

Literacy Notes

Summer 2014

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Literacy Notes, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries' statewide literacy newsletter, was launched in 1986 as a means to share news and information with individuals involved in the state's emerging literacy effort.

The first issue, written by Marilyn Vesely, offered \$300 scholarships for room, board, and transportation to a national literacy conference in Memphis, talked about the newly formed Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, and announced a special literacy event that featured Jonathon Kozol,

a national literacy expert and author of the book *Illiterate America*.

Looking through back issues provides a wonderful historical review of the past 28 years. In those early days, most programs were staffed by volunteers. Local programs did not assess learners, did not report statistics, and operated on shoestring budgets. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) did not have a literacy office, a website, or state funding for literacy.

Today, ODL's Literacy Resource Office oversees more than \$1 million of literacy funding. Most local programs have paid staff and operate with budgets that include state

and private funds. Technologies not available in the 80's have provided new opportunities for literacy programs, tutors, and adult learners.

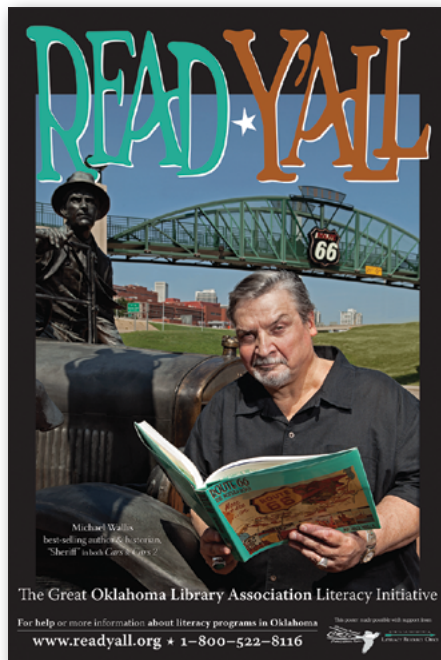
Even as local literacy programs and volunteer tutors became more tech savvy, ODL continued to offer *Literacy Notes* in paper form.

Fast forward to 2014. Today, most Oklahomans make technology part of their everyday lives. Almost everyone has access to a computer or smart phone and the Internet. Paperless communication is now the norm. With this shift in communication preference, the Literacy Resource Office will no longer print and mail *Literacy Notes*. News and information will be shared via the ODL website and by email. To receive this newsletter online, send an email to rebecca.barker@libraries.ok.gov.

ODL's literacy staff would like to dedicate this final hard copy newsletter to the tutors, directors, board members, trainers, volunteers, past and present, who have made a difference in the lives of adult learners.

New Read Y'all Poster

The newest *Real Y'all* poster featuring Tulsa author **Michael Wallis** was recently unveiled at the state literacy conference. Wallis—an award-winning reporter, historian and biographer of the American West—gained international renown when his distinctive voice was used for the character of Sheriff in *Cars* and *Cars 2*, Pixar Studio's animated features. Wallis has authored 15 books and has had hundreds of articles published in national and international magazines and newspapers. The new poster is co-sponsored by Chickasaw Regional (Public) Library System and the Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office. Copies are free for pick up at the Allen Wright Memorial Library, 200 NE 18 Street, in Oklahoma City.



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Celebrating Our Journey an Opportunity for Adult Learners

The Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office is pleased to announce plans for a 9th edition of *Celebrating Our Journey*, a collection of stories written by adult learners. Program directors and tutors are encouraged to share information with learners and provide assistance with writing and editing as needed. Stories may be submitted from even the newest adult learner as it is thoughts and experiences that are important, not the “professionalism” of the story.

The book, scheduled to be published in the fall of 2015 will feature stories of hope, humor, courage, and poetry. *Stories and digital photos of the authors must be received by May 30, 2015.* For more information contact Rebecca Barker at rebecca.barker@libraries.ok.gov



Sister **Maria D. Ugbe**, a learner with the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services, recently became a U.S. citizen. Originally from Nigeria, Ugbe wrote a story featured in the 8th volume of *Celebrating Our Journey*.

Citizenship and Immigration Services Project Launched

Oklahoma’s population demographics are changing and one of the results is an increasing demand for English classes and help in obtaining US citizenship.

The process of becoming a United States citizen can be lengthy, complicated, and expensive, making it a formidable process for many non-native speakers. The difficulties finding information, English classes, and other resources may add to the frustration.

To meet this need, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, in collaboration with libraries and literacy programs in three communities, recently launched a new citizenship and immigration pilot project.

Three \$15,000 grants have been awarded to local adult literacy programs to provide resources for immigrants preparing for citizenship. Funds were awarded to Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services, Great Plains Literacy Council in Altus, and Cleveland County Literacy Program, Norman.

US Census 2000—Oklahoma population 5 years and over who speak English less than very well—**3.1 %** or **98,990**

US Census ACS 2012—Oklahoma population 5 years and over who speak English less than very well—**4.0%** or **142,106**

The local literacy programs will work closely with their public library to provide direction, technology assistance, and free classes or one-to-one tutoring. Participants will be able to review citizenship study materials, practice listening and responding to citizenship interview questions, access online practice tests, and have guidance throughout the application process.

The project is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which recently announced a national collaboration with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to enhance the resources available in libraries throughout the country and strengthen the ability of librarians to guide immigrants to the most accurate and current information. For information on the national effort visit goo.gl/5xNt8f



ProLiteracy® National Literacy Conference on Horizon

ProLiteracy’s national literacy 2015 conference will be held in **Charleston, South Carolina, October 15–18.** Check the ProLiteracy website—www.proliteracy.org/uscal/uscal-2015—for updates and details, *and save the date.*



Leaders from New Jersey, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Alabama, Wisconsin, Alaska, and Oklahoma met in Oklahoma City to discuss state level literacy issues; a ProLiteracy representative also attended.

OKC Hosts Council of State Organizations

State Literacy leaders from throughout the country gathered in Oklahoma City for the first face-to-face meeting of the Council of State Literacy Organizations (CSO). Participants not only shared information about state-level operations, they also identified resources developed for their state that could be used by other states.

All meeting goals were achieved including brainstorming ideas for potential multi-state collaborations. One of the areas of discussion was literacy partnerships, and participants were particularly interested in the collaboration between Tinker Federal Credit Union (TCFU) and the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition. TFCU’s Business Development Representative, **Kacie Mach**, shared how other states might duplicate a similar model.

The Oklahoma Literacy Coalition demonstrated Oklahoma hospitality by hosting a dinner at Toby Keith’s restaurant which resulted in even more networking, sharing, and fun. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries was able to host the CSO meeting thanks to Library Services and Technology Act funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

2014 Literacy Conference

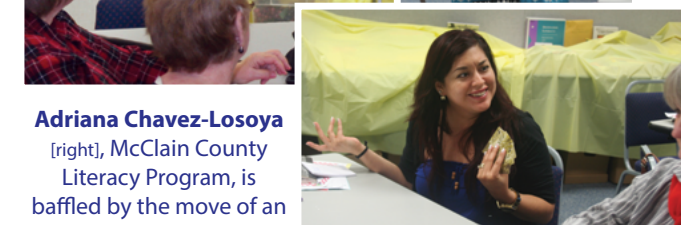
There was something for everyone at the recent state literacy conference hosted by the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition. Tutors, program directors, board members, and adult learners took advantage of a variety of workshops and opportunities to network with peers.

Motivational speaker **Fran Kick** [right] got things started with a unique interactive session that demonstrat-



2014 Directors’ Retreat

Joni Dyer [below left], from Ponca City, reenacts a classic scene from *I Love Lucy*. • **Carolyn Pirtle** [below right], with New Dimension Literacy Council talks about Ardmore’s Dollar General-ProLiteracy initiative.



Adriana Chavez-Losoya [right], McClain County Literacy Program, is baffled by the move of an opponent during a game of Barnge.

The game illustrated the confusion and uncertainty that often occurs when dealing with communication barriers.

What does a vat of grapes and a crazy redhead have to do with literacy? The 2014 literacy directors’ retreat theme was borrowed from the vintage *I Love Lucy* grape stomping episode.

The theme—*Pressed for Time, Don’t Whine*—inspired fun while literacy directors learned time management strategies from presenter, **Donna Rynda**. Another session had directors brainstorming solutions to program challenges in a segment called, “A Few Sour Grapes.” The retreat provided many opportunities for sharing local successes and participating in networking activities, both favorite activities of attendees. Following a day of continuing education, program directors continued networking at a reception hosted by the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition.

The retreat was made possible thanks to a Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

ed the effectiveness of directed learning. Conference workshops covered a wide range of literacy topics including “Becoming a US Citizen,” “Vision and Literacy,” “Using Games to Enhance Learning,” and “What’s New on the GED Test?”

Adult learner authors were honored during a *Celebrating Our Journey* book signing reception, and the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition held its annual meeting and election.

Health Literacy Update

October is Health Literacy Month, and ODL joins health and literacy organizations throughout the country in bringing attention to this important issue.

Evidence indicates that poor health literacy is a stronger predictor of a person's health than his age, socioeconomic status, education, or ethnicity. Public health and medicine rely heavily on the written and spoken word to disseminate patient information. It is essential that individuals have basic health literacy skills to speak with medical professionals, access health information, follow dosage instructions, and make informed health decisions.

Literacy programs in Altus, Edmond, Elk City, Miami, Sapulpa, and Woodward, along with the Moore Public Library, recently completed local health literacy initiatives. Some of the activities offered to adult learners, tutors, and members of the community were health fairs, exercise and nutrition classes, and workshops about managing chronic health conditions. The health literacy initiative was made possible by a Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



Ida Fay Winters shares information about the health literacy project in Altus at the 2014 literacy directors' retreat.

Looking for Oklahoma literacy news, statistics, and training dates?
Visit the Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office at www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy

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