



READ

200 N. Greensboro Street
Suite C-2
Carrboro, NC 27510
www.orangeliteracy.org
SUMMER 2010

The Orange County Literacy Council

- * *The Orange County Literacy Council's vision is to achieve 100% adult literacy in Orange County.*
- * *Our mission is to assist adults in improving their literacy skills in order to achieve their employment, community, family and life goals.*

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Student Mayra Cruz Earns GED, Receives Diploma

"When I failed the test, I felt stupid." Mayra Cruz began working toward getting her GED in October of 2007 through a class offered to housekeeping workers at UNC by Durham Tech Community College. One by one, she studied for and passed four of the five sections of the test, with only math remaining. Each time she took the math exam, Cruz came up just short of the 410 points she needed to pass the exam.

After her third try, Cruz became frustrated and stopped attending class. But in January, Cruz heard that OCLC was creating a new structure for the class and she decided to try again. She worked tirelessly with tutors from the Campus Y's Project Literacy group and made a plan to fill the gaps in her math skills.

"I was always doing homework," Cruz says, "weekends, nights. My husband would ask me, 'What's for dinner?', and I would say, 'Math book.'" Her family sacrificed to see her succeed, but her two children, husband and several close friends were a constant source of support as she worked toward her goal.

In April, Cruz passed the pre-test and scheduled an appointment to take her math exam. The Friday before the Monday exam, Cruz was feeling relaxed and hopeful about the test. However, that weekend, she learned that her best friend and cheerleader had died in a car accident, and she spent the weekend in bed, inconsolable. She thought that she would have to cancel the test to deal with her grief, but on Sunday night, she realized that the best way to honor her friend would be to take the test, and to pass it.

On Monday afternoon, Cruz went to the Skills Development Center to try the math test once again. Two weeks later, she opened her scores in her driveway and was elated when she saw the passing score. Crying out of joy this time and still standing at the mailbox, she called her children and her husband to share the good news.

Cruz celebrated her graduation and received her diploma at the Durham Performing Arts Center in May. She received her diploma alongside 100 other graduates from Durham



Mayra Cruz, left with her husband at Durham Tech's graduation ceremony.

Tech's adult education program. Cruz says that graduation was the best experience of her life.

She plans to begin taking community college classes this fall. Her advice for other students is, "Age doesn't mean nothing. No matter how old we are, what job you do, if you want something – work for it."

-Alicia Towler

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Stepping Stones: A Transitional Program for Post-GED Students

As Patrick Elliot Alexander endeavors further into the fourth year of his pioneering program Stepping Stones, the success and significance of his work remains evident through the response of the men involved.

Alexander describes Stepping Stones, created in the summer of 2007, as "a noncredit educational program that acquaints or reacquaints men who are incarcerated at Orange Correctional Center (OCC) with literary learning experiences that are unique to college classrooms."

Alexander began teaching college prep seminars at OCC when he realized the desperate need for an arena in which these men who had not acquired high school diplomas could prepare themselves for obtaining General Educa-

tional Development (GED) certificates. Only after they receive their GEDs are they eligible to continue their education by taking college classes for credit through the UNC-Chapel Hill's Correctional Educational Program.

The first year of Stepping Stones proved to be a considerable success: while 17 men initially participated in the seminar, a total of 11 individuals eventually comprised the core, committed group. The 2007 seminar met for two hours each week from mid-June to mid-August; from 2008 on, the seminar was held for three hours a week for those months.

Although the specific content of each year's seminar has varied from summer to summer, along with the works read and analyzed, the basic purpose

has remained constant — expanding upon the incarcerated men's literary skills and knowledge through an exploration of mostly African American literature, as well as a focus on self-expression through poetry and in-depth discussion.

"The idea is to develop these men both academically and in character," Alexander said.

The 2010 summer seminar is titled "Education and Liberation in African American Literature." Thus far, they've examined DuBois essays, Booker T Washington's autobiography, among other books. *Raisin in the Sun*, *Lesson Before Dying*, and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* are other texts on the syllabus for this year.

... continued on page 3

A Note from the Executive Director

It's been a year since we moved into our new space above Carr Mill Mall in Carrboro and the changes that we've been able to make are benefiting our students greatly. With dedicated classrooms, a fully operational computer lab and several areas for tutors and students to meet, we've been able to expand our hours — adding evening hours Monday through Thursday — to make it easier for those working day shifts to attend class or visit the computer lab.

Most days, our classrooms are filled with the sounds of people learning. From my office I can hear strains of choral reading from Abbie Toms' ESOL class (...my feet hurt/take off your shoes...), George Kelly's students mastering math concepts

for their upcoming GED exams or one of several one-on-one matches working through the sounds of the alphabet. We've also added an extensive library of instructional materials for our tutors, and a collection of books for students to borrow.

And although we lost our space in Hillsborough, a number of individuals and organizations have stepped in to help us continue to serve students in the northern part of the county. First Baptist Church of Hillsborough, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, McCoy's Temple United Holy Church, New Hope Presbyterian Church, New Hope Elementary School, Orange County Public Library, the Central Orange Senior Center and Habitat for Humanity have all opened

their doors to us.

As we start the new fiscal year, we're looking forward to a few additions. To respond to the need for more ESL classes, the United Way of the Greater Triangle has provided funding for Adelante! — an ESL program designed for Spanish speakers. We've also just been awarded a Reading Companions grant from IBM to equip our computer lab with interactive reading software.

Your support has made all this possible. Thank you!



After Retiring from Teaching, Tutor Abbie Tom Seeks a New Challenge with ESOL Groups at OCLC

A chorus of voices rings out from Abbie Tom's low beginning ESOL group. "I broke my leg," Tom says rhythmically. "Go to the emergency room," the students call back in unison. Early each Monday and Wednesday morning, a group of 7-10 women from diverse backgrounds gather in one of OCLC's classrooms to practice their English.

Several years ago, Tom, retired and still longing to teach, decided to volunteer with OCLC. She had taught for 45 years, first volunteering with adult ESOL students while teaching Spanish in Madison, Wisconsin. She taught college students at Washington University and the St. Louis University, and ESOL and Spanish classes in Chapel Hill area middle schools. She went on to take a job as an ESOL instructor for Durham Tech and co-wrote *Teaching Adult Second Language Learners*, the widely respected book of classroom strategies and themes.



Tutor Abbie Tom, left, works with student Khu Khu Jeulah during a morning group at OCLC.

Strategies for working with adult ESOL students have changed significantly over the years, moving away from teaching grammar and focusing more on content. "I consider grammar to be a pit," Tom says. "Once you start, you never get out." To keep her students engaged and the vocabulary relevant, Tom uses thematic lessons based

around real life situations, like going to the doctor, or filling out forms.

Her classes run efficiently, and when new ESOL tutors want to observe an experienced tutor, Abbie Tom's classroom is usually first on the list.

Back in the classroom, students from the early group gather their things to

leave. As they pass the reception desk, they wave goodbye and file out, talking amongst themselves. Tom walks over to a table where a new student is filling out an intake form and explains in Spanish what the student can expect from the assessment tests and when to return for the first class. She takes a quick break and returns as the next group begins to settle into the room.

Why return as a volunteer after teaching for 45 years? "Because," Tom says, "it's fun and keeps things interesting!"

- Alicia Towler

"I consider grammar to be a pit. Once you start, you never get out."

-Abbie Tom

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Four years into the program, Alexander has discovered the perfect format for the three-hour weekly sessions. Most of the time is spent in group discussion of the text that they're currently focusing on; the last bit of class, however, is reserved for the men to share their insights if they feel the desire to do so. The very last session of the summer is open to the town of Hillsborough and serves as an opportunity for the men to present

their personal works to the wider community.

"The relationships built through reading and writing and being in the classroom wanting to learn together are incredible," Alexander said.

Allison Curseen, a fellow doctoral student of Alexander's in the Department of English at Duke University, joined forces with Alexander in 2009. Alexander has also received assistance from his dissertation advisor Dr. Maurice O. Wallace who is Associ-

ate Professor of English and African American studies at Duke.

Curseen has reconvened with Alexander for the 2010 summer session of Stepping Stones; her workshops within the program tend to focus on activities that stretch critical thinking and reach into the creative flow of the mind.

Both Alexander and Curseen have given much time and energy to this special program, but they assert that the program has given them a lot in

return, too.

"I've never been in a learning environment in which people want so strongly to be there. Whether [the men] are friends [with one another] in the facility or not, they come together because of their interest in all the program has to offer," Curseen said.

Stepping Stones is held in conjunction with OCLC with funding from Union Missionary Baptist Church.

-Madeline Parker

UNC Workplace Literacy Programs Continue

What do you do when you need to book a bus ticket to visit your sister in another state? Find sugar-free recipes for a diabetic family member? Or read about your health care benefits? You go online. The Internet offers a wealth of resources. But using those resources requires computer access, strong basic literacy and computer navigational skills – access and skills not everyone has.

When the University of North Carolina began to move to an online payroll and benefits system, it recognized the need – and the opportunity – to ensure that all their employees have the skills they need not only to access the new system, but to participate in the rapidly growing digital society. In

June 2008, UNC's Department of Training and Talent Development asked OCLC to develop and implement a pilot program to help UNC employees with limited literacy skills or who were unfamiliar with computers. The pilot phase of the program proved to be very successful. OCLC worked with over 225 employees, teaching both computer and basic literacy skills.

It went from, 'I can't do this' to 'I really can do these things.'

The program continues this year as the UNC Workplace Literacy Program. At the request of many of the employees, we developed an intermediate level computer curriculum. Where the Basic Computer class focuses on skills such as identifying computer hardware, clicking/double clicking the mouse, using the keyboard, checking e-mail and paystubs, the Intermediate Computer class level will introduce attachments, web searches, creating and saving information to files and basic word processing. Classes meet for an hour-and-a-half, twice a week for 6 weeks. To accommodate those working late or overnight shifts, we include classes at "unusual" times – such as 6:30 am.

The change in students' attitude is remarkable. Kelly Peak, one of last year's instructors, described one student who first entered the class barely able to touch the computer, often making negative comments about how she "couldn't do it." As the class progressed, so did the student. "I could feel her attitude shift," Peak explained. "It went from, 'I can't do this' to 'I really can do these things.'"

Reading and Writing for Opportunity – the basic skills component of the program – also continues this year, with classes offered in both fall and spring.

For information, contact Joy Turner (jturner@orangeliteracy.org).

Art Exhibition Benefits Literacy

The Friends of the Carrboro Branch Library are presenting "Hand in Hand", an art exhibition to benefit The Orange County Literacy Council, Student Health Action Coalition (SHAC- Carrboro Clinics), and TABLE (children's weekend backpack feeding program).

Participating artists include Linda Carmel, Barbara Keighton, Louise Francke, Nerys Levy, Jane Ludington, David Taylor, Miriam Sagasti, and Marilyn Strother.

The artists have pledged a percentage of the sales of their work both to the local nonprofit programs and the Carrboro Branch Library. As part of the exhibition, the Library's Arts Program will also be holding a journal-making workshop at the Literacy Council offices

for adult learners and their tutors. This exhibition and workshop are also made possible by a grant from the Strowd Roses Foundation.

The Carrboro Branch Library is located in the McDougale School Media Center at 900 Old Fayetteville Road in Chapel Hill. The library is open Monday-Thursday from 3:30-8pm, Saturdays from 10am until 2pm and Sundays from 1:00pm until 5pm.

Artwork will be on display in the Carrboro Branch Library from June 19th November 30.

For more information, contact the Library at 969-3006 .

The Friends of the Carrboro Branch Library
present

Hand in Hand

Artists in support of:
Student Health Action Coalition (SHAC-Carrboro Clinic)
TABLE (children's weekend backpack feeding program)
Orange County Literacy Council

June 19th - November 30, 2010
Reception Sunday
June 20th from 2-4:30pm

Carrboro Branch Library
900 Old Fayetteville Rd Chapel Hill NC
Library Hours: Mon - Thurs 3:30-8:00 pm
Sat: 10:00 - 2:00 pm
Sun: 1:00 - 5:00 pm

ARTISTS:
Linda Carmel
Barbara Keighton
Louise Francke
Nerys Levy
Jane Ludington
David Taylor
Miriam Sagasti
Marilyn Strother

This exhibition is also made possible by a grant
from the Strowd Roses Foundation.

Celebrating National Literacy Month

September 2010—Open House Events



Not for Kids Only

Date: Sunday, September 12

Time: 2:00—4:00 pm

Join us Sunday September 12th as we use books, tall tales, songs, puppets and games to teach language skills. Designed for the young and young-at-heart—those older than 5 will be required to check their inhibitions at the door.

Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Light refreshments will be served.

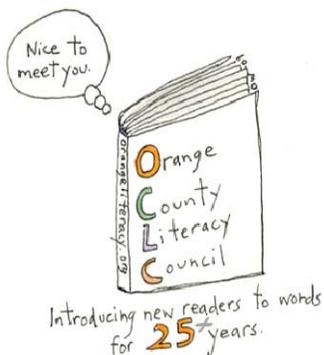
Meet the Author—Randall Kenan

Date: Sunday, September 26

Time: 2:00—4:00 pm

Award-winning author Randall Keenan (*Let the Dead Bury Their Dead; Walking on Water: Black American Lives at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*) joins us to talk about his work as a writer and about what reading meant to him growing up in rural, south-eastern North Carolina.

Light refreshments will be served.



Where: OCLC offices in Carr Mill Mall
200 North Greensboro St.
Suite C-2 (Over Panzanella's)
Carrboro, NC 27510

RSVP appreciated, but not necessary:
Oclcopenhouse.eventbee.com
or
(919) 636-4457

3rd Annual Writers for Readers Reception and Book Luncheon Raise Money and Awareness

The Orange County Literacy Council held its 3rd Annual Writers for Readers Reception and Luncheon on February 14th and 15th.

This year's event featured authors Dorothy Allison, Charlaune Harris, George Singleton, Lee Stringer and Wells Tower. On February 14th, reception attendees mingled with guest authors and enjoyed food from famous cookbook authors Jean Anderson, Sara Foster, Moreton Neal, Nancie McDermott, John and Dale Reed and Bill Smith at the UNC President's House.

On February 15th, the five authors spoke

about the importance of literacy and read selections from their works during a luncheon catered by the Carolina Inn.

The authors stressed the importance of literacy in their own ways. Stringer talked about how writing helped him battle addiction and homelessness. Allison told a moving story about a friend who felt isolated and ashamed struggling to read as an adult. Pictures and audio can be found on our website.

Our thanks to the authors, sponsors and committee members, as well as Hodding Carter III, Honorary Chair and Daniel Wallace, Master of Ceremonies.



Author George Singleton, center, signs copies of his books at the Carolina Inn after OCLC's 3rd Annual Writers for Readers Luncheon in February.



Local authors Wells Tower, left, and Daniel Wallace take time to chat at the Writers for Readers Reception at the UNC President's house. Guests had a chance to mingle with the authors and enjoy food from famous Southern Cookbook authors.

Writers for Readers 2011

Planning is underway for our 4th annual event. Author and Southern culture and folklore scholar William Ferris (*Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues*) will be our Honorary Chair. Best-selling author Jeffrey Deaver (*The Burning Wire, The Devil's Teacup*) will be featured. Deaver was recently selected by the estate of Ian Fleming to write the newest in the James Bond series. Check our website for the latest details.

2010 Writers for Readers Sponsors

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Author Dorothy Allison, right, at the reception.

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In honor of Polly Moreau

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...and a number of anonymous donors

The Summer 2010 edition of *READ* printed courtesy of **Océ North America** (www.aceusa.com).

¡Adelante! (*interjection*): go ahead, move on

OCLC is beginning ¡Adelante!, an exciting new project focusing on ESL services for adults in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro Latino community. Through a partnership with the Interfaith Council (IFC) we will work with each student to develop an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) – a plan that addresses immediate needs, such as food, clothing, rent and utility assistance, as well as their longer-term educational needs. As each student sets short and

long-term goals for personal and economic stability, his/her plan will serve as a personal roadmap for reaching these goals. We will need a number of volunteer tutors and mentors. If you are interested in working with the project, please contact us or fill out a volunteer application online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TutorApplication>.

Adelante! is funded by United Way of the Greater Triangle.

Congratulations!

Several OCLC students met their long term goals this year. We would like to recognize the following students (and their tutors) for their accomplishments:

GED Recipients

Mayra Cruz
Mike Daniel

New Citizens

Rakesh Kumar
Lackwinder Kumar

Congratulations on your success!

ESOL Tutors Needed

We need tutors to work with ESOL students in a variety of situations—from new refugees who are learning the basics of life in the U.S., to parents who need to communicate with their children’s teachers, to students working toward citizenship. We provide training and on-going support. Experience is not required. We ask that tutors sign up for a minimum of 12 weeks, approximately 3 hours per week. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.orangeliteracy.org>.

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