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Literacy Advocates Unite for Literacy Awareness
Elected Officials Honored for Their Commitment to Adult Literacy

ATLANTA, Feb. 17, 2010 – Georgia Adult Literacy Advocates (GALA) will host 75 literacy organizations from across the state at the Central Presbyterian Church (across the street from the Capitol) today at noon to educate lawmakers about what adult literacy means to Georgia. GALA members include Literacy Action Inc., Certified Literate Community Programs, the Technical College System of Georgia, Georgia State University, Literacy Volunteers of Atlanta, libraries, county literacy groups, literacy councils and others.

Leaders such as Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle; State Representatives Larry O’Neal, Tony Sellier, Willie Talton, Amos Amerson, John Yates, Stacey Abrams and Jay Neal; and State Senators Ross Tolleson and Jeff Mullis will be recognized on GALA’s “honor roll” for their dedication to literacy awareness in the state of Georgia.

“This is the first time that literacy and adult education groups across the state have joined hands on such an important issue,” said Paige Pushkin, GALA chair and director of operations for Literacy Action. “In addition to affecting individuals’ lives every day, adult illiteracy impacts Georgia’s economy, health and safety. That’s why we’re so appreciative of our ‘honor roll’ recipients – they have volunteered their time, resources and energy to inspire and assist adult learners. More importantly, they understand the bigger picture when it comes to literacy and its effects on the state.”

Functional illiteracy is the inability of an individual to read, write, and compute in everyday life situations. In metro Atlanta alone, nearly 800,000 adults are considered “functionally illiterate.” Low literacy costs businesses in the southeast \$57.2 billion annually and in Georgia \$2.1 billion annually. But for every dollar invested in adult literacy programs, \$33 are returned to the community.

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.

Details about the event follow:

Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2010 – GALA Luncheon

Noon

Central Presbyterian Church, Tull Hall

201 Washington Street SW, Atlanta, GA 30303

Speakers:

- John Pruitt, WSB-TV news anchor, master of ceremonies
- Ron Jackson, commissioner, Technical College System of Georgia

Georgia General Assembly “Honor Roll” Recipients:

- Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle
- State Representatives Larry O’Neal, Tony Sellier, Willie Talton, Amos Amerson, John Yates, Stacey Abrams and Jay Neal
- State Senators Ross Tolleson, Jeff Mullis

For more information, visit 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.

About GALA

GALA’s Mission is to increase awareness, support, and funding for adult literacy needs and efforts in Georgia. Our Vision is a literate Georgia with accessible learning opportunities for all adults.



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.