

Family Literacy Academy Leads to Educational Success for Working Mother

Christine Adkinson's inspirational story proves a second chance at education dramatically changes lives. ...

Five years ago, Christine Adkinson finished high school with the help of a Barbara Bush Learning Academy. On Thursday, Dec. 13, she graduated from Polk State College. Christine's inspirational story is similar to so many of our students, and perhaps very much like someone you know.

Christine is a mother of four who moved to Florida to pursue her dreams. She was working as a custodian at a local elementary school, believing this was the best way both to work and to be near her four children.

In the fall of 2007, Christine enrolled her family at the Barbara Bush Foundation's Family Literacy Academy at Lake Wales. Like many parents, Christine was struggling to understand how best to help her two youngest sons learn. Both have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Recently, Christine looked back on those days and shared: "The gift that the Barbara Bush Foundation gave me was the gift of how to be a learner **and** a teacher. I'm a mom of four, and that gift of being a teacher is profound," she said. "When I graduate

next week from Polk State College with my Associates Degree, I'm planning to enroll at Warner Southern University, and I'll major in education because I know I can be a great teacher."

The Family Literacy Academy in Lake Wales, Fla., is

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owned by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and operated by The Family Literacy Academy of Lake Wales. It was founded by Dem Cowles, a retired attorney who spends his days and nights thinking up great ways to improve services. With 50 families enrolled in the academy, he's proud to report that a recent survey found that in the period from 2010—2012, children experienced a **2-year literacy growth** per child enrolled. In addition, adult students gained an average of **1.2 grade levels** in Adult Basic English, including English as a Second Language (ESOL) students.



Graduate Christine Adkinson

Our hats are off to Christine and Dem. We know Dem's work is loved and appreciated in his community. More than 20 families are on the waiting list to enroll, but you can help shorten that list. If you'd like to sponsor a family, the cost is \$250 per month. You're your monthly gift of \$250 pays for our teacher costs, food and curriculum.

Your investment not only will improve the lives of the family you sponsor and pave the way to its greater success, but it also will help to create a stronger Florida and a stronger America for everyone. ○