

LiteracyLinks

The Portland Literacy Council Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor

December 2011

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Correction

The page 1 photo in some November 2011 issues of Cornelia Stanton and Rose Fobb was incorrectly captioned.

Editor

Scrabble® Is the Fun in Fundraising!

by Peggy L. Murphy



Thomas [TJ] and Duncan Carter, the team of Seven Deadly Tiles.

Portland Literacy Council and Tuesday Scrabble® players cosponsored their second casual Scrabble® tournament on October 29. Kudos to the brave souls who brought their word mastery to the Gotham Tavern. Registration fees and donations will add over \$700 for PLC's GED Test Scholarship Fund.

“Flexible Snakes” (Thomas Madison and Arlene Matusow), took first place prizes, followed by High School Dropouts (Betsy Tighe and Jeremy Griffes), and H2Crow (Kathryn Kramer Waters and Barry Crow). Seven Deadly Tiles (pictured above) won prizes for best team name. (Although they drew a blank when asked which tiles were the deadly ones.)

Special appreciation goes to the solo players who teamed up with strangers. Portland Literacy Council thanks our prize donors including Cascade Cycling, Chamber Music Northwest, Exodus Spa & Salon, Fire on the Mountain, Gotham Tavern, Grand Central Bakery, Juls by Julie, The Naked Sheep Knit Shop, Lucky Lab Pub, New Seasons Markets, Revolver Bikes, Donna Hughey, and the Bag Ladies.

We also thank our dedicated volunteers: Donna Hughey, Barbara Hershey, Debby Pollock, Alan Jakobs, and the PLC board. Our most heartfelt thanks go to Barry and Julie at Gotham Tavern for their sponsorship.

Had a Great Time at USCAL, Wished You Were There

by Peggy L. Murphy, Editor

I had the privilege to attend ProLiteracy's US Conference on Adult Literacy – **USCAL** – in Houston Texas, November 2-5, on behalf of Portland Literacy Council.

This month's *LiteracyLinks* reports on the conference. I'm starting with a poem by Earl Mills, an adult learner who has written poetry since he was a child, followed by summaries of workshops I attended, and a short description of a literacy program in Egypt. The Tutor Toolbox feature will return in January.

Words from an Adult Learner

"Diploma in Hand"

By Earl Mills

Author of [From Illiterate to Poet](#)

Graduated from high school, diploma in hand.
Why I received it, I don't understand.
With mixed emotions, I held it high,
Knowing within that it was a lie.

The words that were written to me, were Greek.
Nevertheless, a job I must seek.
Busy with life as years go by.
Tears in my heart I wanted to cry.
Now married, the children came.
Having to raise them - who's to blame?

Reached out for help - at first I failed.
Disheartened inside-who can I tell?
Somehow within, a planted seed,
A call for help - I've learned to read!
Diploma in hand, I lift it high.
No tears in my heart, no longer do I cry.

Editor's Note: Earl Mills read his poem at the opening day conference luncheon. Mr. Mills told me that he has always had a gift for writing and is honored to share his words with our readers. [From Illiterate to Poet](#) is available from Amazon and [JasherPress.com](#). His writing recalls challenges, love of family, and his spiritual beliefs. Mr. Mills is a North Carolina Ambassador for Literacy and a board member of the North Carolina Literacy Council. Reprinted with permission from the author.

So many workshops, so little time

- **Developing and Promoting Health Literacy Partnerships** ([Literacy Network](#), Dane County, Wisconsin)

Is "Health Literacy" part of your vocabulary? I predict we'll hear more about "Health Literacy" because the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality will be

researching patient perspectives on the quality of health and health plan information provided by the medical community.

Health care, insured or not, can be hard to navigate. What questions should you ask? Can you read and understand the dense text accompanying medications? Are you confident choosing medical care? Consider how difficult these choices would be if you had low literacy skills, a language barrier, or lacked health care access.

The program at Literacy Network helps clients navigate the health care maze. It partners with local clinics and hospitals, which provide participant incentives. Clients learn to overcome cultural barriers and fear to call for appointments, discuss their child's diabetes care plan, or follow prescription courses. Participants practice interacting with volunteer health care workers in clinic settings. I found this one of the most worthwhile workshops of the conference.

- **The Women's Literacy Network: A Model for Literacy Learning and Empowerment** ([Literacy Volunteers of Tucson](#) and [Literacy for Life Coalition](#))

How can literacy programs improve participation in GED programs? A program in Tucson recruited ten recent GED recipients, provided 20 hours of specialized tutor training, and matched each with two GED students. Tutors and students received stipends to offset childcare and transportation, and received financial assistance. Tutors also received professional letters of reference.

Training techniques included miscue analysis: rather than saying an answer is wrong, the tutor asks questions to help guide the student to an answer. Tutors draw on existing student knowledge and use different approaches to appeal to different learning styles. In addition to creating strong student-tutor bonds, participants gained self-confidence, increased their educational achievements, and improved their employment options. Combining incentives with personal attention and support yielded impressive results for this GED program.

• Digital Literacy—Today's Essential Skill

Here we are in the second decade of the 21st Century, surrounded by Tweet and Skype. Are we digitally literate? Can computers and the Internet reach learners without access to the traditional classroom?

One of the speakers, Petrice Sams Abiodun, from Loyola University in New Orleans spoke about the value of Learner Web in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Through Learner Web, literacy programs reached learners without classrooms, helping the city rebuild its knowledge base after losing its assets.

Another aspect of digital literacy is the ability to separate fact from fiction on the Internet. While we have numerous people who are savvy in the use of online video games, does that equate to being able to use computers to enhance knowledge?

Do libraries play a critical role in information literacy, or are they passe? Think of Multnomah County Library, in addition to print media, patrons have access to computers, the Internet, and E-books. Reference librarians continue to help patrons find information.

The need for digital literacy is a reminder that lifelong learners learn, unlearn, and relearn.

Editor's Note:

Official title

Digital Literacy: Skills, Tools, and Opportunities to Reshape Adult Literacy Learning and Instruction

Panelists

Toni Cordell, Literacy Advocate

Lana Jackman, President, National Forum on Information Literacy

Petrice Sams-Abiodun, Executive Director, Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy at Loyola University

Stephen Reder, Professor of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University

• The Skype's the Limit!

Is Skype just a free Internet video telephone service? Or, could it mean no more Snow Days at school? Teachers and tutors are using Skype to facilitate book groups and teach distance learning programs.

Skype is available for free download from the Internet; users will need microphone, camera, and speakers to use the service.

A great way to keep in touch with folks here and abroad, Skype may be familiar to your students. Maybe they could teach you to Skype . . .

• Literacy, Cooperation, and Harmony in Cairo, Egypt

Dr. Tandiari Samir, MD, an Egyptian public health professional, provides health and literacy services to the poor in Ezbet Khan Allah in Old Cairo. Her work includes improving the quality and availability of medical care, ending female genital mutilation (illegal for the last three years - and a Christian and Muslim cultural practice), providing reproductive health education, and literacy classes.

Dr. Samir founded the St. Anba Moussa Association in 1973. It began as a faith-based organization, and provides literacy services to both Christians and Muslims. Women, men, and children attend separate sessions following cultural norms. The association provides "small meals" for the children to help them with learning.

Dr. Samir's work with the St. Anba Moussa Association helps women become more self-sufficient, benefiting themselves and their families. Hearing Dr. Samir was a humbling reminder that many people in the world have limited choices, and if offered, they will choose literacy. USCAL presented Dr. Tandiari Samir the **Ann C. Michel Women in Literacy Award**.

For Your Calendar Volunteer Literacy Tutor Training

Registration Information

January 21 & 28, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Clackamas Community College Campus - OIT
7736 SE Harmony Rd, Milwaukie, OR

Save the Date

The 2012 Tutor Conference will be Saturday, March 10, at Reed College. See you the February 2012 LiteracyLinks for program details, and see there!

Opportunities

People-Places-Things

Group Dynamics in the ESOL Classroom

Friday, January 7, 10 a.m. to Noon

Abundant Life Church, 4536 NE 116th Avenue

Register at info@pptpdx.com

\$15 fee