



LITERACY FOR LIFE

“Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” – Frederick Douglass

FALL 2003

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BRLC Recognized by Funding Groups

Local and state funding organizations have recognized the Council’s work by increasing our funding. The United Way of Henderson County has increased our yearly allocation to \$25,000. The North Carolina Community College System has increased our grant to \$45,000. Henderson County funding will be maintained at \$14,500. In addition, the Council has received grants of \$10,000 from the Community of Henderson County, and \$500 from First United Methodist Church to help us start our Small Group program.

Thanks to all of these agencies for recognizing the contribution we make to the community.

BRLC and Times-News to Partner in Newspapers in Education

The *Times-News* will provide BRLC with daily newspapers Monday through Friday to be used by our students and tutors in their classes. The papers will be delivered to the Council, but can be picked up by tutors and students. Additionally, Nancy Nichols, coordinator of Newspapers in Education will present an in-service training for BRLC tutors: “Using the Newspaper in Your Literacy or ESL Class”. The workshop will be Tuesday, October 14.

Literacy For Life readers can help by donating their newspapers, instead of stopping delivery, when they go on vacation. To do this, you may either call 692-5763 or go online to www.hendersonvillenews.com, then select “Home Delivery”, then “Vacation Stop” and click on “Yes” when asked “Do you wish to donate your papers to Newspapers in Education?”

Thanks to the *Times-News* for extending this program to include BRLC.

BRLC Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

On July 12, 2003 the BRLC held its annual meeting at the Hendersonville Library. Before a crowd of members and friends three volunteers were recognized for their outstanding efforts on behalf of literacy.

The G’Anne Sparks Award for Outstanding Tutor was presented to Linda Klein for her work with her ESL small group and the Motherhead Class at EvenStart.

The Lisa Morrill Outstanding Volunteer Award went to Joyce McCall for her five years of dedicated work in the Council’s office.

The Hugh Lowry Memorial Extra Mile Award was presented to Bill Woerner in recognition of his outstanding leadership of BRLC.

The meeting concluded with poetry readings by the Seasoned Poets and by our own poet laureate, student Chris Edwards. *(See page 3 for more about Chris.)*

13th Annual Western North Carolina Literacy Conference Planned

Literacy Councils and Community Colleges from Western North Carolina will present the 13th Annual WNC Literacy Conference on Saturday, April 3, 2004. The conference, featuring workshops for adult students, basic skills and ESL tutors, teachers, trainers and administrators, will be held in Asheville. As in the past, there will be a statewide writing contest for students. More information will be coming, but mark your calendars now!

Literacy For Life

the newsletter of:

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Monday thru Friday
9 AM to 5 PM

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United Way**

**From The Desk
of the President**

At our annual meeting on July 12 one important item of business was approval of a new **Mission Statement** as follows:

The mission of Blue Ridge Literacy Council is to provide our Henderson County adult students the English communication and literacy skills they need to reach their full potential as individuals, parents, workers and citizens.

The board and staff believe this better identifies who we are working with, what we are trying to accomplish and how we will benefit our students and the community. Special performances from the Seasoned Poets and BRLC student Chris Edwards were enjoyed by all. Chris also played guitar and received excellent recognition in the *Times-News*.

Our new board member, Virginia Fuentes, was approved and welcomed. Virginia is the Lead Instructor for the Early Childhood Education and Teacher Associate Degree program at Blue Ridge Community College. She is an experienced Adult Basic Skills and ESL teacher. Her knowledge, experience and enthusiasm have already been invaluable.

The 2003/2004 officers for the Board of Directors were introduced: Bill Woerner, President; Rich Leppingwell, Vice President; Charles Kuykendall, Treasurer and Alice Crisp, Secretary were re-elected to another term.

The Annual Report is available in the office and contains details on financials, program highlights, and special events.

We are in a sound financial position. We have already applied to be chosen for the BMW Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament next year – a tournament which netted us \$6830 this year. We look forward to a good year.

Bill Woerner
President

I Would Like To:

- Learn more about volunteering.
- Make a tax-deductible contribution of _____ (amount).

[If not using a credit card omit the first two items.]

Credit card type and number _____

Signature _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Please clip and return to: Blue Ridge Literacy Council, Inc.
P. O. Box 1728
Hendersonville, NC 28793

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Ask a literacy council volunteer if they are making a difference in someone's life. I guarantee you the answer will be, "Yes!" Is it challenging, is it tough, is it fun? Again, the answers will be, "Yes!" Ask, "Is it worth your time?" and the answer will be "Yes!!!"

In 2002/03 over 250 volunteers helped 327 adult learners achieve over 2500 goals. Learners read to their children, got better jobs, became United States citizens, entered college, learned to speak, read and write. Few of our students could have accomplished their goals without the help of their volunteer tutor.

So what kind of superhuman do you have to be to work such miracles? The simple fact is you just need to be yourself. If you can spare 3 or 4 of the 168 hours in a week, if you are comfortable with English and want to help someone else become that way, then you can be a great tutor.

Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

Consider becoming a part of Blue Ridge Literacy Council's group; and talk to your friends, neighbors and family about it - then give us a call; you won't regret it.

With my warmest regards,

Diane Bowers

STUDENT-TUTOR **RELATIONSHIPS HOLD** **THE POTENTIAL FOR** **MAGIC**

As with the children in Garrison Keillor's mythical Lake Wobegon, we believe all Literacy Council tutors and students are above average.

But occasionally in the student-tutor relationship there occurs what must, in the final analysis, be a small miracle. Such is the relationship of student Chris Edwards and tutor Susan Smith.

Susan was forced by failing hearing to give up her career in teaching. But she missed teaching and, after hearing a minister assert that "God wants you to use your talents" she attended a tutors' workshop in 1999. Susan knew that she could not tutor non English speakers because her hearing was too poor to overcome unfamiliar accents. So she waited for "her" student to come along.

Chris Edwards at age 16 was basically illiterate. But he wanted an education and attempted to enter the GED program at Blue Ridge Community College. At this point he was directed to the Literacy Council and in October of 2001 he was paired with Susan.

In less than two years Chris has covered most of what normally would be 12 to 13 years of education. Chris has recently passed the written test for his driver's license. But that is merely the tip of the iceberg. He also writes poetry; he has learned to play the guitar; he is well on his way to enrolling as a regular student at BRCC; and he is starting a landscaping business. Two years ago Chris' goal was a GED. At this point his goal is a college degree in English and Music.

When asked of what he was most proud, Chris said "I'm proud of Susan. She stuck with me in spite of some health problems." And of what is Susan most proud? "I'm proudest of Chris" she says. "He doesn't give up."



Chris Edwards and Susan Smith

FINDING A JOB IN HENDERSONVILLE

(A Student Composition) by Gabriel Falcon

I first came to Hendersonville in August 1995. I came from Mexico City with a friend who had been here several times before. He had a friend at who had promised us both a job making My friend knew a little English but I knew none.

We lived in a rented trailer. The job paid poorly so after 2 months we started applying for other jobs. There were no responses. I bumped into an old friend from Mexico City who said he worked at Bradford Wire and thought we could find a job there. He got applications which we, or more correctly my friend, filled out and submitted. A week later we had heard nothing so we went in person. They could find no applications and gave us new ones to fill out. Knowledge of English was required and there would be an interview. The applications were returned at noon and we were told our interview would be at 2 PM. I was worried but my friend said he would help with the interview. Unfortunately we were interviewed separately.

The woman who interviewed me explained what my job would be. I shook my head even though I didn't understand a word. She finally realized that I didn't understand English but said this job didn't require much, but made me promise to learn English as soon as possible. I would start work the next morning.

My friend also got a job, but on a different shift. I showed up the next morning and was met by a supervisor who looked mean and apparently didn't know I was to start that morning. He sat me in front of a machine and left with no instructions. I just sat looking at the machine until another worker came over to help. He knew a little Spanish so was able to describe what I was to do. I was to wind fine wire onto small spools. I quickly got started on the job with occasional help from my new friend.

My first English was learning the names of the objects at work. About three years later I started at the Literacy Council.

After 8 months I asked for another (higher paying) job and became a wire cleaner. After another year and a half I advanced to wire softening. Now I have run every machine but one and done almost every job and worked every shift at Bradford Wire.

