



ARA Newsletter

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Arkansas Reading Association
An affiliate of the
International Reading Association

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Sarah Nelson Womble

32nd Southwest Regional IRA Conference Huge Success!

The 32nd Southwest Regional IRA Conference was held on November 15-16, 2007, in Little Rock. Evaluations conducted online by IRA indicated the conference was a success. A total of 2,453 educators from the Southwest Region and other states attended the conference. Seventy companies were represented in the exhibit hall.

Twenty-eight featured speakers were on the program as well as many other excellent presenters who shared their expertise during the 152 breakout sessions. There were three well attended general sessions. Linda

Gambrell opened the conference with "The Power of Pleasure Reading." Steven Layne's "Balcony People" was an inspiration to all who attended the afternoon general session. Kate DiCamillo won hearts sharing "The Writer's Life: Making It Up as You Go!" during the third general session.

Special events included a Book Nook sponsored by Barnes and Noble on Wednesday evening and several vendor receptions early Thursday evening. A *Celebration of Children's Authors* on Thursday evening provided entertainment by *Trout Fishing in America*

and autographing by children's authors.

A special thank you goes out to the many volunteers from Arkansas who made this conference a success. The 33rd Southwest Regional Conference will be held in Oklahoma in 2009.



Glenda Nugent (left) visits with authors and illustrators Patricia C. and Fred McKissack. Patricia spoke at the Book and Author Luncheon Friday.

Distinguished Service in Literacy Award

Sarah Nelson Womble is the recipient of the first *Arkansas Reading Association Distinguished Service Literacy Award*. This award was established to recognize an individual who has distinguished himself or herself in the promotion of literacy statewide and/or nationally. Sarah is a distinguished proponent of literacy in Arkansas and across the United States and Canada.

Sarah has served in several roles in the Pulaski County Spe-

cial School District, Little Rock, Arkansas, including teacher, elementary assistant principal, elementary principal, associate director of elementary education, and director of elementary education. Since her retirement in 2000, Sarah has continued to volunteer in elementary schools.

Sarah has been very active in Arkansas Reading Association and International Reading Association for over 25 years, serving as president and state coordinator for the Arkansas Reading

Association, chairman of two regional IRA conferences, and on various IRA committees. Sarah has not missed an IRA Convention since 1978. Currently, Sarah is a Leadership Development Associate for IRA.

ARA congratulates Sarah Nelson Womble on her distinguished service to literacy and is pleased to announce that from this point forward this award shall be known as the *Sarah Nelson Womble Distinguished Service Literacy Award*.

Legislative Sessions at 32nd Southwest Regional IRA Conference

Two legislative sessions were conducted at the 32nd Southwest Regional IRA Conference in November. During the first session, "Celebrate Learning About Advocacy for all Arkansas Students," Linda Eilers, ARA Secretary and Janis Gibson, ARA Legislative Chair shared information gathered from the IRA Legislative Workshop in Washington, D.C.

In the second session, "Celebrate Meeting with a Legislator," Senators Gilbert Baker and Shane Broadway informed attendees of the upcoming issues from the Education Committee

and answered questions. They were very open with their comments of the progress of the education committee. They stated that this is the time to get to know your legislators. With the legislature not in session, the Senators and Representatives have time to get to know you and your needs. They encouraged everyone to have a specific concern about education to communicate when you get in touch with them. Also, they said it would be helpful to mention that you are a member of the Arkansas Reading Association. Both Baker and Broadway strongly encouraged attendees

to contact their state legislators with concerns about education.



Senator Shane Broadway, Janis Gibson, and Senator Gilbert Baker discuss education issues with conference attendees..

2007 Administrator in Reading



Suzette Anderson

Suzette Anderson, a member of ARA and Jefferson County Reading Council, has been in education for 23 years and is currently the principal at W. T. Cheney Elementary School in Pine Bluff School District. She is dedicated to improving school achievement by improving student reading levels through various avenues such as reading tags, lunch with the teacher, and accelerated reading dances.

Mrs. Anderson can often be seen reading with large groups of students in the library or cafeteria while other students read silently. She is perceived by her staff as a "positive

educator who is dedicated to providing many pathways for children to learn, and views reading as a most valuable commodity."

For these and many other reasons, the Arkansas Reading Association would like to congratulate Suzette Anderson on receiving this year's Administrator in Reading Award.

For information about nominating your administrator for this prestigious award, go to the ARA website—www.arareading.org—and click on Awards or contact Julie Huskey at Julie@arareading.org.

2008 ARA Conference



Mark your calendar to explore literacy with the Arkansas Reading Association on November 20-21

for the 2008 Fall Conference—"Reading...the Window to the World." This year's conference will feature Linda Hoyt, Camille Blachowicz, Tim and Cindy Shanahan, Toni Buzzeo, Claire Rudolf Murphy, Teri Sloat and other outstanding speakers.

ARA adopts Ugandan Student as Project

Supporting Ugandan students through the Terri Clark Ministries continues to be the focus of International Projects. Several councils have made a commitment to sponsor students in Uganda and/or send care packages to ARA's student, Simon Kutego. Councils who are currently taking part in this effort are: Arkansas River Valley, El Dorado, North Central, Jefferson County, Grant Count, Arkadelphia, SEARK, and Reading on the Ridge.

For more information, contact: Tara Coker at Tara@arareading.org.



Simon Kutego

ARA's Student in Ugandan

Studies & Research Grant Makes a Difference for Males!

Editors Note: The following article was submitted by Susan Hunter, Literacy Coach at Camden Fairview Intermediate School. Susan received the ARA Studies & Research Grant for 2007.

Thanks to an ARA Studies and Research Grant titled "Outside the Lines," males at Camden Fairview Intermediate School are excited about reading. The purpose of the grant was to target males who are not interested in reading, are seriously at risk, and/or are attending In School Suspension. The results are noteworthy.

Grant funds have been used to purchase magazines and other high-interest materials that appeal to males. Sports-related materials have been number one with the students with *Sports Illustrated for Kids* flying off the shelf as soon as it arrives. Fourth and fifth graders in the program alternate months for a copy, and each student is allowed to keep his copy. However, the students are eager to read every edition, so they are trading magazines with the students in the other grade when they finish a magazine. Parents of two of the students have ordered the magazine for their sons because they wanted every issue of the magazine.

Males who have not participated in class discussions are now eager to share information about their favorite sports and sports figures. The students meet during their lunch period once a week

with me, and we are joined frequently by a male mentor. I have been surprised by the details they remember about the sports figures: where they went to college, members of their family, their statistics, and specific game details such as how many tackles. During each session, each student takes a fun fact from each state about football and reports to the group. They especially enjoy being a sports reporter and using their "microphone" to inform the group of the latest news (SLE OV.1.5.3). They understand the information in the magazine and are teaching other students how to read material such as a gamer grid (SLE IR.12.5.2; R.9.5.13; IR.12.5.5). Through lively discussions about illegal activities such as dog fighting and illegal use of steroids, they are developing their own sense of right and wrong as they evaluate players' actions. They are now taking sides as to the Super Bowl winner, basing their choices on their reading (Bloom's!). Although they disagree frequently, they are respectful of the opinions of others, an important social skill.

Reading *Sports Illustrated for Kids* led them to read biographies on sports figures, which helped them select a player or sport to produce their own books. Hearing about the program, some males who do not have reading problems asked to join the lunch group. Consequently, the "new" students have

teamed with other group members to produce books. These guys like to draw, so art supplies were purchased for them to illustrate their books. Our at-risk students are developing friendships with stronger students through their reading interests; the positive results are seen in their classrooms throughout the day.

Students are writing more because the grant provided funds for a journal. Their entries include interesting facts, questions for the group based on their readings, and reports on players/issues of their choice to share with the group (SLE W.5.5.1; W.4.5.14; R.9.5.19; R.9.5.11; R.10.5.5; IR.12.5.6 & OV.3.5.1; OV.1.5.8; OV.3.5.3).

Recently, the students took an assessment on a non-fiction passage, and a student who scored a 1 on his open response on the same kind of passage last year, scored a 3 on his open response this year. Other students are showing improvement, some greater than others.

The ability to read affects so many aspects of a person's life, and the results of this program prove the importance of reading. I thought the program would be a success, but I never imagined the impact it would have on these students. Wanting to read, discuss, and write is a major change for most of these students. All of these areas will help them succeed in school and life.

President's Message



Glenda Nugent
ARA President
2007-2008

Dear ARA Friends,

We are in the last quarter of another ARA and school year. As you reflect on

the year, congratulate yourselves on what you have done for children and literacy by working with Arkansas Reading Association, your local reading council or as an educator in your school. What you do is important and we need dedicated educators who are willing to give their time and energy to help promote literacy in our schools and state.

Each local council should plan now to attend the ARA Summer Leadership Workshop in Little Rock, July 25-26. You will soon receive registration details for this important event.

ARA State officers and committee chairs should also plan to attend the

ARA Transition meeting on June 14.

Again congratulations and heartfelt thanks to each of you for your contributions to ARA, your local council and the children you teach.

Sincerely,
Glenda Nugent
ARA President

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
ARA Summer Leadership Workshop
July 24-25, 2008
Embassy Suites—Little Rock

Local Council News

Central Arkansas Reading Council

Several Central Arkansas Reading Council officers attended the ARA Summer Leadership Workshop in Little Rock in July. President Tricia Reid, President-Elect Vanessa Hendrix, Vice-President Karyl Bearden, and Treasurer/Membership Chair Pat Davidson met with their ARA mentor, Glenda Nugent, to plan CARC programs and projects for the year. The council started off the year with a meeting targeting Pre-K teachers on September 20, 2007 at Pulaski Technical College. The Parents and Reading Program was presented by Paula Findley, ARA Parents and Reading Committee Chair. New officers were installed by Glenda Nugent. Door prizes included two student memberships and a selection of books donated by Scholastic. On October 8, 2007, a Newspaper in Education program was presented by Susan Grogan, ARA Newspaper in Education Committee Chair, at a meeting at the Jacksonville Middle School for Girls. For information about joining CARC, please contact Karyl Bearden at Karyl@arareading.org.

El Dorado Reading Council

The El Dorado Reading Council asked local businesses to donate money for books and distributed them at a "Back to School" blowout in August. They also manned a booth at the Union County Fair to solicit council and ARA membership and gave out books to children attending the fair. In addition, they made bags of books for the hospital children's ward to be given to children who are patients of the hospital. A poetry contest was held for first graders, culminating with an awards ceremony involving families and a guest speaker. They also spoke to students at a local college about becoming members of the El Dorado Reading Council, ARA, and IRA.

Grant County Reading Council

Grant County Reading Council began the year with a bang as they sponsored Literacy Nights on October 18th at East

End Elementary, November 8th at East End Intermediate, and February 12th at Sheridan Elementary. They passed out over 600 books at the Grant County Fair Parade and the East End Holiday Parade. The council also plans to volunteer at the Literary Festival in Little Rock in April, conducting literacy based activities. They plan to close the year by donating books to the local HIPPI program in Grant County.



GCRC Members donate books!

Jefferson County Reading Council

The Jefferson County Reading Council served their community by distributing 200 Booster Book Bags to kindergarten students immunized at the Jefferson County Health Department and 100 books and brochures to teenage mothers and their children served by ACCESS. More than 400 families attended and received free books at JCRC's "Read Across America" event at Pines Mall. In addition, JCRC provided staff development opportunities for area teachers through presentations by children's book author, Darcy Pattison, Perma-bound representative, Loyd Harris, and "Reading in Science" by Wright Group. Highlights for the future include a presentation by Arkansas author, Carla McClafferty, a return visit by Loyd Harris, and the continuation and expansion of local community service projects.

North Arkansas Reading Council

The North Arkansas Reading Council have several exciting events planned this year. Tina Montgomery, ARA President-Elect, was the featured presenter at the first meeting. She gave a preview of the Fall Conference and gave book talks on the featured authors.

"Walking Through a Winter Wonderland" was held in December. This activity gave children the opportunity to enjoy several Christmas related books and activities. The council hosted Arkansas author Katy Duffield on March 31, 2008. Educators from surrounding schools were invited to hear Katy speak about her award-winning book *Farmer McPeepers and His Missing Milk Cows*.

North Central Arkansas Reading Council

The North Central Arkansas Reading Council held its first meeting of the year at UCA with Glenda Nugent, ARA President, attending. Members were treated to an exceptional program on Newspapers in Education by Karen Brown, who shared a plethora of ideas with a pirate theme for using the newspaper in the classroom to enhance every area of the curriculum. As an international project, the North Central Arkansas Reading Council partnered with two other councils to sponsor a Ugandan student. The February 12th meeting at the Vilonia Primary School featured Mike Rush, a local writer of great renown, who presented a writers' workshop. Congratulations to Ruth Linn, current treasurer of the North Central Arkansas Reading Council and former Historian of ARA, who has been named 2007-2008 teacher of the year for Greenbrier Westside Elementary!

Northeast Arkansas Reading Council

The Northeast Arkansas Reading Council finished the 2006-2007 school year with an early membership drive. Flyers and brochures with a tentative schedule of programs were sent out to members and to schools in the area. With membership underway, the council began a new project—a website. The website is located at: www.orgsites.com/ar/nearc. NEARC officers attended the ARA Summer Leadership Workshop in July and have many programs, events, and activities planned for the year.

Local Council News (continued from page 4)

Northwest Arkansas Reading Council

On September 19, 2007, State Representative Lindsley Smith spoke to 30 educators from Northwest Arkansas at the first meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Reading Council. Lindsley has served as the State Representative from House District 92 since January 2005. She gave a brief history of the background of the No Child Left Behind Legislation, recounted several problems our state has encountered as a result of the implementation of the NCLB act, and she mentioned several issues surrounding the re-authorization of the act. Representative Smith talked about the importance of legislative advocacy and encouraged the attendees to become advocates for the teaching profession. She encouraged those attending to stay abreast of educational issues and contact elected officials at the local, state, and national level to voice their informed opinions about important issues and concerns.

SEARK Reading Council

The SEARK Reading Council has held two meetings thus far this year. The first meeting was held in September at Drew Central with an Arkansas History program by the Drew Central Fourth Grade Teachers offered as staff development. The second meeting was held at Monticello Elementary School in January. Paula Findley, ARA Parents and Reading Chairperson, presented a program on parent involvement. Two winners of The Young Writers project will receive awards at the annual Literacy Banquet in April. In addition, new officers and committee chairs will be introduced at that time. Through the Ugandan Student Adoption, the council adopted a girl and a boy as an international project. Care packages are being mailed at intervals. Another successful project was the "Storybook Characters" at the local Sonic. SEARK members and Americorp members enjoyed reading and passing out books to children who came by. SEARK Reading Council Literacy winners for 2008-2009 are: Sheila Gardner, Educator, and Sonic of

Monticello (Kay and Jason Espinoza), Community.

Southeast Arkansas Reading Council

The Eudora Elementary School participated in a Reading/Science Fair, sponsored by the Southeast Arkansas Reading Council. Each student read books on their level. Then parents assisted their children in making a story board about the book. The displays were colorful and imaginative. The grade levels were awarded first, second, third, and honorable mention. This project helped increase parent involvement and helped students see reading as an enjoyable pastime and lifelong skill.

Three Rivers Reading Council

The Three Rivers Reading Council that serves Lonoke, Prairie, White, and Woodruff counties, has hosted three evening events. "Partnership With Early Childhood: Pre-K and Beyond" was the title of the September 6 event that was a collaboration between the council and area preschools. We compared frameworks and highlighted, specifically, how preschool lays the foundation for later literacy success. Several new members were recruited that night! On September 27, the council presented "Going Deeper Into Science With Literacy", another collaboration, this time with the council and two new science specialists who serve our area. First came a presentation on the reading process: before, during, and after reading any texts. Then the science specialists gave a brief presentation on the "before, during, and after" of learning a science concept and how that relates to reading in the sciences and to the reading process. They had prepared the group to do "hands-on" experiments with some of the lab kits that are available to teachers to use in their classrooms. Donning goggles and working in small groups, the participants enjoyed the lab activities and the writing and reading that went with them. The next event was called, "Newspapers in Education" and was presented the evening of November 8. Two hours of profes-

sional development credit was available for each of these events. The power point presentations of the three events are available for other councils to use. Contact Susan Grogan at sgrogan@wilbur.k12.ar.us.



TRRC Members enjoy lab activities.

White River Reading Council

Award-winning author Alexandria Lafayette and local author Betsy Jacoway were guest speakers at the White River Reading Council meetings this year. Also, Julie Huskey, ETA/Cuisenaire representative, spoke to the council about the latest materials and manipulatives for teaching reading. Two projects, "Brush Up on Reading" and "Give Reading a Shot," provided opportunities for children to receive a picture book when they visited a local dentist or health clinic. Parents also received information on the importance of reading aloud to their child.

Arkansas Catholic Special Interest Reading Council

The ACSI Reading Council hosted a "Souper Saturday" on February 2, 2008, at Christ the King School. Patricia Bandre, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Reading Education Center for Literacy from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock spoke to the council about reading. In April, the council is planning their annual spring banquet at Holy Souls to honor teachers and administrators.

Join your local council, ARA and
IRA today!
billieann@arareading.org

**Arkansas Reading
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Promoting literacy in Arkansas for over 35 years!

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Membership Information

IRA - International Reading Association Membership Information:

1-800-336-READ *Basic Membership - \$36.00* *Journal Membership - \$61.00*

Contact IRA at www.reading.org or Billie Ann Dishongh at BillieAnn@arareading.org

IRA Student Membership—\$22.00 (Contact Wendy Ellis at Wendy@arareading.org)

ARA - Arkansas Reading Association Membership Information:

Basic Membership - \$10.00 for individuals who do not have a local council in their geographic area.

Contact Billie Ann Dishongh, Tanna Clark, or go to www.arareading.org

Local Reading Council Membership/ARA Membership:

Local reading council membership offers local networking opportunities through regular meetings, community involvement, projects, and leadership opportunities. (Dues vary by council and include ARA membership.)

Renew your local council/ARA/IRA membership!
BillieAnn@arareading.org