



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Emily Ellison**

404.818.READ (7323)

EMellison@literacyaction.org

## **Literacy Action to Host Pulitzer Winners at Atlanta History Center**

**ATLANTA, Jan. 26, 2010** – Literacy Action Inc. will host Pulitzer Prize-winning authors at its second annual “Writers for Readers” event at the Atlanta History Center. The panel of authors will discuss what the written word has meant to their lives and careers.

“There are more than 800,000 adults in metro Atlanta who are functionally illiterate, so this event is designed to celebrate the joy of reading and writing,” said Karen E. Bennett, Literacy Action board chair and senior vice president of human resources at Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. “We have two main goals for our students: empower them and improve their lives.”

Functional illiteracy is the inability of an individual to read, write, and compute in everyday life situations. In Georgia, Literacy Action, Inc. is the largest community-based nonprofit providing free classroom instruction and job-readiness services for adults with low literacy skills. The organization serves more than 600 students per year.

“We hope ‘Writers for Readers’ will help spread the word that illiteracy is not uncommon, but it can be solved. Functional illiteracy is an intergenerational issue that impacts all our lives, and this life-changing skill shouldn’t be taken for granted,” said Emily Ellison, Literacy Action’s president and executive director.

Details about the event follow:

### **Feb. 4, 2010 – “Writers for Readers” Lunch at Atlanta History Center**

**Noon to 2 p.m.**

**130 West Paces Ferry Road NW Atlanta, Georgia 30305**

Hosts:

- **John Pruitt**, WSB-TV news anchor, master of ceremonies
- **Valerie Jackson**, host of NPR’s “Between the Lines,” panel moderator

Panelists:

- **Hank Klibanoff**, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for History and former managing editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- **Natasha Trethewey**, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Interview opportunities will be available with the panelists, former Literacy Action students and the agency’s president and executive director, Emily Ellison.

Individual seats for the “Writers for Readers” event are \$150.00. **For more information, visit [www.LiteracyAction.org](http://www.LiteracyAction.org).**

**About Literacy Action**

Literacy Action has been providing free classroom instruction to adults who are illiterate or have low literacy skills since 1968. Literacy Action students are 18 years or older and typically have completed some high school. However, the majority function at a fifth-grade reading level upon entry to the program. In addition to basic and advanced reading programs, the agency also provides classes in math, computer, financial, health, and family literacy and GED test preparation. The organization currently receives no federal or state funding.

**A “Fast Facts” sheet is attached.**



## Fast Facts

- Functional illiteracy is the inability of an individual to read and write in everyday life situations.
- 40 million Americans are functionally illiterate.
- Up to 93 million adults in the United State would benefit from additional literacy instruction.
- **More than 800,000 adults in metro Atlanta are functionally illiterate.**
- Begun in a church basement in 1968, Literacy Action Inc. has grown into the largest private provider of adult basic education in the state.
  - Literacy action serves more than 600 students per year.
  - 98 percent of Literacy Action’s students are people of color and English is their native language.
  - 90 percent are at or below the poverty level.
  - 45 percent are single women who are heads of households.
  - 40 percent are the primary caregiver to a school-aged child

### Supporters

- Barbara Bush, Cal and Kelly Ripkin, Maya Angelou, and Oprah Winfrey have been among Literacy Action’s national supporters.
- Local donors have included corporations such as UPS, Georgia-Pacific, Cox Enterprises, and Coca-Cola and influential individuals including Ada Lee Correll, Sue Wieland, and Carolyn and Andrew Young.

### Teaching Model

- Literacy Action was the first local agency to move from one-on-one tutoring to a classroom model for delivering basic academic skills as well as GED preparation.
- The curriculum emphasizes work and life skills; for example, students in math class receive training in check book management and typical work-place computations. Since such a large number of adult learners were high school drop-outs because of learning issues, Literacy Action also uses the Orton-Gillingham phonics-based approach to reading instruction, which was developed for children with dyslexia and other reading issues, and is used at state-of-the-art programs such as the Schenck School.
- In addition to basic literacy classes, Literacy Action offers computer, financial and health literacy classes; other services include resume and interview preparation, and job and human services referrals.

### Funding

- All of Literacy Action’s revenue comes from fund-raising, with more than 80 percent coming from the private sector and less than 20 percent coming from government funding, including Fulton County and the Atlanta Housing Authority.