

# WALC TALK

Spring 2011

WHITTIER AREA LITERACY COUNCIL, INC.

## President's Message

by Patricia Almada



I would like to thank all of our tutors, students and board members for a fantastic year of teaching and learning at WALC. We have all given it our best, supporting each other when

the going got rough and celebrating together the successes of our organization. You have supported our fundraising efforts, attended tutor support workshops and provided hundreds of hours of academic support for our students. Summer is around the corner now, bringing us time to reflect on this year and time to plan for the next. We are always looking for ways to serve more students and to become even more effective. I welcome all your ideas, help us grow, spread the word and have a restful and safe summer.

## Did You Know .... ?

### That as a tutor you can:

- turn a life around?
- give confidence and support to someone who has felt alone and incapable?
- put a father on the road to a better job?
- give a mother the

- ability to read her child a bedtime story?
- help a grandfather increase his reading skills so he can take his turn reading out loud during Sunday School?
- give an immigrant the resources

- needed to become a citizen?
- give a grandmother the skills she needs to start her own business?

**BOTTOM LINE ...  
YOU CAN MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE!**

## WALC President Recognized for 2011 Las Distinguidas Award

By Sinda Cruz



L-R: Eva M., Natalia M., Lisa D., Sinda C., Raul A., Patricia A., Cristina G. Denette B.

Our very own Patricia Almada, President of the Whittier Area Literacy Council, Inc. was honored at the 2011 Las Distinguidas. The award came from Greater Branch of the American Association of University Women. Patricia received the award for her outstanding service to the Literacy Council, where she serves as the current President. She also tutors and is a tutor trainer. Patricia has also authored many children's books. She has volunteered for the Interfaith Food Center. Friends, colleagues, and Patricia's husband Raul, were present to witness Patricia receive her award. Patricia deserves the recognition! Congratulations!

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## 6th Annual Soup and A Good Book Fundraiser By Laura Warner, Tutor



On Saturday, March 19, 2011, the Whittier Area Literacy Council held its 6<sup>th</sup> annual 'Soup and a Good Book' fundraiser. This year's

theme was *Poetry in Our Lives*, and the event was a rousing success! The Fire-side room was filled to capacity with students, tutors, and community members joined together in support of the WALC and in celebration of poetry. Those in attendance had the pleasure of sampling delicious soups donated by local



restaurants, including, California Grill, Enchilada's y tamales tambien, Fenix 5-4, Greenleaf Café, Sage Restaurant &

Lounge, and Casa Jimenez.

This year's theme offered students an opportunity to demonstrate their poetry writing skills. Tu-



tors worked with students in preparation for the event, guiding them in writing various forms of poetry including haiku, diamante, and limerick. The time and effort invested by tutors and students was evident in the wonderful works pre-



sented during the event. Poems composed by WALC students were recited by students from Whittier College who brought the poems to life with humor, drama, and enthusiasm.

The guest speaker, Professor Mariano Zano, recited several original poems from his book, *The House of Mae Rim*. Professor Zano, a native of Spain, read his poems in both English and Spanish. His poems were moving, inspiring, and exemplified



poetry's ability to stir the soul. California High School student Jasmine Warner, recited an original poem, written for her Freshman Benchmark Project. Jasmine enjoys writing poetry and short stories and aspires to be a published author.

The 'Soup and a Good Book: Poetry in our Lives' event provided a showcase for student creativity, talent, and ability, and clearly demonstrated the positive influence the Whittier Area Literacy Council has on the community. A wonderful time was had by all!



## Whittier Area Literacy Council, Inc's Family Literacy Night by Cristina Gardner, Board Member

During the 2010-11 school year, WALC hosted three Family Literacy Nights. The meetings began with dinner served for those attending, followed by a presentation.

Our first Literacy Night was held in October. The topic was Financial Literacy presented by Suzanne Ausdal, a representative of Union Bank. Ms. Ausdal spoke about the impor-

tance of starting to save money at a young age and offered suggestions on how to help children learn the value of money.

Our second literacy night took place in January. After dinner our parents learned about thinking and organizational skills. They learned strategies for helping their children with remembering things from shopping lists to the planets

and solar system. Our presenter was Roxanne Torosian, a speech language pathologist with the Rowland Unified School District.

In April we held our final Family Literacy night for this school year. Our own board member and educational consultant Lisa Dabbs was our speaker. She discussed the importance of technology in education and in our lives. Parents

and students became familiar with different free on-line websites to support literacy and learning. Ms. Dabbs has also promised to return next year and expand our knowledge of this topic.

If you were unable to make it to our family literacy nights this year, you will still have an opportunity to do so next year. Thank you to all of those who were able to make it this year.

## Tutor Workshops— Support Tutoring

Since 2003, the Council has offered Tutor Support Workshops approximately three times a year. Each seminar has been from 90 minutes to an hour long. They have focused on various subjects such as 'Strategies and Ideas For Motivating Students', 'Poetry For All', 'Seven Keys to Spelling', 'Integrating Computers with Tutoring' as well as many other useful workshops. The workshops have provided tutors with hands-on practice and ready-to-use tools that can be implemented into tutoring.

The 'Poetry for All' workshop covered the different types of prose that a tutor could use in assisting their student prepare a poetry piece for the 'Soup and a Good Book' event. Patricia Spratling, tutor, was the presenter. Initially, a couple of tutors felt that they weren't 'any good' at writing poetry and were hesi-

tant in attempting to help their student write a poem. After completing the workshop, tutors were very positive about guiding their students in creating poetry for the event. Tutors were excited about learning the different forms of poetry such as acrostic, cinquain, diamante, Haiku, and Limericks (just to name a few). The poems penned by students were read and performed at the 6th Annual Soup and a Good Book Fundraiser which was held at the Literacy Center.

Patricia Almada, Board Member and Tutor Trainer presented a one hour seminar titled 'Integrating Computers with Tutoring'. The focus was on utilizing the laptop computers in our Resource Library. Tutors had hands on practice using software for improving phonics skills and using software for aiding the second language learner with English. Tutors were also shown how to research any

topic by using Google.

The last workshop being presented this year will spotlight the learning games that can be found in our Resource Library. Tutors will receive hands on practice playing educational games such as Upwords and Jingo. This idea was given to us by tutor Elizabeth Baca. If there is a topic you would like to learn more about please suggest it to us.



L-R: Ida, Pat A., Pat S. Matthew, & 'B'

### Facts From ProLiteracy's website:

- 18 million adults in the US don't read well enough to earn a living wage.
- The United States ranks **fifth** on adult literacy skills when compared to other industrialized nations.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

June 4th—Installation

July 9th—Budget Mtg.

August 13th—Set Fiscal Calendar

September—1st Board Mtg. & Tutor Training

October—Scrabble

## Tutoring Tips—Courtesy of the Cambridge School Volunteers

Before you get started as a volunteer, here are some things to keep in mind. Some strategies may be more appropriate for working with elementary students than high school students, or vice-versa.

### Managing Student

#### Behavior...

- Building trust and setting boundaries are

essential factors in establishing an effective learning environment.

- Set clear boundaries and goals from day one. Be sure to explain why you are there. Maintain a firm and friendly demeanor.
- Be precise and specific when directing students. Make sure you have their undivided

attention before placing expectations on them.

- Never argue with a student. Avoid an escalating situation. If a student refuses to follow your instructions, consult with the office.
- Reinforce positive behavior! Catch students being good. Give lots

of attention for appropriate behavior.

- Allow movement, especially for younger students. Let them move around and/or stretch. Take a break when necessary.

# Whittier Area Literacy Council, Inc.

## EACH ONE, TEACH ONE

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**BUSINESS HOURS**  
Monday/Wednesday  
9:30-1:00  
2:00-7:00  
Tuesday/Thursday  
9:30-1:00  
2:00-5:30



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## WE THANK OUR DONORS

Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 WALC has received the generous contributions from the following donors:

David Ellis	\$ 5,000
Ellis Foundation	\$ 5,000
Whittier Rotary Club	\$ 900
McMaster-Carr Supply Co.	\$ 1,750
Whittier Historic Neighborhood Assoc.	\$ 200
BCM Foundation	\$25,000
City of Whittier	\$ 3,500

The support of these individuals, service clubs and foundations make it possible for us to continue offering free services to our students. We thank you!

## Best Practices

Research of best tutoring practices from the University of Illinois highlights specific points that appear to increase the quality of tutoring programs and improve the chances of achieving positive impacts for students. Based on this research, Gordon (Gordon et al., 2004; Gordon 2009) has developed a list of these key strategies for tutoring programs:

- Effective training of tutors
- Diagnostic testing of students to plan program
- Formal and informal assessments to guide the tutoring process
- Tracking of progress in order to adjust instruction
- Close collaboration with classroom teachers to maximize effectiveness
- Follow sequential instruction in a systematic approach

How do we measure up?  
Let us know your ideas!

