



WALC Talk

February 2007

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Volunteer Recognition Luncheon Features A Satisfied "Customer"

A hall filled with voices, the aromas of Italian food, and the warmth of the holidays met all of us as we stepped off the elevator on the second floor of the Whittier Museum. It was a day to celebrate. Students and Board alike wanted to make this day special for the tutors. They wanted to give back to those who give to them all year.

After we made our way with our plates around the food table that was heaped with a generous amount of spaghetti, lasagna, salads, and dessert, we settled down at our tables to enjoy good food and conversation with our tablemates. I met one tutor who told me he was very happy about his young student's success. That student was well on their way; they no longer in need of a tutor. I also met an adult student and his two children. They all seemed happy to be there and getting a chance to meet others in the organization. It was a family day – one in which one part of



the family recognized and said "thank you" for the work that the other part does.

Nisreen Malhis

Before the official recognitions took place, one adult student made the featured speech of the day. Nisreen Malhis, a Palestinian woman, took the stage. She told how she came to this country at the age of 18. Although she had learned English, she lacked confidence in her skills and was frustrated by the way her accent sometimes made communication difficult. After 9/11, she was particularly motivated to improve her speech. She didn't want her strong accent to get in the way of educating people about Islam. It was through the Whittier Public Library

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that she learned of WALC. At first, because she was not the typical WALC student, she thought maybe she wouldn't be eligible for help from the Council. She decided to call anyway, and was accepted right away. WALC is open to people of all levels of literacy and everyone with literacy-related issues. She spoke enthusiastically – and in a clearly understandable English – about WALC volunteers and staff and the help that she received.

Soon it was time for President Liz Allision and Cynthia Snyder, the Program Coordinator, to hand out the annual service awards to 59 WALC volunteers who have collectively given more than 348 of service to the Whittier community through WALC. There were so many tutors and a great many years of service. (Inadvertently, Samantha Leyer, a first year volunteer, was left off the list of recipients, though she was present at the luncheon. Sorry we missed her award. We DO thank her so much for her service.)



VOLUNTEER AWARDS LIST

One Yr./40 Hrs.

Nicole Ybarra
 Damien Keneally
 Nic Garza
 Beverly Risse
 Patricia Almada
 Mary DeSantos
 Raul Almada
 Rebecca Jimenez-Pacheco
 Leona Middleton
 Billie Miller
 Jessica Vazquez
 Alfred Villasenor
 Samantha Leyer

Two Yrs.

Gail Chabran
 Joanne Elliott
 Angela Gleason
 Barbara Jaloma
 Anne Kruzic
 Jeff Rein
 Iris Zuber
 Henedina Ledesma
 Memo Gutierrez

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The last volunteer award went out to Ida Sacco. She is the longest volunteer, having assisted WALC students for 24 years. She and dozens of others who selflessly continue to give their time to help literacy learners to find their way in the world were given well-earned certificates of appreciation and hearty applause.

Past President Allen Rious was also honored for his many distinguished years of service to WALC.

– Joanne Elliott



Poetry Can Build Students' Excitement about Reading

By *Marcielle Brandler*

In 1988, I became a Poetry Workshop Director for California Poets in the Schools (CPITS) as an independent



contractor. I contacted local schools, proposed workshops, which I designed, taught the workshops, and organized poetry readings in which the students could read their original work at local bookstores. CPITS matched half the funds the school paid.

Students experienced what it is like to write, perfect, and then perform their own writing in front of a live audience. We created chapbooks of their poetry for parents, classmates, and friends, so students could have something permanent in remembrance of the experience. I loved hearing students say excitedly, "Yeah! Poetry!" as I entered their classrooms.

Knowing that they had an audience made all the difference. When we know we will be heard, we take more responsibility for our words. The students were not writing to a teacher for a grade, but for their classmates and their own sense of expression.

The workshop gave them the permission to express negative as well as positive feelings. Many personal issues emerged from their writings. The key to getting anyone to express himself, is to make sure he feels safe and supported. There are no wrong

answers to questions and no bad poetry or ideas, at least, not in this situation when we attempt to encourage children. Writing poetry increases kids' vocabularies. They are exposed to new words both in reading and discussing poetry.

Getting Young People Excited about Poetry

One of the best things you can do to spark the interest of young people who are constantly being talked at and lectured, is to read them a funny poem and then ask them to read it. A poem that has two or more parts is best. That feels more like acting and playing than working.

Use the poem to the right. Let the class scream with laughter and act out a bit. This letting off of steam feels so good to them, and they will always remember that the freedom that poetry allows them is a GOOD thing and not some stodgy unintelligible words they HAVE to put up with. Oftentimes, several students will want to try reading or acting the poem. Let a few of them do so. Have one student play the girl and the other play the boy.

Ask them:

- What is the story about?
- Why is she stared at? (She's is pretty)
- Why is his face "passed over"? (He is not fun to look at.)
- What is the story's point or is there a point?

• Is it always important to be TAUGHT by a poem? (No.)

• Do poems always have to rhyme? (There is never a wrong answer when discussing poetry. One person may love rhyme, while another loves free verse or experimental poetry.)

Just allow the free flow of ideas for discussion. It is a good idea to go line by line for meaning. You might ask:

• Why are the lines arranged the way the writer has arranged them?

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What the Ugly Boy And the Pretty Girl Have in Common

By Marcielle Brandler

She is stared at.
His face is passed over.
Neither of them
are seen.

She's so cute, it's assumed
she's spoiled.
He's so ugly, he's cute.

He can't believe she likes
him.
She's afraid he'll find
something
he doesn't like.

They marry.
Over the years,
his face acquires dignity,
and her face gains
character.

Now, people say
how
alike they look.

Book Review



From Reader To Writer:

Teaching Writing
Through Classic
Children's Books

A Book By Sarah Ellis
*Groundwood Books / Douglas
& McIntyre, 2000; 176pp*

Here is a guide to help you get the child you tutor interested in putting words down on paper. Sarah Ellis doesn't just suggest books to

read and include writing exercises, she throws in a short biography of the author. She shows how they started writing or what inspired them for a certain story. We see how human these famous authors were and are and this demystifies the writing experience.

One chapter talks about the wonderful children's author Beatrix Potter. We learn her stories started in writing a letter to a young sick friend about things in which she was interested and turning them into a story. She had a love for animals, so she told this young boy a story about a rabbit named Peter. From the telling of Beatrix's story she moves on to



how Beatrix used letter writing and then provides exercises on communicating in a letter. She encourages the use of drawings as Beatrix did in her letter about Peter Rabbit. At the end of each chapter is a list of books using the form or process used by the author that can be given for further reading.

Some of the authors she includes can be used with older students depending on their interest. One such author is Paul Yee, who wrote short stories about the Chinese immigrant experience. Regardless of the author, most of the exercises are useful for all age groups. Some exercises are good for one session and others would be good over a series of weeks. Pick it up and try it out. You can find it at the Whittier Public Library...as soon as I bring it back.

– Joanne Elliott

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- What changes in the story of these two people?
- What is the difference between a story (narration) and a poem?

Following these guidelines, you can make reading, writing, and performing poetry fun for all ages.

Award-winning poet/educator Marcielle Brandler teaches poetry, publishing, and grammar workshops to all ages. For information, contact her at: Marcielle Brandler /PO Box 1201/Sierra Madre, CA/91025-1201 or message Marcielle@dslextreme.com, or phone Universal Image Prod. 626 791-5867.

Soup's ON!

"Soup and a Good Book" is back for a second year. With such great success last year WALC has decided to bring back this warm and cozy fundraiser. Be prepared to hear some moving, and insightful words from our students and enjoy some homemade soup from our gracious sponsors.

New Laptops are Ready

WALC now has five laptops donated to us by Southern California Edison. Gabe Lederer, our computer wiz, has hooked them all up to the Internet. He also installed the software and larger hard drives in all of them. Thank you, Gabe!

Quick Reads..

Volunteers Serve Many

Currently serving 61 students: ESL: 24; LIT: 37, of which children 15 and under number 24.

Total Paid Membership: 103, of which 63 are active.

Financial Report Dec. 2006

Checking	\$14,653.15
Savings	\$0.00
CDs	\$35,685.79

Researchers Find 30 Million Adults Lack Basic Literacy Skill Levels

Up to now, adult literacy learners have far too often gone through years of schooling that involved only the reading of other people's words. Not enough opportunity has been provided for them to make words their own. In planning for the future of writing instruction in adult literacy, policymakers and program staff should consider James Boyd White's definition of literacy:

Literacy is not merely the capacity to understand the conceptual content of writings and utterances, but the ability to participate fully in a set of social and intellectual practices. It is not passive, but active, not imitative but creative, for participation in the speaking and writing of language is participation in the activities that make it possible. Indeed it involves the perpetual remaking of both language and practice. [cited in Robinson, 1990, p. 158]

– from an article by Marilyn K. Gillespie called "Research in Writing: Implications for Adult Literacy Education" found on the website for the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=561>.

Reading this quote makes you realize just how much a person who is illiterate misses out in life.

There are 30 million Americans (14 percent of the U.S. population) that are at the "below basic" level of literacy according to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. They range from being non-literate in English to having the ability to find obvious information in a short text and follow written directions to complete a simple form. They can not answer the question "What is the purpose of a literacy conference?" after reading a multi-paragraph essay about that literacy conference.

We at WALC are doing what we can to help this situation, but we can't do it alone. Please talk about the situation with your families, those you work with, and those you worship with. Meet with friends and family to discuss different ideas about what else can be done. Bring your ideas and friends to WALC. Find out how you can help in your children's schools. Bring up using more learner centered techniques like we use at WALC that would help those having trouble. Speak to your government officials. The more we each take responsibility for making literacy a priority in our personal lives, community, and political arena the more people we can help. And eventually we'll have more people living fuller lives and able to give back to their communities.

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Three Yrs.

Zachery Lopez
Alyssa Nunez
Gerri Pineda

Four Yrs.

Linda Fletcher
Calvin Kinzie

Five Yrs.

Cecelia Brellenthin
Jean Demoray

Six Yrs.

Elizabeth Allison
Gloria Boone
C.L. Carr
Sary Melles
Susan Mitchell
Gloria Reyes-Luera
Allen Rious

Seven Yrs.

Adolfo Garcia
Joanne Klemm
Carol Rael
Frank Rael
Lorraine Tracy
Cheryl Turner
Pauline Woods

Eight Yrs.

Linda Lee
Mary Pascoe
Rae Ponce
Ann Vucetich

Nine Yrs.

Eva Moreno

Ten Yrs.

Janet Ohrtman

11 Yrs.

Jan Jore
Josephine

12 Yrs.

Bonnie Weber
Donna Smith

14 Yrs.

Vera Dominguez
Virginia Salazar

15 Yrs.

Pauline Tracy
James Fletcher

20 Yrs.

Toni Aja

24 Yrs.

Ida Sacco

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Call to Tutors to Share 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., Feb. 10	Tutor Training 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. @ Literacy Center	Tues., Mar. 6	Tutor Support Workshop 7 p.m. @ Literacy Center
Sat., Feb. 24	Soup and a Good Book Time & Location TBA	Mar. 10,17, 24, 31	Tutor Training 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Sat., Mar. 3	Full Board Meeting 9 a.m. @ Literacy Center		