being in a rush is causing her some stress.

After she finally finds the office, Rose writes her name on the check-in sheet, and a nurse hands her a clipboard with a form to fill out. The form has a lot of tiny boxes to write in, it's not clear.

Almost 7 out of 10 adults have trouble finding, understanding, and using health information to help them make decisions about their health. Sometimes that's because people struggle with reading, but anyone can have trouble finding health information, particularly if they are under stress due to a scary diagnosis. Have you had any experiences with health care that are similar to Rose's story? Rose wasn't exactly sure why she needed to see a specialist doctor. The hospital was hard to navigate, and Rose was rushed and felt stressed. She hands Rose a brochure for leaching, the nurse shows Rose back out of the office, and tells her to have a nice day.

When Rose gets home, she has a look at the brochure the doctor gave her, but the words are really small and it's hard to read. She sets it back down on the coffee table. Later, as she takes her evening high blood pressure pills and gets ready for bed, Rose is feeling confused and a little uneasy from her experience today. Should she change anything? What comes next?

Rose's story is fictional, but it serves to illustrate a lot of what health literacy is all about. At the most basic level, health literacy is about communication. Health care professionals (such as doctors and nurses) and health care systems (such as hospitals) must communicate clearly and effectively with patients and caregivers, so they know what's going on with their health, and how to make the best decisions moving forward.

When health care professionals give patients information or instructions that aren't easy to understand, such as how to take a medicine properly, it can be confusing, and even dangerous. When documents such as forms or bills are hard to figure out, it can cause mistakes that take time to fix.

Health literacy affects patients and caregivers. Almost 9 out of 10 adults have trouble finding, understanding, and using health information to help them make decisions about their health. Sometimes that's because people struggle with reading, but anyone can have trouble finding health information, particularly if they are under stress due to a scary diagnosis.

What is health literacy?

Health literacy offers tools and techniques to help with all of these challenges. In fact, you can take steps now to better understand your health. Here are some tips to help you take control of your health:

• First, teach health information: Trusted health information comes from credible sources and is usually written or updated in the last five years. Credible sources include government agencies like the National Institutes of Health, professional and nonprofit organizations like the American Heart Association and colleges and universities.

• Ask your doctor questions: To better understand your health and how to stay healthy, you can ask three questions: “What is my main health problem?” “What do I need to do?” and “Why is it important for me to do this?” Ask questions until you understand what your doctor said.

• Prepare for your doctor visits: Write down the questions you have for the visit, bring your medications with you, and ask a friend or family member to come along.

• Repeat information back to your doctor: Explain things back to your doctor in your own words to make sure you understand.

Health Literacy Media is a nonprofit health communication company located in St. Louis, MO.
Certified Agencies

Community Impact: Education - Health - Financial Stability - Basic Needs

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AMERICAN RED CROSS EASTERN MISSOURI REGION
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL MISSOURI*
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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE COLUMBIA AREA*
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA - GREAT RIVERS COUNCIL
CENTRAL MISSOURI AREA AGENCY ON AGING
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