



THE LITERACY COUNCIL  
OF CENTRAL ALABAMA

# Literacy Matters

Fall/Holiday 2011

## The Literacy Council

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## Fundraiser Provides Unique Experience

The Literacy Council offers an intimate gathering with best-selling authors

In 1999, the Signature Series was born with the help of The Literacy Council's friend and the owner of Alabama Booksmith, Jake Reiss. The Signature Series is TLC's longest running fundraiser and provides a portion of the monies necessary to help The Literacy Council serve the more than 92,000 illiterate adults in Central Alabama. And Reiss sees it as something more: "It's important to the community as it offers an opportunity to visit with Birmingham's best and brightest in a beautiful setting, enjoy fine wine and food, and spend time up close and personal with super stars from the literary world. And everyone goes home with a keepsake treasure in the form of a signed book."

The authors for the series are selected based on different criteria, such as the belief they will soon be world renowned, as was the case with Kathryn Stockett. Some are already well-known authors, like previous Signature Series honorees Cokie Roberts and Tracy Chevalier. Reiss also looks for authors who will appeal to the discriminating reading tastes of supporters of The Literacy Council, ensuring a pleasant evening for all who attend. Equally important, he chooses authors who champion the battle against illiteracy and come to support TLC's mission to eliminate illiteracy in Central Alabama.

2011 has seen authors Mark Childress, Adam Ross, and most recently, Patty Callahan Henry.

"I can't imagine a more enjoyable way to support a worthwhile cause with a dynamite return on your investment in the community. I believe the Signature Series is one of the hottest tickets in town," Reiss said.

The location for the Series adds to the experience as well. "We choose homes that are, above all, interesting," said Susan Swagler, Signature Series chair. "Some have incredible views. Others have fabulous art. The garden is the draw with some homes. Sometimes it's all of the above."

The Signature Series continues in 2012, beginning with Stewart O'Nan on January 24. Patrons can expect another year of gatherings with great authors, interesting company and exceptional food and drink. Tickets are available now. Full season tickets, which guarantee admission to all three receptions this year, are \$300 per person. Single reception tickets for 2012 are \$110 per person, per event. Visit [www.literacy-council.org](http://www.literacy-council.org) for more information.



While patrons enjoy being part of the Signature Series, the authors also take pleasure in the experience. Rick Bragg was impressed by the library at the home of a host, and Tracy Chevalier admired the décor of another's. Every author featured with the series insisted it was their honor to be selected and had hopes for a return visit.

### Kicking Off the 2012 Signature Series Season

Stewart O'Nan will be the first author featured in the 2012 Signature Series on Tuesday, January 24. Tickets are available online at [www.literacy-council.org](http://www.literacy-council.org) or by phone at (205) 326-1925. You can also purchase tickets at The Literacy Council office, 2301 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Suite 102.

A *New York Times* best-selling author, O'Nan has written a screenplay and worked with Stephen King on a book following the 2004 season of the Boston Red Sox. He is the author of over ten works of fiction, including his latest, *Emily, Alone*. Don't miss this opportunity for great food, company, and conversation with Stewart O'Nan about his bestselling novels.

## A Fresh Look for The Literacy Council

A new logo as TLC celebrates 20 years of service in Central Alabama

Notice something new at The Literacy Council? A new logo was unveiled this past summer as part of TLC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. The new logo comes as the non-profit continues to grow and evolve, embarking on the next decade of battling illiteracy in Central Alabama.

The old logo was a symbol of literacy services for approximately ten years. "We wanted to incorporate reading and writing, and have something more modern," said Beth Wilder, president and executive director of The Literacy Council.

Lawler Ballard Van Durand, a Birmingham-based marketing, advertising and design firm, was responsible for the design of the new logo with Pat Powell serving as the creative director for the project. "We tried to think of visual cues that come

up when you think of literacy, obviously a book, but we wanted to make it different from others we'd seen before," said Powell.

Narrowed down from hundreds of ideas, the new logo is representative of reading and writing, the two going hand-in-hand as part of the change The Literacy Council strives to make in the lives of the more than 92,000 illiterate adults in Central Alabama.



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## New Literacy Program Launched in Woodlawn

Dream Center provides tutors for adults in need, helping to change lives

The Literacy Council recently partnered with Church of the Highlands to begin an adult literacy program at their Dream Center in Woodlawn. After training to become a tutor to help others learn to read, volunteer Warner McGowin was reminded of his church connection and the ministry Church of the Highlands provides through the Dream Center. He reached out to The Literacy Council to help start the new literacy program.

Located in the old Woodlawn Fire Station, the center was started as a way for Church of the Highlands to minister to and serve the local community and surrounding areas. Steve Hannum, The Literacy Council's community outreach manager, led the effort to implement the program. Hannum works to develop adult literacy and ESOL tutoring initiatives in transitional housing, homeless shelters and other faith-based and community outreach programs. These tutoring initiatives allow volunteers the opportunity to teach those in need how to read where they are most often found seeking assistance.

The center offers tutoring on Mondays and Thursdays, or by appointment.

### Give the Gift of Reading

Give the gift of reading. Literacy is the gift that changes lives!

Making a donation to The Literacy Council helps us as we work to reach the more than **92,000 illiterate adults in Central Alabama**, teach them to read and give them hope for a better future.

You may make a donation online at [www.literacy-council.org](http://www.literacy-council.org), by phone at 205-326-1925, or The Literacy Council office at 2301 1st Avenue N.

Give the gift of hope!

# Literacy Community Shares Wealth of Knowledge

## The Literacy Council hosts the Summit on Reading

On November 17, The Literacy Council hosted the Summit on Reading, connecting professionals who work with literacy issues from early childhood services to programs for adult learners. It was the first summit held since 2006 when then-Governor Bob Riley hosted a similar event. The Summit was held at the Hoover Public Library and featured a wide variety of topics providing an opportunity for experts in the field of literacy a chance to share their collective knowledge and best practices.

The key note address was given by Maggie Poteau of ABC 33/40 who shared her story of growing up under challenging circumstances and the important role literacy played in her life. Dr. Elaine Hughes, retired professor and recent Alabama Humanities award winner, also spoke during the opening session about the connection between literacy and poverty in Alabama.

Eleven information sessions were offered with presenters sharing valuable information ranging from the importance of family literacy to teaching techniques used to instruct adult learners. John Stone, president of the Alabama Association of Nonprofits, discussed advocacy and policy engagement necessary for nonprofits to address literacy issues. His presentation can be found on The Literacy Council's website ([www.literacy-council.org](http://www.literacy-council.org)). Judith Stone, coordinator of Alabama Reading Initiative, updated attendees regarding the state's literacy plan, explaining the background and how it would be implemented.

The Literacy Council has plans to hold the Summit annually.

## Supporting Our ESOL Educators

### 2011 ESOL Conference provides professional development opportunity for educators

The third annual ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Educator Conference was held on October 17 at the Junior League of Birmingham. The conference was open to both volunteer and professional ESOL educators.

Dr. Sue Seay, assistant professor for reading and English language instruction at UAB, gave the key note address on family literacy and the effect it has on communities in Alabama. Topics of the day's sessions included teaching English for conversation, a demonstration of several websites that help adult English learners, and demonstrations of improvisational games for the ESL classroom.

This year, the conference offered a fun inter-cultural activity when the students from Shelby County Schools' LEAPS (Learning English and Parenting Skills) program used their new English language skills to teach conference attendees how to make paper flowers. This amazing group of students also shared their personal journey in learning English as a second language. A round table discussion on student retention concluded the 2011 conference.



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