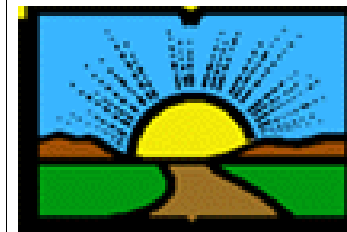




New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
The Literacy Forum
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The Literacy Forum

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

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("Support" continued from page 2)

zations involved in this project detailed a number of specific actions they will take in the coming year to support their vision. These steps include the following as well as a variety of other initiatives:

- The Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest fund, Harvard University's National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, the Council of State Directors of Adult Education, and the National Coalition for Literacy will host a national literacy summit in February 2000 to create an action plan for improving basic literacy skills in order to help close the skills gap. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, American Council on Education, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Department of Labor will promote and work with this and other partnership efforts to help Americans improve their basic skills. Northeastern University will sponsor a New England-wide regional conference on literacy in cooperation with this effort.

Taken from National Institute for Literacy Policy Update, December 22, 1999

The Literacy Forum is published bi-monthly by the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. News and commentary may be submitted to the Coalition using our mail address, e-mail address, phone, or fax number. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Training Corner

TRAINING CALENDAR

DATE	TYPE	PLACE	CONTACT
2/2	LVA READ Test Workshop	ReadWest	Elizabeth Thomsen 892-1131
2/2	LVA ESLOA Test Workshop	ReadWest	Elizabeth Thomsen 892-1131
2/4,5	LVA ESL	T or C	Jacklyn Lewicki 894-7041
2/18,26	LVA ESL	Lit Ctr Abq/TVI	Ed Lazar 266-6416
2/18,26	LVA BR	LVA Cibola County	Linda Vigil 285-5995
2/18,19	LVA ESL	Deming Lit Prog.	Dolores Rodriguez 546-7571
3/10,11,12	LVA ESL	LVA-Socorro Cnty	Valerie Moore 835-4659
3/10,11	LVA ESL	LVA-Dona Ana	Harry Pearson 527-7641

Be sure to check our website at www.nmcl.org for the latest updates to the training calendar.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
★ The NMCL is recruiting tutor trainers, both for ★
★ Literacy Volunteers of America programs and ★
★ Laubach councils. Call us if you qualify in these ★
★ ways: ★
★ 1. You have tutored using LVA or LLA meth- ★
★ ods for forty hours or one year, minimum. Both ★
★ literacy and ESL training are in demand. ★
★ 2. You have a letter of recommendation from ★
★ your sponsoring literacy program or ABE stating ★
★ that you have tutored well and would be a ★
★ dynamic trainer. ★
★ 3. You have a driver's license and insurance ★
★ and are willing to travel in-state occasionally. ★
★ We are particularly interested in trainers from the ★
★ central, southeast and southwest part of the state. ★
★ If accepted, NMCL will provide you with paid ★
★ opportunities to apprentice an experienced ★
★ trainer and will contract you to train when you ★
★ have completed your apprenticeship. If you are ★
★ interested, contact Rena at 1-800-233-7587. ★
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

From the Executive Director

That Time of Year

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will already be nearing the end of our thirty day legislative session. The Coalition has proposed legislation (kindly sponsored by Senator Mary Jane Garcia) seeking expanded funding to meet the growing literacy needs of our state. Local programs stand to benefit directly by this legislation if it is signed into law. Please, show your support for Senate Bill 62 by calling your legislators now!



Return of the Tin Horn Dictator
(reprinted from the NLA electronic discussion list)

Last year, in response to the list moderator's urgings for literacy activism, a subscriber replied that these were the rantings of a Tin Horn Dictator. Mounting the soapbox for his annual hortatory, the Tin Horn Dictator holds up a large banner on which is written, "The New Millennium Right to Complain Campaign."

He begins to speak, "Ladies and Gentlemen, as you have heard me say before, in this democracy of ours complaining is not a natural right; it must be earned. I have seen plenty of robust complaining in 1999, and as good as that might be for the soul and psyche, I wonder how many of you tilling in the literacy field -- and complaining good and loud about it -- have earned this right to complain."

A voice in the crowd asks, "Earn the right to complain, you say? You bet I've earned it....I teach long hours and get paid a pittance for it. And, mind you, I still don't have health benefits."

"Still, you need to do more," replies the Tin Horn Dictator.

Another voice cries out "I'm a student, husband and parent. I hold a job, and have community responsibilities, too. Isn't that enough?"

"Unh Unh," says the uncompromising Tin Horn Dictator.

"Well, there's not much *I* can do about advocacy" says someone who works in a university.

"You bet there is" says the THD.

"I work in a library. We can't be political, you know."

"Nonsense," says the THD.

"Well, what about me? I work for a state education department. The law says I can't be an advocate."

The THD shows some understanding of the bu-

reaucrat's problem but says, "Even so, there's plenty you can do which isn't advocacy, as such, but which will help. I'll tell you how in just a bit. There are lots of ways to earn the right to complain, for example:

1. Does your state have an adult literacy public policy (advocacy) committee yet? If so, does it meet monthly? Does the committee have a yearly plan for how it will work with legislators to increase funds and in other ways improve adult literacy education? Are you on this committee?

2. In 1999 did you write at least one letter and make at least one phone call to each of the following:

- a) your Congressperson,
- b) both Senators,
- c) your State Representative and
- d) your State Senator

about the need to increase funds for adult literacy? (That's 5 letters and 5 phone calls.) If you are a U.S. citizen you have a right and responsibility to communicate with the representatives you elect. Wars have been fought and lives have been lost to defend that right.

3. In 1999 did you encourage others to write and call their representatives? How many people did you encourage to do this?

4. Did you invite a legislator in 1999 to visit an adult literacy program and to talk with students about why they were there, what they were getting out of the program, and what needs were still not being met?

5. Did you speak before a community group in 1999 about why they need to support adult literacy with more funds (to reduce waiting lists, provide more seats in classes, offer more hours of instruction, help adult learners get computers to use for learning) ?

("Tin Horn" continued on page 2)

ILLITERACY IN OUR FRONT YARDS *By Charmaine Coimbra—reprinted with permission from www.livefromsantafe.com*

My grandparents raised me. I was three when we moved to the country. "We'll live off the fat of the land," Charlie, my godfather promised. Charlie was a dancer by training and a dreamer by nature. Eighth-grade ended his education, but his dreams, the Navy and his wit moved him through life.

When I relocated to New Mexico's countryside, I retained Charlie's dream—to live off the fat of the land. A river runs rich through this New Mexican valley, the orchards are thick and most everyone has a garden. Cattle and sheep graze in the dense grass. But a shocking secret shadows the landscape.

David lives down the road. Clif, my husband, says that he has probably been in prison, judging by the tattoos on his face and neck. It's my guess that since he is out, he learned his lesson. Driving home from a long day's work, we notice David lunging his new mare. We waves and motions us to stop. "Hey bro," he greets as he and my husband share what I call a slogan handshake between guys. "Did

("Illiteracy" continued on page 2)

(*"Tin Horn"* continued from page 1)

6. Did you start a postcard campaign where adults on long waiting lists for services mail a card to their legislators asking for help, or where students who are graduating thank a legislator for the public funds that made this achievement possible, but also point out how many others are on waiting lists for this learning opportunity?

7. Did you write a letter to a newspaper to inform readers about the state of adult literacy in your community? Many people are aware that adults need these services now, but they mistakenly assume that the needs are being met. We need to help them know about the reality, that we still have under \$300 per student per year of federal funding, and in some states little or no additional state funds, and that nationally we are meeting at best 10% of the need.

8. State education department people can provide the information which legislators and advocates need. You can:

- ask programs to keep waiting lists and provide an accurate, unduplicated count of the number of people waiting for services and how long the average wait is;
- determine what percent of the need (based on Census data) is being met in your state;

provide information which shows what the investment is and what the measures of quality and outcomes are, and what investment would be needed to meet high standards of:

- enrollment;
- retention;
- student satisfaction;
- achievement of learning outcomes; and
- impact on income, family and community life, civic participation, and other changes which legislators-- and all of us -- want to see."

"So, folks," says the Tin Horn Dictator, "examine your heart. Did you earn the right to complain in 1999? If not, don't stop complaining, but do get busy in the new year, and make a difference."

The Tin Horn Dictator puts down his horn and asks if others would like to speak.



Business, Organized Labor, and Education Leaders Pledge New Support for Skills

A coalition of prominent leaders from business, organized labor, education, and government are calling for expanding opportunities for adult learning—including adult literacy—in a new report, *Skills for a New Century: A Blueprint for Lifelong Learning*.

The report, which is the culmination of six months of discussion among the coalition's members, outlines five broad recommendations to provide adults with the skills they need and employers with the skilled employees needed to remain competitive. The interagency project was housed at the National Institute for Literacy, directed by NIFL staff member Alice Johnson, and was supported by the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce, the National School-to-Work office and the National Partnership for Reinventing Government. The five recommendations are:

- Deliver education and training that is tied to high standards, leads to useful credentials, and meets labor market needs.
- Improve access to financial resources for lifelong learning for all adults, including those in low-wage jobs.
- Promote learning at a time, place, and manner that meets worker needs and interests including through the use of technologies to enable learning at home, the workplace, or elsewhere.
- Encourage and motivate adults to pursue further education and training and inform them of resources available to help them do so.
- Form partnerships among a wide array of organizations and stakeholders to support workforce development and lifelong learning for adults.

Coalition members presented their findings to Vice President Gore, who met with them recently at the White House. Several recent GED graduates and a current GED student also participated and told the Vice President about their experiences as adult learners. Gore stated, "America's competitiveness and prosperity will depend increasingly on high-skill, high-wage jobs. We must work together to help all of our people keep on learning throughout their lifetimes and get the skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century."

In addition to embracing a common vision and recommendations for helping Americans improve their skills, the organi-

(*"Support"* continued on page 4)

(*"Illiteracy"* continued from page 1)

you see my new mare? She's a beauty."

We all admire the sorrel steed. "Bro, I got a new tractor and thought that your wife might want to get her garden patch tilled up," he offers looking left toward a green and rust '54 John Deere.

I jump at the offer and we agree that on Saturday morning he'll turn the first soil for my new garden.

The soil is hard and rocky. David, in his thin cotton t-shirt and Marlboro-logo cap, hollers, "Can you climb on the back of this till and help hold it down while I make the first few passes?" Not wanting to seem squeamish, I hop on the back. The exhaust-spewing tractor chugs through the soil and human-sized stones. My good meals go to use weighting the tills to the soil.

When we are done, David asks, "I need to call the Griegos across the river to tell them I'll be over there next. But, um, you see, um, my eyes, you know, they aren't so good no more. Can you find their number in the phone book for me and dial them, no?"

Later I run into a young woman, Marie, who works not far from our business. She cleans offices. "Oh, honey, it is so good to see you," Marie greets in the grocery line holding what looks like a pay check in her left hand. "Honey, I think I hurt my eyes. How much is this check for? I'm going to cash it," she grins holding out the printed check. The check reads "NOT FOR CASH. MCI will credit your next telephone bill \$5 dollars if you join MCI's savings plan today."

Now being the new land owner, the acequia association put me on as secretary and treasurer right away. Dutifully I write bills for the ditch cleaning and enclosed notes about legislation regarding water rights in New Mexico.

Richard, who lives near the top of the ditch, pulls his new model Chevy pickup up to the house. "Good morning," I greet as he remains in the idling truck. He is fresh shaven and splashed with English Leather, in a pressed, short sleeve white shirt and gray slacks. "Yeah, good morning. Listen, I came to pay my bill," he begins, handing me the billing I earlier sent out. "But, I'm not seeing too good these days. How much is it?" I tell him and he reaches for his checkbook, signs his name on the bottom and hands me the blank check. "I got the arthritis and wonder if you would just fill in the right amount and stuff on this check." He hands me his pen through the truck window

"Of course," I agree.

Several days later his brother comes by to pay his bill—he hands me the billing, asks

(*"Illiteracy"* continued on page 3)

(*"Illiteracy"* continued from page 2)

how much he owes and could I fill out his check.

At lunch, I tell my friend about all these people who seem to be having problems with their eyes. "That's not the problem," she counters. "The problem is that they are illiterate."

"What?"

"I L L I T E R A T E," she spells out. "It's common around here."

"Wow, I never met anyone who could not read."

"Now you have."

My take on illiteracy was that is something found in places other than America or with folks who recently immigrated. Certainly not people who were born and raised here.

But, au'contraire. According to the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL), "Twenty percent of New Mexicans age 16 and older have literacy skills at level; 1..." That is the lowest level on a scale of one to five. Where I live, literacy level 1 is 28% and literacy level 2 or lower is a whopping 68%. On a national scale, literacy level 1 is below 21%.

I never knew. Literacy is something I take for granted.

So I wonder how an illiterate person gets through the day. Apparently not easily.

Says David Godsted, the NMCL executive director, "In New Mexico, around 43% of adult New Mexicans are at the lowest two levels of literacy (below 6th grade). That means that they have trouble reading a newspaper, filling out a job application, have difficulty deciphering a prescription for medication, etc."

Is illiteracy generational even as we go in to the year 2000? Godsted answers, "Absolutely. This remains, in fact, the primary reason for illiteracy. It is truly the key to breaking the cycle of illiteracy."

So, what differences would today's illiterate person face as opposed to a similar situation 50, 30 or even 20 years ago?

"In a word, technology," Godsted begins. "Our country can count information as its number one commodity today. The illiterate will be even more disenfranchised as the labor market continues this trend. In the past, manual laborers could make a decent living without having to read or write. With today's dependence on the computer, this has become a near impossibility."

Godsted recommends the NMCL website for additional New Mexico statistics, as well as, resource information. The address is www.nmcl.org, or call 1-800-233-7587.

As a child, we lived in the country for about five years until it became apparent that we could not live off the fat of the land. Charlie got his contractor's license and we lived off the fat of a boomtown.

He loved life and had the opportunity for choice because he would read.

I do not know if David, Richard, Marie and Richards brother have many choices.

Reprinted from www.livefromsantafe.com

ABE Day HighLIGHTS

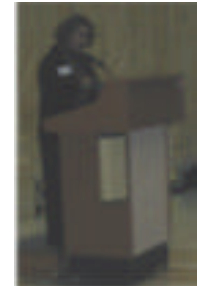


New pathways adult literacy theater players perform

Deborah Martinez and Mary Avila (above left) Chris Ward and Patsy Medrano (above right)



Charlotte Guerrero, GED Graduate, Alamo Navajo Community



Bertha Fabre Lujan, 1999 NMAEA Teacher of the Year



ABE Director, Marlene Herrera with her daughter and granddaughter.



Lisa Breschi Almond, NMCL trainer, at the ABE booth.

January 20, 2000 at the Capitol Rotunda in Santa Fe was an exciting day for adult education in New Mexico. Directors, students, and teachers gathered to support Adult Basic Education Day in the rotunda of the State Capitol. The event was coordinated by the Coalition. Participants viewed the ABE exhibit (as well as the NMCL booth across the hall); watched a presentation by the *New Pathways Adult Literacy Theater*; listened to the press conference featuring a student teacher, and representative from the business community; and finally relaxed and socialized at a reception at the beautiful La Fonda Hotel. You can view the highlights of ABE Day by visiting the Web site at: www.nmabe.org.