



WALC Talk

April 2007

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"Soup and a Good Book" 2007 Is Another Souper Fundraiser

The second annual "Soup and a Good Book" was another successful fundraiser for WALC. We had a great turnout of tutors, learners, and friends who were all nourished by delicious soup from our sponsors and wonderful writings by our students. Funds raised were \$1,162.00 after expenses, which weren't many. Thanks to all those who donated to this event and especially our sponsors, who provided the wonderful soup: Phlight, Greenleaf Cafe, Crepes & Grapes, Sage Restaurant and Lascari's Italian Restaurant.

The afternoon began with lunch. We all gathered at the

tables with our soup. So many soups to choose from. Alan Rious, WALC's Director-at-Large, made his own wonderful chicken

soup again this year. Our sponsors provided a large selection of soups including lentil and menudo. We chatted and enjoyed the company of friends before the arrival of our guest speaker, Tony Barnstone.

Tony, an award winning English professor at Whittier College, gave a wonderful talk on the importance of story. He told us that he found narrative to be a very important part of his writing. He read his poem, "Nightmare Kiss," from his book, "Sad Jazz": sonnets to



Tony Barnstone

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not only tell us a story, but to show how that can be done within poetic form. He shared anecdotes from his own life and from others. In another poem, "Hair," from his book, "Impure," he showed how we use our stories to understand one another. At the end of his talk he said we often tell the same stories over and over and may do that to keep from falling to pieces, as a way to make ourselves whole.

With that idea in mind, Cynthia Snyder and Rob Tracy stood up to read poems and stories from our learners. They brought the writings to life with their lively and heartfelt reading of work on the theme, "Love of Nature." We caught a glimpse of its beauty, as well as a view of the lives of the people WALC nurtures. We learned a little about local Native Americans as one learner compared her modern life with her predecessors who lived a different way of life here long ago. We saw the beauty of freshly fallen snow and the joy of one learner being able to be the first



one to make footprints in it. Another student shared her experience of hard labor in the potato fields as a child. All of these experiences helped us to understand our learners better and helped them to pull pieces of their lives into focus.

After the reading WALC shared the rest of its home with all who came. People visited the rooms where the daily stories of our learners' experiences unfold and saw where tutors learn how to facilitate that experience. Children enjoyed making crafts while shoppers browsed the White Elephant table and we all got some dessert.



WALC again would like to thank all who came and all who shared. Thank you to Gloria Reyes for coming up with such a wonderful fundraiser. We'll see you all again next year!

-- Joanne Elliott



Learners Can Use Poetry To Understand Their Past

Often there are things we haven't really thought about in years. Like how much fun we had one summer during school break or how sad we felt when our first pet died. These things provide a lot of material for writing and in writing about them we learn more about how we became who we are today.

In using the past to write poetry there are some things you can do to help your adult learner through the process.

- First ask questions about their childhood. What kind of pets did they have or what games did they play with their siblings or friends?
- Once they have chosen an event to write about, continue to ask questions and have them write down in short lines (they don't have to be sentences) what they remember. Ask questions that will bring out sensory experience, like "What color was the bird? What smells do you remember? What did it feel like?"
- Take those short lines and help them to put them into an order that feels right to them.
- Remember, some of the most interesting and powerful lines may come off the top of their heads and may need little editing.

When helping my learner to create a poem for "Soup and a Good Book," I wrote down lines

"If I feel
physically
as if the top
of my head
were taken
off, I know
that is poetry."

*Emily
Dickinson*

as she was telling me her memories. One string of words said everything, "Long days, long heat, long sweats," she said. "Long sweats" may not be perfect English, but it expressed perfectly what she felt all those years ago. This is the beauty of poetry. Although the technical side of writing is important in being able to communicate ideas and facts in the world, we find it most important to communicate feelings. And poetry is just the thing for that. In being able to fully express ourselves, we gain confidence as well as friends for our sharing. We find that we can not only help others to understand where we are coming from, but we can also learn to understand ourselves. -- Joanne Elliott



Photos by Charles Elliott



Web Review

ESL Website:

*These Resources
For Tutors And Learners
Can Be Found Online*

<http://www.eslgold.com/>

Great site with lots of information on teaching ESL as well as handouts, lesson plans, and even online work for learners.

There is a list of helpful things for learners and one for teachers, both on the right side of the page. On the left is another list of skills to be acquired by learners. This takes into consideration what the learner is working on.



The site can also be easily translated into any one of 16 languages simply by clicking on a language listed on the top right. This makes it easy for the learner, especially in the early stages of learning, to access the site.

The learner can practice pronunciation or idioms, discover how to improve business writing skills, and even find a study buddy

through their Telephone English Program. There are also recommendations for books, an online bookstore, and a book exchange where you can buy and sell used books. All of this for free.

Tutors, there are plenty of things for you, too. You have access to those book recommendations and the bookstore. You can also get helpful teaching hints, learn about new software, and link to other helpful ESL sites.

The many exercise and “how to” worksheets also can be utilized by those teaching literacy. Over all, this is an informative and easily navigated page that will provide many ideas for working with your students.

12th Annual
L.A. Times
Festival of Books
April 28 and 29 @ UCLA

<http://www.latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks/>

Encourage your students to get out and enjoy this wonderful annual festival. There are a variety of stages with talks, demonstrations and performances by presenters ranging from cookbook authors to children’s book writers and related entertainment, popular book authors, and poets. There are also numerous panel discussions with famous authors

Quick Reads...

regarding literature or the issues of the day. You can shop ‘til you drop for your favorite books, too. Or learn about an organization or book seller at any of the 300+ exhibitors. Hope to see you there!

WALC Speaker’s Bureau Presents

On May 23rd, WALC’s Program Coordinator, Cynthia Snyder, will give an informational presentation to

a local chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, an international honor society of women educators that promotes their professional and personal growth.

Volunteers Serving As of March 2007

Currently serving 55 students: ESL: 23; LIT: 32, of which children 15 and under number 21.

Total Paid Membership: 106, of which 57 are active.

Financial Report For March 2007

Checking	\$34,966.71
Savings	\$0.00
CDs	\$36,081.80

These Techniques Can Help Tutors To Draw Insights from Learners 5

Questioning is key to developing comprehension. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates used questions to draw insight from his students. It is in this capacity that the tutor finds her most important role while helping her learners. Here are some techniques to help you develop this important ability:

- **Focus.** It's very important to have in mind a focus for your questions. You may not always know where your discussion will eventually take you, but keeping a focus will help steer you in the direction you want to go.
- **Keep a slow pace.** Take your time in asking the questions.

Don't expect an immediate response. And remember to respond yourself before going on to the next question.

- **Stay away from questions that only require a yes or no.**
- **Start in the real world.** Ask the concrete questions, then progress to the more abstract ones that deal with ideas.
- **Stay open and nonjudgmental.** You may not agree with your student's responses, but you must always respect their point of view.
- **Take turns.** Encourage your student to ask questions. They can model what they have learned from you.

- **Know when to move on.** Timing is everything. If the discussion becomes too long and no longer interesting then it's time to move to another area of questioning. Recognize when to end a discussion.

These techniques were drawn from "Teach Someone to READ: A Step-by-Step Guide for Literacy Tutors," by Nadine Rosenthal. If you want more, this book is available at the Whittier Public Library.



New Laptops are Ready for Your Use

Just a reminder that tutors can now make use at WALC of five laptops donated to us by Southern California Edison. They are located in the Resouce Center. All are

hooked up to the Internet. They also have word processing, ESL and literacy programs. Head phones allow personal study of English pronunciation.

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Tutors: You Can Share Your Helpful Tips and Hints

Do you have a favorite technique for teaching reading or writing? Maybe you've found a wonderful exercise that helps your student understand a grammar rule. Perhaps a book or website has provided inspiration for your tutoring. Please share your findings with the rest of us by way of writing a short description of the technique, providing the exercise

you like, or writing a book or website review. Please keep your piece to 300 words or less and provide a contact email or phone number in case clarifications need to be made. You can send in your ideas and recommendations to Joanne Elliott in care of the WALC office, or you can email them to her at soulsprite@yahoo.com.

Calendar of Events

Sat., April 21,28
Sat., May 12,19

Tutor Training
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
@ Literacy Center

Sat., May 5

Full Board Meeting
9 a.m. @ Literacy Center

Tues., May 1

Tutor Support Workshop
7 p.m. @ Literacy Center

Summer 2007

Read-A-Thon Fundraiser
TBA -- Keep an eye out for the mailing