

One Of Five Americans Cannot Read!

By Jalyne Strong
Post Staff Writer

When she pays her insurance agent each Thursday, she signs the checks with a capital X. That is her "mark". She's not exactly sure what is printed on the many policies she has. She's paid on them for years and years and continues to pay. Her agent assures her that they are needed coverage.

Her grandson sends weekly letters. He's away at college. Every unopened letter, she places in a shoe box. They are precious to her though she doesn't know what they say. "Maybe someday," she tells herself as she lays the last envelope in the box. Maybe someday, she'll have someone open the letters and tell her what they contain. But for now, she's too embarrassed. She's 62-years-old and cannot read.

She believes she's alone in her predicament. She doesn't know that one out of five Americans cannot read. A lot of information goes by her. She doesn't comprehend signs, cards or posters. She cannot read the labels on food packages or medicine containers.

Outlined in the Mecklenburg County Literacy Council's pamphlet, "One out of five Americans cannot read help wanted ads; get or hold jobs because of their inability to read; read labels on packaged foods or read cooking instructions; write letters to family and friends or read those they receive; read information provided for voters, home owners, car owners, gardeners, bus riders; read legal contracts that they sign or read laws for their protection and help; read directions for taking medicines or for opening the child proof caps."

Joyce McManus, office coordinator, and Linda Hubbard, chairperson of the publicity committee, for the Mecklenburg County Literacy Council, are concerned about these people.

Aside from their office jobs, they are both tutors with the Literacy Council which offers free reading lessons to adult students. Along with other volunteers, McManus and Hubbard spend three to four hours a week teaching someone to read.

It is a job that has its problems: it is hard to get some people to respond to the help, and Hubbard and McManus must always be aware and sensitive to each and every student's insecurities.

"Many older people are afraid and nervous at the prospect of learning to read. They think they'll be laughed at," explains Hubbard. "Some people equate not being able to read with being stupid."

Therefore, McManus and Hubbard's first responsibility is to make their students comfortable. Their personalities play a big part. Both are friendly, warm and humorous. They succeed at easing the tension with their students.

The way the instructions are set up also help. Meetings between tutor and student are private, one-on-one. There is no classroom setting. Tutoring is held in convenient places for both tutor and student, usually a central location: a library, church, community center, etc.

The teaching materials are the Beauty Of The Week

Continued From Page 1A

Pretty and personable Erin maintains a carefree demeanor in her private life also. She says she likes nothing better than a relaxing atmosphere. Her favorite activities are listening to music and eating. "To be honest," she laughs, "I love to eat. But you could never tell it because I'm so thin."

"If I go out of town I don't mind if I don't do anything else but go to a nice restaurant," she adds.

Music that best fits her character is, says Erin, "Easy listening, smooth sounds. I love Jazz. My favorites? Marcus Miller and Pieces of a Dream. And I enjoy Luther Vandross and Kashif. They could sing to me all day," she smiles.

Erin admits to possessing a large collection of albums. Lucky girl, she used to work for a record store for six years.

Other best loved activities for Erin include going to the park on a nice day and an interest in clothes. "I love clothes," she notes. "Sometimes I dress conservative. But I like to get wild," she laughs.



Joyce McManus
...Office coordinator



Linda Hubbard
...Chairs publicity committee

"Lauback Way to Reading": a series of four workbooks with basic reading and writing skills. Once the student completes the skill books he or she will be able to read on a seventh or eighth grade level. There is no pressure to complete the lessons at a certain date. The student proceeds at his or her own pace.

The lessons can be difficult for the students. But this does not mean that they are not intelligent. It is just that they aren't familiar with the skills. McManus equates the situation with this scenario: "Imagine," she says, "you are confronted with a sentence in German and told to read it. If you do not know any German, the sentence could be as simple as 'Jim gets the ball,' but you'd have no idea what it says."

And Hubbard adds, "Or if you are right-handed, try to write with your left hand. It is extremely hard." These examples help tutors realize the predicament faced by the adult student just learning to read and write.

The reasons why so many Americans are functionally illiterate are many and diverse. "But it is a problem that is not limited to any segment of society," assures Hubbard. Illiteracy cuts across the board. "There are white-collar workers who cannot read," says Hubbard. "People wonder how they get by for so many years. They manage somehow."

But sometimes they don't manage. Hubbard tells a story about a business supervisor who, after fifteen years with a company, quits his job because the office was changing to a new system. The new system would require a new type of record-keeping. The supervisor had managed with the old system but he knew he wouldn't be able to understand if it was changed. He left his job. He didn't want his co-workers to know he could not read.

McManus and Hubbard do not dwell on the sad stories. They are excited now that they are involved with helping adults learn to read. "You get as much or more than you give," admits McManus about her experience teaching reading and writing skills. "It's a precious gift to someone that can never be taken away from them."

To illustrate, Hubbard offers a quote from Tzu, a Chinese Taoist philosopher, "If you give a man a fish, he will be nourished once. If you teach him to fish, he will feed himself and his family all his life."

Hubbard and McManus are concerned about increasing people's awareness of illiteracy. They are recruiting both tutors and students.

To recruit students, Hubbard has sought the assistance of radio stations. The point is to have people hear the message if they cannot read the pamphlets, cards, or posters put out by the Literacy Council.

Tutors are recruited through printed information. Flyers simply state, "Teach Someone to Read." Potential tutors are invited to attend tutor workshops held five times a year: each January, March, May, September and November. Instructions during these workshops generally deal with how to relate to adult students.

What are the requirements for becoming a tutor? "Caring," both Hubbard and McManus agree.

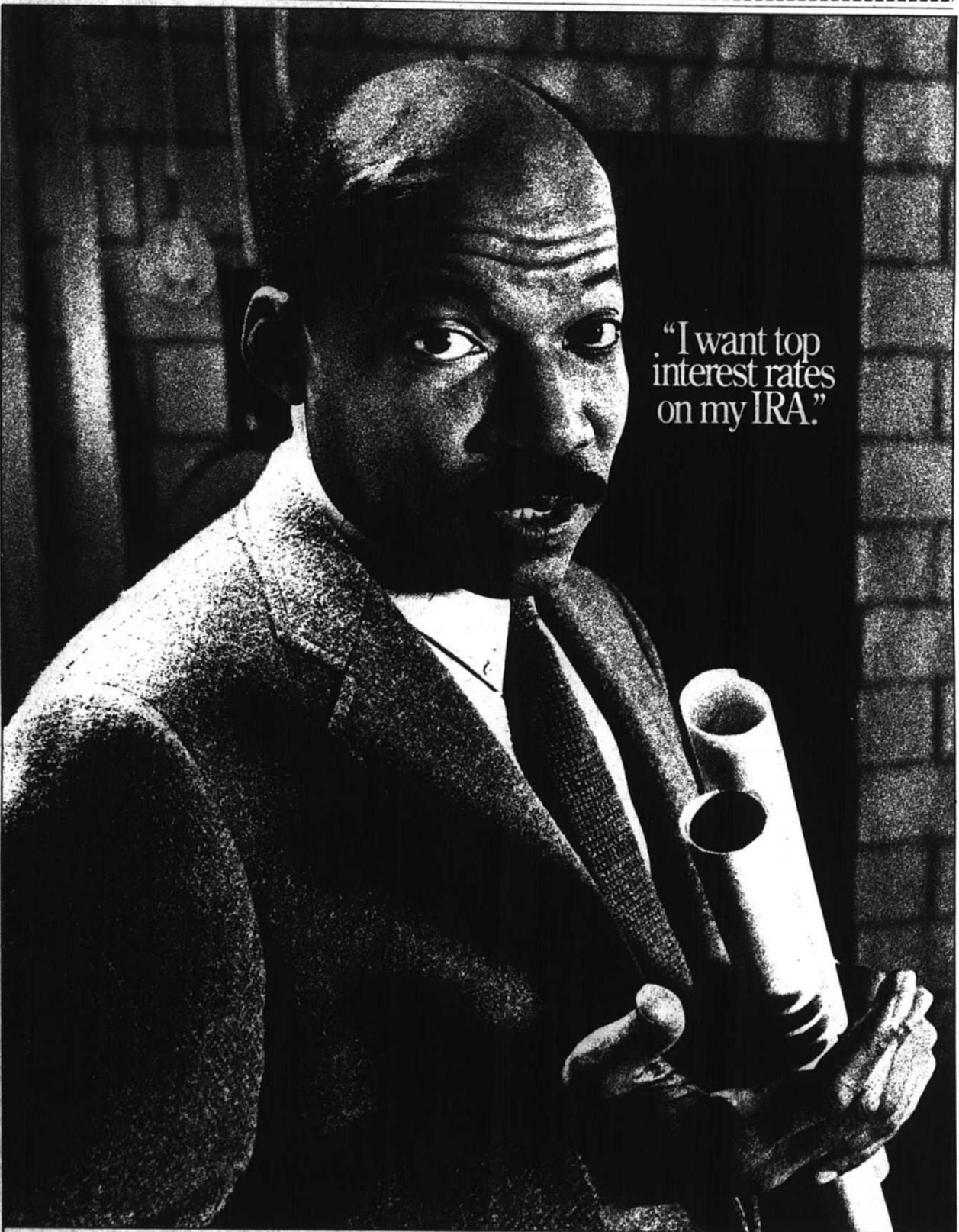
Anyone interested in teaching someone to read, please call 376-5938. More information will be gladly given.

The person this article would help the most can't read it. Tell a friend. Reading lessons are free. Call 376-5938.

THE CHARLOTTE POST

Fill Out The Below Information And Enclose
Check or Money Order for \$17.76 Mail To:
THE CHARLOTTE POST
P. O. Box 30144
Charlotte, N.C. 28230

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____



"I want top interest rates on my IRA."

Fact: Rates on all Wachovia IRA options are among the best you'll find.

No matter which Wachovia Individual Retirement Account options you choose, you earn current money market rates — among the highest anywhere. Your Wachovia Personal Banker can help you decide among the terms and rates available. And help you combine them, if you wish, for a more flexible investment program. See a Personal Banker soon.

Annual Percentage Rate	10.30%
Annual Yield	10.848%
Four year fixed-rate deposit \$500 minimum	

Wachovia
Bank & Trust

Federal regulations require substantial interest penalties for early withdrawal. Rate effective as of 2/27/85 (subject to change daily).

Member FDIC.

Omnia Gift Shoppe's
10th Anniversary Celebration
Introducing: **COLOR ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATIONS**
A scientific technique in choosing the right colors for your skin tone and color coded cosmetics.
Saturday, March 9th
10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Bounty Shopping Center
3201 Beatties Ford Rd. **393-2020**