



# Rogers County Literacy Council

1515 N. Florence ☞ Claremore, OK 74017 ☞ 918 277-4331  
*A United Way Agency · Member, Oklahoma Literacy Coalition · Affiliate, ProLiteracy America*

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## Interpreter for a Day

By Silvia Reyes  
 RCLC Learner  
 Tutor: Jane Wallace

One day my tutor and friend Jane drove to Tahlequah for lunch. Before we ate lunch at my brother's restaurant, El Zarape, we went to pick up my mother and my sister-in-law at my brother's house. I introduced Jane to my family and we drove to the restaurant where my father and brothers were working. I felt smart because my mom and sister-in-law don't understand English, and



**PHOTO:** Jane Wallace & Silvia Reyes

Jane doesn't understand Spanish so I was the interpreter. I had to listen carefully to explain the English or Spanish. After lunch we visited at my

brother's house and we stayed there for awhile and I did more interpreting. We had a nice day and I felt very smart using English.

## Letter from the Board President

*It's been a great year!*

This has been a great year for the Rogers County Literacy Council. Dedicated tutors, volunteers, and board members donated hundreds and hundreds of hours teaching students and helping at various activities. Many lives are being affected right now, and the ripple effect of your work today will have huge impacts in the future. One flame can light countless fires.

During the year, the RCLC has given over 1000 books to youngsters in an effort to reward readers and encourage the occasional readers into a lifetime of enjoying books. If you want to have a truly great experience, help at one of several events where we give out books to kids. I'm not a talented enough writer to do it justice, but ask me, and I'll tell

you dozens of stories of kids almost jumping out of their skins just to get a book. My favorite from this year is from the United Way kick off. Jon Douthitt and I were manning a table, sharing information with adults and giving books to kids. When Jon gave a young girl, about 3-years old and carrying a puppy, a Disney

(cont. page two)

## Letter from the Board President

*(continued from page 1)*

“Three Little Pigs” book, the little girl practically threw the puppy to her parents just for a book. That’s the power reading can have. Or maybe it was just Jon!

The progress we’re making as an organization is a tribute to the wonderful people who are members, both student, tutor,

and volunteers, of the Literacy council. Superb people provide guidance and training by serving as Council board members giving generously of time and talent. It has been a pleasure to serve with them.

The mission of the RCLC is daunting. The number of illiterate adults living in our area

is almost overwhelming and we may never reach them all, but the ones we do reach will change their families and their families’ families for generations. What a rewarding legacy.

Thanks for a great 2010 and here’s to a better 2011  
*Mike Gardner*

## Board members will be Missed

Three long-time RCLC council members have stepped down after serving a combined 17 years on the literacy board. Faye Cowan, Judy Riley and Jon Douthitt have not only served as board members but are serving or have served as literacy tutors.

Judy, who was a board member for 4 years, “enjoyed getting to know the student I tutored and watching her improve her English and reading skills.”

For Judy, the best part about being an RCLC board member was helping to provide materials and services for people to improve their reading skills. Judy has taken on a new challenge in life by signing up for a seven-year Bible Study Fellowship that meets each Tuesday night, which conflicts with board meeting nights.

Jon Douthitt has served as a board member for seven years. Jon believes that the RCLC board “has been and is composed of highly motivated, capable members who are other-centered and devoted to spreading literacy.”

As a tutor, Jon has also enjoyed the interaction between himself and his learner. “We have devel-

oped a wonderful friendship,” he added. “There are very few endeavors that are as satisfying as helping a person learn to read.

Quite often, an ability to read is taken for granted in our society, and those who are unable to read develop coping mechanisms to conceal this inability. Lack of reading ability is sometimes due to a disability, sometimes due to lack of opportunity, but most difficulties can be overcome.”

Jon has taken on additional part-time judicial work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Quapaw Nation and the Sac and Fox Nation and additional responsibilities as a Friends of the Library in Oklahoma (FOLIO) Ambassador. Because of these increased commitments, Jon felt he had failed to devote as much time to the Literacy Board membership as he had in the past.

Faye Cowan has been a member of the RCLC since 2003, serving

as a tutor and then joining the board in 2005. For two years, she

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**“They will be missed.”**

was the board secretary and has diligently kept track of reported tutor and board member volunteer hours for the past five.

During her time on the board, Faye also attended two literacy conferences, one in Oklahoma City and the other in Arkansas. “I have learned a lot by serving on the board,” says Faye, who is retiring because of health-related problems. “I will miss the interactions and friendships,” she said.

“We would like to thank all three for their contributions and dedication to RCLC,” says Mike Gardner, president. “They will be missed.”

# New Literacy Board Members Bring Experience, Passion

RCLC recently welcomed two new board members. Marsha Chisum recently retired after 16 years with Claremore Regional Hospital. Marsha spent four years as the Manager of the Dietary Department and one year as the Senior Advantage manager before being asked to become the first "paid" director of the hospital Auxiliary Volunteers. Marsha not only managed the 90 hospital volunteers but simultaneously worked with Senior Circle, a health and wellness program and senior activities program with a paid membership of approximately 550.

"I also continued to work with the marketing department," said Marsha, "where I helped write press releases, special events and community relations."

Marsha has also been active with the Rogers County Coalition for Senior Citizens, assisting with planning and executing the annual Rogers County Senior Day activities. Marsha brings to the council

her skills of marketing, public relations, event planning and project and volunteer management. She enjoys reading, writing, cooking and entertaining.

As a recent retiree, Marsha is looking for a way to serve the community in a way that will make a positive difference in people's lives. "I have long thought that the Literacy Council is something I could believe in," said Marsha. "As a board member, I want to learn how the council works and of course, help more people be aware and take advantage of the wonderful service provided by the organization. It is important to me that I have something of value to offer as a member of the board.

New board member Oliver Walker, who also recently became a literacy tutor, is the owner of Walker Management. Oliver's skills and experience include retail management, sales, human resource experience and new employee training.

Oliver has been working with learner Ernesto Murillo, two to three times a week since early September, to help him pass the citizenship test. Ernesto recently passed his test and interview and is ready for the next step toward achieving his goal of becoming an American citizen.

About his election to the literacy board, Oliver said, "Literacy can open up the world to anyone. Literacy can not only help adults find jobs, receive promotions, and find job satisfaction. Literacy can also entertain, enlighten, and bring us all closer together. I am looking forward to doing what I can to reduce the rate of adult illiteracy and help to make more members of our community aware of ways they may be of assistance in this endeavor."

The Council welcomes both of these new members to our board. They will both be an asset to the RCLC.

## FRIEND SPEAK

### *Free Conversational English Classes*

If you are reading and speaking English but need to improve your conversational English-speaking skills, the Church of Christ, located at 315 E. Blue Starr, is offering free one-on-one assistance using the book of Luke in the Bible. Although there is no charge for the one-hour sessions, there is a one-time workbook fee of \$10. Volunteers are available at the following times to work with individuals who wish to work on their speaking skills:

**Sunday** 8 - 9 a.m. & 3:45 - 4:45 p.m.  
**Monday through Friday** 11 a.m. - noon & 1 - 2 p.m.  
**Wednesdays** 7 - 8 p.m.

For more information, call 918-858-5499.

# Preparing ESL Students for the Citizenship Test

By Jerry Jones

The oath of citizenship is the end of a long journey for our students who have a goal of U.S. naturalization. Fortunately, there are many helps along the way, both in our literacy library and on the internet.

The main source of information on the internet is the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ([www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov)). All forms required for beginning the application process are available at this site. In fact, there is so much available it is sometimes hard to determine what you need.

On the USCIS home page, start with *Citizenship Through Naturalization*, under the *Citizenship* heading. The column on the right side of this page has links to various helps—a brochure, *How to Apply for Citizenship* (if a permanent resident); a 58-page *Guide to Naturalization*; and an online self-test to help you test your knowledge of U.S. history and the structure of our government. (While the latter is multiple-choice, the actual test is not.) The two brochures can be



downloaded. A link to download the application form is also listed, along with a checklist of the documents to accompany the application. New, higher fees went into effect November 23, and they are listed under *Citizenship and Naturalization Based Forms*

Most important for tutors are the resources under *Study for the Naturalization Test*. This includes *Naturalization Test Components*, a brochure which lists the questions and/or information to study for the civics and English tests; an informational brochure which outlines the steps in the citizenship process and again gives the test information; and a scoring guidelines brochure. There is also a link to a page that lists exceptions and accommodations to the test—very important if a student is over 50 or has a medical disability.

The *Scoring Guideline* discusses the speaking test, previously called the oral interview. In addition to the

guidelines presented, tutors should make sure their students know that this test begins the moment the USCIS officer greets the applicant in the reception area, and continues until student leaves the officer's presence. In addition to the questions in the study guide, the officer will also ask general "get acquainted" questions, which help to determine the applicant's facility with English

The literacy office library has several publications which give general information on U.S. history, and passing the tests. They include *The Way to U.S. Citizenship*, *Citizenship Q & A* (audiotape), *The Constitution Made Easier*, *Citizenship: Passing the Test* (book and audio CD and audiotape), *Citizenship: Ready for the Interview* (book and audiotape), *The Vote: Making Your Voice Heard*, *How Our Laws are Made*, *The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution of the United States of America*, *Voices of Freedom: English and Civics for the U.S. Citizenship Exam*, *English through Citizenship*, *Across the U.S.: State-by-State Reading and Language Activities*, *On Common Ground* (videotape), and a folder of civics questions.

## ODL Donates Quantum Pads to Help ESL Learners

ESL learners will benefit with a "bundle of help" from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Literacy Resource Office. Actually, this "bundle of help" came in the form of six Quantum Pads (Leapfrog) with microphone systems to be used with the Sed de Saber English for Everyone program. Each theme-based lesson is designed to develop vocabulary and communicative phrases. Activities, such as role-playing, read aloud and interactive games, accompany the crucial voice record-and-compare feature. Span-

ish translations of all text are another invaluable feature for both students and teachers.

These research-based, portable Quantum Pads will be checked to students to be used at home to practice their English. Since practice makes perfect, students will progress at a faster pace to acquire conversational skills to function in an English-speaking world.

A training session for all tutors will be scheduled in the near future.



# BRIEFLY SPEAKING

## *ODL Recommends New Resource*

*Great tool for language experience*

**Storybird** was recently recommended by Leslie Gelders, Literacy Administrator, as a great resource for tutors/adult learners to use for language experience. According to Ms. Gelders, “Storybird reverses the process of visual storytelling by starting with the image and ‘unlocking’ the story inside. You can choose an artist or a theme, get inspired, and start writing.”

Visit [www.storybird.com](http://www.storybird.com) and see the wonderful on-line books that can be created, illustrated, and shared. Ms. Gelders suggested that you click on the “take the tour” button and view the quick tutorial. “The resource is fun, fabulous and free,” she adds.

## *Mark your calendars now*

*The BEE & Auction are returning in 2011*

Saturday, April 2 has been scheduled for RCLC’s annual signature event, the “To Bee or Not to Bee,” spelling bee and silent auction. This will be the third year for the nail-biting, heart-stopping “Bee” that leaves some scratching their heads and others toting a trophy home.



This past June, a silent auction was added to the fundraiser with bidders winning items at bargain prices and the RCLC benefitting from the items donated by local businesses and individuals.

The event site is the same—NTC on HWY 88 north. More information will be forthcoming as the “Bee” committee begins their planning.

## *Leadership Rogers County Offers Opportunity to Non-profits*

*Literacy Rocks*

For the second year, RCLC was a participant in the Leadership Rogers County Speed Dating event to acquaint leadership class members with the various opportunities to become involved as a volunteer in the community. Literacy director, Carol Round, along with 20 other non-profits, had 90 seconds to share their organization’s mission and message with each individual who was participating in Leadership Rogers County.

“I wanted the literacy council to stand out from the other non-profits,” says Carol, “so I wore a denim visor Cat Rahmeier had decorated with scrabble tiles spelling out ‘Literacy Rocks,’ and our RCLC logo.”

In addition, Carol also handed out Hershey’s candy bars to each participant. However, the candy bar wrapper had been changed to reflect what a non-reader or someone with dyslexia might see when reading. “The candy bars were a hit,” says Carol. “And I don’t think I ever had to pack such a powerful message about the importance of literacy into 90 seconds. It’s a good thing I am a fast talker.”

## 2010 RCLC Donors

A Big "THANK YOU" goes to the individuals  
and businesses who made donations to RCLC in 2010!

Madge Cox  
Lois Schramme  
Mary Jo & Walter Brown  
J.O. Hix  
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Carla Gardner  
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Volunteers of America  
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The Pink House  
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Gripado's  
Belvidere  
Hammett House  
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Pizza Time Buffet  
J&J Pharmacy  
A Place of Grace  
Dorothy's Flowers  
Make it Special  
Walke Brothers Meat  
Felts Shoes  
The Nut House  
Karen Green  
Amanda Trosko  
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**Dank**

**Gracias**