

CELEBRATE LITERACY IN ARKANSAS AWARDS

The 2009 Celebrate Literacy in Arkansas award winners were announced in a ceremony held April 28, 2009, in the Rotunda of the State Capitol Building in Little Rock. Award winners included:

Arkansas Reading Association (ARA)

❖ARA Educator of the Year
Award: Susan Bitely, Jefferson
County Reading Council

❖ARA Agency of the Year Award:
Blytheville Alumnae Chapter of
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

❖ARA State Community Leaders
Award: Jim Halsell, Fayetteville

Arkansas Literacy Councils (ALC)

❖ALC/Win Rockefeller Leadership
Award: Charlie Searcy, Searcy and
Associates, Monticello

❖Outstanding Business Partner
Award: Lennox Industries,
Stuttgart

Arkansas Bar Association Lawyers for Literacy Committee

❖2009 Arkansas Volunteer Tutor
of the Year: Jim Oschenfield, Hot
Springs Village



Martha Cortes (right) was named Adult Learner of the Year for 2009 at the annual COABE Conference. The conference was held April 18-22 in Louisville, Kentucky.

This Issue

COABE Award P.1

Literacy Celebration P.1

Program Highlights P.2

Visit <http://dwe.arkansas.gov/adult.html>
for links to previous issues of the
Adult Education Newsletter.

2009 COABE Adult Learner of the Year

The Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) has named Martha Cortes of Rogers as the Adult Learner of the Year for 2009. The award—and a \$1,000 stipend for her education—is given annually to a student overcoming difficult circumstances to pursue adult learning; supported other adult learners; and managed significant adult responsibilities such as those related to family, community, and employment. Cortes was nominated for the award by Ben Aldama, Dean of Adult Education at NorthWest Arkansas Community College. The award was presented April 20th at the COABE conference which was held in Louisville, Kentucky.

Cortes is a wife, a mother to three children, a community volunteer, a student at NorthWest Arkansas Community College and a full-time administrative assistant at the Adult Education Center. She is a person of ambition and inspiration. She took and passed her U.S. Citizenship test in 2007, five months after she applied. "Citizenship means a lot to me," Cortes said. "It gives a person more rights, such as obtaining an education, getting a job, and voting."

Education has fueled her inspiration. "Education really changes things, the way we think about each other, ourselves, and our country," Cortes said. "NWACC has changed my life, too. It has helped me to become a better student, employee, and person. After working here (at the Adult Education Center), I'm able to focus more on what I want to do, which is to teach."

She spoke no English and had no friends when she first arrived in Rogers, following her husband from Durango, Mexico. Her husband already had a job in Rogers when the two married in Mexico.

Cortes enrolled in the NWACC Adult Education English as a Second Language (ESL) classes when she arrived in Rogers. She started evening classes at the beginning level. Today she speaks fluent English.

In October 2006, Cortes was named the Outstanding Paraprofessional at the Arkansas Association for Continuing and Adult Education (AACAE) Conference. The award further fueled her ambition. She frequently speaks publicly on behalf of the College and the benefits of learning English. Cortes will graduate from NWACC with an Associate of Arts this year. She plans to continue her education at the University of Arkansas, majoring in Education.

In accepting the award Martha commented:

"It is an honor for me to get this award. Thanks to Ben for nominating me and for being my mentor. Thanks to COABE and Dollar General for giving me the award. Thanks to my family for supporting me.

As an immigrant, I never thought that I could have the opportunity to study and improve my education to this level, which is the start to a promise to myself to improve my life in all possible ways.

Thanks to all the COABE members because as teachers you are improving the lives of not just immigrants but adults that want to succeed in life. You are changing people's lives, and you have definitely changed my life.

Thank you!"

2008 GED® Top Scorers Recognized

Individuals earning the highest scores on the GED Test during 2008 were recognized as part of the Literacy Celebration held on April 28 in the Rotunda of the State Capitol.

Of the 8,747 individuals testing last year, 7,443 passed which gives Arkansas a pass rate of 86%. Dedra Duttenhoffer earned the highest score of 794 from a possible 800. She tested at UAM College of Technology at Crossett (Hamburg Center).



Pictured above: GED Top Scorers. Front Row (L-R) Ericka Taylor, Shasta Doshier, Dinah Dixon, Jessica Crabtree, Dedra Duttenhoffer. Back Row (L-R) Clinton Williams, Caitlyn Correll, Brock McVay, and Verneen Johnson.

WAGE™ Testimonial

Written by
Samantha Dougan-Morris

I am a twenty-nine year old wife and mother of two boys. I am enrolled in SEARK College and will be graduating May 8, 2009, with an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Accounting and a technical certificate in Business Management. I am currently a SEARK Student Ambassador, on the Student Senate, and hold office in Phi Beta Lambda.

I began my journey at SEARK with the Adult Education/WAGE Program in August, 2006. Before WAGE, I had been a stay at home mom. When I started to look for a job, I had a problem because I had been at home and unemployed for almost four years. I had no skills. I had always taken pride in my family and being there for them, but somewhere in those four years, I had "lost" me. I will always give credit to the SEARK WAGE Program and to the people in the program for giving me the skills I needed to begin trusting in "me" again as well as others. I know that I do have something to offer, and I have gained the confidence to go after what I want in life.

When I first enrolled in the SEARK WAGE Program, it had been almost 10 years since I had been in a classroom. The help and assistance that I received made a world of difference. I honestly believe that if I had gone straight from the house to [college], I would have failed and would not be where I am today.

I have received many honors and opportunities that I would have never dreamed of receiving.

I see a bright future not only for me but also for my family. Without [WAGE], I do not know if I would have made it this far.

WAGE™ Program News

WAGE & Dislocated Workers

The Pulaski County and Conway WAGE Centers recently provided workshops in interviewing techniques and resume writing for dislocated workers of the Target Distribution Center in Maumelle. The programs were offered in collaboration with three WIA offices.

The Conway WAGE Center participated in the Governor's Dislocated Workers Task Force presentations to former employees of SAS Shoes and 150 newly displaced workers from IC Corp. The Conway WAGE Center informed workers about free training and educational opportunities available through WAGE.

New WAGE Programs

The Van Buren Adult Education/WAGE program began offering onsite WAGE classes at Pepper Source and Abilities Unlimited businesses.

Pulaski County Adult Education/WAGE instructors started teaching classes at a newly constructed classroom located at the Goodwill retail store in North Little Rock. Goodwill Industries of Arkansas continues to be a valuable partner of WAGE statewide.

Collaborative Efforts in Franklin, Logan and Crawford Counties Meeting Needs For Students and Citizens

As a condition for receiving state and federal adult education funds programs develop and implement recruitment and retention activity plans. Recruitment and retention activities include a close working relationship with other agencies. Special efforts are made to serve those most in need (i.e., low-income students, individuals with disabilities, single parents, displaced homemakers, and individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement including those with limited English proficiency).

Programs in western Arkansas exemplify the directive of collaboration through a number of efforts, including:

- Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus, Franklin and Logan County Adult Education, collaborate with their campus in providing preparatory work for the NET, HOBET, COMPASS, and basic refresher work in reading, math and language.
- The Career Pathways Initiative in Ozark provides childcare and gas funds for Adult Education students that qualify—including 16 and 17 year old students.
- The Department of Workforce Services has personnel working at the ATU-Ozark Campus as a One-Stop office. This same service is provided at Crawford County Adult Education center. The convenience of location helps in meeting the needs of unemployed citizens in the counties.

English as a Second Language Student Population Grows At Northwest Technical Institute in Springdale

According to Northwest Technical Institute (NTI) Adult Education Center Director, Donna Meigs, almost 80 percent of the adult education students at the center are English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Dr. Meigs says "We are keeping our students longer as they strive to strengthen their skills. In the last year, the number of students we have has increased due to many plants closing and the influx of ESL students. One of our ESL students couldn't speak English when he arrived in this country. After being enrolled in ESL classes at the center for several years, he took and passed the GED Test and is now enrolled in the Computer Information Systems program at NTI."



Donna Meigs

