



# READ

503 West Franklin Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516  
www.orangeliteracy.org

WINTER 2008

## From our students ...

*The phrase 'lifelong learning' is often used, but few examples of this concept are more inspiring than those of our students. Improving literacy skills requires continuous hard work and determination by students and their tutors. So each year, to celebrate these efforts and to recognize the accomplishments of our students, the dedication of our tutors and volunteers, and the unwavering support of the community, the Orange County Literacy Council hosts a Student Tutor Banquet. And each year — before a riveted audience — OCLC students read from stories they have written. Their words inspire us and encourage us to renew our commitment to adult learning. Below are excerpts from those writings.*

### From Jamaica to Orange County

*Copeland Andrews*

I give thanks for the blessings I received from God. I also give thanks for my wife Liz, my parents, and my wonderful tutor, Mary. Without the help of Liz and Mary, I could not stand here tonight reading.

I came from a small island in the Caribbean named Jamaica. I never went to school that much to read and write. So I became an adult who could not read. I always listened to people when they were talking and tried to learn from them. And in everything I did, I always used my common sense. In Jamaica I thought that I could live like that for the rest of my life.

Then I met this lovely lady named Liz. We became friends and got married soon. Then she took me with her to the U.S. When she and I got here the first thing I said to myself was, "This is not the place for me. How am I going to get around? I can't read and write."

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**Dec. 4, 2007**

*Stella Cole*

I no longer think how it feels to get close to the finish line. Every day I come closer to crossing my finish line. I am in a long race. Sometimes it is so hard, but I won't give up. There are so many wonderful people helping me. When I think about this program, I am inspired to keep pushing for the finish line. To finish any race you get strength from God and all of those around you.

### Writing Enriches My Life

*Starr Hovis*

Writing is new and important for this time of my life. I am learning who I am, and I am accepting me. This is a delightful step in my twelve-year growth. When I was sick, I was like a child. Writing has helped me be more adult. I could not write well before; I could not remember or make sense. Now I feel more normal. I am learning how to be more focused. I am learning how to think. My body is fitting together better. I want a sense of what I am doing and when. Even if I never get my memory back, I can write down things I need to remember. I can just live and not worry about remembering.



*OCLC Americorps Member Diana Johnson presents Chelia Thompson with a Tutor Appreciation Award*

**Additional student writings on page 4.**

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**OCLC Expands ESOL Program**

*Kelly Davis*

We are all aware of how difficult life in the United States is for a person with low literacy skills. Imagine how difficult it is then for a person who does not speak English. Over the past year, the Literacy Council has started to expand programming to more fully meet the needs of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners throughout Orange County.

We decided to design and implement programs that would add to the current opportunities for ESOL students rather than replicate those opportunities. To that end, we started offering the Citizen Partners program for individuals who plan to take the Naturalization test. In twice weekly classes, instructors use curriculum focused on U.S. history, geography, economics, and government systems to help students improve their English skills. Students are also matched to Citizen Partners, volunteers from the community who serve as personal guides to understanding what it means to be a U.S. citizen.

Our ESOL Program has grown to include several small group classes that meet at various times during the week and at various places throughout the county. The goal of these classes is to engage students in all four communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We keep these groups small, three to five students each, so that all the learners have an opportunity for ample meaningful communication in each class.

The OCLC is always looking for new volunteers. No experience is necessary. If you are interested in working with our ESOL program, then visit the OCLC website ([www.orangelifteracy.org](http://www.orangelifteracy.org)) or contact Lesley Starke at our Chapel Hill office ([lstarke@orangelifteracy.org](mailto:lstarke@orangelifteracy.org) or 919-933-2151).

**Adult Literacy Program Adds Group Tutoring Option**

Each person who comes to OCLC has a unique story and a distinct set of reasons for needing our services. That's fairly obvious, but sometimes the consequences of that reality are harder to predict. Every single student here has work and family demanding time and attention. Many can't survive with just one job, so they have two or three. Not surprisingly, they may end up missing a week, two weeks, or even a month of sessions. Add to this the demands on our tutors, all of whom also have families, jobs, and lives outside of volunteering, and one begins to understand why tutor/student matches can be difficult to maintain.

Therefore, in September of this year, the Adult Basic Education program began offering group classes. Unlike a tutor/student pairing, a group can still meet if one person is absent. Groups also allow us to match tutors and learners more quickly, cutting the dropout rate between registration and meeting. The option of group classes can enable more people to access our services. Many people register for a tutor, but sometimes changes in their lives make it impossible to meet once they are finally matched. If they can begin sessions more promptly, it is often easier for them to plan around the tutoring.

## Express Your ‘Selves’ — A New Seminar at the Orange Correctional Center

Patrick Alexander

Although I’ve been involved in volunteer work throughout my life, I’ve never felt challenged and fulfilled in the ways that I did this past summer at Orange Correctional Center (OCC) in Hillsborough, N.C. For eight weeks, I taught a college prep seminar at OCC titled “Express Your ‘Selves’: The Art of Creative Self-Expression in African American Literature.” This seminar responded to the educational interests of many men at OCC, which included reading and discussing African American literature, performing poetry, and developing skills in close reading and public speaking. It also responded to the men’s broader interest of “getting a taste” of college education. Student participants in “Express Your ‘Selves’” read and responded to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and engaged four major novels from the body of twentieth-century African American literature: Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Ann Petry’s *The Street*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Jonah’s Gourd Vine*, and Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying*. They also took five comprehension quizzes and two essay exams, participated in critical discussions of each novel, read and responded to works by African American poets, and presented a final creative project to classmates and other OCC volunteers.

Even though the seminar was aimed at helping those men who had attained a GED (or a high school diploma) to smoothly transition to

college coursework, it was open to all men at OCC. We met once a week for two hours. While grades were not assigned, I did evaluate student work. Also, I modeled the seminar after for-credit African American history courses taught by University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill history professor Robert Porter, who teaches at OCC.

In the coming summer, the OCC college prep seminar will run for ten weeks. We will explore writing as a political act in African American literature. During once-a-week, three-hour sessions, we will engage such works as Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Maya Angelou’s autobiographical narrative *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Nathan McCall’s autobiography *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America*. The men and I anticipate another enlightening and energizing term.



OCLC has added a number of small group tutoring sessions.

(continued from page 2)

### Adult Literacy

Of course, learning requires more than just showing up for classes. Our students are adults, and most of them have specific reasons for seeking our services. One may want to improve his or her reading skills to get a better job, while another is trying to study for the GED. Our challenge is to address these goals and the students’ personal needs in a group setting. Classes try to incorporate both activities that are beneficial to all learners and personalized instruction. For example, in a two-hour reading skills session, the first half may be spent reading and analyzing

a newspaper article together and the second spent doing more individualized lessons. The groups are never more than five people, and there are at least two tutors assigned to every class, so students can still easily ask questions and tutors can take time to properly explain the material.

We realized, however, these sessions are not for everyone. Some learn best with a one-on-one tutor, while others cannot fit our class times into their schedules. For those people, individual tutors are still available.

## The Simplest Joy in Life: My Tutoring Experience

*Chelia Thompson*

As a tutor, I've learned that although my students come from different backgrounds, I still share a common moment with each one. It is that moment where a concept has been learned, applied, and then used to help them achieve a goal. That moment of success is priceless for both my student and me.

When I first started tutoring, I didn't know what to expect. I had tutored children in the past, even a couple of my peers over the years, but never adults who had lives and complicated circumstances to deal with. Then when I sat down with my first student, I learned that she didn't know what to expect either. This helped our tutor-student relationship to grow because we were both learning along the way.

Even now as I gain new students, I still don't know what to expect with each new meeting. But to me, that's what makes the tutor-student relationship better. We learn about each

other and that makes our learning environment more comfortable. The more comfortable it is, the easier it is to learn and teach.

The best part of tutoring is the joy that my students experience when they reach their goals. The look that they get when they come to the end of their projects or finish a workbook is worth every moment of review, explaining, and planning that has gone into helping them. Sure, the frustrating and hard times crop up along the way, but that all fades when the task is done. All the complications aren't as important anymore. Now the focus is on celebrating the achievement. My students' smiles are my satisfaction, and that's what makes me happy to be a volunteer tutor. I thank God for the opportunity to work with each one.

*Chelia Thompson has tutored at OCLC since June 2006. She was one of 4 recipients of the 2007 OCLC Tutor Appreciation Awards.*

*Full versions of our students writings are available at [www.orangeliteracy.org](http://www.orangeliteracy.org)*

### The World I Come From

*Alina Guimaraes*

My name is Alina. I am from Africa—from Mozambique.

Mozambique is located in southeast Africa by the Indian Ocean. The capital is Maputo. The country is 801,590 sq km, or slightly less than twice the size of California. It has a population of 20.5 million people.

My country is one of the poorest countries in the world. It has various economic and social problems, as well as problems with nature. Mozambique has two important seasons: summer and winter. During the summertime, it rains a lot, and some rivers get full and the water overflows. The plantations flood and crops go bad.

### Conversion: From Fiji to America

*Keshni (Devi)*

The real story starts when I was twenty; however, I suppose I should give you the boring background story before that. I was born in the city of Lautoka, which is on the one of the biggest islands in Fiji, a country made up of 326 separate islands.

I never knew my father because he died before I was born. The rest of my family—that is, my mother, my brother; and my sister—were all very hard working. After my father died, my mother moved us all to my grandparents' place along with our uncles. All the older members of our family had jobs, but they encouraged me in my studies.

### My Story

*Matthew Adams*

I was born on October 1, 1962, in Mebane, N.C. My parents' names are James and Sadie. I am the third oldest of five children. I was raised in Hillsborough, N.C. I call Hillsborough my hometown because my first seven years began there. I lived on Eno River Road across the railroad tracks from what was once Cone's Mill Factory.

My father worked as a painter and owned his own business as a painter. My mother worked in a mill in Hillsborough, but I don't know what it was. My grandparents, who were my father's parents, lived down the road on Old Dimmock's Mill Road where the water plant is now.

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**Congratulations!**

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Benny Albright	Starr Hovis
Betsy Andrews	Dao Ngo
Copeland Andrews	Laverne Robinson
Mike Daniel	Johnny Stevens
Keshni Devi	Milton Vaughn

*2007 Tutor Appreciation Awards Recipients*

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Christopher Phan  
Furat Sawafta  
Chelia Thompson  
Julia Wood

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And thank you to all our students, tutors, volunteers, donors and community supporters for a very successful year of learning.

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