



READ

200 N. Greensboro Street
Suite C-2
Carrboro, NC 27510
www.orangeliteracy.org
SUMMER 2011

The Orange County Literacy Council

- * *We envision a community where literacy is available to all.*
- * *Our mission is to help adults reach their education, employment and life goals. We do this by providing free, flexible instruction in reading, writing and basic math, English and computer literacy skills and GED preparation.*

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Celebrating Success

Although the threat of severe thunderstorms kept us from holding our spring celebration this year, our reasons for celebrating are greater than ever. This year—FY2010-2011—we worked with over 639 learners in our Adult Literacy Program. Over 320 of these learners—nearly twice as many as last year—became full-time students. And almost half of these full-time students made measureable progress—all remarkable numbers. This growth and success was possible because of the commitment of a very dedicated and generous community of tutors, volunteers and donors.

Full-time OCLC students averaged 50.5 hours of instruction this year. A number of students, however, greatly surpassed that average. Others reached major milestones. We honor these outstanding students, their tutors and their commitment to learning. Their success is our success.

80+ hours of instruction

Matthew Adams
Faydene Alston
Roger Amey
Betsy Andrews
Stella Cole
Cha Law Eh
Sylvia Espinoza
Carmen Garcia
Thelbert Green
Starr Hovis
Roxana Ibarra
Clanet John
Isatu Kamara
Tha Lay
Wanda Lea
Sah Ro May
Casio Noell
Paw Pa
Mayya Pulik
Christopher Reed
Romeo Rodriguez
Juan Segura
Naw Sheh
Joseph Smith
Mae Sot
San San Tint
Ka Nyaw Wah
Gyi Way
Russell Williams
Phyu Zar Win
Thu You



Elisaul Manriquez passed all five GED Tests. Admirably, Elisaul scored in the 99th percentile on his math test, with a score of 720 out of 800.



Htoo Htoo – soon to be Htoo Htoo Simon – passed his Citizenship Test on June 27th. Htoo Htoo is shown here with his tutor Phyllis Kessler.



200+ hours of instruction

Sisters **Kamlesh Pandwar** and **Charanjit Kaur** each attended over 200 hours of instruction in FY2011 as they studied for the Citizenship Test with their tutors Stephanie Smiley and Giselle Greene.

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If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please email us at oclc@orangelifteracy.org.

Newsletter edited by Madeline Parker

Board Changes

Please help us in welcoming new Board members John Kinneer and Steven Petrow who joined the Board in July 2011.

John Kinneer - John is a Wachovia Business Banker managing relationships for clients with \$2 million to \$20 million in revenue. John has served in a variety of staff and line positions since joining the bank in 2000. John is married to Whitney Kinneer and both enjoy spending time with their two-year old son Holden

Murphy Kinneer. John served notably in the Marine Corps before attending Winthrop University.

Steven Petrow - As Corporate Editor of Waterfront Media, publisher of Everyday Health, and a longtime publishing executive in New York, Steven's business and editorial expertise extends quite broadly into communications, public relations, and fund-raising. Over the years, he has worked with Time Inc., The Wall Street Journal, and other major media

companies as well as with a number of high-profile writers, including Andrew Weil, MD and Alice Waters. He is the author of five books. His latest work, *Steven Petrow's Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners* was released this spring by Workman Publishing.

And a very heartfelt thank you to **Katharine Walton**, who retired from the Board in January and **Robert Weimer**, who retires from the Board in September.

Staff Changes**Departures**

Emily Nelson, Program Coordinator for ESOL, left in early July to take a position as Executive Director at a small community-based nonprofit in Guatemala. Emily will split her time between Guatemala and El Salvador.

Vanessa Ponce, one of our FY2011 AmeriCorps members left to become a Student Life Instructor at the NC School of Science and Math in Durham.

Arrivals

OCCLC has two new AmeriCorps arriving in August—Diana Hofler and Kelly Sanders. Diana is a recent graduate of UNC with a B.A. in Philosophy. Kelly is a recent graduate of NC State University, where she earned a B.A. in International Studies. Kelly is brushing up on her Spanish. Diana can be reached at dhofler@orangelifteracy.org, Kelly at ksanders@orangelifteracy.org.

Promotions

Joy Turner has been promoted to Program Director, with oversight responsibilities for Adult Basic Education, ESOL and Family Literacy Programs.

Claire Davis, our other FY2011 AmeriCorps member, has stepped in as ESOL Program Coordinator. Claire served as a Program Assistant for ESOL last year.

A Note from the Executive Director

This past year—FY2011—has been one of tremendous growth for us. Over the course of the year, we worked with 639 adults in our regular Adult Literacy program. Half of these individuals—321 to be exact—became full-time students. By comparison, we worked with 175 full-time students the year before. In addition, we provided Creative Writing Workshops and Family Reading workshops to 155 participants

and hosted open sessions on topics such as the immigration process and Burmese and Karen culture and history.

This growth was the direct result of the support we received from the community. In FY2011, volunteers donated over 11,850 hours, lending their expertise and energy as tutors, Board members, fundraisers, event planners, organizers, tech gurus and

literacy advocates. In dollar terms, their contributions accounted for a staggering \$250,000.

Thank you all.

The need for our services remains strong—may FY2012 be equally busy.



Writing Class Builds Students' Confidence

Based on the laughter emanating from the classroom, you would never guess that the night's lesson was on prepositional phrases and subject-verb agreement. However, once you meet the tutor, Andrew Belton, everything falls into place. Andrew is a Ph.D. candidate at UNC in English and Comparative Literature, and his passion for words and positive attitude are contagious. His two students, Roxana Ibarra and Yolanda Wright, came to each class excited to learn and ready to tackle the intricacies of grammar and writing. Through their work with Andrew during the spring semester, they improved their writing skills and became more confident in their ability to express themselves through the written word. In their essays below, they share what being a student at OCLC has meant to them and how tutors like Andrew are helping them achieve their goals.

Unexpected Results

About two or three years ago I was searching around Chapel Hill and Carrboro for some information about a tutor for my son. While searching, I came to a building on Franklin Street. I went inside and I ask the lady at the front desk (Maria) about the sign that read "Orange County Literacy Council." She explained that it is an educational program for adults who need help with English as their second language.

I've learned ... the definition of a preposition (anything that a bird can do to a cloud).

At first, I was a little bit disappointed, because my son needed some help, but I started to think that I also needed some help! The classes are for small groups or one-on-one twice a week. Tutors teach reading, math and preparation for the GED. I was excited about the program because I had wanted to learn more about American History and to write using proper grammar.

Since I started the classes in 2010 I have had many experiences with different tutors. They all have their own special teaching methods and make you feel good even when you make mistakes. These methods keep

me coming to learn more and more every day! I can say this because since I started going twice a week to writing classes, my writing has improved. For example - I've learned when to use commas, the difference between "this" and "these" and the definition of a preposition (anything that a bird can do to a cloud). All these things I have learned from my dear tutor Andrew.

I plan to keep learning and going to classes until I start feeling confident enough to take classes at Durham Tech and earn an advanced degree. My dream is to enroll in only English-based classes. I believe that when I want to achieve something I have to be very dedicated. I also know that knowledge is the key to success in our lives.

- Roxana Ibarra

Head in the Clouds

For as long as I have lived in this country, I have felt I did not speak proper English. I have gaps in speaking, writing, and pronouncing words and am reluctant to ask for help or let people know my difficulties with English!

One cold winter day, I came across a flyer as I was going to Aveda on Franklin St. The flyer read "English Classes for Free at the OCLC (Orange County Literacy Council)." I was so happy when I saw the flyer because it was exactly what I needed. I felt I had found the puzzle piece that I was missing.

Immediately with great excitement, I called the number listed and enrolled in English classes. During the past 6 months of classes, I have

already learned a lot and I am still learning. I don't feel I am in the clouds as much as I did before. I have become more confident writing and reading English.

The English tutors at OCLC are outstanding and very skilled in teaching, especially Andrew Belton. They make the classes so enjoyable that I don't want to miss any classes! Their enthusiasm is contagious and makes me hungry for learning. I am so grateful for my tutors' patience when they identify my mistakes.

I don't feel I am in the clouds as much as I did before. I have become more confident writing and reading English.

I am also thankful to the OCLC and their staff because they are always willing to help me and accommodate my needs. Of course none of these things would be possible without the OCLC benefactors; I truly appreciate their benevolence.

I believe one day in the near future I will accomplish my goal to write and read English properly.

- Yolanda Wright



Writing students Roxana Ibarra and Yolanda Wright with their tutor Andrew Belton. Andrew returns this fall after a summer of studying in China.

For information on becoming a tutor, call 919-636-4457.

OCLC Computer Lab Offers Flexible Reinforcement for Tutoring

If OCLC's computer lab is open, there's a good chance you'll find Carmen Garcia there studying. Carmen has embraced the lab – and our recently acquired Access 21st Century software – as a supplement to her twice weekly tutoring sessions. Through meetings with her tutor and her work on the computer, Carmen has quickly achieved over 100 hours of instruction since early March when she became a student. And she will tell you that during that time, she has learned a lot.

When we moved to Carr Mill Mall two years ago, one of the things we looked forward to most was having our own computer lab. We knew that with a lab we could help our students improve their computer literacy at a time when basic computer skills are required for most jobs. We also knew that computers could help us provide reading, writing, math, and English instruction in

creative ways. Over the past two years, our students and tutors have seen the benefits of incorporating computers into their learning, whether they're working on basic phonics, intermediate English, math, or GED preparation.

Carmen calls the computer lab a complement to tutoring. "I can

ask my tutor questions about things that I don't understand from the computer lessons," she says. "But the computer lab allows me to come more often than the two days a week that I meet with my tutor. I like the flexible schedule." Carmen finds the increased opportunity for practice to be very helpful as

she begins preparation for her GED.

The program that Carmen uses, Access 21st Century, is designed to prepare students for all 5 subject areas of the GED – reading, writing, science, social studies, and math – through interactive lessons targeted at learners' specific instructional needs. Carmen enjoys this particular program because the lessons allow her to review topics she struggles with, move at her own pace, and learn about the subjects of science and social studies. She also enjoys the way the program helps her improve her vocabulary and keep track of her progress. Most importantly, Carmen says, "Access 21st Century keeps me interested to go forward in my learning."

For more information about our computer lab and the resources that may be available for your students, contact OCLC staff.

- Joy Turner

OCLC's computer lab offers a wide variety of programs to meet students' needs. Here are a few more examples.

- **Khan Academy – online math resource for beginning to advanced math students**
- **Lexia Reading – phonics based program for beginning readers**
- **U.S.A. Learns – online English lessons for intermediate to advanced learners**
- **Reading Companions – read-along software for ESOL and ABE beginning/intermediate students, provided free of charge by the IBM Corporation**

UNC-Based GED Class Pays Off for Facilities Staff

After more than two years of steady attendance and hard work, Christopher Reed's goal of obtaining a GED is almost within his grasp. A student in OCLC's GED Class at UNC, Chris is excited about his progress. "I never knew that this time would come – I never knew if I'd stay with it. Now I've got one more subject left. It might take me until next winter or spring, but I'm not sweating it."

Growing up, Chris loved school but was forced to drop out after the eleventh grade to provide income for his family. He's been employed at UNC-Chapel Hill for almost eleven years and is currently a maintenance mechanic in the HVAC shop.

He was influenced to join the GED Class when peers started criticizing him for not having a diploma. "I wanted to prove I'm not stupid," says Chris. "I'm too good for that – I've got too many good qualities and too many good things I can do."

Just months after joining the GED Class in spring of 2009, Chris had already passed the GED Science and GED Reading tests. "I [did not know] what a fast learner I was until I started working on the GED," he says. "My instructors here have shown me that."

Since that impressive start, Chris has gone on to pass two

other subject tests—most recently the GED Writing test this past March. Chris is currently studying Math, which will be his fifth and final subject test. "I'm excited about what I've already accomplished, and I know that now it's just a matter of time."

Even though he's looking forward to receiving his GED and leaving class, Chris says he will miss interacting with other students in the GED Class. "I like to provide encouragement and tell others to stick with it," Chris said. "Class has been great – it's an enjoyable atmosphere. It's not an environment where you feel intimidated or where you have

to progress at a certain rate. People here are understanding of what [our] needs are."

Chris is certain that there are some people who might be nervous about joining the GED Class, but he offers some advice for those who are hesitant. "If people would just bite the bullet and come in here and try, they might be pleasantly surprised. The hardest part is just walking in the door. Once you're here you understand there are a lot of people in the same situation."

- Patrick Turner

Strowd Roses Foundation Funds Peer-to-Peer Tutoring Program

OCLC has received funding from the Strowd Roses Foundation for *Sheltered Learning*, a pilot designed to complement our longstanding and successful Creative Writing Workshop program. The Creative Writing program offers weekly writing workshops for residents of both the men's and women's shelters in Chapel Hill. This new project will further

engage the homeless population through peer-to-peer instruction combined with a more intensive and structured writing program. Residents with higher literacy skills will be trained to provide one-on-one or small group instruction to fellow residents needing help with basic adult literacy, ESDL or pre-GED skills. This peer-to-peer model has been used successfully

with other long-term residential populations such as prisons. The grant from the Strowd Roses Foundation will also allow us to revive our earlier Visiting Artists program, where each month a local writer or musician was invited to lead the writing workshop. Additional funding for the project will be provided by The Brian and Laurie Brooks Literacy Fund—a fund created to honor a

longtime donor and supporter of both the Council and the Creative Writing Workshop program.

Peer-to-peer tutoring will begin in early fall. The Visiting Artists series will begin in late fall.

For more information about the program, contact Joy Turner (jturner@orangeliteracy.org)

Federal Grant Helps Refugees Establish Community Garden

OCLC has added a gardening class, or more accurately, OCLC has added an ESDL class focused on gardening and nutrition terminology. In early 2011, the Orange County Partnership for Young Children—the longtime funder of our Family Reading program—asked us to develop a class specifically for Burmese and Karen families participating in their new Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP). The program is funded by a three year grant from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. The RAPP grant is designed to educate and enable refugee families, especially the Burmese and Karen, in creating sustainable, healthy food sources as well as to develop English language skills and eventually supplemental income. Families will receive plots of

land in addition to training on a variety of topics including farming in NC, marketing, and business development.

To help families learn necessary terminology, we are developing a curriculum that draws on concepts and terms such as cover crops, organic material and supermarket language as the content base for learning English language skills. The curriculum is developed only a week or two in advance, so that instructor Carla Tiller can react quickly by adding or elaborating on needs identified by other partner agencies. Recently, Tiller was able to weave My Plate, the USDA's new nutritional guidelines, into lesson plans the week after they were announced.

For additional information about the ESDL class, contact Claire Davis (cdavis@orangeliteracy.org or 919-636-4457). For additional information about the gardening project, contact Margaret Samuels, Orange County Partnership for Young Children (919-967-9091).



Above: Gardening class students with instructor Carla Tiller.

Below: Students map out the different food groups.



Students test new foods.

Writers for Readers—A Presidents' Day Tradition

The 4th Annual Writers for Readers was an unqualified success. Featured authors Jeffery Deaver (*Edge, Carte Blanche*), Mark Richard (*House of Prayer No. 2*), Kim Severson (*Spoonfed: How Eight Cooks Saved My Life*) and Heidi Durrow (*The Girl Who Fell From the Sky*) mingled with guests at Sunday evening's reception. Each spoke eloquently at Monday's luncheon about their writing, their love of reading and the absolute necessity of literacy.

Our thanks to Tom and Susan Ross who so generously opened their home to us, to hosts Marcie Cohen Ferris (*Matzah Ball Gumbo*), Bill Ferris (*Give My Poor Heart Ease*) and Tim and Denise Duffy (*Music Makers: Portraits & Songs from the Roots of America*).

Our thanks also to our featured writers, student Rachel Shukuru, tutor Judi Chatowsky, the Writers for Readers organizing committee and co-chairs Mary Alexion and Katharine Walton. And of course, our thanks to Daniel Wallace, our favorite emcee.

Writers for Readers 2012

Join us February 19-20, 2012 for the 5th Annual Writers for Readers Book and Author Luncheon. Confirmed authors include poet **Natasha Trethewey** (*Domestic Work, Native Guard, Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*) and novelist **Robert Goolrick** (*A Reliable Wife, The End of the World as We Know It*). Check our website (www.orangeliteracy.org) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/orangeliteracy) often for sponsorship opportunities, tickets and program updates.



Author Heidi Durrow talks with sponsor Dave Moreau at the Writers for Readers reception.



OCLC Student Rachel Shukuru and Tutor Judi Chatowsky talk about their literacy journey.



Author Mark Richard with Event Co-Chair Katharine Walton

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OCLC Offers Citizenship Classes

Many people don't know that the Orange County Literacy Council offers assistance for students to prepare for their citizenship interview and test, but we do! It seems like every day now we have another student become eligible to begin the road to citizenship. Because preparing for the exam is a very individual process, and because each student plans to interview at a different time, we offer a number of options for students who come to us for help.

For those who have a long time to study, we integrate civics content into most of our ESOL curricula. For students

planning to take the test in the next 12-18 months, we have more targeted options. We currently have three students who have been working together for over a year and are all about a year away from taking the test. Giselle Green, a UNC student, has been working with them. On any given day, this tight-knit group can be seen reciting the Oath of Allegiance or listening to the Star Spangled Banner. The class has really dived into the material so that the students will feel completely ready before they take the test.

For students who don't have quite as long to study, we offer more individual attention.

Volunteer ESOL tutors, as well as staff, step in to help students prepare by drilling them with flashcards and holding practice run-throughs of the interview process.

The interview/test for citizenship is comprised of four parts. The first three—the oral test, the reading test, and the writing test—are designed to judge applicants' abilities to use English. The fourth part tests applicants' knowledge of U.S. Civics. Applicants are asked ten questions (from a pool of 100 possible questions). They have to get six correct. The questions are difficult; many current citizens would probably not be

able to answer all of these questions. When time gets close for the actual interview, we try to simulate as closely as possible what students will go through, from making them restate the Oath to asking them questions off the N-400 (the official form to apply for citizenship).

Some of our students are very close to their interview while others are just beginning to study, but they all need lots of support in their journey. If you are interested in helping out with this special program, please contact Claire Davis at cdavis@orangeliteracy.org or 919-636-4457.

The 5th Annual Writers for Readers Event—February 19th and 20th, 2012

Corporate and Individual Sponsorships Available—call 919-636-4457

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