

Phi  
Kappa  
Phi

FORUM

A Quarterly Publication

Spring 2004

# Literacy

**li-tas** (lit'ās), *n.* a former silver coin of Lithuania equal to 100 cents. [**< L** *litās* 'equal']

**lit.B.** [**L** *litēria* 'literary literature'. [**< L** *litērius* 'learned']]

**li-tch** (lit'ch), *n.* a fruit of a Chinese tree, consisting of a thin, brittle shell enclosing a sweet, jellylike pulp and a single seed. 2. the tree itself. Also, **leechee**, **li-chee**. [1580–90; **< NL** **< Chin** *lizhi* (*li* scallion + *zhi* branch)]

**lit'/tchi nut'**, the brownish, dried litchi fruit. [1875–80]

**lit-crit** (lit'krit'), *n.* Informal. literary criticism. [by shortening]

**Lit.D.**, Doctor of Letters; Doctor of Literature. [**< NL** *Lit(t)erārum Doctōr*]

**lit de jus-tice** (lit də zh' tēs), *n.* the seal upon which the king of France sits when holding formal sessions of the parliament. 2. the seal itself. [**< F** *lit de justice* 'bed of justice']

**lite** (lit), *adj.* 1. an informal, simplified spelling of **light**<sup>2</sup> (defs. 12, 13), used esp. in labeling or advertising commercial products: *lite beer*. —*n.* 2. **light**<sup>2</sup> (def. 37). —**lite'ness**, *n.*

**-lite**, a combining form used in the names of minerals or fossils: *aerolite*; *chrysolite*. Also, **-lyte**<sup>2</sup>. Cf. **-lith**. [**< F**, simplified form of *-lithe* **< Gk** *lithos* 'stone'; similarly **G** *-lit*, earlier *-lith*]

**li-ter** (lē'tər), *n.* a unit of capacity redefined in 1964 by a reduction of 28 parts in a million to be exactly equal to one cubic decimeter. It is equivalent to 1.0567 U.S. liquid quarts and is equal to the volume of one kilogram of distilled water at 4°C. *Abbr.*: l Also, esp. *Brit.*, **litre**. [1800–10; **< F** *litre*, back formation from *litron* an old measure of capacity, deriv. (with *-on* n. suffix) of **ML** *litra* **< Gk** *litra* 'pound']

**lit-er-a-cy** (lit'ər ə sē), *n.* 1. the quality or state of being literate, esp. the ability to read and write. 2. possession of education: *to question someone's literacy*. 3. a person's knowledge of a particular subject or field: *to acquire computer literacy*. [1880–85; **LITER(ATE)** + **-ACY**] —**Syn.** 2. learning, culture.

**lit'eracy test'**, an examination to determine whether a person meets the literacy requirements for voting, serving in the armed forces, etc.; a test of one's ability to read and write. [1865–70]

CONCISE ETYMOLOGY KEY: **<**, descended or borrowed from; **>**, whence; **b.**, blend of, blended; **c.**, cognate with; **cf.**, compare; **deriv.**, derivative; **equiv.**, equivalent; **imit.**, imitative; **obl.**, oblique; **r.**, replacing; **s.**, stem; **sp.**, spelling, spelled; **resp.**, respelling, respelled; **trans.**, translation; **?**, origin unknown; **\***, unattested; **‡**, probably earlier than. See the full key inside the front cover.

**lit-er-ar-y** (lit'ə rer'ə), *adj.* 1. nature of books and writings, culture: *literary history*. 2. pertaining to literature: *literary style*. 3. versed in or a well-read. 4. engaged in or h literature or writing: *a literary* an excessive or affected displ dantic. 6. preferring books t ish. [1640–50; **< L** *literārius*, writing. See **LETTER, -ARY**] —**er-ar'i-ness**, *n.*

**lit'erary exec'utor**, a publisher of works and other thor. [1865–70]

**lit-er-ate** (lit'ər it), *adj.* 1. having or showing knowledge literary; well-read. 3. chara polish, or the like: *His writin* 4. having knowled field: *literate in computer us* tion; educated. —*n.* 6. a pers 7. a learned person. [1400–5 *litteratus* 'learned, scholarly. S

**lit-er-ate-ly**, *adv.* 3. well-informed,

**lit-er-a-ti** (lit'ər ə tē, -rā'-), *n.* persons of scholar intellectuals. [1615–25; **< L** people, *n.* use of pl. of *litterāt*

**lit-er-a-tim** (lit'ər ə tīm), *adv.* ally. [1635–45; **< ML**, a form (see **LITERATE**), with adv. suffi

**lit-er-a-tor** (lit'ər ə tər), *n.* *litterātor* an (inferior) gram teaches elementary grammar + **-ātor -ATOR**; see **LITERATE**]

**lit-er-a-ture** (lit'ər ə chər, -ings in which expression and ideas of permanent and univ teristic or essential features, biography, and essays. 2. the a specific language, period, pe *England*. 3. the writings dea ject: *the literature of ornithol* writer or author. 5. literary v kind of printed material, as c bills: *literature describing co chaic*. polite learning; litera letters and books. [1375–142 *litterātūra* 'grammar. See **LIT**

—**Syn.** 1. **LITERATURE**, **BEL** to artistic writings worthy of broadest sense, **LITERATURE** in on any subject: *the literature* ever, it means the body of ar or period that are characteriz and form and by universalit tional appeal: *English litera BELLES-LETTRES* is a more spe lit'ə-let-ə-ri, or 'essays, bi

# Phi Kappa Phi FORUM

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the staff of *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* or the Board of Directors of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

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The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 and became a national organization through the efforts of the presidents of three state universities. Its primary objective has been from the first the recognition and encouragement of superior scholarship in all fields of study. Good character is an essential supporting attribute for those elected to membership. The motto of the Society is *philosophia krateitō phōtōn*, which is freely translated as "Let the love of learning rule humanity."

Phi Kappa Phi encourages and recognizes academic excellence through several national programs. Through its awards and grants programs, the Society each triennium distributes more than \$1,300,000 to deserving students and faculty to promote academic excellence. These programs include its flagship National Fellowship program for students entering their first year of graduate study, Promotion of Excellence grants for faculty-led projects, Study Abroad grants for undergraduates, and Literacy Initiative service grants. For more information about how to contribute to the Phi Kappa Phi Foundation and support these programs, please write Perry A. Snyder, PhD, Executive Director, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Box 16000, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70893 or go to the Phi Kappa Phi web page at [www.phikappaphi.org](http://www.phikappaphi.org).

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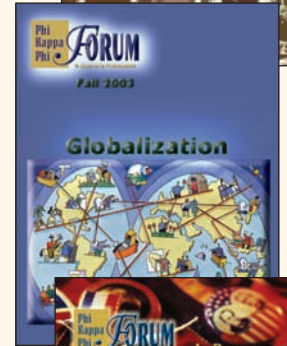
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# Literacy



Spring 2004

**literacy** (lit'ər ə sē), *n.* **1.** the quality or state of being literate, esp. the ability to read and write. **2.** pos- session of education: to question someone's literacy. **3.** a person's knowledge of a particular subject or field: to ac- quire literacy in a field. [*lit* + *-acy*]

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## Letters to the Editor

*Phi Kappa Phi Forum* publishes appropriately written letters to the editor every issue when submitted. Such letters should be no more than 500 words in length.

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# A Note from the Editor

James P. Kaetz



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## IN THIS ISSUE

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As might be evident from my chosen field, I am a reader. If I do not have an unread book or two sitting on my bedside table while I am in the middle of another, I start to get nervous. I was the child who wore out flashlight batteries by reading under the covers long after it was time for lights-out at our house. I do not know what I would do if I were suddenly to lose my sight — learn Braille in record time, I suspect.

It is difficult for me to understand people who do not read for pleasure, who proudly proclaim that they do not read. But even more difficult to think about are the people who want to read but have never had the opportunity to learn how. Despite our increased societal emphasis on communication through purely graphic means, reading is still fundamental. To not be able to read a menu or a set of directions or instructions, to have to struggle through each day avoiding situations in which one might have to read must be frustrating and stressful experiences. The limitations that not being able to read imposes on a person's opportunities, ability to succeed, and self-image are staggering. It is a blight not only on our nation, but on the world.

That is why I am so gratified that The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi has decided to throw its weight and resources behind a new program of Literacy Initiative grants, some of which are celebrated in this issue. The seed of the idea of linking Phi Kappa Phi with the cause of literacy actually was planted about four years ago at a staff retreat in Baton Rouge. One of our tasks there was to think of ways to make Phi Kappa Phi more visible. Stephanie Bond, one of the *Forum's* associate editors, suggested that we try to get involved in some way with promoting literacy, a truly worthwhile cause.

Nothing came of that suggestion immediately. Later, when I was asked to serve as a staff representative on what was then referred to as the Branding Committee, which was set up to explore ways to distinguish Phi Kappa Phi from other honor societies, I mentioned Stephanie's idea as one possibility. The idea was discussed, and very soon we became (at least in our minds) the Branding/Literacy Committee. The Board of Directors decided to support our idea and authorized money for a pilot literacy-grants program to gauge member interest in such an initiative. We designed the requirements of the grants — one being that projects which found a way to get students involved would be given preference — and sent out the call for grants.

Because the deadline for the grants was short and because we had so little time to properly publicize the program, most of us on the committee expected few responses (as Donna Schubert notes in her piece in this issue, she was secretly hoping for at least ten). To our astonishment, we received eighty-eight applications. After reading and agonizing over the wonderful responses, and after the Board authorized a little more money, we awarded seventeen grants, eight of which are discussed in this issue by the people involved. We unanimously regretted that we could not fund more, but we stretched the money as far as it would go to accommodate as many as possible in meaningful (we hoped) amounts. Most gratifying is that we believe we have hit upon a service initiative on which everyone in our diverse membership can agree — I know of no one who would say that money spent on helping people learn to read is a bad idea.

The Board of Directors has authorized two rounds of literacy grants for the next triennium, which, pending approval of the budget by delegates to our upcoming national convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico, we hope puts us permanently into the business of promoting literacy by getting our members involved at the grassroots level. I for one would love to see this program grow and prosper so that eventually when one thinks of Phi Kappa Phi, one thinks not only of our generous graduate fellowships, but also of our commitment to the goal of literacy.

As I said earlier, in this issue eight of the grant recipients tell us about how they used the grant money that they were awarded and what it has meant to their community, their chapter, and to them personally. From reading and providing books to elementary school children, to reaching out to the community to identify and help adults who need to learn, to disseminating poetry throughout a community, all of these projects are inspiring.

In addition, we have articles from four of the premiere literacy organizations in the nation: ProLiteracy, the National Center for Family Literacy, Literacy USA (formerly the National Association of Urban Literacy Coalitions), and the National Institute for Literacy. Each organization has programs, opportunities, and resources that might help you become involved in your own literacy project.

On a personal note, I want to say how positive the experience of being on the committee that helped create this grant program has been. Our energy and enthusiasm for the idea was embraced by the Board of Directors and made to happen in the most fundamental sense by the staff at Phi Kappa Phi's national office. The spirit of cooperation among all parties involved has been tremendous.

And what can you as members do? Create your own worthwhile literacy program, or become involved in an already-existing program in your community. Then apply for the next round of grants (see page 7 for dates). Help us to make Phi Kappa Phi and literacy synonymous.

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## APPRECIATIONS

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Thank you to Jennifer Browning and Kelly Messerschmidt, our student interns for the spring semester here at Auburn University. Your sharp eyes, intelligent suggestions, and enthusiastic work were greatly appreciated. Good luck to you both as you finish your degrees and launch into the wide world of work.





Forum on

# Education & Academics

Andrea Ickes-Dunbar

## Charlie Gordon Passes the Test of Time

We have just finished reading the short story “Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keyes. For twenty years my eighth-grade students and I have agonized with Charlie, have hoped for him, and have felt outrage on his behalf. Sixty times I, along with my students, have endured the emotional rise of Charlie Gordon’s meteoric ascent from mental disability to the pinnacle of cognitive capacity and his tragic fall into intellectual oblivion. With each reading, my heart constricts and my eyes brim with tears.

The ubiquitous and enduring presence of this story in the eighth-grade public school curriculum makes it almost unnecessary to introduce Charlie Gordon to most adult readers. “My grandpa read this story,” announced one of my students today in amazement. At least two generations of readers are familiar with the story, in which a man with mental retardation is granted the opportunity to undergo experimental surgery that temporarily triples his intelligence. We meet Charlie through his own journal entries and are immediately captivated by his heartwarming sincerity. Here is a man who desperately wants to be like others in the hope that he will have friends and be able to participate fully in the social world. Following surgery, Charlie’s intelligence increases rapidly and with it his perception of social complexity. As Charlie matures, so do his relationships with his coworkers and former “friends,” his teacher, and his doctors. However, increased intelligence does not hold the key to positive social interactions, to happiness, or to peace of mind.

Ultimately, Charlie’s mental state regresses; his giftedness evaporates.

The reader is left with a profound sense of nostalgia for the elusive happiness that might have been.

Charlie Gordon’s dilemma is vividly drawn and intensely relevant to most students. Adolescent readers are struggling with their own emerging intellect and conflicting social needs. They often experience troubled relationships with peers who are perceived as “different.” Each student brings to the story his or her own perspective and predicament.

For some students, the text is extremely challenging. Some students are strikingly similar to Charlie at his most naïve and literal-minded. Others are self-conscious as Charlie approximates, then surpasses their own capabilities. Many students remark that their empathy toward Charlie diminishes as he becomes an increasingly competent adult.

Students chuckle patronizingly at Charlie’s exuberant discovery of punctuation, even as they themselves continue to misuse conventions and misspell common homophones. Some gifted students react with self-recognition when Charlie talks about masking his superiority so as not to alienate those around him, a phenomenon that the author refers to as “the Wedge of Loneliness.” All flare up with righteous indignation at the meanness of Charlie’s supposed friends. Most acknowledge their own occasional cruelty toward others. Many squirm at the suggestion that there are “Charlies” among their peers who are ostracized and ridiculed, and they frequently resolve in their reading journals to treat others better. Most young readers find Charlie utterly convincing and often

respond as if the story were factual rather than science fiction.

But what can a sixty-year-old reader bring to the sixtieth read? Always something new, as it turns out. Each year, I discover some “peripheral” that enriches the classroom experience. Early on, I made inkblots and mock Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) cards so that students could appreciate the disparity between their own imaginative capabilities and Charlie’s. One year, I adapted a pencil-and-paper exercise to mimic the sensation of having a learning disability, imposed an unattainable time limit, then asked students to reflect on their own sensation of frustration and futility. From a television series on the human brain (*Nova*), I presented students with a brief questionnaire to introduce the concept of brain hemisphericity. From a long-ago teacher-training workshop, I put together a quiz inviting students to compare their own behavioral intelligence with Charlie’s. We watch the film, *Charly*, and discuss differences between the film and the story. Such activities encourage introspective reading. As the story unfolds, so does each student’s self-understanding.

As a culminating activity, students participate in an improvisational role play. In this scenario, students are cast in several possible roles: potential brain-surgery candidates, the candidates’ families and friends, a hospital administrator, a lawyer, news reporters, and so on. From these hypothetical perspectives, students discuss the moral implications of human experimental research and present plausible rationales. In this forced-choice scenario, students intensify their empathy for pivotal characters, heighten their awareness of multiple viewpoints, and confront their own feelings. Subsequent journal entries reveal that each enactment is intensely engaging and unique to a particular class.

On my classroom shelves are three previous editions of textbooks that contain the story, each with different notes from the author and different artwork. We jigsaw these bits of information together and discover how the story came to be, the author’s purpose, and where the story fits in the larger context of its several

(continued on page 7)

# Forum on Business & Economics

Larry Chambers

## Why We Are Losing the War on Investing for Retirement (And How To Win It)

New advances in technology, communications, and investment theory might make you think we are finally winning the war on investing for retirement. We are not. Here is why and how you can change the outcome.

The year was 1974, not long after I had graduated from college, and it was a big day for my father, who had just retired after thirty years of hard work and many personal sacrifices. I watched as he ceremoniously handed my mother his first pension check — for \$478.

“This is it?!” She actually pulled on the check in an attempt to stretch it. “This is what they expect us to live on?!” My dad rubbed his forehead, dropped his shoulders, and walked out of the kitchen — there was nothing he could do about it.

My dad had accepted the notion that his loyalty to his employment would ensure an income during his retirement, but he never looked at whether it would be *enough* income. During his earning years, participation in a pension plan was passive, and the benefit was defined. Company management made all the decisions based on their own agenda — covering that defined benefit while protecting their personal liability.

To dilute that liability, retirement-investment vehicles evolved to shift the

investment decisions into the hands of the participants — the people with the least expertise to be making those decisions. Management’s role was carefully delineated by the 1974 Employee Retirement Security Act known as ERISA, and today, more than 90 percent of employment-related retirement investing is in some type of *participant-directed* plan.

As one of our largest-ever demographics entered its peak earning years and dollars flowed into these plans, both fixed and equity markets reflected this growth in the longest-running bull market in history. That environment was responsible for misleading a large contingent of the investing population into believing that big returns were there for the taking; all you had to do was find the

latest “hot pick” based on previous performance. After all, the marketing departments of mutual funds were touting *average* annual returns of 25 percent on a regular basis. That was all the information individual investors needed to make their decision. Little did they know that a conservative fund with a 10 percent compounded rate of return could yield more than a fund with an average annual return of 25 percent. Huh?

Say we put \$10,000 into an aggressive fund and the next year, the fund loses 50 percent; our account has dropped to \$5,000. Luckily the following year, the fund doubles and our account is back to an even \$10,000. *Our* return on this investment over two years is *zero*; but the fund’s *average* annual return is 25 percent ( $-50\% + 100\% = 50\%/2 \text{ years} = 25\%$ ). That same \$10,000 invested in a conservative fund with only a 10 percent annual return makes \$1,000 the first year and \$1,100 the second year ( $+10\% + 10\% = 20\%/2 \text{ years} = 10\%$ ); the account is now worth \$12,100 of real money, because of the higher compounded rate of return.

The average investor still looks at past performance as if it is a promise of future outcome and does not understand how the fund’s return was generated or what that will mean to the dollar value of his or her account in the future. So, how do you think the individual investor fared during the “can’t lose” era? *Not very well.* The

Category	Cumulative Return <sup>1</sup>	Annualized Return <sup>2</sup>
S&P 500 Index	793.34%	12.22%
Small Company Stock Index	538.94%	10.25%
<b>Average Equity Fund Investor<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>62.11%</b>	<b>2.57%</b>
Long-term Government Bond Index	718.05%	11.70%
Long-term Corporate Bond Index	659.30%	11.26%
Intermediate-term Bond Index	436.40%	9.24%
<b>Average Fixed Income Fund Investor</b>	<b>120.06%</b>	<b>4.24%</b>
Treasury Bills	175.89%	5.49%
Inflation	79.80%	3.14%

1. Calculated by Dalbar using data presented in *Stocks, Bonds and Inflation 2003 Yearbook*, Ibbotson & Associates, Inc.

2. Annualized return assumes returns are compounded annually.

3. The rate of return investors earn — based on the length of time shareholders actually remain invested in a fund and the historic performance of the fund’s appropriate index.



table on the preceding page reflects a study by Dalbar, a highly regarded researcher of the financial industry, called the Quantitative Analysis of Investor Behavior (or QAIB), which compares performance for the period 1984 through 2002.

The important stats to notice here are that the S&P 500 has averaged 12.22 percent per year since 1984, but the individual equity investor has averaged only 2.57 percent. The whole point of investing in stocks is to beat low-yielding bonds and inflation over time, but the study reveals that the average bond investor beat the average equity investor almost two to one, returning 4.24 percent versus 2.57 percent. Even inflation beat the average equity investor! Why?

According to Dalbar, the primary reason for investors' dismal performance is their attempt at *market timing*. Instead of staying invested for the entire measurement period, human nature and misleading prognostication of market trends entice investors to pour money into stocks after the market has performed well for a short period of time, essentially missing much of the upturn. Then, true to form, investors tend to pull money out of the market after a decline that exceeds their invisible risk tolerance level — just the opposite of the “buy low, sell high” golden rule.

“A Market Timing Myth” (*Journal of Investing*, Winter 2000) looked at what investment returns would have been if someone could have accurately timed the stock market. The average annual return for the period of 1991–1998 was 19.87 percent, but by not being invested *during the best forty* out of those 2,023 trading days, the return after expenses dropped to a paltry 5.35 percent. The study also showed that by *avoiding the forty worst* trading days, the return would have improved to a whopping 29.09 percent. Unfortunately, the odds of knowing “when to hold them and when to fold them” are 1 in  $1.444 \times 10^{84}$ !

Most people have lifestyle aspirations that far exceed their current strategy for accumulating assets, and their strategy is seldom designed around a long-term process. Your goal is probably very clear — to make and save as much money as possible

for your retirement — but when you focus on the goal, rather than the process, you find yourself chasing the greatest performer, buying/selling at the wrong time, and generally riding an emotional roller-coaster with doubt and panic as your companions.

This means you need to *change the way you invest*. Your success over the next two decades will depend on making the transition to a forward-looking investment process built on finite dollar amounts and time frames and specific ways to manage your existing and future resources to meet those goals. One thing that would help would be to create an *Investment Policy Statement*, a written guide against which all your investment decisions should be ratified. This one move of putting your investment process in writing takes the emotion out of investing and will keep you from getting sidetracked by promises that are “too good to be true.”

While there may be thousands of books on investing, only a few explain how an investment policy statement can keep you on track. This one is a must read: *Investment Policy: How to Win the Loser's Game*, Charley Ellis, Dow Jones-Irwin, 1985. Also read *How to Write An Investment Policy Statement*, by Jack Gardner, Traders Library, 2004.

You may need to get professional help — preferably from someone who is not making money on your every investment decision. Find an investment professional who will analyze your current position and who understands and can help you to create your own investment policy.

To get started, familiarize yourself with the following simplified description of the steps to formulate an investment process:

### **STEP 1 – YOUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

Write down your financial goals and assign realistic dollar amounts and timelines. Next, outline the duties, responsibilities and promises of all parties involved, including yours. This list works as a management tool because it clarifies communications by establishing responsibility.

### **STEP 2 – YOUR RISK TOLERANCE**

Risk is a necessary component of returns. How much risk you are comfortable with or willing to take will greatly affect the types of investments that you select. It also could play a large part in the time horizon necessary to achieve your goals.

### **STEP 3 – MANAGING RISK**

Low levels of risk may be appropriate for some individuals, but inappropriate for others. Your advisor should show you a risk profile for each asset class inside your portfolio and the volatility associated with each. Basic asset classifications might begin with cash equivalents, bonds, asset-backed securities, real estate, and corporate stocks, with both debt and equity categories further divided by their general risk-reward or income-growth characteristics, by domestic, foreign, tax-exempt, or other characteristics of the issuers, and so on.

### **STEP 4 – INVESTMENT GUIDELINES**

A large and broadly accepted body of empirical and theoretical knowledge exists about the behavior of capital markets, often described as “modern portfolio theory,” that can provide guidelines for investing to manage risk at a level that is suitable to your personal situation. All of your investment decisions should be evaluated against your overall strategy.

### **STEP 5 – ASSET ALLOCATION**

Asset allocation simply means determining what proportion of your money will be invested in each of the various asset classes — stocks, bonds, and cash investments — so as to maximize the growth of your portfolio for each unit of risk that you take. Asset allocation may be the single most important determinant of the long-term performance of any investment portfolio.

### **STEP 6 – DIVERSIFICATION**

A diversified portfolio provides stability and, hence, a larger long-term return, but only if you spread your money among the various asset

Continued on page 9.

# Forum on Science & Technology



Devlin M. Gualtieri

## Cyborgs and Atomic Microscopes

Much discussion is currently taking place about the ethics of intentionally modifying the human species. Fifty years ago, this same discussion was taking place, but it was not about intentional modification of DNA (the structure of which had just been discovered by Crick, Franklin, Watson, and Wilkins to be the basis of life); instead, it was about creating a hybrid of man and machine — that is, a cyborg.

The word “cyborg,” shorthand for *Cybernetic Organism*, was introduced by Manfred Clynes in 1960. Nowadays we seldom hear the word, and we are even less likely to hear about cybernetics, although advances in nanotechnology may someday make cyborg a household word. Cybernetics as a field of study has been eclipsed by “Artificial Intelligence,” a field of computer science enabled by the evolution of powerful digital computers. The study of artificial neural networks is essentially all that is left of cybernetics. Most of those studies now conform to an artificial-intelligence paradigm, in which intelligence is considered to be a quality that can be stored, rather than the cybernetic definition that considers intelligence to be an interaction.

The word “cybernetics,” from the Greek word for steersman, was coined by Norbert Wiener in 1948. Wiener was a brilliant mathematics professor at MIT who used the term to describe the study of autonomous machines, especially those that incorporate a feedback mechanism to survey their surroundings and respond to it. Those were the days before ubiquitous digital computers, and Wiener’s autonomous systems were simple electronic systems that performed

such tasks as aiming artillery, an important application that he studied during World War II. Earlier, simple mechanical systems, such as the speed governor on steam engines, had performed a similar control function that amounts to simulating the actions of a human operator. Wiener, in his 1950 book, *Human Use of Human Beings*, proposed cybernetic machines as a way to free humans from many of the less interesting tasks of life, such as tending the hearth to achieve a comfortable room temperature.

The idea of a cyborg takes cybernetics a step further by making humans a part of a more efficient machine. Cyborg was likely the inspiration for the naming of the Borg in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and the idea of a human-machine hybrid does conjure images of the Borg for most people. The Borg, as hybrids of human and machine, have lost their humanity in proportion to the loss of human flesh. The *Star Trek* humans resist assimilation by the Borg because they see this conversion as a loss of their essential humanity. When I was a boy, an article was published in *Life* magazine about cyborgs. One image that I remember is a cyborg astronaut floating nearly naked in space with a fishbowl on his head. At that time, Clynes and his colleague, Nathan Kline, were investigating cyborg technology for NASA as a way for humans to conquer space, but one look at that illustration makes you wonder whether it was really humans doing the conquering.

The question of how much of the human remains in a cyborg leads us to the *Socks Paradox*. A particular sock is darned with new thread whenever it gets a hole. Eventually,

all thread that was in the original sock has been replaced. Is it still the same sock? If not, when did it lose its identity? The Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who wrote that you cannot step into the same river twice, would answer that the sock is always a different sock, not just after the first stitch, but after the first crease. At any instant the sock is never identical to one at a particular past instant. Heraclitus would argue that we do not maintain our identity from one instant to the next because we age, lose a hair here or there, and so on. It seems that Heraclitus would have no problem with human transformation into cyborg because a human is always changing, and there is no reference state for the definition of what is called human.

Modern humans have always been cyborgs to some extent. From the time that we first donned cloak and shoes, we have used mechanisms to enhance our lifestyle. After clothing, more complicated artifacts were introduced. Eyeglasses were developed for better vision, but we did not stop there. Instead of merely alleviating a deficiency, we found ways to enhance functionality. So eyeglasses led to telescopes, and written language evolved as a memory-enhancement tool. Medical and scientific instruments are the culmination of mechanisms to enhance our senses. As such instrumentation becomes more complex and what is sensed becomes very distant from the human state, are we really sensing things as humans, or can such sensing be understood only in the context of the human-machine hybrid, a cyborg?

Atomic Force microscopes now exist that can image individual atoms on the surface of solids, so some scientists claim to be seeing atoms. One is reminded of the painting of a pipe by the Belgian surrealist painter, René Magritte, with the caption, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (*This Is Not a Pipe*, 1926). What we see in the Magritte painting is not a pipe, but a *representation* of a pipe, and Magritte explicitly makes this point. When you view a small object with an optical microscope, you actually do see the object because the microscope is just an amplifier for the light that reaches your eyes. However, an atomic force microscope is not an amplifier of anything that can be seen, and the

image of atoms viewed on a computer display is merely a representation of atoms with no direct linkage to human senses. The cyborg scientist, a combination of human and the atomic force microscope machine, claims to see atoms, but he or she is not seeing in the human sense.

An atomic microscope is conspicuous enough that its cyborg scientist is easily identified, but the identification of a cyborg will become more difficult in the future. One spin-off of integrated circuit processing is the field of nanotechnology, presaged by Richard Feynman in his 1959 address to the American Physical Society, "There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom." Along with micro-miniature electronics, we now have a capability for micro-miniature machines that can do such tasks as clear our arteries of plaque and deliver drugs to just the right places. Injection of small machines will become a common medical procedure, and every human will become a cyborg. As these nanomachines become more complex and we become dependent on them for our future lifestyle, will we still have the capacity to question whether we are still human?



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### **Charlie Gordon Passes the Test of Time** (continued from page 3.)

incarnations. This year, an inquisitive student discovered a Web site for the author, Daniel Keyes, who is still writing and lecturing at age seventy-six.

Prompted by this new stimulus, I finally read the novel, also titled *Flowers for Algernon*, published in 1966. I was surprised at my own reaction, which was one of aversion to this in-depth presentation of the character whom I thought I knew so well. To read explicit scenes of Charlie's conflicted sexuality and to visit the horrors of his childhood felt so invasive and voyeuristic that I could hardly bring myself to finish the book. Just like my students, I have accepted Charlie as a real person, and I am reluctant to probe his private depths.

I also read Keyes' 1999 book, *Algernon, Charlie and I: A Writer's Journey*. Here, at last, I "met" the author. Keyes shares all: the germination of the story idea, its multiple metamorphoses from story to novel to teleplay to screenplay to stage musical, and his reluctance to interpret his own work. Keyes reveals his authorial attachment to Charlie and his dogged insistence on preserving the original intent of his story from beginning to end.

Reaction to the original story is strong. "I know how Charlie feels," writes one student. "If you pay attention, this story will change the way you live your life." Others write: "Charlie is an inspiration." "Next time you see a person making fun of

someone, don't join in or walk away, help the person out, it's what Charlie would have done." "At one point I wanted to jump into the book and give those guys a piece of my mind! That was no way to play with a person you call a friend." "Sometimes I felt like crying for sorrow, or shedding tears of joy." "I wanted to say 'sorry!' to all the people in my life that I have ever made fun of. The story should be read in fourth grade to stop the torment, then re-read in eighth grade for stronger impact."

As a teacher, I have become increasingly aware of time as a moving vantage point that affects reader and story alike. What was science fiction in 1959 is science in 2004. What seemed far-fetched fifty years ago seems highly plausible today in the dawning era of genetic engineering. To read the story at sixty means to confront one's own senescence.

So, while the kids and I are reading side by side, our literary experiences are quite different. There is a lot to talk about across two generations. The sixty-first read will surely be the richest experience of all! One thing is certain: Charlie Gordon passes the test of time.



**Andrea Ickes-Dunbar teaches seventh- and eighth-grade English and Spanish to a second generation of students in a multi-generational K-8 California public school. She often writes poems, raps, and jingles for her students. Three favorites are "Long Term Memory," "Wholly Holy Homophones," and "Spelling Sucks!"**

## 2005 Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grants

Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grants will be available once again in 2005 to chapters and individual members to fund ongoing literacy projects or to create new initiatives. If you are interested in applying for a literacy grant, please note the following dates and deadlines:

August 2, 2004 — Literacy Initiative Grant applications available at [www.phikappaphi.org](http://www.phikappaphi.org)

February 1, 2005 — deadline for receipt of applications

April 15, 2005 — announcement of grant recipients

July 1, 2005 — funds awarded

June 1, 2006 — project completion date

July 3, 2006 — deadline for receipt of project reports



David Thurmaier

## New Music and the Wounded Dragon

Brahms's *Requiem* has not the true funeral relish: it is so execrably and ponderously dull that the very flattest of funerals would seem like a ballet, or at least a *danse macabre*, after it.

— George Bernard Shaw, *The World*, November 9, 1892

Beethoven's *Second Symphony* is a crass monster, a hideously writhing wounded dragon, that refuses to expire, and though bleeding in the Finale, furiously beats about with its tail erect.

— *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt*, Vienna, May 1804

Scathing commentary about the music of two of the world's finest composers! Even Brahms and Beethoven were subject to negative, albeit highly amusing, reviews by the press. It is fascinating to peruse Nicolas Slonimsky's *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, a collection of "critical assaults on composers," to learn how music by the most celebrated composers has been scorned and misunderstood. Perhaps the more important message to deduce from Slonimsky's book is that music we now consider "old" was once new.

Unfortunately, resentment toward anything new has persisted into today's musical culture. If you scan the season schedule of a typical orchestra, you are unlikely to find more than a handful of works written in the twentieth century, let alone the twenty-first. Instead, many orchestras program the same works by the same composers year after year. The reasons for this vary: contemporary music can be more technically demanding for an orchestra and can require increased rehearsal time; some orchestras do not have access

to new music scores or may find them prohibitively expensive in these troubled days of arts-funding cuts; or, as I discovered from a response to a letter that I wrote as a concerned undergraduate to the president of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, it comes down to balancing artistic vision with keeping people in the seats.

In my own teaching experience, I always become nervous when the twentieth-century music unit begins because I can already hear the complaints from my students — "This isn't music!" "Where's the melody?" "It sounds like a bunch of noise." — and those are some of the more polite statements. I often shake my head when confronted with these comments because the majority of the music about which students complain was written more than fifty years ago. It is difficult to call the works of Bela Bartók (d. 1945) or Arnold Schoenberg (d. 1951) "new," despite the declarations I hear in my class to the contrary.

In his provocative book, *Who Needs Classical Music?*, Julian

Johnson notes that "Musical modernism is little liked and even less understood. . . . This alone suggests that the music requires critical reflection." In light of that observation, I was intrigued to read that the topic for this issue of the *Forum* is literacy because I believe that we have an opportunity to increase and sharpen our literacy when it comes to more contemporary artistic expressions. Instead of shying away from what is unfamiliar to us, why not embrace it? This resolution should extend to all of the arts.

Like those voiced by some of my students, the most common complaints from concertgoers about contemporary music revolve around its having "no melody," or that one "can't tap along with it," or that it just plain "sounds weird" (and sometimes it does). From my perspective, these remarks assume that a piece of music written in 1995 inherently shares a link with a piece written in 1750 and should be expected to function in the same way. In other words, few people have a difficult time listening to the music of J.S. Bach because it can be expected to do certain things that are familiar to most listeners. By contrast, one may not know what to expect with a newer work. What I suggest below may be a simple method for approaching new music, as well as other arts.

Let's take the first movement of the second *Brandenburg Concerto* as a piece that exemplifies characteristics which we might find in Bach's music. Immediately the listener is presented with richly melodic music stated by the violins and answered by a piccolo trumpet. Rhythmically, the movement stays in the same meter, so it is easy to tap the beat. Finally, Bach's music consists of harmony that we have heard many times before; these familiar chords appear in all types of music written before Bach's time and beyond.

Now consider the composer, artist, and philosopher John Cage (1912–92). In musical circles, Cage is probably best known for his piece *4'33"*, in which a pianist sits silently at the keyboard for the time specified by the title. The "music" consists of whatever sounds occur in the performing space: coughing, rustling, and talking, to name a few. To take a less extreme

example, most of Cage's music allows for the element of chance to shape a piece. For instance, Cage determined the compositional structure of many pieces by rolling dice or consulting the *I Ching*; additionally, he directed performers to play movements from compositions in any order, at any tempo or dynamic. This is where listeners to Bach and Cage part company. Though Cage's music often contains the same instruments as Bach's, Cage's music sounds entirely different because it does not fulfill the expectations that we learn listening to Bach. A person expecting to find a hummable melody, steady beat, and pretty chords in a Cage composition will be disappointed from the downbeat on.

But why should these differences create a value judgment? Bach is not "better" than Cage, just as Rembrandt is not "better" than Jackson Pollock; they are artists from different eras, each expressing unique artistic statements. To help a potential listener who is frightened by modern music (and art), I would argue that everything has to do with *expectations* — just as one would not expect a painting by Pollock to look like a Rembrandt painting, one should not expect Cage's *Music of Changes*

to share the exact characteristics as Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto*. If listeners approach an unfamiliar musical work by suspending their expectations and focusing on it as its own entity, they have a greater chance of at least appreciating the composer's efforts. So upon entering a recital that contains new music, try focusing on something else besides the melody. Does the piece have an interesting rhythm? Are the instruments playing in nontraditional ways? Just what makes the piece sound different from music that you know? Try to find at least one or two aspects of the work that you find intriguing or noteworthy.

Additionally, you might consider the history of the artwork that you plan to observe or hear. More recent paintings or musical compositions sometimes offer an advantage to us because we might relate to them better as a result of their immediacy. For example, works that depict the Holocaust resonate deeply in our society because the details of those atrocities still remain in our shared memory. In this sense, contemporary works could have a better chance of reaching the listener — often the artists are alive and sometimes in the

concert hall or art gallery with you — because artist and listener share common experiences.

I close with another quote from Slonimsky's book, this time about Claude Debussy:

Poor Debussy, sandwiched in between Brahms and Beethoven, seemed weaker than usual. We cannot feel that all this extreme ecstasy is natural; it seems forced and hysterical; it is musical absinthe; there are moments when the suffering Faun in Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun* seems to need a veterinary surgeon (Louis Elson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 2, 1905).

I suspect that today's composers would not mind becoming the next Brahms, Beethoven, or Debussy, even if told their music writhed like a wounded dragon or needed a veterinarian.



**David Thurmaier is an assistant professor of music theory at Central Missouri State University. His musical interests include Charles Ives, American music of all types, and the Beatles. He is also an active composer and performer on horn and guitar.**

## Why We Are Losing the War on Investing for Retirement (And How To Win It) (continued from page 5.)

classes that do not always have the same price movements — for example, value and growth, small and large, international growth and value. To diversify and control costs, you might consider mutual funds.

### STEP 7 – INVESTMENT MONITORING AND REBALANCING


Periodic monitoring is necessary to judge your investment performance with appropriate benchmarks. Rebalancing brings your portfolio back into balance with the percentages that you set for asset allocation. Rebalancing improves results, which would indicate that a style that is outperforming the broad market does not stay in favor for long periods of time.

Academically tested rules have been written for the process of investing; unfortunately, the unwritten rules may do you in. It all comes down to whether your investing is driven by the process or driven by the goal. The investor's goals are in dollar currency, but a fund's manager is graded on quarter-to-quarter performance to attract new investors. Meanwhile, the media's goal is to attract viewers/readers with controversial or sensational copy, and Wall Street's goal is to make money for its own shareholders. How do you know if your broker recommends an investment because it is the best fund for you or because it pays him/her the highest commission?

Little wonder that a disciplined investment process is your only insurance for a predictable outcome!



**Larry Chambers is a freelance financial writer living in Ojai, California. He has authored more than 800 magazine articles and thirty-four business books. His latest book, *The First Time Investor, 3rd edition, McGraw Hill, will help you get a good start in a disciplined investment process. He welcomes feedback at Lchamb007@aol.com. You can find his books at www.competitiveforce.com.***



**Wendell H. McKenzie**

## Thoughts on Literacy

Motherhood, apple pie, baseball, and literacy. Who could possibly be against them?

Kind of a “no-brainer,” actually! Particularly when it comes to literacy.

In fact, it is hard to imagine anything more central, fundamental, and germane to academic excellence across the disciplines than literacy. Learning to read, to write, to communicate, to think critically, to share ideas, to move our society forward, all depend heavily on being literate.

Nationally, Phi Kappa Phi’s active interest in literacy originated at our Board of Directors and Staff strategic-planning retreat in Fall 2001. There we added a key phrase to our long-standing mission statement. To the existing statement, which read, “To recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education,” we added, “and to engage the community of scholars in service to others.”

Out of that retreat and expanded mission statement the Literacy Initiative was conceived. Many of our members have long been asking for opportunities to serve. What better vehicle than the promotion of literacy?

Using funds originally approved for interdisciplinary initiatives at the 2001 Convention in Indianapolis, our Board of Directors earmarked \$30,000 for an initial cycle of competitive Literacy Initiative Grants. The program was announced in fall of 2002, and nearly ninety proposals were submitted. They ranged from helping minorities to learn to read well enough to pass a driver’s license exam, to purchasing a new book for every newborn in the chapter’s county, to reading to the elderly and blind. Seventeen of these wonderful projects were funded and are now in progress. Simply fantastic!

A gratifying benefit of this initiative has been to learn that many Phi Kappa Phi chapters and members were already active in literacy programs across the country and beyond. We salute you, thank you, and ask that you share your time-tested ideas with us. I sense that we are just scratching the surface in this exciting arena.

Needless to say, we will be presenting to the convention delegation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in August a budget that includes increased funding for the Literacy Initiative Grants program.

I could not be more proud of this responsible new venture for Phi Kappa Phi.

***Wendell H. McKenzie is National President of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.***

**Donna Clark Schubert**

## A Crucial Need

A smudged little face appeared across the counter from me at my husband's retail store. "Can you help my daddy?" she asked. "He can't read the prices." And so began my introduction to illiteracy.

In 2001, the Board of Directors and staff of Phi Kappa Phi added the following few but significant words to the Society's mission statement: "*to engage the community of scholars in service to others.*" Beyond recognizing and promoting academic excellence, the expanded mission statement acknowledges the value of the friendships and bonds created through membership. It also acknowledges the meaningful contributions that our members make to society, and it challenges us to do more.

In early 2002, President Wendell McKenzie wanted to implement a program to show Phi Kappa Phi's com-

mitment to community service. He appointed a work group comprised of Nancy Blattner, Sarah Bulman, Paul Ferlazzo, Marya Free, Pat Kaetz, Traci Navarre, Mandi Walton, and me. Together, our group studied, learned, and made use of the considerable body of knowledge shared freely by Phi Kappa Phi members.

Here is what we learned about the effects of illiteracy:

- Approximately 44 million Americans have extremely limited reading and quantitative skills, according to the National Adult Literacy Survey published by ProLiteracy America.
- Those who lack basic literacy skills are more likely than others to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, and prostate cancer, and as people gain literacy skills, they are more likely to understand their health problems and to follow treatment regimens properly.

- Children of low-literate parents tend to get poor care and poor nutrition at home and tend to do poorly in school.
- Worldwide, 70 percent of adults who lack basic literacy skills are women, and low-literate women earn only 70.1 percent as much as men with equivalent skills.
- Literacy issues are as interdisciplinary as is our Society, and we can do something about them.

In the fall of 2002, Phi Kappa Phi announced a pilot literacy-grants program that would ultimately award \$30,000 to worthy projects. As chair of the work group, I quietly set my personal measure of success at receiving ten grant proposals. We received almost ninety.

Today, Phi Kappa Phi literacy-grant recipients are tutoring adults; reading with and providing books and materials for children, including homeless children; providing supplementary reading and writing instruction and workshops; replenishing a school library that suffered water damage; and creating interaction among K-12 and college students, senior citizens, and community members.

In the next triennium, this literacy-grants program will become a permanent part of Phi Kappa Phi's service to others. Thank you, my fellow Phi Kappa Phi members, for dreaming with open minds, volunteering countless hours, and investing your considerable talents in making this literacy program a reality. Because of you, our community of scholars is helping little girls' daddies every day.



**Donna Clark Schubert is National Vice President of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.**



**Paul Ferlazzo**

## Questions to be Answered

When the Board of Directors modified the mission statement of Phi Kappa Phi in 2001 to include the phrase, "*to engage the community of scholars in service to others,*" we were not sure where it would take us. We had decided that as a modern honor society we needed to do more that was relevant to the common life of our nation. The membership, too, had been asking for programs that would allow them to use their scholarship and the force of their numbers for the benefit of their local communities. Phi Kappa Phi had been very successful for more than one hundred years in fulfilling the original mission of the Society, "*to recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education.*" But we knew that the revised mission was going to take us into unknown territory.

The success of the Literacy Initiative, our first program with a clear public-service feature, is evidence that Phi Kappa Phi is on the right track. As we proceed into the next triennium we will continue to support literacy activities, to be sure. But should we be doing more? Should we develop other programs for our members that encourage them to link their learning with the needs of their communities in relevant and meaningful ways? Should we consider enlarging the definition of what we mean by "honor and excellence" in higher education to include "making a difference for the better in the life of one's community"? These and similar questions are likely to confront us in the years ahead. If you have suggestions or ideas concerning any of these questions, let us hear from you.



**Paul Ferlazzo is President-Elect of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.**



Photo courtesy of  
Julia Putnam.

**Julia Putnam**

## Reading with Character

**I**mproving student access to reading involves two key components: materials for reading and time to read. Therefore, the primary purpose of Reading with Character is to provide greater access to reading for children at Ashley Park Elementary School by providing resources for improving the school library as well as the collections in individual classrooms. In addition, the project addresses character education by coordinating this effort with an existing character-education program. The school participates in a district-wide character-education program, which is most effective when woven into every aspect of the curriculum. By selecting books with characters who exemplify desirable traits, this project helps address both literacy and character education. In support of Reading with Character, Phi Kappa Phi awarded it a \$2,500 Literacy Initiative Grant in 2003.

Ashley Park Elementary School is an urban school in Charlotte, North Carolina, with about 420 students in grades K through 5. The school has a balanced language-arts program that places phonics instruction within a complete reading and writing program. In 2001–02, 59 percent of the school's third graders and 64.6 percent of fifth graders were at or above grade-level reading. A

disparity based on race/ethnicity indicates particular concern for African American students. One of Ashley Park's goals is that at least 95 percent of the third and fifth graders will be reading at or above grade level by 2005. Students, teachers, and administrators at Ashley Park are making considerable progress toward meeting their goals for all children.

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### MATERIALS FOR READING

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**R**eading-education research shows that students' reading levels improve when they have greater access to materials that are at the appropriate reading level. This project provides high-interest fiction and nonfiction books for below-grade-level readers. The school's literacy facilitator and the Ashley Park teachers chose a variety of "Hi/Lo" books for each grade level (K through 5). As project manager, I also worked with the school librarian to select books that can be used to support the character-education program in place at the school. They chose children's books with strong characters that exemplify eight traits: respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, justice and fairness, courage, citizenship, and perseverance and hope.

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### TIME TO READ

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**B**y being able to take appropriate reading materials home with them, children have more opportunities to *read to learn* as well as to *read for pleasure*. During the fall of 2003, the school librarian, Ashley Park teachers, and I selected and purchased books that children can read at home with little adult input. As the books arrived at the school, Phi Kappa Phi members worked with teachers to create "take-home" packs for children at each grade level. Parents were encouraged to participate in this "read-at-home" time. The books provided opportunities at home for parents to reinforce and discuss the monthly character-education traits. Children's questions and comments about the stories that they read offered parents important insights into their children's thoughts about themselves and the world around them.



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## BUDGET

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The award money from the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative grant is being used to purchase books and supplies that directly benefit the students at Ashley Park Elementary School. Approximately \$350 has been used for supplies (zip-lock bags, labels, and crates) for the “take home” packs. Approximately \$1,500 has been used to purchase books for the individual classrooms, and the remaining \$650 will buy library books that help teach character traits.

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## PHI KAPPA PHI'S INVOLVEMENT

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This project is engaging University of North Carolina-Charlotte Phi Kappa Phi members in the Ashley Park Reading With Character Project in several ways. Members go to the school to help create packs of books for students to take home. Also, during the school year, members visit classrooms and read to children at the school. After reading a book, the member leads a classroom discussion about the character traits exemplified in the story and about choices made by the characters. The project fits into Phi Kappa Phi's statement of purpose by using grant resources to involve members in a community-based literacy project that exemplifies a *love of learning* and a *love of reading*.

As project manager, I visited a first-grade class and read the book, *Itching and Twitching: A Nigerian Folktale*. The story is about two friends — a monkey and a rabbit. The rabbit complains about the monkey's itching, and the monkey complains about the rabbit's twitching. The book provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss respect for our friends' differences. Some of the other books that have been purchased include:

- *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, by Christine King Farris. Character Trait: Justice and Fairness.
- *Standing in the Light: The Captive Diary of Catharine Carey Logan (Dear America Series)*, by Mary Pope Osborne. Character Trait: Respect.

- *Jackie Robinson*, by James Olsen. Character Trait: Perseverance.
- *Amelia and Eleanor Go For a Ride: Based on a True Story*, by Pam Munoz Ryan. Character Trait: Courage.

Several of the Ashley Park teachers connected our project to writing in the classroom by having their students write thank-you notes to me. The students' notes are the best evidence of the impact of this project:

- I hope that you can read some of the books that you gave us.
- I hope that one day you can come to our school and read some of these books to us.
- Thank you for the books. They will really help us in reading. It will get our grades to come up.
- Thank you for the books. We will treat them with respect.
- Thank you for giving us books. We really need them. If we could, we would give you something back. And that is all I can say.

The character trait for December was “caring.” All of my fellow Phi Kappa Phi members who have participated in the Reading With Character project agree that the teachers and students at Ashley Park Elementary School have given “something back” to us. We have learned the importance of caring and showing our concern for the well-being of others!




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Julia Putnam is a Program Assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs at University of North Carolina-Charlotte. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Middle Grades Mathematics Education.

# Calling All Professors!

***Here is your opportunity to tell all of our readers about the real world of higher education!***

In the fall of 2001, the then-titled *National Forum* published “Teachers Teaching,” a special issue featuring the voices of numerous K–12 teachers from across the nation. Those dedicated educators told us their stories, their wishes, and their hopes for their profession. In the upcoming Fall 2004 issue, we want to give our members in higher education the same opportunity, in an issue that we are titling “Professors Professing: Higher Education Speaks Out.”

We are looking for 500- to 1500-word submissions, dealing with the most pressing issues in higher education today. We will select from among those submissions as many as possible, either in their entirety or in part, to appear in the issue. Topics that you might address include the following:

- Shared governance
- Academic standards and grade inflation
- Finances in higher education
- The academic job market
- Tenure and tenure review
- Adjunct/temporary faculty
- Academic freedom
- Political correctness — real or apparent?
- The student body
- The place of athletics

Of course you are not limited to only these topics, but please make sure that your topic is broad enough to be of general interest to our diverse audience. For example, a controversy unique to the field of Latin American history would not be appropriate unless you are using it as an example to illustrate a broader academic issue.

## ***Guidelines/Rules for Submission:***

- You must be an active Phi Kappa Phi member and employed either full- or part-time at a post-secondary institution (university, college, or junior college), or emeritus from such a position, to submit a manuscript.
- Deadline for submissions will be August 1, 2004; selections will be made by September 1, 2004.
- Only one submission of 500–1500 words, please; multiple submissions will be returned, unread.
- Submit manuscripts either via regular mail (three clean, double-spaced hard copies and an electronic file on either a disk or CD in WordPerfect or Word) or as an e-mail attachment to kaetzjp@auburn.edu.
- Provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope for notification and/or return of manuscript. Manuscripts will not be returned unless postage is included.
- *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* reserves the right to refuse any manuscript.

We are looking forward to your submissions — remember that deadline of August 1, 2004, but early submissions will be greatly appreciated!

## Start planning now to attend the 2004 Phi Kappa Phi National Triennial Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Nestled in the Sandia Mountains, Albuquerque is a city rich in history and culture that offers something for everyone. While there, visit Old Town with its 300-year-old adobe buildings, ride the tram to the top of Sandia Peak, and experience the culture and art of the area's Native American population. Our hotel in the heart of Albuquerque is within easy walking distance of many attractions. Come and join us as we conduct the Society's business, report our successes and concerns, and share in the camaraderie with other volunteers dedicated to doing their part for the nation's oldest and most prestigious multidisciplinary college honor society.

The convention will feature election of national officers for the next triennium, chapter-officer training workshops and presentations, exciting speakers, national scholar and artist award presentations, and much more!

Visit the Phi Kappa Phi Web Page at [www.phikappaphi.org](http://www.phikappaphi.org) (under Events) for updates on plans, and watch for future notices in the *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* and *Phi Kappa Phi Focus*.



All chapter delegates will be reimbursed for travel expenses plus a \$100 voucher. In addition, the first 50 nondelegates to register for the convention will receive \$100.

# 2004 Phi Kappa Phi National Triennial Convention August 5-7 Albuquerque, New Mexico at the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque

A Heritage of  
**EXCELLENCE**



A World of  
**OPPORTUNITY**

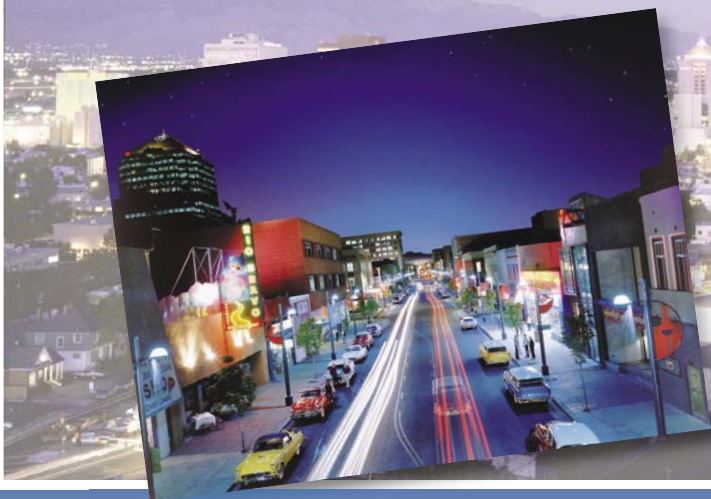


Photo Credits: Route 66, Luminarias in Old Town, and Albuquerque Skyline, marblstreetstudio.com; Night Cityscape, Ron Behrmann; Sandia Peak Tramway, Jay Blackwood.



Ruth Seymour

## Families Read Every Day

Many studies indicate that parental involvement in a child's education accelerates the child's progress. Purcell-Gates (1996) states that children begin to learn about reading and writing in their own homes. Judi Lesiak (1997) cites in her research that reading is a very important activity for building schema useful for successful reading strategies. Children's exposure to reading will affect their progress when they go to school. Our purpose in applying for the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grant was to encourage parents' involvement in their child's literacy at home.

The teachers at Briarwood Elementary in Charlotte, North Carolina, know that parental involvement in a child's education is crucial. To encourage parents' reading to children, the kindergarten teachers at Briarwood have implemented a program called Families Read Every Day (F.R.E.D.). For this program, teachers send home books each day with each student. On the day that the book is sent home, a family member reads the book to the child and records the book title in the child's reading record. The book is then sent back to school for another child to receive and read.

This program is particularly valuable at Briarwood because it is an Equity Plus School, serving a low socioeconomic community. At this school, 79.44 percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch. Many of the kindergarten students do not have books in their homes, so the books that are sent home are usually the only ones that are read to them by family members.

Many of the books in the F.R.E.D. program in past years have become old and torn from being sent to and from



Photos courtesy of Ruth Seymour.

homes. Funding from the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy grant provided money to purchase new, interesting books to replace the old, worn ones. Money from this grant gave four kindergarten classrooms more than four hundred new books to send home, which was more than one hundred books per classroom. The classes that took part had twenty-five to twenty-six students in each classroom.

As project director, I purchased and distributed the books to the teachers. While distributing the books, I also discussed with the teachers how the project would be evaluated. To evaluate the effectiveness of the project, after two weeks of sending home the new books, I asked teachers to complete a survey. The parents of the students were also sent a survey to see how the books had affected the children's reading.

Teacher-feedback forms were given to the four teachers, and parent-feedback forms were given to the teachers to send home for the parents to complete. All teacher surveys were returned, and twenty-two parent surveys were returned. Three of the four teachers saw an increase in parents' reading with their children, and one teacher saw no change. All four teachers noticed that the students saw a difference when the new books were sent home.

The students have become more excited about reading each day. One teacher wrote, "I've heard them say 'I want that one, I want that one!'" — showing how

excited the students are to read the new books. This teacher also commented, "Parents love the excitement that the kids are showing with them. Several want the stories read to them as soon as they arrive home each day." The director of the project also noticed the excitement over the new books as she was at the bus-lot one afternoon. She saw a student get out one of the books; three other students who were around were excited to see the book, and they all began to look through it while waiting for the late bus.

The teachers have enjoyed being able to give the students new books to read each night. Some of the comments were, "We really love the new books," "I have enjoyed seeing the children getting all these new books," "I love them," and "The children love the new books." One teacher reads a book during class after the students have read the book at home, so they get to hear a familiar book again.

The parental feedback was a little more mixed. One classroom returned no forms, two other classes returned five forms, and one class returned twelve forms. In one of the classes that returned five forms, four of the five parents saw an increase in their child's interest in reading. One parent saw no change. In the other classroom that returned five forms, four of the five parents saw no increase in their child's interest in reading because of the books. One parent did write that the child noticed a difference and that the child's interest in books increased. In this classroom with the more neutral responses, the teacher decided that the students should receive the books for more than a month before sending the feedback forms home. I had asked for the feedback forms to be sent after two weeks while the newer books were still a new experience. In the classroom that returned twelve forms, nine parents saw an increase in their child's interest in reading, and three parents saw no change.

Some of the comments from parents who saw an increase in their child's interest were, "We have enjoyed the new books. Each night that we read one my son says, 'That was a great book'"; "She is bringing books home that she wants to read herself. They keep her interested longer, and they are a little more advanced

and a big challenge. I'm very happy with them"; and "Brandon likes being read to." Some of the comments of the parents who did not see any change in their child's interest were "The books are more interesting," "Keep sending books home," and "To be honest, I did not notice if the books were new."

I was disappointed that only 22 percent of parents responded, which was much lower than expected. The feedback from the parents who did take time to complete the forms was valuable and validated the success of the project. Overall, the parents receiving their feedback form after two weeks did see an increase in their child's interest in the books. The class that sent the feedback forms after a month of new book use had a difficult time remembering the old books and seeing any difference in their child's interest.

In the future, I would like to have a meeting with parents before sending home the new books to help parents see the importance of reading being interesting. At the meeting, I would also let parents know the importance of getting their feedback; how to read with the children also could be modeled for the parents.



Ruth Seymour teaches first grade at Briorwood Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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Sharon Darling

## Family Literacy: Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Families



Family literacy is an educational strategy developed by the National Center for Family Literacy to meet the needs of at-risk families. It brings parents and children together to learn and acknowledges the important role that parents have in their children's language and literacy development. Family literacy is based on the premise that a child's first and most influential teacher is the parent. It capitalizes on parents' motivation to do what is best for their children, fostering in families a love of learning, not just as a temporary patch, but as a permanent solution that will last a lifetime.

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### THE NEED

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Each day 34 million people in our country wake to a world that brings them too little to eat and too little to wear, housing that is inadequate and unsafe, and minimal health and child care. According to *Poverty in the United States: 2002*, this figure represents the number of Americans who are living in poverty — an increase of 7.1 million since 2001. The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that in 2000, 2.1 million children under age three were living in poverty and that in 2001, 5 million American children were living in extreme poverty.

These are compelling figures. What does living in poverty mean for these Americans?

Poverty is a serious problem with many complex and deep-rooted causes, the most obvious of which is an economic one. In 2002, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$18,400, while severe poverty meant having an income less than half of this — an annual income of \$9,200 or less for a family of

four. Low income is often the catalyst for problems such as malnutrition, abuse and neglect, inadequate housing, and lack of support systems that ensure high-quality child care, health care, and safety.

Certainly, one of the underlying causes of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty is low-level literacy skills. According to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), individuals with high levels of literacy are more likely to be employed, work more, and earn more than individuals demonstrating lower proficiencies. Individuals at the lowest literacy level have median weekly earnings that are \$450 less than those at the highest level (\$23,400 less per year). The survey also found that 40 to 44 million adults in the United States have literacy skills at the lowest level, and nearly half of these adults live in poverty. The correlation is clear — lack of education contributes to being poor.

Performing at the lowest literacy level of the NALS means being unable to read a bedtime story, a prescription label, or a note from a teacher. It means lacking the skills necessary to read and fill out a job application, to decode a bus schedule, or to understand a tax statement. Some respondents had such limited skills that they were able to respond to only a small part of the survey.

Many parents who struggle with supporting their families economically also face enormous challenges when trying to support their children's language and literacy development. Poverty creates its own priorities, and parents who are facing the many challenges of poverty often find it difficult to view education as a priority — either for themselves or for their children.

Children of parents who lack basic literacy skills are less likely to have access to reading and writing materials at home, to have educational opportunities outside of the home, and are less likely to be enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. They also are less likely to observe role models who are reading and writing throughout the day.

In their book, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, Hart and Risley (1995) describe a lack of language experience that plagues children in poverty. Their study found that children in professional families will hear 20 million more words by age three than children in welfare families. Hart and Risley found that the differences in language interactions between parent and child in the early years were directly reflected in a child's vocabulary growth and use of vocabulary, two measures of an individual's ability to succeed both in school and in the workplace.

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. If parents lack the skills that they need to encourage and enhance their children's language and literacy development — a primary predictor of academic success — their children are more at risk of failing in school.

By the time that disadvantaged children enter kindergarten, their dearth of language experiences and limited exposure to a varied vocabulary can be difficult to overcome and may result in a frustrating school experience. As teenagers, these children may find leaving school an easy alternative to struggling to keep up.

The intergenerational cycle of poverty is a self-perpetuating one, as low literacy skills are passed down from parent to child in a legacy of want. How can we help families — not just adults, not just children, but *families* — to break this cycle? One solution is to give families the opportunity to learn and grow together, as a unit, building on the strengths of each other.

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## A SOLUTION

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The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), located in Louisville, Kentucky, is a nonprofit organization founded in 1989 with a grant from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. NCFL devel-

oped a comprehensive system that stresses adult literacy, parenting, children's education, and interactive literacy experiences between parents and children. Through these four components, family literacy programs provide integrated learning experiences based on families' educational needs.

The *adult education* component addresses the literacy goals of adults. Parents pursue their educational and career goals, gaining the skills that they need to be effective employees, active community members, and leaders and supporters of their families. Comprehensive family literacy services include a focus different from stand-alone adult education programs — working within a family context to make learning relevant for adults as they strive toward their goals and the goals that they have for their children's future.

*Children's education*, designed to promote the growth and development of young children, focuses on the whole child, emphasizing language and literacy development and fostering cognitive, social, and emotional skills. This component engages parents in their child's education to foster meaningful involvement that can be main-

tained throughout the child's educational experience.

*Parent Time* provides opportunities for parents to learn more about their children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth, develop parenting skills and life competencies, and bond with other parents for support and friendship. Through Parent Time sessions, parents increase their knowledge of their children's language and literacy development and the important role that they play in that development. Parents also practice problem-solving and learn about resources available in their community.

*Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time* is a regularly scheduled time for parents and their children to come together to read, work, learn, and play. During this time, parents learn how to create and extend the meaningful intentional interactions with their child that can lead to enhanced language, literacy, and emotional and cognitive development. As instructors model ways to support and extend children's learning, parents recognize opportunities

**Children of parents who lack basic literacy skills are less likely to have access to reading and writing materials at home, to have educational opportunities outside of the home, and are less likely to be enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. They also are less likely to observe role models who are reading and writing throughout the day.**

to interact with children during everyday routines at home or in the community.

Family literacy programs operate throughout the country, in urban and rural areas, preschools and elementary schools, and community-based and faith-based organizations. They consistently serve those populations most in need. Family literacy as a formal educational approach has been recognized through a federal legislative definition that includes programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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### CENTER INITIATIVES

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The NCFL has pioneered family literacy in the United States and supports it in myriad ways. We provide training to the staff of the 6,000 family literacy programs nationwide as well as develop resources for their use. Key to our approach is identifying and applying research to inform our training and to ensure that programs are on a path of continuous improvement and that the services which families receive are of high quality. We serve as advocates for legislation and funding, and we develop program models to explore new strategies in family education.

One of our most enduring initiatives is the Family and Child Education (FACE) program. The FACE program is a collaboration led by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and includes the Parents as Teachers and Engage Learning programs. It has been serving American Indian parents and their children for more than a decade. Though all family literacy programs honor the cultures of the diverse populations served, nowhere is the concern for preserving culture and language more prevalent than in the FACE program. With literacy as the vehicle, FACE programs use language and culture to provide relevant educational experiences for American Indian families.

Our newest initiative, which also infuses education with culturally relevant learning activities, builds on the experiences gained through the FACE program and other initiatives working with widely diverse, high-risk populations. The Hispanic Family Literacy Institute (HFLI), established with an initial \$3.2 million grant from longtime partner Toyota, seeks to expand and enhance family literacy services for the educational, social, and economic advancement of Hispanic and other immigrant families in need.

As the Hispanic population continues to grow (it is now the largest minority population in our country and has the highest school-dropout rate of any of our populations), providing for the needs of these families has become a priority not only in large cities

but in small communities as well. Hispanic children entering our school systems often have parents who do not speak English well, may not be literate in their own language, and do not have the necessary skills to compete in the workforce. Never has the need for intergenerational programs been more pronounced.

As part of HFLI, the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) has been implemented at fifteen sites in five cities with high percentages of immigrant populations. TFLP is designed to help bridge the gap between Hispanic families and schools — a gap created in part by language and educational barriers as well as by poverty. These program models will guide our training services and the development of improved family literacy services for English language learners.

HFLI will enable NCFL to develop an array of resources and programs to help educators understand and honor the rich cultural and family-oriented experiences of Hispanic families.

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### ADVANTAGES OF FAMILY LITERACY

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The flexibility of family literacy makes it a solution to a variety of needs. Many programs incorporate the philosophies of family literacy into their existing services. One major advantage of family literacy as an intervention is that it does not require the creation of new government programs or funding streams. Rather, it builds on existing public support for parental involvement and children's education through programs such as Title I, Reading First, Even Start, and Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. We are reaching out to families in many ways to empower parents to seek educational improvement for themselves and to help their children to learn.

Volunteerism is an increasingly important element in the broad literacy spectrum. NCFL offers a variety of services that takes advantage of the latest technology to support volunteers and programs. By increasing the capacity of programs to use and train volunteers, family literacy can reach the maximum number of parents and children seeking to improve their education.

Verizon Literacy University (VLU) is the first online university dedicated solely to literacy. It is designed to provide better-prepared volunteers and program staff to support literacy organizations. Through an interactive Web site ([www.vluonline.org](http://www.vluonline.org)), VLU offers online courses free to potential volunteers, existing volunteers, and program staff to help them all make the most of their volunteer experience. VLU also provides resources



that help users understand the need for literacy services throughout the nation.

Vital to the success of family literacy is making sure that families in need connect to the programs that can help them. Funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has made possible a national public-service advertising campaign that, along with the Ad Council, is spreading the word about the availability and effectiveness of family literacy. As part of this wide-scale project, and with support from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, NCFL operates a toll-free call center. Those who call the Family Literacy InfoLine (1-877-FAMLIT-1) in response to the ads have their questions answered by a live operator in English or Spanish. Those with Internet connections can visit NCFL's Web site at [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org) to access a Family Literacy Program Directory, which helps users find a family literacy program in their area.

Family literacy provides holistic services that prepare adults for the workplace and help them fulfill supportive roles as parents. At the same time, family literacy fosters bright futures for children by preparing them for academic success in school. When we give low-income families the tools to create better lives for themselves, we are investing not only in families but also in America's future.

Berta Perez, a student speaker at the 2002 National Conference for Family Literacy in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was a family literacy participant, received her GED, and then began a full-time job working in the family literacy program that she had attended. Her words serve as testimony to the power of family literacy:

It is such a great feeling to be able to work in the same family literacy program that taught me to become the person I am today. Every time we get a new student, I see myself standing in the doorway, unsure of my future, unable to speak English, but longing for a better life. I am so happy that I can be a living example of the power of family literacy. They can look at me and say to themselves, if she can do it, so can I. Most of all, my children will know that determination, hard work, and education will open doors and allow you to fly like an eagle.

NCFL relies on private donations to design and sustain programs that meet the most urgent needs of disadvantaged families. Many organizations, including *Worth* magazine, have recognized NCFL as one of the nation's leading charities. NCFL was recently recognized by the Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy as one of three finalists

for the 2003 Excellence in Corporate Philanthropy Directors Award. The award recognizes nonprofit organizations for exemplary efforts in building effective partnerships with corporations.

With the support of many corporations, foundations, organizations, and countless individuals who have given their time and talents as well as their treasures, family literacy is reaching families and, as Berta demonstrates, is making a difference in their lives.

For more information about family literacy and the National Center for Family Literacy, visit our Web site at [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org) or call the Family Literacy InfoLine at 1-877-FAMLIT-1.



Sharon Darling has been a teacher, administrator, and educational entrepreneur, receiving recognition for her groundbreaking work and leadership in the field of education. She serves as an advisor on education issues to governors, policy makers, business leaders, and foundations throughout the nation. Her work has been instrumental in shaping state and federal policies and laws that address critical societal issues such as welfare reform, education reform, and the development of the skilled workforce of tomorrow. Her many awards and recognitions include the 2001 National Humanities Medal awarded by President and Mrs. Bush; the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, Johns Hopkins University, 1998; and the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education, 1996. Ms. Darling is a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

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**Brian D. Robertson**

## **Open Books, Open Hearts — A Read-Aloud Program**

**T**his is a story of a partnership. One partner is Payne Elementary School, an inner-city public school in Washington, D.C. The other partner is Grace Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Virginia, an affluent Washington suburb. And the silent partner providing funding in 2003–04 is The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

The program that these partners take part in is called “Open Books, Open Hearts.” Its goal is to stimulate children to learn the joy of reading by listening to stories being read aloud in small-group settings. Volunteer members of Grace Presbyterian Church read to first- and second-graders at Payne Elementary School twice a month. Each reading session lasts about forty-five minutes and includes reading aloud, discussion, an activity, and a snack. On “give-away” dates, each student is given a copy of one of the books to keep for his or her own personal library. In 2003–04, sixty-five students will each receive seven

books. For many of these students, these are the only books that they own.

The theme for the 2003–04 school year read-aloud program is “Journey Around the World.” Students who participate are given a “passport” that they will use as they travel around the world. Beginning in Washington, the students


use a map to find their first destination — Botswana. The journey is truly around the world, as the books chosen for the program feature stories and destinations in Africa, the Middle East, Antarctica, Japan and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, South America, and Europe.

Payne Elementary School is located in southeast Washington, D.C. Only a few miles from the U.S. Capitol, the neighborhood is one of the poorest sections of the District, with more than 90 percent of the students attending Payne living at or below the poverty level. A member of Grace Presbyterian Church grew up in this neighborhood and suggested that Grace assist the school near his former home. Thus, the Payne/Grace Partnership was formed. The school’s principal specifically requested that Grace establish a read-aloud program at Payne.

Numerous studies demonstrate that reading aloud to children at an early age helps them develop and improve literacy skills — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. A 1983 Department of Education study concluded: “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading, is reading aloud to children.” Reading aloud is a “commercial” for reading, according to Jim Trelease, author of *The Read Aloud Handbook*.

Approximately two dozen volunteer readers from Grace participate, and some thirty additional volunteers assemble activity kits and make snacks for the students. Once each semester, high school and junior high school students from Grace Youth Group use their day off to read to the students at Payne.

Adam Robertson, a member of Grace and a life member of Phi Kappa Phi,




**This Book Belongs to**

**and was donated through**

*The National Honor Society of  
Phi Kappa Phi  
Literacy Initiative Grant*

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**Open Books♥♥Open Hearts  
Program**



**Grace Presbyterian Church**

saw the announcement about the Literacy Initiative Grant program and suggested to the church that this grant might be a source of funding for the “give-away” portion of the read-aloud program. (Adam is a 2001 graduate of Virginia Polytechnic University and State University and is currently enrolled in a PhD program in cell biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.) As a personal commitment to the goals of literacy and service to others, Adam donated additional money to Open Books, Open Hearts in honor of his late mother, who died in August of 2002 from melanoma. She was a graduate school member of Phi Kappa Phi (University of Maryland, 1976).



The Board of Directors of Phi Kappa Phi recently broadened the organization’s mission statement by adding the phrase “and to engage the community of scholars in service to others.” Open Books, Open Hearts is an example of this mission statement in action as the members of Grace Presbyterian Church; the principal, faculty, and staff of Payne Elementary School; and the members of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi all combine their time, talents, and resources to help and serve elementary school students in Washington, D.C.



The “partners” in the Payne/Grace Partnership — the principal, faculty, and staff of Payne Elementary School and the members of Grace Presbyterian Church — have found that the Open Books, Open Hearts program is tremendously rewarding to those who have made the commitment to literacy. The members of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, by their financial support, have made the 2003–04 program an overwhelming success story.



Brian D. Robertson is a retired career naval officer and a lawyer with Paralyzed Veterans of America in Washington, D.C. He is a member and elder (not currently serving on Session) of Grace Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Virginia, and has been an active supporter of the church’s youth mission and the Payne Read-Aloud literacy program. He recently remarried and his spouse, Margaret, is a school teacher who has participated in the Open Books, Open Hearts program.



Photos courtesy of Margaret LeBaron Robertson.

Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt

## “Living Voices”: 2003 Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence Project and the West Virginia Young Writers Fiction Competition

The Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence Project was developed in 1998 by the Department of English at Shepherd College; its purpose is to celebrate and honor the work of a distinguished contemporary Appalachian writer each year. The literary residency was designed to function in concert with the Appalachian Heritage Festival, an annual celebration of Appalachian artistic and cultural traditions, sponsored by the Performing Arts Series at Shepherd. To encourage aspiring young writers, aged sixteen to twenty-eight, and to foster literacy and the kind of networking that encourages literary achievement, Shepherd College developed in 2002 the West Virginia Young Writers Fiction Competition. In this competition, fiction submissions from throughout the state of West Virginia are judged by a panel of teachers and writers, with the final selection of the winning works made by the Appalachian Writer-in-Residence. A \$1,000 Literacy Initiative Grant from Phi Kappa Phi helped to make possible both the fiction competition and the residency in 2003.

Southern Book Critics Circle Award-winner Robert Morgan (*Gap Creek* and *The Truest Pleasure*) was the Fifth Annual Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence. From September 29 through October 4, 2003, Morgan visited Shepherd College and the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, fulfilling the requirements of the residency. Morgan,

an international best-selling fiction writer and poet whose book, *Gap Creek*, was chosen as an Oprah Winfrey Book Club selection, came to Shepherd College to receive the Appalachian Heritage Writer's Award for his body of work in fiction and poetry and for helping foster through his writing an understanding of Appalachian heritage and cultural traditions. Morgan, who teaches creative writing at Cornell University, is also a recipient of the James G. Hanes Poetry Prize Fellowship of Southern Writers (1991), National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1968, 1974, 1982, 1987), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1988–1989), and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (1986). In 1986, he was selected as Hawthornden Fellow in Poetry at the International Writers Retreat at Hawthornden Castle, Scotland. In 1991 he received the North Carolina Award in Literature. His stories have been listed by *Publishers Weekly* as Outstanding Books, and *Gap Creek* was named Book of the Year for 2000 by the Association of Appalachian Writers.

During the week-long residency, sponsored in part by the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grant, Morgan conducted writing workshops for young writers; visited the public schools for literary discussions; met with community book clubs, college classes, and other community and college groups interested in literature and writing; and participated in interviews with newspapers, West

Virginia public radio, and the editor of the *Antietam Review* literary magazine. Morgan also attended receptions and spoke at literary programs about literacy, story telling, and the Appalachian culture that features so prominently in his novels. The highlight of the residency, however, was the September 29 Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 281 Speakers Series held in the Scarborough Library at the Robert Byrd Legislative Studies Center. Morgan spoke to a packed auditorium about his own journey to literacy and story telling, growing up in the rural mountains of North Carolina, which serve as inspiration for his poetry and as a setting for most of his stories.

The Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grant also sponsored the West Virginia Young Writers Fiction Competition, for which Morgan made the final selection and presented the \$500 first prize and runner-up prizes at the Appalachian Heritage Festival Concert on Friday, October 3. At the Festival, Morgan also read from his newest novel, *Brave Enemies*, a love story told from the point of view of a young mountain woman and detailing her search for her husband across enemy lines during the American Revolution. More than eighty young writers from across the state of West Virginia participated in the Fiction Competition. Morgan met with the winner and runners-up to encourage their continued involvement with writing and story telling. The first-place winner of the competition was Charles Town, West Virginia, resident Charlotte Henning (age twenty-six) for her story "Unseen"; second-place honors went to Morgantown resident Abigail Aikens (age twenty-one) for her story "Fung Shwee"; and honorable mention was won by Masontown, West Virginia, resident Natalie Sypolt (age

twenty-two) for her short story "Flaming Jesus." The Residency Committee was pleased to see an extraordinary response from both high school students and college students from almost every part of the state. For information about the 2004 Young Writers Fiction Competition or the Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence Project, see [www.shepherd.edu/englweb/residence.htm](http://www.shepherd.edu/englweb/residence.htm).




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Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt received her PhD from the University of Georgia in 1982 in British Literature and Linguistics. She currently teaches in the Department of English, where she is Director of the Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence Project and the West Virginia Young Writers Fiction Competition, chair of the campus Curriculum and Instruction Committee, and Shepherd College Representative to the Advisory Council of Faculty of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. Shurbutt's recent publications (2002, 2003) include biographies/critical studies of Zelda Fitzgerald, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Flannery O'Connor for Scribner's *American Writers* series (Jay Parini, editor) and a study of the work of Margaret Atwood for the *English Writers Series*. She has published in *Women and Language*, *The Southern Literary Journal*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Women's Studies Journal*, *Essays in Literature*, and a variety of other scholarly and interdisciplinary journals. Book publications include *Reading/Writing Relationships* (Kendall Hunt, 1986), the introduction to Caroline Norton's *Lost and Saved* (Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1989), and "Writing Lives and Telling Tales: Visions and Revisions" in *Untying the Tongue: Gender, Power and the Word* (Greenwood Press, 1998).

Bethel House Kogut

## Why Adult Literacy Matters



Photograph used by permission of ProLiteracy.

With so much attention being focused on improving student performance and schools' accountability these days, it is often difficult to get policymakers, educators, and the general public to appreciate why attaining higher levels of adult literacy also merits a national commitment. But adult literacy does matter. In fact, the success of our current education policies and goals is inextricably linked to achieving improved levels of adult literacy in this country.

For the past ten years or so, literacy advocates have cited results from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) to describe the magnitude of the U.S. adult-literacy problem. NALS established and evaluated literacy levels of the U.S. population and introduced a now widely accepted definition of literacy as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.” According to the 1992 report, one in five adults — between 40 and 44 million people — lacks sufficient literacy skills to meet daily needs in their families, their workplaces, and their communities. Despite this finding and the United States’s middle-place ranking among industrialized nations on most measures of adult literacy, many of our nation’s educators, elected representatives, and social commentators are still not convinced that significant numbers of U.S. adults struggle with functional illiteracy.

Adult-literacy advocates and critics alike are anxiously awaiting the next important report, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), which will be released in 2005. This report is expected to clarify the correlations between literacy and economic status, occupation, education, health, and voting behavior. It also will measure the ability of the least-literate adults to decode and to recognize and read words with fluency in either English or Spanish.

Once NAAL is released, adult basic-education and literacy programs will have a new set of numbers to work with as they plan and advocate on behalf of functionally illiterate adults. More significant, though, will be the contribution that the report will make to our understanding of how literacy instruction and literacy programs can help address an array of social problems including poverty, rising health costs, joblessness, prison recidivism, and so on.

Some questions remain, however, that NAAL will not fully answer. One is, why does the United States have an adult literacy problem at all? ProLiteracy Worldwide President Robert Wedgeworth considered this question in his recent State of Adult Literacy

2003 report and identified several factors that contribute to low functional-literacy rates among adults. One of the most important of these is immigration, a demographic factor that is basically outside the purview of our education system.

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## IMMIGRATION

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Immigration is now driving U.S. population growth. The 31.1 million immigrants identified in the 2000 Census is more than triple the 9.6 million who were resident in 1970 and more than double the 14.1 million in 1980. Roughly a third of the U.S. foreign-born population has arrived since 1990. Most important, one in five U.S. children is the child of an immigrant.

While immigration fuels our nation’s vitality and productivity, it also creates literacy challenges. Taken as a group, immigrants have less education and are poorer than native-born Americans. Thirty percent of immigrants lack a high school diploma — that is 3.5 times the rate for natives. U.S. literacy programs, both publicly funded and community-based, provide the critical “front door” for these newcomers, helping them learn to read and write English, master

basic educational skills, prepare for citizenship, and obtain jobs that will provide them and their families with financial security. Today, 90 percent of ProLiteracy America’s 1,200 community-based adult-literacy programs are delivering English as a Second Language (ESL) and related instruction to immigrants and their families. Almost three-quarters of these programs report waiting lists of adults seeking instruction.

**Literacy programs that work with adults are very familiar with learners who never mastered the basic skills that they needed to be successful in school. Many of these adults struggle with learning disabilities or otherwise lack confidence that they still can improve their reading, writing, and other literacy skills. They find success in community-based literacy programs partly because the instructional setting is so unlike the formal-classroom settings where they have failed in the past.**

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## KIDS LEAVE SCHOOL WITHOUT SKILLS

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Another factor that contributes to the U.S. adult functional-illiteracy problem is that young people are leaving school without the basic literacy skills that they need. According to a recent study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel

Hill, evidence linking literacy problems in early adolescence with dropping out at a later age is just beginning to emerge. Understandably, middle and high school curricula assume that fundamental skills are in place and can make little or no allowance for students who lack the ability to handle their coursework. When remedial or resource help is available, it necessarily focuses on course material, not reading or other basic skills.

Literacy programs that work with adults are very familiar with learners who never mastered the basic skills that they needed to be successful in school. Many of these adults struggle with learning disabilities or otherwise lack confidence that they still can improve their reading, writing, and other literacy skills. They find success in community-based literacy programs partly because the instructional setting is so unlike the formal-classroom settings where they have failed in the past.

Improving schools and giving them the resources that they need to deliver quality education to an ever more diverse population is certainly critical to reducing dropout rates. However, it will not eliminate our adult-literacy problem because some of the most daunting barriers to students' school success are simply beyond the reach of the educational system. Two of these barriers are student mobility and the intergenerational transfer of literacy skills.

It is now estimated that 60 percent of students in the United States make unscheduled school changes between first and twelfth grades. These young learners are typically from low-income families and attend inner-city schools where the enrolled population can change as much as 100 percent a year. Mobile students have lower-than-average achievement and drop out at significantly higher rates than their peers whose families relocate less frequently or not at all. In short, students who move a lot and have limited mastery over basic skills grow into adults who find that their options are limited by low literacy.

Another formidable barrier to school success for many students is that literacy skills — or the lack of them — are passed from one generation to the next. According to a 1999 report by the U.S. Department of Education, the “single most significant predictor of children’s literacy is their mother’s literacy level.” Numerous studies show that children whose parents have less than a high school education tend to have the poorest performance on reading tests. Children whose parents are high school graduates do better, and children of parents with even more education do better still.

When parents lack sound literacy skills, they cannot read to their children, help them in school, or

show them how reading, writing, and mathematical skills are essential in daily life. Intervention, however, can change this pattern. We know, for example, that when adults receive literacy instruction and their skills improve, there is a corresponding improvement in their children’s school performance. Moreover, these gains are long-term. Children whose parents (or caregivers) are committed to improving their skills are healthier, drop out of school less, have fewer teen pregnancies, less joblessness, and less social alienation.

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## EDUCATION POLICIES MUST WORK TOGETHER

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When adults improve their basic literacy skills, they benefit not only themselves, but also their families and their communities. Adult basic-education and literacy programs help adults to develop workplace skills, get jobs (or better ones), and master the life skills that will ensure their long-term financial and personal security. These programs also prepare learners to participate in our democratic society by offering them citizenship instruction, classes about the voting process, and opportunities to learn about issues that affect their community, their state, and their nation. ProLiteracy Worldwide and its colleague organizations promote public policies that support the adult basic-education and literacy system and recognize its essential role in our national commitment to schools. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy should help build the case for support for this new approach.



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**Bethel House Kogut is vice president of Corporate Communications for ProLiteracy Worldwide.**

For more information on how U.S. adult literacy programs are making a difference, please visit [www.proliteracy.org/about/outcomes.asp](http://www.proliteracy.org/about/outcomes.asp).

ProLiteracy Worldwide was formed in 2002 by the merger of Laubach Literacy International and Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., the largest organization of community-based literacy programs in the world. ProLiteracy has 1,200 local literacy affiliates in the United States, eighty-six partner programs in forty-eight developing nations, and includes a publishing division, New Readers Press. ProLiteracy Worldwide’s mission is “to sponsor educational programs and services whose purpose is to empower adults and their families by assisting them to acquire the literacy practices and skills they need to function more effectively in their daily lives and participate in the transformation of their societies.”





**Robert E. Nolan and  
Aaron Christensen**

## **Phi Kappa Phi Supports Nascent University- Community Project**



Photos courtesy  
of Aaron Christensen.

In 2003, Phi Kappa Phi awarded Oklahoma State University (OSU) a one-year grant of \$1,680 through its Literacy Initiative Grant program to support the university's role in staffing and managing a nascent community organization, the Stillwater Hispanic English Language Initiative (SHELI). This project was the brainchild of Dr. Maureen Nemecek and Rev. David Medina. Dr. Nemecek was an associate professor of journalism at Oklahoma State and director of the Master's in International Studies program. Rev. Medina is associate pastor of St. Francis Catholic Church in Stillwater, Oklahoma. His interest in the project was to meet the social and cultural needs of Mexican immigrants to the area, as well as their spiritual needs. Since 1992, the Hispanic population has increased 300 percent in the surrounding area of central and northeastern Oklahoma, making such programs necessities.

SHELI began in October 2002 as a community project to serve the communication needs of Mexican and Central American immigrants to Stillwater, a town with a population of approximately 40,000. Rev. Medina arranged for SHELI to use four classrooms in the building that once was the parochial elementary school for St. Francis Catholic Church. For many years the building has been used only part-time, that is, intermittently for preschool, church meetings, and adults' and children's religious education. In an effort to assist the growing Hispanic population, the church made the building available

to SHELI on Tuesday and Thursday evenings throughout the year.

The church's contribution of donated classrooms includes the costs of heat, lighting, and air conditioning. Volunteers for the program come from the community and from students in the Master's in International Studies program at OSU. Faculty and staff also volunteer their services to SHELI. The church's donation of space and utilities is estimated to be worth about \$500 a month for eleven months. Hence, the contribution of St. Francis provides one of the main economic resources for the program. The second major resource comes from volunteer teachers in the community who donate more than four hours each per week to the project. Some of the volunteer teachers also have undergone extensive training at the Stillwater Literacy Council in methods of teaching English as a Second Language.

The announcement of Phi Kappa Phi's Literacy Initiative Grants prompted Sam Meharg, an International Studies graduate student; Dr. Maureen Nemecek, faculty sponsor; Joyce Montgomery, coordinator of Campus Volunteers; and Dr. Mac McCrory, Phi Kappa Phi representative, to submit a proposal to the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grant Competition. Notification of the award was received on May 12, 2003. Funds associated with the grant became available on July 1.

The most pressing need for the program since its inception had been the lack of instructional materials. A SHELI volun-

teer familiar with ESL instructional materials reviewed a collection of materials on file at the Stillwater Literacy Council and recommended adopting the Steck-Vaughn series, *Real Life English*, levels 1–4. These materials provide ready-made lesson plans for the volunteer teachers and ensure that the program will have some consistency. The materials also fit with the purpose of the project — to enable immigrants in Stillwater to use the post office, shop at local food stores, find doctors, and take advantage of city services. The *Real Life English* series seemed to reviewers to respond to the need of students to be able to cope with everyday situations such as paying the gas bill, finding the public school, and asking directions. Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative Grant funds were used to purchase these materials.

Attendance at the classes has ranged from a high of eight to a low of four in the advanced section, and from a high of eighteen to a low of four in the beginning section. Originally, there was great enthusiasm for the classes during Fall 2002 and Spring 2003. The best attendance months so far have been from April to October, and the lowest attendance months have been December and January, which could be related to the relatively harsher weather conditions during the winter months. The SHELI volunteer staff also realizes that many participants in the program move back to Mexico during the winter months. Actual attendance as of this writing is seven in the beginning section, four in the intermediate section, and five in the advanced section.

When SHELI began in the fall of 2002, the three levels of instruction were populated exclusively by Hispanics, with some of them coming from as far as twenty miles away. As time went on, word got out that classes were conducted for the community free of charge, that the instructors supplied the instructional materials, and that anyone could participate, regardless of their religious affiliation. Soon, individuals from other

countries began to frequent the literacy program. SHELI so far has served students from Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela, Nepal, Korea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and China.

Future plans include the purchase of additional instructional materials. SHELI staff hopes to purchase beginner-level readers and a placement test corresponding to the *Real Life English* series. Purchasing computers was suggested; however, only older, previously owned computers would be suitable for the Center because of the security issues and the difficulty of storing them each night in a facility used for multiple purposes. Many contemporary software programs also require higher speeds and larger memories than those found in donated computers.

What has SHELI learned about the participants? Some have been residents of Stillwater for many years. One student in the intermediate class, for example, is a relatively long-time resident of Stillwater, having lived and worked here for ten years. He understands almost everything in day-to-day communication but desires to work more on his production of English expressions and his accent. He spends the week writing down things that he hears on television, so when he comes to class, he has twenty to thirty questions about usage and word meaning. He is truly an example of a self-directed learner.



Other SHELI participants have moved to the community to take construction jobs, which require minimal English-language skills. Several SHELI participants in the beginning section group work for a landscaping company that has a bilingual foreman. The company provides housing for these migrant workers; consequently, their need to learn English revolves around a narrow set of communication skills related to their food, health, and

laundry needs. These SHELI participants attend classes during the growing season of late March through October and return to their countries of origin once the growing season comes to an end. Almost all have families, wives, children, or parents in their countries of origin.

Other participants want to learn more about the community. Thus, some classes are held at sites outside of the school. Classes for the advanced section have been conducted in the public library, where students not only visited the library for the first time, but also learned how to apply for a library card and what services the library offered. Other trips were taken to the supermarket and the OSU homecoming parade. As one group, mostly SHELI students of Chinese heritage, walked through a dense crowd at the homecoming “walk-around,” one student observed that the crowds milling around the homecoming displays reminded her of her city life in China.

Dr. Mac McCrory, director of the OSU Wellness Center and a Phi Kappa Phi representative, gave two presentations describing the local health care system in Stillwater. His presentation was in English, with two translators available to those whose English skills were inadequate for the presentation. He described health services in the community that might be available to those lacking health insurance. One such health service is provided by the Payne County Health Department during certain hours of the week. During his presentation he asked for a show of hands from those who had no health insurance. Not surprisingly, probably half of the group of twenty-four SHELI participants raised their hands.



Thanks to Phi Kappa Phi, SHELI has a strong chance of continuing. Future plans include training all volunteers in the proper use of the Steck-Vaughn materials as well as providing better intake counseling and placement testing. Coordinators and volunteer teachers continue to come from the OSU Master’s program in International Studies. Aaron Christensen, the current coordinator, has recruited three OSU students to teach this academic semester. While Christensen and fellow student Brittany Glenn will be graduating in May, the International Studies program will continue to supply SHELI with key volunteer teachers and potential coordinators.




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Robert E. Nolan is an associate professor of adult and continuing education at Oklahoma State University and a SHELI volunteer since its inception.

Aaron Christensen is a graduate assistant in the OSU study abroad office. He is a Phi Kappa Phi member and will graduate with an M.S. in International Studies on May 7, 2004.

Kristie Reilly  
**Building Bridges**

*Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. . . It is the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman, and child can realize his or her full potential.*

— U.N. Secretary General and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Kofi Annan



Photo courtesy of Kristie Reilly.

Realizing full potential is sometimes a two-way street. Phi Kappa Phi's laudable commitment to funding Literacy Initiative grants has provided a perfect avenue for Kean University volunteers and local children in Elizabeth, New Jersey, to walk this road together.

Thanks to the foresight and generosity of Phi Kappa Phi, the Kean University chapter of Phi Kappa Phi began a literacy outreach program at the Elizabeth Public Library, and the results have been rewarding for the children, for Kean students, and for the faculty.

Using the expertise and resources of the Kean University chapter, faculty and students throughout the campus community are participating in a monthly interactive story time that is gaining momentum and, we hope, is making a real difference.

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### FIRST STEPS

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We started out by applying for and receiving a \$2,500 grant from the Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative, which was supplemented by an additional \$1,670 contribution from the Kean University chapter of Phi Kappa Phi.

Armed with this budget, we have created a program that not only gets children together for a traditional story time, but also provides books for each youngster who participates. The target age is five- and six-year-olds, but all ages are welcomed.

The Elizabeth Public Library is just a five-minute ride from the Kean campus, and the enthusiasm of Librarian Carolyn Geeding made it well worth the trip. Geeding was as excited about the program as we were, and her willingness to work on evenings and weekends was crucial to launching it.

We then decided on a monthly story time schedule, established themes and instruction teams for each month, and produced brochures and fliers to get the word out.

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### HITTING OUR STRIDE

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At the time of this writing, the library has hosted five successful story times. The themes chosen — Dinosaurs, Ocean Life, Winter Wonderland, Building and Creating, and Friendship — have been very well-received. After our first story time, it was apparent that Spanish-speaking students were particularly interested, so the Ocean Life story time was our first bilingual hour. Future planned themes include Around the World and Celebrating Diversity.

Thus far, each story time starts the same way. A few children come over to the designated stage area in the children's section of the library, most prompted by mothers who are eager to see their kids discover the joy of reading. Once we begin the first book (we usually read about five or six each hour, with sing-along songs and chats in between) the ears of other children in the library perk up, and those inquisitive youngsters make their way over to the fun.

Each story time ends the same way, too, with the children scampering to the book table to pick out their favorite book to take home and read again and again with siblings and friends. Any extras are donated directly to the library. Coloring books and crayons are also distributed for children to take home as a way to creatively reinforce the theme. Children who attend the story time regularly are building nice libraries in their own homes.

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### THE NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY

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We embarked on this endeavor with the purpose of promoting literacy among youngsters in an area in which illiteracy rates are unacceptably high. The indescribable feeling of watching children bond with specific books and making the books their own is an unexpected, albeit welcome, bonus.

Most instructors came to this program with a love of books. The opportunity to share this love with others and see it grow is indeed a powerful thing. Even more powerful, however, is the child who learns to love books and all the knowledge, enjoyment, and confidence that springs from that love. The more children we can reach, the better off we shall all be.




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Kristie Reilly is the Acting Dean of the Nathan Weiss Graduate College and president of the Kean University chapter of Phi Kappa Phi. She is also the mother of two young boys.

# The Mission of Literacy USA

Edith Gower

Raymond (not his real name) was born in Louisiana during World War II. His family members were sharecroppers, so he was primarily out working in the fields instead of being in school after the third grade. At age eleven, he began apprenticing with a plumber. By the time that he was eighteen, he was married, had moved to Texas, and had his own successful plumbing business. When he was in his early fifties, his life fell apart. He was divorced and had moved to the state of Washington.

As Raymond began to pull himself back together, he investigated the possibility of taking the test to get his plumber's license. Much to his dismay, he discovered that the Washington state test was entirely written. The test in Texas years before had been a practical one with a few multiple-choice questions on which he had guessed. All of his life Raymond had struggled without the basic literacy skills that we take for granted. He was embarrassed, believing that he was the only one who had not learned to read as a child. It was something that he had even kept from his own children. Not able to read what was on a restaurant menu, he would take his chances by pointing at an item or by ordering what the person next to him was having. He could eyeball the size of pipe. His wife had kept the company books. When faced with having to read in other circumstances, he would say that he had forgotten his glasses and then would take the papers home for his wife to read. When he found himself without his wife, he was also without a livelihood.

Raymond heard about a place in his neighborhood called the Goodwill Learning Center, where adults could learn to read or improve their read-

ing. He had no choice but to summon up all of his courage and walk through the door of that center. He had even pictured it looking like a children's school inside and had worried that the seats might be too small. Instead, he found a friendly, casual atmosphere and warm smiles from professional staff, well-trained volunteers, and even more important, people like him. He attended small classes of six or eight and was tutored between classes. It took him four years, while he was once again a plumber's apprentice, to get his GED and pass the license exam. When Raymond passed the exam, the learning center hosted a big party to celebrate his starting his own business.

Raymond took great pride in telling his story to motivate people like him to improve their basic skills and to encourage others to support literacy services by volunteering or contributing financially. He became the star of the King County Literacy Coalition's speakers' bureau and enjoyed giving back to the system that had given him so much.

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## ONE OF MANY

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Raymond's tale is just one of many. Children do not acquire the basic literacy skills that they need for any number of reasons. Some are ill and out of school for extended periods. Others are moved around frequently and never get settled in one place long enough to learn. Children with learning disabilities, various learning styles, or distracting barriers such as being hungry are not given appropriate attention by our social systems. The education system is not fine-tuned enough to recog-

nize when children first begin to fail and to provide proper intervention at the earliest point possible. Poor training and staff development within the education system contribute to the problem, as does a lack of incentives for outstanding people to enter the often undervalued teaching profession. Today we also have added high-stakes standardized testing to this mix, which is pushing our borderline, at-risk youth out of school before graduation, so as not to lower their school's rating. Not only are people such as Raymond disenfranchised, but their children are also at high risk, as low-level literacy is a legacy passed from one generation to the next. Compounding this problem is a huge influx of non-English-speaking immigrants.

All told, some 90 million people lack sufficient reading skills to function successfully in our society, according to the National Adult Literacy Survey of 1992. A new survey soon will be published that purportedly will show no substantial improvement since 1992. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that only 10 percent of those in need of services are getting assistance, and 50 percent of those individuals drop out of classes within three weeks of beginning them.

### THE NEED FOR LITERACY COALITIONS

Access to literacy services and the quality of those services must be improved. A well-coordinated and well-funded system of high-quality literacy services must exist across the country, so that all people requiring literacy services will have ready access to them and can reach their highest potential. Literacy USA is a driving force toward making this happen. Literacy USA is a coalition of coalitions. Formerly known as the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions, the organization was formed in 1995 out of a need for urban coalition leaders to come together to network, share expertise, and speak with a single, powerful voice. It has just expanded its membership to include state, regional, and rural literacy coalitions. Literacy USA now has sixty-five member coalitions, which represent more than 4,400 service providers assisting more than 2,700,000 learners. Providers include adult basic-education, GED, English as a Second Language, and family-literacy

programs. They range from community college- and school-based programs, to workplace, faith-based, and community-based programs. It is the most diverse literacy network in the country.

Local literacy coalitions support literacy-service providers and community stakeholders working together to meet the challenge of illiteracy — doing together what they cannot do individually. These organizations play a central role in creating the necessary infrastructure for service delivery by making

**Access to literacy services and the quality of those services must be improved. A well-coordinated and well-funded system of high-quality literacy services must exist across the country, so that everyone requiring literacy services will have ready access to them and can reach their highest potential. Literacy USA is a driving force toward making this happen.**

literacy a priority in the community, targeting investments of time and funds where they have the greatest impact, providing coordination to ensure the most efficient and effective services, expanding services and access to them, and ensuring accountability to achieve high-quality instruction and program management. Although most Literacy USA members began with a focus on only adult and family literacy, they are now playing a broader

role, with programs that cover all age groups.

Literacy USA supports these local efforts by building its members' capacity, advocating for literacy, establishing an accountability system and standards, and building awareness of the issue. Literacy USA brings stakeholders to the table to work together, just as local coalitions do. The organization is supported by a Corporate Advisory Board consisting of Dollar General Corp., Half Price Books, IBM, Pitney Bowes, Scholastic Inc., Time Warner Inc., and Verizon Communications. This group not only assists Literacy USA financially, but its members also contribute their time and energy toward other resource development, marketing, planning, and advocacy.

Literacy USA's goals are advanced through a variety of programs and activities. Through coalitions, Literacy AmeriCorps places 130 AmeriCorps members with literacy-service providers to tutor and teach in six cities, plus a new capacity-building corps assists emerging and transitioning coalitions directly. The Targeted Technical Assistance program funds a consultant who meets on location with emerging or transitioning coalitions, holding meetings with board, staff, providers, and business and local government leaders. Two national meetings are held each year, with peer learning occurring daily on an electronic discussion list. Literacy USA maintains a rich Web

site that lists materials for members to borrow and serves as a portal to a wealth of other resources. For example, 100,000 Scholastic books are distributed through the network each year. Advocacy alerts provide guidance for coalitions and their stakeholders to participate in government with a single strong voice. Literacy COUNTS is a data-collection project in the developmental stage that will measure learner progress across funding streams and track return on investment.

Two new taskforces have just been formed. The Coalition Evaluation Taskforce is looking at how coalitions hold themselves accountable and will eventually produce quality standards for literacy coalitions. The Social Justice Taskforce is looking at the dynamics among racism, poverty, and literacy, and how Literacy USA can take steps to help create a more just society through its work.

None of the social or economic challenges that we face as a nation today can be overcome unless all members of our communities have the basic literacy skills that they need. Literacy is essential for families to promote education and learning within the home, for children to succeed in school, and for people to

become employed, self-sufficient, and to advance in their career. It is essential for people to make informed decisions about civic and health issues, for them to navigate in this information and technological age, and for communities to combat the forces of poverty and crime.

If we are to reach our potential as a democratic society and as individuals in our roles as family members, workers, and citizens, we must all have access to information, express ideas and opinions with confidence, solve problems and make independent decisions, and keep up with change in a world that grows ever more complex. One hundred percent literacy is a challenge that can be met. It requires the engagement of 100 percent of the stakeholders in every community. We are all stakeholders.



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Edith Gower is executive director of Literacy USA. She can be reached at [Edith.gower@naulc.org](mailto:Edith.gower@naulc.org). For more information about Literacy USA, please visit its Web site at [www.naulc.org](http://www.naulc.org).

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## SMOKING MY GRANDFATHER'S PIPE WHILE FISHING (AS I WISH HE HAD DONE)

There's a zippered pocket inside  
my fishing vest, where I keep  
my grandpa's pipe. Tonight,  
on a sandbar just below the snag,  
the time is finally right  
to pack the bowl  
with fresh tobacco — the way  
I saw him do it  
when I was just a kid —  
and burn it into life. At last light,  
when fish can't even see  
a Clouser Minnow, I send sweet smoke  
skyward, a message from his grandson,  
whom he'll think irresponsible —  
fishing on a harvest moon.

SHAWN PITTARD

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Shawn Pittard lives near the American River in Sacramento, California. He has recent or forthcoming work in *Confluence*, *The Distillery*, and *Poetry Now*.

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Mary Beth Pringle and Adrienne Cassel

## For the Love of Words: Dayton, Ohio's Five Rivers Poetry Project

*the syllables fluttering  
saying please love me,  
from continent to continent  
over the curve of the earth.*

– Joseph Millar  
“Telephone Repairman”

The Five Rivers Poetry Project was born in March 2003, partly in response to the war in Iraq and partly as a result of our continuing awareness of the silencing of women's voices worldwide. As teachers of literature and women's studies, both of us know that words are an effective tool for reclaiming what has been lost through disenfranchisement and oppression. We feel that poetry provides the best means by which each of us — no matter our sex, nationality, religion, ethnicity, or sexual preference — expresses our longings, joys, angers, and sorrows. We believe that by affording occasions to share poetry, we are creating opportunities for increased understanding that will lead to a more peaceful and humane world.

Thanks to a Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Initiative grant, two classes at Wright State University (Dayton, Ohio) — Women's Poetry of Resistance and Poets in the Community — plan to devote their quarter-long efforts to increasing a love for poetry in the Greater Dayton area. Students in the Women's Poetry of Resistance course focus on the words of women too often overlooked or suppressed. The Poets in the Community class will foster a love of language by providing opportunities for Greater Dayton community members to experience the power of words in verse.

Five programs will serve as the foundation for this work. Following precedents set by London's Poetry on the Underground and the U.S. Poetry in Motion program, *Poetry Rides the Bus* will display poems in poster format on Dayton RTA buses. Poems posted on buses will be a mix of well-known verses and those written by Dayton children.

*Poetry Around Town*, joining the American Poetry and Literacy Project, will brighten Dayton's winter months by bringing poetry to people in unexpected places. Students will distribute free copies of Dover Thrift editions' *Great Poems by American Women*.

To reconnect poetry to its powerful oral tradition, Five Rivers Poetry Project will host several *Memory Circles*, during which community participants will recite much-loved poems that they have memorized. They also will discuss the poems' meanings in their own lives.

*Dayton's Favorite Poems* will give Dayton-community members a chance to be videotaped reading the poems that they love most and discussing the reasons those poems are important to them.

The fifth project, *Poets in the Schools*, will provide training for college students to teach poetry-writing workshops in area schools and community centers.

This exciting work is already well under way. Students in the Women's Poetry of Resistance course, taught by Professor Adrienne Cassel, began the term with an examination of poems written by women revolutionaries in El Salvador and South Africa. They also studied poems written by African American women in response to women's oppression around the world.

Focusing right now on the *Poetry Around Town* program, teams of students from the Women's Poetry of Resistance class are preparing to distribute hundreds of free poetry anthologies around Dayton. They are writing letters that explain the project and inserting them into copies of the anthologies. The students are also tucking in copies of favorite contemporary poems by internationally known women writers. On distribution day, enthusiastic students will crisscross the city in a van, dropping off volumes of poetry at sites that the students have chosen. So far, key drop-offs include women's shelters, the YWCA, and other places where women congregate.

Women's Poetry of Resistance students also will figure importantly in the *Memory Circles* program. Students will organize and lead individual memory circles or avoid a final exam by memorizing and presenting a poem during a *Circle* event.

Poets in the Community students, to be taught by Professor Cassel in the spring, will continue the work of the Women's Poetry of Resistance group. As part of the *Poetry in the Schools* program, Poets in the Community students will plan poetry-writing activities and design poetry-writing workshops, which they will conduct in local elementary and secondary schools. They also will select poems to be displayed on Dayton-area buses as part of the *Dayton Rides the Bus* program.

In an effort to include secondary students and teachers, The Five Rivers Poetry Project has invited high school videography students and their teachers to film Dayton-community members reading poems for the *Dayton's Favorite Poems* project. Following a procedure recommended by Robert Pinsky's renowned

Favorite Poems Project, *Dayton's Favorite Poems* will distribute the videotapes to local television stations for public viewing.

These five programs funded by Phi Kappa Phi's 2003 Literacy Grant are just the beginning of the work we envision for the Five Rivers Poetry Project. Next year, we hope to expand our outreach efforts by funding a series of visiting writers, continuing work with local schools and community organizations, sponsoring writing workshops, establishing a poetry house, and more.

As Edward Said recently wrote, "[At] the dawn of the twenty-first century the writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attribute in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority" (*The Nation*, September 17, 2001). The Five Rivers Poetry Project, aware of each syllable's power, is committed to being a part of this work.




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Mary Beth Pringle is professor of English at Wright State University. She is president of the Wright State chapter of Phi Kappa Phi.

Adrienne Cassel is an instructional designer at Wright State University. She earned an MFA in creative writing from Bennington College.

Lynne L. Snowden

## Latinos and Licenses: Encouraging Latino Literacy

I first became aware of the darkness of illiteracy when I started teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in the mushroom labor camps of Eastern Pennsylvania. I worked in a government-sponsored ESL program, teaching evening classes to thousands of migrants during a period of five to six years. Most of those students were either Mexican or Central American immigrants, and most of them were functionally illiterate, meaning that they could read, write, and count in Spanish (and sometimes English, as well), but not at a functional level. They could not write a check, read a book, write in cursive, or calculate how much money they were owed for the ten-pound baskets of mushrooms that they had picked during the last week. This functional illiteracy made it almost impossible for them to integrate into everyday American life. Mostly they stayed quietly in the shadows, content to be Mexican heroes to the ten to fourteen family members whom they typically supported back in Mexico.

But the most interesting men were those who could not recognize even a single letter of the alphabet. These men were not easy to identify because they carefully hid their illiteracy. Unless they came to you and declared their illiteracy, you would never get to know the darkness that they endured. A story that a Mexican friend of mine told me once helped me to understand how desperately these people wanted to learn to read. My friend and his uncle were walking through a parking lot one day. The uncle saw a truck with some letters on it, and he said to Rodolfo, "Look, I am learning to read," and carefully spelled out the letters that he saw on the truck: F-O-R-D. Rodolfo complimented him on his newly acquired skill, but he was trying not to laugh because the letters on the truck actually read C-H-E-V-R-O-L-E-T.

Rodolfo did not laugh at the man because he, too, understood the darkness in which the man suffered. Once you see illiteracy, you cannot forget it. The worst part is knowing that if you both had just a little time, in a few weeks you could begin to take the darkness away. But these adults in need see their lack of knowledge as a weakness, so they hide it and fear exposure.

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### DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

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When our Phi Kappa Phi chapter was notified about the literacy grants, I approached the director of a Latino agency to ask for help in getting clients for a literacy program. Because so many functionally illiterate individuals exist in the immigrant community, it seemed unlikely that we would have any problems getting clients. My only worry was finding tutors among the busy staff and faculty at my university.

The grant initiated a new community program for residents of Wilmington, North Carolina, and its surrounding rural counties. It matched Phi Kappa Phi student members and University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) chapter professors as tutors with young Latino adults. North Carolina has a large and growing Latino population with a severe need for one-on-one literacy tutoring. The local Latino organization did not have the funds to run such a literacy program, so many students who wanted to take ESL classes were not capable of keeping up with other students. To encourage the Latino students to continue the literacy classes for an extended period, the lessons were structured around learning to read well enough to pass a North Carolina driver's license test. Dr. Martin Kozloff, an expert on literacy issues from the UNCW School of Education, set up an

easy-to-teach lesson plan that was effective and up to the standards of the “No Child Left Behind” program. I purchased the needed books over the Internet. The literacy training was designed to prepare these students to continue to improve through ESL classes offered at the Centro Latino. Our tutors were trained to encourage the students to continue their general education as well.

Our program was designed to have at least two beneficial outcomes: learning to read and encouraging driver safety. One professor even volunteered to guide the students through the licensing process, helping them to pass the written and driving exams, when they got to that point. Young Latino immigrants often feel that they are forced to drive without driver’s licenses when they cannot read well enough to pass the state tests.

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### CLASSES BEGIN

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Classes began in late summer of 2003 at the Centro Latino building in the late afternoons and evenings, Monday through Thursday; they were supposed to run for twelve months. The first step was to recruit the tutors. I advertised in our weekly campus newsletter, *The Campus Communique*, and via the Internet for tutors. Amazingly, within three weeks, I had all the names that I needed. We wanted to begin with ten students and tutors to see how the program went. When I had enough volunteer tutors, I told the agency to start collecting names of people who were interested in the classes. In early October, we ran a workshop to train the tutors in using the literacy materials and then had a class with the students. During the class, I determined that all of the students were good candidates for literacy training. Then I matched the students with the tutors. Unfortunately, only five out of the original list of twelve students showed up for the first meeting, but I felt that we could easily recruit others.

The program ran well for a few weeks, but then problems began to surface. It turned out that because Centro Latino is a very busy place in the evenings, the tutors had problems finding places that were quiet enough to do the literacy lessons; therefore, three of the students were

moved to the university for their literacy classes. These students came the second week after they were moved and then did not return. Student attendance was also spotty for some of the other tutors who remained at Centro Latino, so some nights the tutors were there but had no students. At the end of November, I learned that the center was going to shut down for the month of December because many of the migrants go home to Mexico for the holidays. This shut our program down as well until the center reopened in January.

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### REVISING THE STRUCTURE

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During this period I tried to think of ways that I could revamp the program. In my original grant proposal, I had asked for student-transportation money; none of the students had their own transportation because the program was designed to teach them how to get their driver’s licenses. I cut this idea from the budget when I received less funding than I had proposed, but cutting it proved to be the program’s undoing. By moving the classes away from the only place to which students could easily come, Centro Latino, we had a more difficult time recruiting beginning students.

With the help of the Amigos International director, we have now altered the structure of the program. Some tutors now go to the nightly ESL classes, where they are assigned students who are considered to be behind by the ESL teacher. Even if tutors do not have the same students each week, they will always have at least one student to tutor. The director also approached a nearby high school and found that many Latino and African American students there need literacy training and are available for classes during the day. We will begin literacy classes at another area high school as well, so tutors who can manage day classes will run these sessions.

The changes have just been implemented this month, so it will take a while to see whether they are successful. We will use the remainder of our money to purchase materials for the instructors and supplies such as paper and pencils for the students, who often do not have

the money to purchase even these simple aids. After the program was up and running, we had planned to seek additional community/university funds to continue the program after the Phi Kappa Phi grant money runs out, but now we will wait to see whether we can continue to get enough students to volunteer. Another problem is that many of the immigrants have not volunteered because they do not have the documentation to obtain a North Carolina driver's license. Therefore, we are now downplaying the focus on helping them obtain a driver's license because finding students has been more of a problem than finding volunteer tutors.

It has been a labor of love for me to develop this program, and I am very grateful to everyone who has rendered assistance; of course, it all started with Phi Kappa Phi.



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Dr. Lynne Snowden is an associate professor of criminal justice at UNC-Wilmington. She has published three books, *Collective Violence* (2000) and *Preventing Terrorism* (2002 and 2003), as well as numerous journal articles on violence, terrorism, policing, and other related topics. Recently her interest has broadened to the area of homeland security because it combines her research in illegal immigration, risk assessment of violence, and policing issues. She is currently working on an edited set of readings by some of the most outstanding criminal justice researchers and academics in the United States. In her service activities, Professor Snowden has worked with Latino social service agencies for almost twenty years teaching ESL, developing education and health care programs, and serving on their Boards of Directors.

## National Institute for Literacy

# Promoting Literacy: Resources of the National Institute for Literacy

The National Institute for Literacy's (NIFL) activities to strengthen literacy across the lifespan are authorized by the U.S. Congress under two laws, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) in the Workforce Investment Act and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The AEFLA directs the Institute to provide national leadership regarding literacy, to coordinate literacy services and policy, and to serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs. The NCLB law directs the Institute to disseminate information on scientifically based reading research pertaining to children, youth, and adults as well as information about development and implementation of classroom reading programs based on the research.

Most of NIFL's funds support programs and services designed to improve the quality of literacy programs nationwide. Primary activities include:

- Bringing technology to the literacy field through **LINCS**, a state-of-the-art Internet-based information and communication system.
- Improving services to adults with learning disabilities through **Bridges to Practice**, a four volume research-based guide.
- Promoting adult literacy system reform through **Equipped for the Future**, a long-term initiative that developed content standards to ensure that every adult can gain the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill real-world responsibilities as workers, parents, and citizens.
- Connecting those in need of adult, child, and family literacy services with information about programs in their communities through **America's Literacy Directory**, an easy-to-use online searchable database.
- Providing copies of NIFL publications through the **National Institute for Literacy Hotline and Clearinghouse**.
- Developing and disseminating scientifically based reading research and research-based products to educators, parents, policymakers, and others through the **Partnership for Reading**, a collaborative effort among NIFL, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Recent partnerships with the private sector include work with Verizon, the telecommunications firm, on projects to make information about literacy and literacy programs more widely available to the general public. The "Ask Verizon Reads" Web site encourages visitors to ask questions about adult and child literacy. Answers are provided by the Institute, the American Library Association, ProLiteracy Worldwide, Reading is Fundamental, and the National Center for Family Literacy.

**liter-a-cy** (lit'ər ə sē), *n.*  
being literate, esp. the ability to read and write. 1. the quality or state of session of education, esp. the ability to read and write. 2. pos. a person's knowledge of a particular subject or field. 3. a require computer literacy. [1880-85; LITER(ATE) + -ACY]

—Syn. 2. learning, culture.

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## NIFL PROGRAMS

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### LINCS

LINCS — the Literacy Information and Communication System — is the premier online information and communications network for adult and family literacy. LINCS has enhanced the ability of all states to use information technologies in the context of literacy instruction; created a rich database of local, regional, and nationally developed materials; trained thousands of practitioners in applying technology in teaching and professional development; and leveraged several million dollars for regional, state, and local literacy agencies. With the addition of the Partnership for Reading to the NIFL's agenda, LINCS has become one of the principal locations for literacy-related information for children and youth, as well as adults.

LINCS is a cooperative electronic network of the national, regional, state, and local partners, including NIFL, five regional LINCS partners, representative organizations from forty-five states and territories, twelve content-development partners, and several major national organizations. The coordinated efforts of LINCS partners have provided a national infrastructure for the literacy community to access the most comprehensive collection of family and adult basic skills research, teaching/learning, and training resources.

Throughout the development of the LINCS initiative, NIFL and its partners have adhered to the following guiding principles:

- As a **comprehensive system**, LINCS is designed to meet the needs of adult and family literacy stakeholders by providing free, timely, easy, and efficient access to the most relevant and up-to-date adult and family literacy resources and training.
- As a **distributed system**, LINCS' architecture is intended to provide more flexibility in contributing and maintaining resources at the state and local level while eliminating fragmentation and duplications nation-wide.
- As an **interactive system**, LINCS brings together different literacy stakeholders, enabling them to share resources and expertise instantaneously through different online communication tools.
- As a **collaborative network**, LINCS' content, design, structure, and feature enhancements are developed through contributions, feedback, and ongoing communication between NIFL, LINCS partners, and different sectors of the literacy field.

- As an **evolving system**, LINCS reflects new developments and implements state-of-the-art technology to help improve literacy stakeholders' access to information and use of technology resources in teaching and learning.

LINCS offers comprehensiveness of content by providing a publishing arena and a means of access to locally produced materials that might otherwise be difficult to find. LINCS partners have developed uniform standards for collecting and organizing online resources to provide users with the greatest ease of access to the information they need, regardless of the geographic origin or authorship of that information. In addition, while each home page found on the LINCS network contains unique information and design features, all page developers have followed LINCS guidelines and similar design programs to present users with a seamless, clear, and uncomplicated information and communication system. NIFL and other partners in the LINCS network provide both on- and off-site training to state and local level programs on developing and maintaining Web pages and resource collections. And finally, LINCS has created several features that are available to national and state organizations enabling them to customize the features based on their audience and their subject areas.

### *Bridges to Practice*

Estimates about the number of adults in adult education programs, social services programs, or employment-seeking programs indicate that probably 40 to 50 percent of these adults, at a minimum, may have learning disabilities that have kept them from achieving academic and employment success in their lives.

The Bridges to Practice materials address this issue and are designed to help teachers, social workers, employment counselors, job coaches, and others recognize learning disabilities, learn how to implement a screening process in a program, and learn what to do when an adult has been diagnosed with a disability.

The program consists of four guidebooks that contain the training materials, and a fifth book that is a trainer's manual. These materials were developed through a grant from the NIFL and are based on research with adults and youth with learning disabilities that was done in the 1990s at the University of Kansas.

Originally designed for use in education programs, the materials have been revised for use with a multitude of audiences, but the core message remains the same: an adult who has learning disabilities has a disability and is eligible for accommoda-

tions and/or assistive technology and support under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The recognition of a possible learning disability and subsequent referral for testing for a legal diagnosis can make a significant difference in the life of an adult who has previously not known about this disability.

Since 1999, hundreds of trainers have been trained in forty-six of the fifty states and in the Pacific Islands. Many of these trainers are busy training others about adults with learning disabilities. Some do this through grant programs that were funded by NIFL; others are funded through their state education department or through volunteer literacy programs. Still others have been training staff in welfare offices across the United States. The Workforce Development Offices in many states are using trainers to prepare their staff to better serve adults who have, or may have, learning disabilities.

The NIFL is the lead training agency and retains the right to certify trainers in the Bridges to Practice materials. A trainer may begin with a local program, but to reach the Master Trainer Certification, a portfolio must be established with the NIFL. Training is done in person at this time. In the near future, we anticipate training sessions will be available online as distance learning courses.

### ***Equipped for the Future***

Since 1994, the NIFL has led a collaborative, nationwide effort to develop adult learning standards that can guide instruction and assessment and improve the quality and results of adult literacy programs. The sixteen Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards define the knowledge and skills adults need in order to successfully carry out their roles as parents, citizens, and workers in the twenty-first century. These skills include strong reading, writing, and math skills; they also include the skills we need to communicate and work well with others; to solve problems; and to keep up with change.

Although EFF is a voluntary initiative, nearly 600 adult literacy programs in thirty-eight states are already using the EFF content framework to guide teaching and learning. Eighteen states have begun using the EFF standards to improve the quality of one or more of their adult learning systems. In addition, key national organizations such as the National Center for Family Literacy, the National Urban League, ProLiteracy, and the National Retail Federation are using EFF as an integral part of their own training and program improvement systems.

EFF is currently working with these state and national partners to develop a range of research-based tools that can assist programs, states, and

national organizations in using the standards to improve instruction and results. These include:

- A training package that helps programs integrate evidence-based reading practices within EFF practices.
- A toolkit for teachers based on a ten-step model of standards-based instruction and assessment.
- A handbook for program improvement based on the EFF Quality Model.
- A work-readiness credential that defines, measures, and certifies mastery of the knowledge and skills required in the twenty-first century workplace.

### ***America's Literacy Directory and The National Literacy Hotline***

America's Literacy Directory (ALD) is an easy-to-use online searchable database that refers potential learners and volunteers to literacy programs in their areas. To view a list of programs on the Internet, users simply enter a zip code at <http://www.literacydirectory.org>. The directory provides detailed information about types of services, class times, program fees, and directions to the programs in their neighborhood.

Information in the ALD is also available by calling the National Literacy Hotline, which NIFL has maintained since 1995. English- and Spanish-speaking operators are available between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. EST Monday through Friday; at other times, callers may leave a voicemail message. The toll-free number is 1-800-228-8813 (TDD/TTY1-877-576-7734). The hotline typically receives between 400 and 1,000 calls each month.

### ***Publications***

The NIFL publishes documents on a variety of literacy-related topics. Most can be accessed online, and hard copies can be ordered by calling the National Institute for Literacy at EDPubs at 1-800-228-8813 (TDD/TTY1-877-576-7734), visiting the EDPubs Web site, or faxing 1-301-470-1244. Among these publications are national and state policy updates and a variety of research and instructional publications such as the "A Child Becomes a Reader" series and the "Putting Readers First" series. A list of the publications can be found online at [www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html](http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html).

### ***The Partnership for Reading***

The Partnership for Reading is a collaborative effort by three federal agencies — the NIFL, the National Institute of Child Health and Human



Development, and the U.S. Department of Education — to bring the findings of evidence-based reading research to the educational community, families, and others with an interest in helping all people learn to read well. First established in 2000, The Partnership is now authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110).

The Partnership's mission is to disseminate evidence-based research, a focus that makes it substantively different from earlier information-dissemination efforts and clearinghouses. This mandate to use evidence-based research as the basis for making decisions about reading instruction was advanced by the work of the National Reading Panel (NRP), assigned by Congress in 1997 to review the available research. Setting high standards for research quality, the NRP examined more than 460 studies to extract the essential findings about what has been scientifically proven to work in reading instruction.

The work of the NRP was just the beginning. Through ongoing, high-quality research, our understanding of how to teach reading will continue to grow. The Partnership for Reading will stay at the forefront of that effort in several ways. First, The Partnership will bring the substantial body of evidence established by the NRP to the educational community through products and events that articulate the findings for a wide range of audiences. Second, it will continue to build the connection between scientific evidence and strategies used in classrooms and at home to make children better learners. And finally, The Partnership will add to the body of knowledge through continual review of new and existing research, using high standards of research quality.

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### SEE WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

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Promoting literacy is a national priority, and every organization, resource, and volunteer is integral to the battle. NIFL invites you to visit our Web site at [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov) to see how you might become involved in the effort to bring literacy to the entire country.



This article is adapted from materials on the National Institute for Literacy home page, by permission of the NIFL. For more information, go to the Web site at [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).

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## NIGHT SHIFTS

The nighttime  
highway whine  
of eighteen-wheelers

brings back  
midnight streetcars  
screeching  
out of monster faces  
in my bedroom  
when I was five.

Everywhere  
people lurch awake  
to the screams of distant engines —  
some, like bombers,  
so alarm-clock regular  
that their threat wakes  
before their sound;  
some, like old war,  
bombard over and over in dreams;  
and some, like the trigger click  
of a reluctant hallway light,  
the last thing heard.

GEORGE STAEHLE

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George Staehle was born in Columbus, Ohio, where he graduated from Ohio State University, followed by more than thirty years in U.S. government physics research at the University of California. He paints, hikes, plays various sports, and works on writing with his wife and daughter, who also write.

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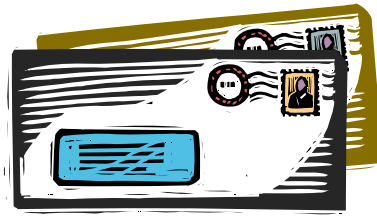
### FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Summer 2004  
SEQUENTIAL ART: THE COMICS

Fall 2004  
PROFESSORS PROFESSING

Winter 2005  
THE HUMAN BRAIN

# Letters to the Editor



## FORUM ON BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Anthony J. Dukes's Winter 2004 *Forum* column on "The FCC and Media Regulation" is unsatisfactory in its analysis of corporate cost-cutting.

Dukes cites the example of Baltimore-based Sinclair Broadcasting's consolidation of costs by hiring one Baltimore employee to do the local weather in both Flint, Michigan, and Birmingham, Alabama (my hometown).

I am a meteorologist and the teacher of meteorologists, and I know first-hand the many consequences of such cost-cutting.

First, significant safety issues are involved. Both Birmingham and Flint have been the sites of massive and deadly tornado outbreaks. The June 8, 1953, Flint tornado was the last single American tornado to kill more than 100 people and was voted in a National Weather Service poll of citizens and experts as the worst natural disaster to hit Michigan during the entire twentieth century. The April 8, 1998, Birmingham tornado killed thirty-two and narrowly missed the city's downtown center. The Birmingham viewing area has suffered about 300 tornado deaths since 1916.

Do the million-plus residents of the Flint and Birmingham areas want or deserve life-saving weather warning information coming from someone in Baltimore who doesn't know their cities? The consumers are not fully informed; the television watchers in Flint and Birmingham are presumably not told that their Sinclair weatherman is located almost 1,000 miles away. Viewers may not be able to recognize the difference between expert local service and remote-control cost-saving service until it is too late to change the channel.

Second, during severe weather situations, which city will the Sinclair employee focus on: Flint or Birmingham? Widespread severe

weather outbreaks that blanket the continent from Alabama to Michigan simultaneously are not unheard of. I know from discussions with television meteorologists and National Weather Service employees that in such fast-breaking weather situations, it is nearly impossible to keep up with the severe weather just in one's own state or vicinity — let alone half a continent. What is Sinclair's policy in such cases? Who gets warned and who doesn't? Why didn't Dukes ask?

Third, on a more personal note, consolidation has created what one national meteorology columnist has called "The Great Depression" in broadcast meteorology employment, a field in which entering annual salaries were generally below \$20,000 already.

In summary, I believe that the Sinclair approach to television weather is a disservice to the public and may cost lives someday soon. The risks are hidden from the public via the subterfuge of a "local" meteorologist who really works for multiple television stations out of an office in Baltimore. As with so many other examples of cost-cutting, it sounds wonderful until you realize that you have completely erased your safety margin in critical situations just to save a few bucks. I remember a time when the airwaves were considered a public trust instead of an opportunity to further engorge the coffers of media conglomerates.

Finally, as the teacher of now-unemployed meteorologists, I think of consolidation in very personal terms that may resonate with more and more outsourced and downsized Americans in the coming years: what good is all this cost-cutting if you are unemployed and can't afford the service even at its new, reduced price?

John Knox  
Athens, Georgia

## DEMOCRACY IN DANGER

This letter is a response to the Winter 2004 issue "Is Democracy in Danger?"

For three-hundred-plus years, the people of what is now the United States shared the blood, sweat, and tears of the successes and failures that occurred. They built a rich and powerful nation while at the same time defeating some of the worst tyrants in the world's history.

However, this great nation is weakening from within. We are becoming a nation of wimps, weaklings, and dependents. This decline is happening because personal responsibility is becoming a lost trait. Too many are sleep-walking through life until being brought back to reality by some shocking event: for example, I've charged more money than I can possibly repay; I've had more children than I can provide for; I didn't expect to have this serious illness or injury; I didn't realize retirement would get here this soon; and so on.

According to my sources (*Kiplinger's Personal Finance* and *Money* magazines), somewhere between 35 and 40 percent of adults in our country pay NO federal income tax. Many of these same individuals are clamoring for free prescription drugs, universal health care, and other expensive social programs.

The actual bill payers of this nation, those who DO pay federal income tax, should decide how that money is spent. One of the reasons for our Revolutionary War was England's taxing the colonies without allowing representative government. Today we have something just as harmful — representation without taxation. This occurrence has directly led to the lack of personal responsibility: "Why should I plan for anything; the government will take care of me." The right to enter a voting booth should be granted only to those who pay federal income tax.

Daniel A. Brooks  
Huron, South Dakota

Eric Smith's article, "How Much Knowledge Does Democracy Require," makes the following assertion about stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) ready to be used by Saddam Hussein: "We now know that he did not have them." Actually, we "know" no such thing. We do know that we haven't yet found any, but to believe that he "did not have them," one must believe 1) that Iraq depleted every drop of its known chemical stockpiles that were used against the Kurds and Iraqis; 2) that, despite the knowledge and infrastructure that existed solely for that purpose, no more chemical weapons were produced in the years following the Iran/Iraq war; and 3) that, despite his continuing efforts to hide activities and deceive weapons inspectors, Saddam Hussein's claims that he had no WMD were true. Interpreting intelligence data and weighing the risks of action against inaction is an inexact science at best. Although an observer could accept the above criteria as true and conclude that it was likely that Iraq had no WMD in the months before the war, the following facts cannot be ignored: chemical weapons would be easy to hide — by burying them or sneaking them over the border — and hard to find. The statement that "we now know that he did not have them" is certainly premature and quite possibly wrong.

Deni Elliott, in "The Essential Role for the News Media," states that the White House "intentionally created the erroneous connection" between Saddam Hussein and 9/11. She quotes David Frum as saying that his mission was to "extrapolate from the September 11 terrorist attacks to make a case for 'going after Iraq.'" She fails to point out that regime change in Iraq had been U.S. policy for years, terrorist networks frequently interact, and the administration decided to wage a "war on terror," not just on Al Qaeda. The fact is that terrorist networks across the globe are very interconnected and often share resources for funding, weapons, safe havens, logistics, and training. For instance, Iraq harbored known terrorists such as the notorious Abu Nidal, conducted training camps on how to hijack airplanes, and, as with many known terrorist states, had some documented links with

Al Qaeda personnel. To point out these connections is not the same as deliberately deceiving people into believing that Hussein was behind 9/11. The author then excerpts speeches by Bush that do not claim that Hussein was behind 9/11, but instead point out Iraq's obstinate militancy and ask us to "imagine those nineteen hijackers with other weapons." Clearly, the fear was that Hussein would give deadly weapons to motivated and active terrorist groups. Elliott characterizes speeches that simply do not assert a Hussein-9/11 connection, as well as an article that clearly states that Bush "never pinned blame for the attacks directly on the Iraqi president," as a "subtle" and "ominous" linking of Hussein with 9/11. The author also uses General Wesley Clark's claim that "the White House" asked him to point out just such a link, but does not mention that Clark quickly backed away from his claim that administration officials contacted him and later downgraded his source from an administration official to an unnamed man from a Middle East think-tank in Canada. Ultimately, Elliott uses this tenuous argument to suggest that the war may have been the result of deliberate deception. Although it might be legitimate to point out that the administration should strive to be absolutely clear about the relationship of various threats to the nation because a portion of the public may have been "confused" (perhaps the misinformed or disinterested masses that Smith writes about), it is certainly not proof of a deliberate "disinformation campaign."

Excellent issue! Keep up the good work.

K. Holmes  
Jacksonville Beach, Florida

## WHERE DID ALL THE VOTERS GO?

The U.S. Census reports that my community [Fairbanks, Alaska] has a total population of about 83,000, of whom almost 40 percent are under the voting age and 25 percent are military or military-related, many here for short periods and maintaining residence in their home

states. A substantial number are college students resident in other states, cities, and countries. A significant percentage of our population is transient, coming here on brief government assignments or for construction projects or for other reasons. An unknown but important number are not U.S. citizens, and we have a significant prison population.

Our total voting age population could hardly be, given the above characteristics, more than 50,000, and is more likely 40,000 if not in fact closer to 30,000. However, our official election rolls show the impossible number of 65,000. This number reflects laws that prohibit removing people from the voter registration rolls even when they do not vote. The reality not just here but elsewhere is that the voter registration rolls are vastly inflated, and as a consequence voter election participation rates are simply inaccurate, perhaps by as much as 20 percent or even more. In short, there is far more voter participation than the unreliable statistics indicate.

Donald F. Lynch  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Notwithstanding the lamented paucity of civics (add economics, history, geography, math, and science to the list!) education suffered by many American cohorts, none of your authors suggest that some non-voters may consciously choose a responsible approach to certain elections, namely they abstain. And, all things considered, it's reasonable for voters who don't really have a basis for choosing one candidate over another to NOT vote.

Indeed, voter inaction may even be considered responsible. Their abstentions, at least to me, are less harmful than a skewed election outcome orchestrated by partisan or one-issue organizers who actively work to "get out the vote" among tepid voters who — if not cajoled — would wisely "vote" to abstain.

Mike Rethman  
Kaneohe, Hawaii



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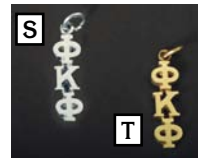


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