

# The Lamplighter

April, May, June, 2007

A quarterly newsletter of the  
Literacy Council of Bonita Springs

## From The Council Director:

Summer is here and, while many of our tutors have returned to the north, we remain very busy keeping up with requests for English classes. At our April orientation, we had 47 students attend, all looking for the opportunity to improve their lives. At our May orientation, over 60 students attended and in June we had over 40 new students join us. Our numbers are growing and we continue to need tutors to join us in our mission to give the gift of English to our local residents. Just a few hours per week and you can change a life!

The Literacy Council is a very special organization and I, for one, am thrilled to be here. On June 12, I celebrated my first anniversary as Executive Director and I am proud to share how we have grown this past year: 1,549 students; 594 tutors, 13 tutor workshops, 195 newly trained tutors, an overall 11% gain in students from the previous year. The Literacy Council is growing through local job booms, construction slowdowns, and higher unemployment rates, and we are still seeing a consistent pattern of growth in requests for English. This is very exciting, in that we can reach more and more people to help them achieve the American Dream. What an exciting place to be! And we thank those of you who are in this journey with us: our wonderful tutors, our dedicated students, our generous donors, our supportive community, our committed Board of Directors and our super staff. Thanks to all of you for everything you do.

P.S. Breakfast notes: Thanks, tutor Doris Loigman and student Sandra Flores, the stars of the video. Special thanks to Chuck Pipher, who edited the video and donated the equipment and his specialist who helped make the audio and video a success. Thanks also to Antonio Ixcot Coyoy, one of our students who served as videographer. Super job, Antonio! And of course many thanks to our sponsors for the event, Bonita Bay Group, Northern Trust Bank and Hahn, Loeser & Parks, LLP.

Teaming Up For Literacy!!  
Susan Acuña

## Like to Buy a House?

If you want to buy a house and learn about home financing, you can attend a seminar on principles and techniques of mortgage financing presented by Clemente Hernandez, a student and mortgage broker, on Friday, July 20 at 6:30 pm in the Council Office.

### OFFICE SCHEDULE

Susan Acuña, Executive Director  
Diego Grisales, Program Director  
Kerty Reiterer-Crespo, Office Manager  
Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Jeanne Sachs, Student/Tutor Coordinator  
Monday to Thurs., 4:00 to 9:00 pm  
Nora Martinez, Assistant Coordinator  
Monday to Friday, 5:00 to 9:00 pm

### STUDENT LAB OPEN

Mon. to Fri., 9:00 am to 9:00 pm

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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## Buy a Raffle Ticket!!

Our next raffle will be held July 29 during the Annual Summer Party for a beautiful bicycle to the winning ticket holder. Come in to the office and buy a ticket for only \$1 and get the chance to win this bike, or a clock radio, or a gift basket.

## Gerardo Velez Honored By Trade Magazine

One of our students, Gerardo Velez, was recently featured on the cover of HVACRBUSINESS magazine. He is employed as a senior technician at Conditioned Air in Naples. Judy Walker, one of our wonderful volunteer tutors, taught Gerardo English twice a week for two years until he mastered the entire Laubach Way to Learn English series. Congratulations, Gerardo, on your success! And kudos to you, Judy, for your dedication in helping Gerardo learn English which truly helped him reach his goals!

## All Students, Tutors Invited to Council Summer Party Sunday, July 29, at Bonita Community Hall

Be sure to reserve Sunday, July 29, on your calendar for the 2007 Council Summer Party. This gala event will be held from 4-7 pm in the City of Bonita Springs Community Hall, 27381 Old 41 Road, at the corner of Reynolds Street across from Riverside Park. Highlight for the festive gathering will be musical and dancing entertainment by a Mexican band and by dancer Maria Hillyer. A raffle for a bicycle, two alarm clock radios, and two gift baskets – one for adults and one for young girls – will be also conducted. The raffle tickets are \$1.00 each and are available at the Council Office. Special gifts for students, including children and mothers, will also be awarded. All attendees are urged to prepare and bring dishes from their native countries and beverages to share with their friends.

## United Way Allocates \$120,000 to Literacy Council For 2008 English Programs and United Way House

The United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties has given \$120,000 to the Literacy Council to continue and expand literacy programs in calendar year 2008 for the Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park communities. The Council received the full amount requested by Council Executive Director Susan Acuña. The funds will be used to support the Moms and Tots, Worksite Literacy, individual tutoring and group classes and to expand Moms and Tots Programs into Estero and San Carlos Park. The United Way Allocations Committee Team recognized that acquiring literacy skills greatly increases the quality of life for many people in our community. With the dramatic influx of a Spanish-speaking workforce, particularly in the local community, speaking and understanding English is critical. The Allocations Team once again applauded the Council's highly effective collaborations with local schools, agencies, businesses and communities, particularly the partnership with the YMCA for the Moms and Tots Program and the coordination for the United Way House.



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



## Muchas Gracias Por El Dinero!

The Literacy Council wants to express its deep appreciation to the following organizations for their generous donations during the second quarter of this year.

- Greater St. Louis Community Foundation donor-advised fund (Ray and Judy Ford): \$5,000.
- United Way Supplemental Allocation: \$5,604 plus \$5,000 from DeToqueville Society donors Pat and Al O'Donnell.
- Copperleaf Foundation: \$2,000.
- City of Bonita Partnering for Results Grant: \$23,000.
- Pelican Landing Auction: \$2,348.
- Worthington Ladies Golf Tournament: \$4,111.
- Southwest Florida Ladies Duplicate Bridge Group: \$1,500.
- Donor-advised fund from the SWFLCF: \$1,000.
- Bonita Charity Bingo: \$25.
- The Gerald and Angela Nichols Family Fund of the Catholic Community Foundation, Minnesota: \$1,000.

The Council enthusiastically encourages community, business, foundation organizations and civic-minded individuals to seriously consider donations to help expand the development of English language programs sponsored by the Literacy Council. To obtain further information and arrange for a donation, please contact Executive Director Susan Acuña at 495-0999 or by e-mail at bonitaliteracy@comcast.net.

## Deep Thanks to Bay Presbyterian Church, Cafe of Life

The Council has been the grateful recipient of food and office supplies donated by several local organizations. The Bay Presbyterian Church, under Pastor Reverend John Anderson, has generously donated weekly supplies of milk, bread and pastries from Fresh Market.

The Cafe of Life also shares their food donations from Publix Supermarket each week with Council students who attend language classes and with Moms and Tots participants at all six language class sites.

Thanks for being such great community partners!

## Community Partnerships Are Great For Council Programs!

Thanks to Family Health Centers and their staff who visited our Moms and Tots programs to discuss prenatal health issues and to distribute free vitamins to our moms. FHC also administered flu shots and tuberculosis tests to our moms. We really appreciate the opportunity to partner with such super organizations to bring the message of health and nutrition to our very underserved mothers and their young children.

Thanks to Lee Memorial Health Systems who visited one of our Moms and Tots programs to survey them about their needs and expectations for the Lee Memorial Health System. We are glad to help our community partners strive to improve their services.

Thanks to Good Wheels, Inc. which, through our United Way partnership, transported moms and their children from Manna Christian RV Park to the Bonita Springs YMCA to enjoy an afternoon of swimming at their beautiful facilities. A big thanks to the YMCA for their generosity. Many of the moms and their children had never been swimming before. It was a most enjoyable and refreshing excursion.

Thanks to the Bonita Assistance Organization and their ongoing support for snacks and juice for our tots. We really appreciate your support of our Moms and Tots Program!

Thanks to the City of Bonita Springs for allowing us the use of a conference room at the old Liles hotel in the evenings! Since our space is so limited, it is wonderful to be able to have one of our larger classes held in the beautiful building.

## Attend a Spanish Class!

Like to learn Spanish? Sign up at the Council Office for a six-week program that will give you a speaking knowledge of this wonderful language.

Beginners classes will meet every Tuesday from 12-2 pm at the Council offices. Call the office for dates and to register. The fee is \$150 plus books.

## Breakfast Speakers Describe Their Journeys To Personal Success

Due to limited space, we were unable to share stories from the 4th Annual Fundraising Breakfast held on March 15. Sandra Flores, our student starring in the video, spoke to the breakfast guests and shared her story along with Diego Grisales, our Program Director and student, Demetria Gonzales. We have printed them here for your enjoyment.

### Sandra Flores

My name is Sandra Flores. I came to this country in 2006 from a small town in Mexico. I came with my husband and son. When I came to the United States, I was unable to do anything because I did not know English words (colors, numbers) or other words so people could understand me. I was unable to go anywhere alone. I came to the Literacy Council for help; when I started to learn English I started to feel better about myself. I was able to go to the store and shop, able to speak to the doctor and help my son with his schoolwork. The tutors that the Literacy Council provided have continued to help me better my life. I want to tell you how much I appreciate all the help and support that I have received through your efforts.

### Diego Grisales

My name is Diego Grisales. I'm the Program Director of the Literacy Council of Bonita Springs, and today I want to share my experience with you. I'm from Colombia and I came to this country three years ago with my family. I'm an economist and I have a master's in financial management. I was a professor in many universities in my country and also a manager of several companies. Unfortunately, I left Colombia because of many problems. I lost everything in my country. I remember, when I arrived in the United States, it was difficult because I didn't speak any English. That is why my first job was as a cleaner in a school, and then I got a better job at Publix, Home Depot, and other companies, but always doing the menial jobs. I was very frustrated that my background as a manager, professor, etc, didn't matter here.

Thanks a lot and God Bless you and God Bless America.

I heard about the Literacy Council from a friend. Immediately I went to the Council and started English classes. Today I want to say thanks to the Literacy Council and my tutors, because they were really a big support for me. Now my life has changed a lot. I bought a new house two months ago, my new car; my children speak English very well, my wife has a good job, and I'm working for the organization that taught me English, and especially I have peace in my heart!

Finally, let me tell you something: In order to be grateful, I want to work hard to help my community and honor this country. Thanks a lot and God bless you and God bless America.

### Demetria Gonzalez

My name is Demetria Gonzalez. I am 63 years old and I am from Oaxaca, Mexico. When my husband died a few years ago, I didn't know what to do. I had five children; I had no job and I had never been to school in my life. I didn't know how to read or write. I didn't speak either English or Spanish. I spoke what is called Mixteco, a dialect spoken where I grew up. The only job I could find was in the field picking tomatoes.

So I decided to come to the United States to try to improve my life and the lives of my children. But lacking speaking skills, even Spanish, was a big problem. If I wanted to buy a money order to pay the rent, I had to ask someone who speaks English to go with me.

One day a friend told me about the Literacy Council's Moms and Tots program. I decided to try it. And from the first day, I really liked it. Since that first day, I have never missed a class. We have excellent teachers. They really care about us. I have learned so much.

The Moms and Tots program is making a big difference in my life. For instance, I can now go by myself to buy that money order. I say to the clerk: "May I have a money order, please?" I know numbers, too. Can you believe it?

I never thought someone my age could learn English. Now I know that it is never too late to learn. I still have a long way to go, but I am determined to get there. Thanks to all of the wonderful teachers who are helping me. I have come a long way from Oaxaca.