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Life & Leisure

Hoke Reading/Literacy Council marks 25 years of helping people learn to read

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

The Hoke Reading Literacy Council celebrates its 25th anniversary in conjunction with Literacy Sunday on September 14.

The Literacy Council, made up of mostly volunteers, provides the opportunity for adults to acquire basic literacy skills.

Literacy Council Executive Director Barbara Buie quoted in her most recent newsletter from a 1977-78 newsletter: "If I've seen far it's because I am standing on the shoulders of giants."

"Little did I know that those giants would carry me for a quarter of a century," she wrote in the 2003 summer/fall newsletter.

Some of those "giants" are Jackie Haddon, the first Literacy board chairman; Emma Mims, the first volunteer tutor/trainer; Raz Autry, J.D. McAllister, Harold and Peggy Gillis and Nellie Flowers.

Some were charter board members, some were there with encouragement and financial support, Buie says. "One time we didn't have money for the telephone bill, and a supporter said, 'Send the bill to me until you can afford to pay it.'"

Buie adds, "There are so many that are still there for us."

The Literacy Council was originally located in the 12' x 14' back room of a multi-room complex the agency occupies now at 125 West Elmwood Avenue. "We had very little space, barely enough for two desks — two chairs so we could tutor," says Buie. "One person was doing administrative work and the other tutored."

In the beginning service delivery was one on one. Services have expanded considerably since then, but the Literacy Council still operates on a shoe string.

Over the past 25 years, the Literacy Council has added basic mathematics, English as a second language and technology.

Buie quotes Robert Wedgeworth, president of ProLiteracy. "Wherever you find them, our students are among the most economically and socially vulnerable — and so are their children."

Wedgeworth might well have been speaking of Hoke County, where approximately one-third of its citizens lack the most basic literacy skills.

Buie says it's not easy to measure the successes of the students in terms of academics. "One person has gone into his own business, some people are comfortable enough to read aloud in Sunday school for the first time. People are writing letters to children and other loved ones for the first time," says Buie. "At least three people have been able to maintain employment as a result of being here."

"We've had those kinds of successes instead of those with high school and college degrees."

Anthony Day, 41, went through the regular program to learn to read and improve his skills and has gone onto work on computers in the Literacy Council's lab.

"I feel good now — real nice about it," says Day, who spends his days learning on his own on a computer. There is a teacher available if he needs help, he says. He wants word to get out about the computer classes "I used to be quiet," he says, and is now more outgoing with more confidence in himself. Fond of traveling, now he surfs the Internet.

The Literacy Council operates a public computer lab through the Rural Internet Access Authority's e-NC Initiative. The lab is open and staffed on Mondays and Wednesdays at 5-8 p.m. and Saturdays at 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The labs are for beginners or for those who want to hone the computer skills they already possess or learn how to use the Internet.

"Whether you are a beginner or slightly advanced; in need of a way to check your e-mail or do a fancy report, we are here to help you," says Buie. "For more information or to get started, stop by during the times listed."

<21>Literacy Council officers
<01>The 2003-2004 officers of the Literacy Council are the Rev. Matthew Rouse Jr., chairman, Trudy McVicker, vice chair; Gwendolyn McIntyre Quick, secretary; and John K. McNeill, treasurer. Other board of directors members are Robert Conoly, Edna Ewing, Greta Johnson, Rosa McAllister-McRae and Cheryl Whitford. Deborah Carpenter, Christa Engle, Janeth Hedgpeth, Amy Kirk and Wayne Simpson were most recent board members.

Still needed are compassionate persons who read well and can sacrifice three hours a week to teach basic reading. If you are that person, call 875-2145 to register for a tutor workshop to be held September 23 and 25 at 6-9 p.m. and September 27 at 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. There is no charge for the workshop.

Buie says her silver anniversary wish is that the hundreds of individuals, numerous religious and civic organizations, volunteers, government and especially learners are proud of their involvement with the Literacy Council. "Thank you for caring and sharing," she adds.

"It has been a long time but it has been a fun time," Buie says about her 25 years as executive director of the Literacy Council.



From left, Barbara Buie, executive director of the Hoke Literacy Council; L.C. Chapel, public relations; and the Rev. Mathew Rouse Jr., pastor at Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, also chairman of the board.



Right: Anthony Day surfs the Internet after honing his reading skills at the Hoke Reading/Literacy Council. Above: Two chairs in a small room are symbols of the meager beginnings of the Hoke Reading/Literacy Council's beginning 25 years ago.



Proclamation Literacy, Sunday September 14, 2003

Whereas, adult illiteracy is a serious problem hampering the lives of all Raeford-Hoke County citizens; and
Whereas, adult illiteracy prevents those affected by it from fully participating in our civic, social, political and economic arenas; and
Whereas, we desire that all our citizens have the opportunity to obtain those skills that will lead them to more productive lives; and
Whereas, we wish to applaud those adults among us who have undertaken the task of overcoming their personal illiteracy; and
Whereas, many of our citizens, businesses and institutions have voluntarily supported adult literacy efforts and deserve our

heartfelt appreciation; and
Whereas, we salute Hoke Reading Literacy Council for twenty-five years of service to these most in need of literacy skills; and
Whereas, it is desirable to encourage all citizens to become involved in the efforts to make Raeford-Hoke County more literate; therefore
We proclaim September 14, 2003 Literacy Sunday in Raeford — Hoke County and commend its observance to all our citizens.

Robert Wright
Chairman
Hoke County Board of Commissioners

Bob Gentry
Mayor
City of Raeford