

The Lamplighter

April, May, June, 2005
A quarterly newsletter of the
Literacy Council of Bonita Springs

Come to the Council Annual Meeting June 21

All students and tutors are invited to attend the annual meeting of the Literacy Council which will be held Tuesday, June 21 at 4 p.m. at the Northern Trust Bank in the Bonita Bay Promenade. A student and tutor will address the meeting and the Council film, "My Name is Maria", will be shown. The business plan for 2005-8 will be presented and a new slate of officers will be elected.

Marilyn Ball Fund Tops \$10,000!

Contributions to the Marilyn Ball Memorial Fund have reached the \$10,000 mark, reported Director Katie Verna. As a result, an anonymous donor will match that total. The funds will be invested so that a portion will be withdrawn each year for the Marilyn Ball Moms and Tots Programs. A longtime tutor in the Council literacy program, Marilyn and her husband tragically died in a car accident last fall.

City Grants \$19,000

The City of Bonita Springs Partnering for Results Program has awarded the Literacy Council \$19,000 for the current year to continue providing literacy services in the community. The Council and its students are grateful for the City's generous support of the English language needs of many of the City's residents.

"A Land of Greatness for All Generations"

(Elizabeth Acosta was the opening speaker at the 2nd Annual Fundraising Breakfast held March 8 at the Imperial Country Club. Most recently Ms. Acosta was the Communications Director for the SW Florida Foundation. In a major career change, she is now studying massage therapy.)

Good morning. My name is Elizabeth Acosta and I come from "La ciudad de las flores", or the city of flowers—Medellin, Colombia.

I became an immigrant at the age of 10 and an alien at 13. Like many others, my mother and I began our journey full of optimism, hope and will. My mother, who had worked as an executive secretary all her life, traded her typewriter for a broom and a duster, and I became her assistant. It was gruelling work, but it was not as difficult as the isolation we experienced. Without words to communicate in our new language, we became quiet, passive and disconnected (even from each other). And there was fear in every step of our journey.

Years passed by and Mother was still cleaning. She turned inwards and I reached out for the world. Upon graduating from high school, I won a scholarship to the New World School of the Arts, where I studied visual arts and photography. In 1999, I graduated from Florida International University with a BA in English Literature. "English Literature?" many would ask. I replied by saying, "In the Western world, language is power". They looked puzzled, but I continued. After college, I worked for major foundations, and large corporations, companies such as Viacom and MTV Latin America. I have had exciting jobs, have traveled to many unique places and met incredible people.

This is why, then, that I would like to dedicate this short speech to my mother and thank her for the enormous sacrifices she made.

But when I look back, I see so many other helpers who were there for both of us. Landlords with flexible payment plans, ESOL teachers who helped us fill out job applications, co-workers who gave us rides and others. There were so many bridges that allowed us to continue. And when I look out into this room today, I continue to see those bridges in you—those bridges that will allow others to cross and not be broken. To me, learning the language is the most important aspect for immigrants to "truly" get ahead, ahead not just financially, but emotionally and spiritually.

With the power of language, the journey becomes a voyage; the voyage becomes an epic; the epic is about all of us building a community of people from here and there, a tapestry of experiences so rich that they could only make this a land of greatness for all generations.

Congratulations, Successful Students!

Laura Bermudez, Level 2, Betty Hoye, tutor
Socorro Castillo, Level 1, Linda Peterson, tutor
Luz Elona Chica, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Guillermo Chaperno, Level 2, Carol De Joy, tutor
Sixto Concepcion, Level 1, Robert Tunstall, tutor
Nicolas Cordero, Level 1, Ralph Countryman, tutor
Isaias Cruz, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Silvestre Flores, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Esbin Guzman, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Luz Jaimes, Level 2, Maureen Forrest, tutor
Fabiola Justiniano, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Alvaro Lezama , Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Ricardo Lopez, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Roland Lopez, Level 1, Edith M. Young, tutor
Sandra Lopez, Level 1, Alyse Morande, tutor
Beatriz Martel, Level 2, Donna Garrison, tutor
Maria Martino, Level 1, Paul Gold, tutor
Denia Matamoros, Level 2, Herman Nelson, tutor
Sebastian Montego, Level 1, Edith M. Young, tutor
Geradin Morales Perez, Level 1, Pat Long, tutor
Mariana Murilio, Level 1, Jean Smith, tutor
Fabiola Paniagua, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Maria Perez, Level 1, Signe Winters, tutor
Manolo Rodriguez, Level 1, Tom Roy, tutor
Grazyna Rokosz, Level 2, Pat Del Giorno
Vicente Santiago, Level 2, Pat Del Giorno
Maria Tino, Level 1, Mary Gotsch, tutor

Special congratulations to sisters Doris and Liliana Ochoa and to Raul Flores, who have all become citizens of the United States!

Former Bonita Woman Launched Literacy Council 17 Years Ago

A onetime resident of Bonita Springs, who was born and raised in South America by her missionary parents and was fluent in several languages, started The Literacy Council in 1988 at the First Presbyterian Church. Doris Stephenson, who had retired here with her husband Dell, recognized the need for the many Hispanic immigrant crop laborers living in the area to learn English. She organized after-work classes for small groups, selected the Laubach system of study, recruited church members to teach students on a one-to-one basis and then taught tutor training classes.

The national Rotary Club organization had initiated a country-wide program to develop literacy. Local Rotarian Jack Blake proposed that the Bonita Springs Rotary sponsor Doris's program and the club generously donated funds for textbooks and equipment to furnish office space in Price Hall. When Doris subsequently spoke at a Rotary meeting about the literacy program, Corbin Wyant, publisher of the Bonita Banner and Naples Daily News, volunteered financial support from the Scripps-Howard Foundation. This enabled the program to move into quarters in the Banner office in Sunshine Plaza.

By that time the literacy program had grown into a thriving community venture with volunteer tutors from other church congregations. To help maintain vital operations, a board of directors with 12 members was established, with Bert Fosse as president, Jack Blake as vice president and Judy Plowman as secretary while Doris Stephenson continued to direct all the teaching activities.

When the Stephensons moved to Sarasota to provide health care for Dell, an executive director was hired. The current director, Katie Verna, joined the staff in 2000. Today over 300 tutors teach more than 700 students.

(This article was written by Jack Blake, one of the founding Board Members of the Literacy Council. He now lives in Bentley Village.)

Scrabble, Anyone?

The Literacy Council has been given a free competition-level Scrabble word game kit by Hasbro Games. Any tutors or students who want to organize a Scrabble competition should contact the Council office at 495-0999.

Welcome Aboard, New Tutors!

March 05 workshop at Hope Lutheran Church, led by new trainer, but long-time tutor, Andrea Smith.

Pat Bumstead Dorothea Noland

Chris Hotarek Mary Ellen Rain

April 05 Workshop held at First Presbyterian Church. Trainers were Don Miller and Lorraine O'Connell. Trainer in training, Delores Brecker, also participated.

Ugo Assi Harry Paul

Valerie Bowles Bill Post

Maggie Brady Jack Reed

Shirley Collier Patricia Seaberg

Mary Jicanti Richard Sweet

Barbara Kneer Rosemary Uzzi

Linda Lozzi Kyra Weinkle

Mary McCoy

Colleen Subin was certified in the January 05 workshop. The Director apologizes to her that her name was not included in the last newsletter.

TUTOR TIP: Make a Phone Date

Tutors can help their students to overcome apprehension in making English language telephone calls.

Students normally rely on body language, gestures and facial expressions to communicate person-to-person in English, so telephone communication is a new and sometimes daunting procedure.

To assist students, tutors could schedule telephone conversations with their students at a pre-set time and day which is convenient for both of them, suggests Roberta Reiss in the Collier County Library Tutor Tips newsletter.

Bonita AM Rotary Donates \$5500

The AM Rotary of Bonita Springs has generously given \$5500 exclusively for the support of the Marilyn Ball Moms and Tots Program. On page 2 of the *Lamplighter Too*, "Meet the Moms" will demonstrate the value of the program, both to the moms and to the community.

Delores Brecker Becomes Trainer

Delores Brecker, a current member of the Council tutoring staff, has enrolled in the tutor training program under the direction of Lorraine O'Connell. Delores and Bert Bonner will act as training partners at future tutor-training sessions. Recently she worked with Don Miller and Lorraine at the April tutor-training session and will participate in future training sessions. Delores and her husband Bill also tutor their students Veronica Montero and Gonzalo Ramirez at the Bonita Springs Library.

Local Church Members Interested in Becoming Literacy Tutors

Many parishioners of Christus Victor Lutheran Church, Bonita Springs, expressed interest in becoming Literacy Council volunteer tutors at Sunday services March 13 after hearing a talk on the Council literacy program by Development Director Bob Dimond. Bob was introduced at the three weekly services by Pastor Thomas Slater. Following each service, Council Director Katie Verna and Tutors Nancy Delena and Ann Hall answered questions on the tutor program from departing members of the congregation, many of whom promised to contact the Council upon their return in the fall.

"Just Read, Families" Website Offers Summer Reading Program

Parents can find tips, great ideas, and an age-appropriate reading list to help their children develop a love for reading this summer on a special Website, <http://www.justreadfamilies.org>. The site also offers a kids' page with tips to help develop reading skills through word games, story times, brainteasers and more.

Tutor Training Workshops

June 4, 11, 18, (8:30 - 12:30pm) First Presbyterian Church, Bert, Lorraine and Delores, trainers

September 17, 24, October 1, Saturdays, 8:30 to 12:30pm. Bert, Lorraine and Delores, trainers

October 18, 20, 25, 27, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9 to 1pm. Lorraine and Don, trainers.

Tutors—your hours are valuable!

We're nearing the end of the fiscal year (June 30). Volunteer tutors are essential to their students' success, but your hours are valuable to the Literacy Council, too. When we apply for grants, most grant donors expect non-profit agencies to offer resources to support the proposed project. We can claim the value of the tutors' hours as an in-kind donation. To date this fiscal year, volunteers have donated 14,070 hours. Independent Sector (www.independentsector.org) calculates the value of volunteer work at \$17.55/hour (based on average hourly, nonsupervisory wages + 12% fringe benefits). Hence, the commercial value of the tutors' hours is just shy of a quarter of a million dollars. However, we know that many tutors do not report their hours. Please, tutors, turn in your hours to the office by the end of the month of June because the hours are critical to establishing the Council's credentials when applying for grants.

Why Report Student Successes

Tutors successfully strive to teach their students to complete each level of the Laubach curriculum. But equally as important for students is to "translate" that accomplishment into practical everyday usage. The range of applications of the Laubach curriculum by students is virtually endless: requesting a money order, making change, opening a bank account, writing checks, reading street signs and road maps, helping children with homework, reading to children, obtaining a library card, completing job application forms, job interviewing, learning new job skills, reading pay stubs, scanning newspapers, studying for US citizenship, learning legal rights. When a student succeeds in one of these tasks, tutors should also report it as "Goals Completed" on the Hours Progress Report Form. Such vital information can be included in applications for grants, where we quantify the combined total of student achievements. The key to documenting that success is having each tutor complete their periodic progress reports.

Another Way to Measure Success

To help the Council to do a better job in serving the literacy needs of our students and our community, we have prepared a Student Satisfaction Survey (enclosed in this newsletter), which will enable them to express their opinions on the quality of service provided by the Council and the volunteer tutors. Please ask your students to complete this survey at home and mail it to the office by July 1. What a great opportunity to teach a lesson in addressing envelopes! The results will be analyzed and reported to the Board, our funders and our Lamplighter readers.



Literacy Council of Bonita Springs
PO Box 2703
Bonita Springs, FL 34133

Cut Your Phone Call Costs With Council Rate Cards

Now students and tutors can make telephone calls throughout the United States for 4 cents per minute with special Literacy Council of Bonita Springs telephone cards.

Each card costs \$10 and provides 250 minutes of calling time. Best of all, \$5 of the \$10 fee is donated to the Literacy Council. To buy a card, visit the Council office on Old 41.

Hold Me, Thrill Me!

Southwest Florida Romance Writers donated \$76.10 to the Council, representing 10% of the net proceeds from its 2004 writing contest, "Hold Me, Thrill Me".

OFFICE SCHEDULE

Katie Verna, Program Director
Sonia Heredia, Office Assistant
Monday through Friday
9:00 to 5:00

Jeanne Sachs, Student/Tutor Coordinator
Nora Martinez, Lab Coordinator
Monday to Friday, 4:00 to 9:00 pm

STUDENT LAB OPEN

Mon. to Fri., 9am to 9pm

CONTACT INFORMATION

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