

Agencies join efforts to address adult illiteracy

BY MATT BRENNAN

For The Beacon-News

AURORA — Literacy organizations in the Aurora area are teaming up to share resources and increase exposure while fighting the same cause.

A handful of literacy organizations have formed the Greater Aurora Area Literacy Coalition, and created a web site at www.auroraliteracy.com. Organizers are hoping the group can generate increased interest and volunteers in helping adults learn to read.

"We thought there would be strength in numbers," volunteer Ginny Maloney said. "All these organizations do address these issues in a different way."

The coalition is made up of eight organizations in the area that all work to combat illiteracy in some form. Those organizations include the Aurora Public

Library, Aurora Shalom Ministries, the Dominican Literacy Center, Family Focus Aurora, Hesed House, Waubonsee Community College Adult Literacy, Wayside Cross and World Relief.

They recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Dunham Foundation in Aurora, and filed to become a non-profit.

The money will go toward marketing efforts, and the fees involved in forming the non-profit, according to Kathleen Ryan, with the Dominican Literacy Center. So far, the organization has built a website and is in the process of creating its operational structure.

"Without that you can't go very far," she said.

By forming the coalition, they are able to increase awareness in the area for each of the member groups. As people find the coalition, they are able to determine which of the groups most fit their

needs.

For instance, the Dominican Literacy Center is focused on helping immigrant women, Ryan said.

The coalition members are grateful for the help of the Dunham Fund, Ryan said.

"None of our organizations could afford to make a significant donation, on their own," she said.

In the process of coming together, the organizations and people involved have become more familiar with each other.

"It's really based on cooperation, not competition," Ryan said. "There are so many people in Aurora who need English as a second language or adult literacy."

Maloney said the organization is working toward being able to offer a scholarship. They are also looking to work with more organizations in the area that deal with literacy in any fashion.