

Literacy Notes

Spring 2014



Author Tammi Sauer reads her book to children during *Read Across Oklahoma* at the Oklahoma City Zoo © Children, parents, and volunteers respond to the music of Spaghetti Eddie. © Capitol Hill High School students demonstrate “how to dance like a duck”

3,465 Lucky Ducks!

Quack if you ♥ Reading was the theme as thousands of children converged on the Oklahoma City Zoo to participate in the annual *Read Across Oklahoma* celebration. The 2014 theme was inspired by Oklahoma author **Tammi Sauer**’s new book *Mr. Duck Means Business*. Children in duck capes, and volunteers wearing duck caps were treated to a day of fun including two musical performances by local favorite **Brendan “Spaghetti Eddie” Parker**. The standing-room-only crowd cheered Tammi as she read her story about a grumpy duck and the friends he makes.

More than 3,000 children visited interactive activity stations throughout the zoo where they played alphabet games, learned to dance like a duck, colored posters, met Super Why characters, and had pictures taken with the Target mascot Bullseye. Special guest readers shared stories

in English and Spanish and more than 2,300 books were given away.

High school students helped make the day a success by cutting and sewing more than 1,300 duck capes, manning booths, wearing costumes, escorting guests, and helping teachers with the younger students. According to project planner **Kerri McLinn**, “The older students participated as mentors and volunteers, but it looked like they had as much fun as the younger children.”

Three Quacks for ...

- ▶ FCCLA and ROTC student volunteers from Capitol Hill High School, students from Metro Tech, Opportunities Industrialization Center class members, and the University of Central Oklahoma’s health equity class;

- ▶ volunteers including Target team members, guest readers, zoo staff, and parent escorts;
- ▶ project sponsors who provided funds, staff, and all the resources that made the event possible; and,
- ▶ the sponsors: The Krueger Foundation, Metropolitan Library System, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma Educational Television Authority, Metro Tech, Target, and Zoo Friends—Oklahoma Zoological Society.

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We're Proud of ...

- ▶ Tutors awarded five-year plaques by the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services. Congratulations to:
Catherine Blakely, Eva Boatwright, Beverly Fetty, George Halkiades, Malcolm Joyce, Jessica Kennedy, Deborah Langley, Annette Maupin, Margaret Patterson, Amy Rice, and Barb Whitte;
- ▶ Altus tutor **Mili Stallings**, awarded the Altus Air Force Volunteer Excellence Award by Col. **William Spangenthal**, 97th Air Mobility Wing Commander.

Goodbye and Hello

- ▶ Best of luck to **Debbie Lacey**, literacy assistant for the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Program, who will be leaving the position at the literacy office. Welcome to Anne Denis, hired as the new assistant.
- ▶ Welcome to new library literacy coordinator **Elizabeth Negrete**, who will expand ESL and literacy services at the Ardmore Public Library. One of Negrete's first goals is establishing digital literacy services in the new library computer lab. The lab will help members of the community learn English, prepare for the GED, and become more tech-savvy. The project is made possible thanks to a \$120,000 grant from the American Library Association.

Director Joins Red Cross

When Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council Director **Maria Rogriguez-Cabrales** inquired about bringing Spanish speakers to a health event hosted by the Red Cross, little did she know she would soon become a Red Cross volunteer.

On the day of the event, Maria helped the presenter by translating for audience members who did not speak English. Later, Maria met with the director of Northwest Oklahoma Red Cross Chapter Disaster Services, **Gordon Burgess**, and learned of the need for translators. Maria quickly agreed to help and filled out the required paperwork. Her skills were called upon just a week later when she translated for a family whose house was destroyed in a fire.

In Memoriam

Members of the Great Plains Literacy Council, joined the community in paying tribute to **Gail Miller** who passed away in February. Miller, a charter board member of the literacy program, served the program for more than 28 years. A special plaque was presented to the Altus Public Library where his daughter, Kathy Hale, is Southern Prairie Library System Director.

Successes for Altus Adult Learners

- ▶ **Pete Aldape** became a new U.S. Citizen thanks to the help of tutor, Steve Frances and the Great Plains Literacy Council in Altus. After taking the oath, Aldape said, "Being a citizen makes me feel secure and has given me more rights. I look forward to voting."

- ▶ ESL learner **Whitney Marcellin** recently passed her driving test with the help of tutor, Elsa Garcia

- ▶ Former adult learner **Alice Swakhamer** expressed her appreciation for the local literacy program and her tutor at a recent literacy board meeting.



Great Plains Literacy Council President and tutor, Jacquelyn Parrish (left) and former adult learner Alice Swakhamer

According to Swakhamer, "In the late 1980s, I finally admitted that I needed help to improve my reading and writing, so I contacted the Great Plains Literacy Council." She added, "Even to this day, I am very appreciative to this organization for its value to me with my career and personal journey." Swakhamer now volunteers as a reader for nursing home residents. According to tutor Parrish, "I am very proud of her journey in succeeding."

Día de los Niños



More than 250 Ardmore residents celebrated Día de los Niños at the Ardmore Public Library. Games, food, prizes, and entertainment were provided with support of funders Dollar General Literacy Foundation, REFORMA, and Association for Library Service to Children. Literacy director **Elizabeth Negrete** said, “Parents and children learned the library is a place where fun stuff happens.”

Celebrating Our Journey

The newest edition of *Celebrating Our Journey* shares 90 stories of courage, hope, and humor written by adult learners from throughout the state. **Cassie Dupree**, a student at Wes Watkins Technology Center in Holdenville, wrote a story about her family and how her father, mother, and brother support and inspire each other. She concludes her story by writing, “I can be brave, too. I know that I am brave when I work with my tutor to get better at reading. How could I not be brave when I come from such a brave family?”

To read Cassie’s story or those written by other learners, visit: www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy/publications

The publication is made possible thanks to a Library Services and Technology Act grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services.



Health and Literacy

According to United Health Foundation, Oklahoma ranked 44th in the 2013 national health ranking, up from 46th place in 2012. Even with the improvements, the state has many health challenges. Obesity, smoking, drug deaths, and cardiovascular deaths were among some of the greatest problems.

The ability to read, understand, and communicate health information is critical for all Oklahomans, but is especially challenging for individuals with low literacy skills or limited understanding of English.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that, “nearly nine out of ten people had difficulty using everyday health information.”

Seven local literacy programs are addressing health literacy in their communities thanks to health literacy grants from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries with Library Services and Technology Act funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Those funded in year two of the initiative are Creek County Literacy Program, Great Plains Literacy Council, Miami Public Library Literacy Services, Moore Public Library, Northwest OK Literacy Council, Project Read, and Western OK Learning Center. To view national and state health rankings, visit: www.americashealthrankings.org



Participants in this year’s meeting of health and literacy professionals included [left to right] **Melissa Muncy Struttman**, Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa; **Jesse Craddock**, pastor, Maranatha Ministry of Hope; **Dr. Andrew Pleasant**, Canyon Ranch Institute; and **Marisa New**, Oklahoma State Department of Health.

National health literacy expert **Dr. Andrew Pleasant** recently met with health and literacy professionals at ODL to develop a health literacy plan for Oklahoma. Twenty seven individuals discussed how collaborative efforts among health care providers can move Oklahoma from a “sick care system” to a health care system generating significant savings by putting effort into keeping Oklahomans healthy.

Making a Difference

Bartlesville tutor **George Halkiades** recently received an e-mail from one of his former students:

Hello Sir. Just want to thank you again for all the help you gave me. Thanks to you and the literacy program I am now in my second year of college, who would of thought???

Thank you soooo much. If you wouldn't have told me about the scholarship loan, I would never have made it this far. Thank you, thank you.

Sincerely, Corina

Dollar General Workplace Project—Ardmore

Since the beginning of the workplace literacy program at Dollar General Warehouse, six learners have enrolled. Tutors work closely with Dollar General's human resource department to ensure the content of the class is beneficial to the workplace setting as participants become more efficient employees. Employees are excited about the class and would like to have more hours of instruction.

Fund Raising Success

Community Literacy Centers (CLC) in Oklahoma City raised nearly \$40,000 at their recent *Literacy Live* event. This year, the luncheon and auction featured actress and author **Sonia Manzano**, who may be best known for her longtime role as Maria on Sesame Street. Manzano talked about the importance of reading and joined the audience in applauding CLC for its commitment and literacy work.

Several awards were presented to CLC supporters including: the Literacy Legend honoring **Robert Nelson**; Outstanding Literacy Benefactor given to the **Better Days Foundation**; the Literacy Ambassador Award presented to **Hilarie Blaney**; and the Staff Leadership Award to **Cheryl MacDonald**.



A Win-Win Partnership in Elk City



Southwestern Oklahoma State students pose with Jana Smithy [far left] and Judy Haught [far right]

Students at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Sayer are getting a deeper understanding of what it takes to learn a new language thanks to a unique partnership with the Western Oklahoma Learning Center. University students enrolled in **Judy Haught's** conversational Spanish class help ESL learners at the local literacy council in Elk City. "Everyone's a winner," according to literacy director **Jana Smithy**. "Our adult learners practice their English, and the Sayre students have the opportunity to practice Spanish."

The Sayre students also donated English/Spanish dictionaries to the literacy council and made cards for the ESL learners.

Learning about Dollars Makes Sense

The Creek County Literacy Program in Sapulpa will be offering a new financial literacy program to help members of the community with personal money management. The six week course will cover such topics as identity theft, increasing income and reducing expenses, checking and savings accounts, managing credit, and household insurance. The presenter, a consultant to non-profit agencies in the area of finance and human resources, has developed the new financial literacy program specifically for the literacy council. For more information, contact **Melissa Struttman** at 918-224-9647.

Bees Seen



Throughout the State!

Great Plains Literacy Council hosted its annual GRATE Altus Spelling Bee, raising more than \$5,500 for local literacy efforts.

The Literacy Council of LeFlore County raised \$2,000 at their spelling bee, with seven teams competing. Top honors went to the team from Young's Pharmacy.



Ardmore spelling bee winner of the Best Name Award was **The Singing Bees** team [left], who sang their answers. ©

Word Wrestling Federation [top] earned the Best Costume Award.

In Ardmore, eight teams competed for bragging rights where literacy director **Carolyn Pirtle** called the event “a buzzing success” with \$2,200 raised.

The Creek County Literacy Program in Sapulpa was the scene where twenty-one teams faced off in the 16th Annual Creek County Spelling Bee. When the dust had



Creek County's Overall Winner was the Sapulpa Public Libraries' **Wannabeezz** who correctly spelled “plagiarism.”

cleared, only one team walked away with the coveted Traveling Trophy. The event raised more than \$9,000 for local literacy efforts.

Thanks to the sponsors, donors, volunteers, teams, and supporters who made these events so sweet!

TANF Instructor Receives Honors

TANF Instructor **Erica Hawkins** with the Literacy Council of LeFlore County was recently recognized for her outstanding literacy work at the *Making It Work Day* award ceremony at the State Capitol. The awards, sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, and Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education honored outstanding community partners, businesses, and graduates of the Career and



Photo Ramona Smith, Erica Hawkins, and Laura Smith at the *Making It Work Day* award ceremony

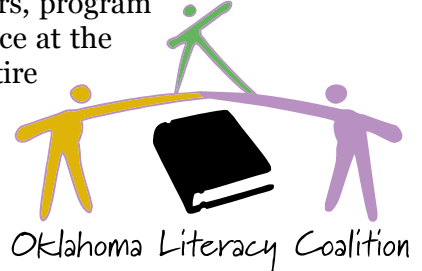
Technical Education community. Hawkins received proclamations signed by Senator Mark Allen, Representative James Lockhart, and Representative John Bennett, along with a plaque from the Career and Technical Education Equity Council.

Save the Dates

Statewide Literacy Conference Announced

The Oklahoma Literacy Coalition has announced dates for the 2014 statewide literacy conference.

The conference will kick off with a reception to celebrate Oklahoma's adult learners and launch the newest edition of *Celebrating Our Journey*, a collection of stories written by learners from across the state. Thirty-six breakout sessions will provide a variety of continuing education for tutors, adult learners, program directors, and others interested in adult literacy. The conference will take place at the National Center for Employee Development in Norman. Cost for attending the entire conference is \$150 (not including lodging) and single day prices will be available.



- ▶ September 21 Book signing reception, Oklahoma Literacy Coalition annual meeting
- ▶ September 22–23 Keynote speaker and workshops

For more details and registration information, visit: www.okliteracycoalition.okpls.org
or e-mail: Angela at oklitcoalition@yahoo.com

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