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Literacy Matters

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A Lifetime of Service

A War Veteran Finds Another Way to Serve for his Country

"I cannot imagine not being able to read," said Dave Holt, a man who has spent most of his life serving his community. From fighting in the Vietnam War to teaching math, Holt has shown a true passion for helping others. What is his latest work? Tutoring struggling readers with The Literacy Council's Ready to Read program.

Holt's love for reading began at an early age. He grew up in a small town in northern Minnesota where he would visit the library often to check out and read books. He said it was a proud moment for him when he got to advance from the children's library to the adult's library- he was in the fifth grade.

Holt's list of accomplishments is impressive, even inspiring, to say the least. In 1962 he graduated from the United States Air Force Academy and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force. He then served as a rescue pilot during the Vietnam war. From there, he was sent to the Pentagon as an intelligence officer. Holt was selected as the first USAF exchange officer to the Japanese Air War College. After many more assignments in between, he ended his career working as a Japan specialist in the Office of the Secretary of Defense/ International Security Affairs in the Pentagon. Holt retired in 1986 as a colonel and command pilot. During his 24 years of service, he received a Purple Heart, Distinguished Flying Cross and several Air Medals, just to name a few.

After retiring from the Air Force, he and his wife moved to Atlanta where he worked mostly as a math teacher but also taught German, Japanese and Social Studies throughout the years.

When they moved near Birmingham in 2009, Holt decided he once again wanted to serve his country but in a different way. He decided to turn his passion for reading into a positive experience for the more than 92,000 illiterate adults in Central Alabama. He knew because he is able to read, he could help others to do so. Holt was then trained as a tutor through The Literacy Council and quickly became a hot commodity. He was the only available tutor in Bessemer and surrounding areas and was assigned more students than one person can handle; even a colonel in the United States Air Force.

To meet the literacy needs of his area, Holt decided to recruit more tutors and expand Birmingham's



Holt tutoring one of his current students at Bessemer Public Library.

ham's Ready to Read program to Bessemer. Ready to Read is a program launched by The Literacy Council and partners at the Five Points West Branch of the Birmingham Public Library to provide struggling readers with tutor times and locations.

Now, two years later, Holt has found several tutors to assist him in teaching low literate students to read. He has paved the way for struggling readers in his area to have the chance to become functionally literate, changing their lives for the better.

The program, through the Bessemer Public Library, tutors students one-on-one unlike Birmingham's program, which offers classes. Holt said the one-on-one tutoring is important because the students decide the rate at which they progress.

"This way the student sets the pace of the program," Holt said. "He or she can go as fast or as slow as they want, I'm just here to help them."

The tutoring sessions are open to all adults, 18 and older, who struggle with reading. Most students are functionally illiterate, a term used to describe individuals who lack the literacy skills to perform everyday tasks such as reading prescription bottles, road signs or filling out job applications.

Holt believes it is his ability to read that has allowed him to accomplish so much in his life. He devotes his time to helping others to read so they can accomplish their dreams, as well.

"I've had a great career," Holt said. "All because I can read."

Signature Series

Each year The Literacy Council teams up with The Alabama Booksmith to bring three prominent authors to some of Birmingham's finest homes for a private reception honoring their latest work. The first Signature Series of 2011 featured Mark Childress, author of *One Mississippi*, *Crazy in Alabama*, and most recently, *Georgia Bottoms*. All the money raised from the Signature Series benefits The Literacy Council and supports their efforts in battling adult illiteracy.

Susan Swagler, a free lance writer and member of The Literacy Council's Board of Directors, has helped to organize the event for the past couple of years. Swagler said each Signature Series is as different as the authors themselves.

"Each author brings their own personal experiences to share with patrons. Every Signature Series is unique, no two are alike," Swagler said.

Not only do guests get to enjoy the company of a prominent author, they get to do it in some of the most beautiful homes in the area. Each home offers something different to the Signature Series and provides an intimate setting to enjoy conversations and share stories. Whether it is an extensive collection of art, like at the home of Philippe and Judith Lathrop or a breathtaking view overlooking Birmingham, like Jim and Julie Stephens' house at the top of Red Mountain, patrons can enjoy the best features of some of Birmingham's

finest homes.

In addition to meeting famous authors, touring lavish homes and eating great food, patrons at every Signature Series receive a signed, first edition copy of the featured book.

Renee Pugh, also a member of The Literacy Council's Board of Directors and Signature Series committee, says she cannot decide which author is her favorite.

"I thought the first one I attended was my favorite, then I went to the next one," Pugh said. "They just keep getting better."

As for Swagler's favorite author featured at the Signature Series, it has to be Kathryn Stockett she said. Stockett presented her book, *The Help*, which has now been made into a movie due to hit theaters in August. Other past authors include Rick Bragg, Delta Burke and Homer Hickam.

Our next Signature Series is scheduled for Friday, July 15 featuring Adam Ross. Tickets are still available. For more information, please visit www.literacy-council.org.



Guests with Mark Childress at this year's first Signature Series at the home of Bob McKenna.

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New Chapters of The Literacy Council

The Literacy Council is excited to announce the development of two new chapters within the organization this year, the Junior Board and the Advisory Committee.

The Junior Board is composed of young professionals under the age of 40 who have a passion for The Literacy Council's mission. The board is responsible for raising money and creating awareness. Additionally, each member of the Junior Board is required to be trained as a certified adult literacy tutor to experience first-hand the effects illiteracy has on our community.

Beth Wilder, president and executive director of The Literacy Council, said the Junior Board was created to help bring awareness of illiteracy to younger people in the community. "They can promote awareness among their demographic" Wilder said. "It allows us to shed light about illiteracy to a younger generation in a way they can appreciate, understand and relate to."

The board will host three fundraisers throughout the year beginning in June with an email campaign through First Giving, an online fundraising website. The board was formed in March and meets the last Tuesday of every month. Spots are still available for those interested in joining this dynamic team of young professionals. Contact Missy Burchart at mburchart@literacy-council.org or 205-326-1925 for more information.

The Advisory Committee consists of fifteen past members and chairs of The Literacy Council's Board of Directors. The Advisory Committee was created to provide a chance to continue the efforts of those who have previously served on the board.

"They have devoted countless hours of their time to helping us in the past and remain passionate about our cause," Wilder said about committee members. "This is a way for them to continue working with us and giving back to the community."

The Advisory Committee will provide advice and counseling to the board of directors and The Literacy Council team. Members meet four times a year to discuss new programs, marketing plans and ways to promote The Literacy Council.

County Updates

JEFFERSON COUNTY

The team at the home office in Jefferson County has been busy this spring.

The Literacy Council coordinated the development of *Literacy Council Partners*, a system of non-profit agencies that provides free literacy tutoring to struggling adult readers.

The Literacy Council will provide trained tutors to their partners at the Dream Center for a literacy program that is set to begin in June.

Over 50 hours of tutoring and instruction were provided to seven men at the Changed Lives Christian Center, where The Literacy Council helped form an adult literacy program.

The Literacy Council sponsored a workshop at Jeff State Community College called "Dealing with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in the Adult Education Classroom." More than 50 tutors and educators participated in the workshop.

TLC established a partnership with Family Guidance Center to provide trained tutors and support to literacy programs at FGC.

Another partnership was formed between The Literacy Council and the YWCA to also provide trained tutors to a literacy program in the Woodlawn area projected to begin in August.

The Literacy Council welcomes Linda DeRocher as the new English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinator. ESOL offers tutors for English language learners in our community. Mark your calendar for the ESOL Educator Conference tentatively planned for October 21. The next ESOL tutor training is scheduled for November.

ST. CLAIR

On May 7, the St. Clair County Chapter held their annual **READING ROCKS** at Eden Elementary School in Pell City where children got to enjoy playing games and reading books. Over 300 books were donated to children ages 3-11.

Four new tutors were trained at the Pell City Methodist Church and assigned students. There are currently nine active tutors in the St. Clair County area and more available once students are found for them.

Thank you to all the tutors who helped in the past six months: Falayda Castagneto, Pat Dorsette, Lavan Foster, Patricia Grogran, Tina Korach, Donnie Olis, Lenora Orr, Allison Newton, Roberta Roby, Carol Shultz, Jason Stanley, Lee Tuggle, Neva Webb, Richard Willert and Louise Wilson.

WALKER COUNTY

The Walker County Chapter of The Literacy Council has developed three new programs to help raise awareness of literacy issues in their area.

The *21st Century Learning Program* is a collaboration with Jasper city schools to tutor middle school students in an after school program with members of the Beville State Community College Sigma Kappa Delta English honors club as the tutors. The program started in January and will resume in August.

Spend the Night at the Library will be held at Carl Elliott Regional Library in Jasper and invites children ages 4-13 to enjoy a night full of games, movies and story telling. Children eight years and younger will stay from 6 to 9 p.m. and children nine and older can stay until midnight. The event is planned to take place in July but no date has been set.

Teens Assisting Teens to Succeed (TATtS) is an after school program that has honor students tutoring and mentoring their fellow classmates. This program uses social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach out to the students. TATtS is currently only active in one high school but will be expanded to more schools with the new school year. The program began in December and will resume in August.

In March, the Walker County Chapter joined the Jasper Public Library, Girl Scouts of America and the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program to celebrate Dr. Seuss' Birthday and invited children to a party where they made their own bookmarks while listening to Dr. Seuss stories. Children also received a free Dr. Seuss book.

The Walker County Chapter will hold the Great Grown Up Spelling Bee in October. Adults get the chance to compete with other teams in a spelling bee while wearing their most creative costumes.

In response to the devastation of the April 27 tornadoes, the Walker County Chapter has planned a program called Shoeboxes for Kids to take place in upcoming months. The program will provide supplies to the youngest victims of the tornadoes. The Literacy Council is asking for items such as books or small toys. Donations can be dropped off at the Walker County Chapter in the Jasper Area Family Service Center.



Participants of last year's Great Grown Up Spelling Bee show off their creative costumes.

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 Morrison, Jeff
 In honor of Jennifer Buettner
 Teel, Peggy
 In honor of Shelia Lawrence

This list reflects donations made from January-May 31, 2011.



Facts About Illiteracy

Adult Functional Illiteracy Rates*:

Blount	14%	5,811
Jefferson	13%	64,901
St. Clair	12%	6,215
Shelby	7%	8,419
Walker	14%	7,632
TOTAL	12%	92,980

*According to National Center for Adult Education

- According to ProLiteracy, 30 million people over the age of 16 don't read well enough to understand a newspaper story written at the eighth grade level or fill out a job application.
- Did you know a parent's literacy skills reflect on a child? A study from the National Institute for Literacy shows that helping struggling adult readers has a measurable affect on the literacy level of their child.
- Over 94 million adults in the U.S. can speak, but not read the English language, according to Literacy in the Labor Force.