

THIS ANNUAL REPORT EDITION OF THE LITERACY ACTION newsletter is filled with success stories about our students and organization. We continue to expand our presence in the community through partnerships and social media while still providing the very best education for the almost 800 students who walk through our doors..

For a list of FY2010-2011 Supporters, please see pages 6-7.

Striving for Excellence

Meet two of Literacy Action's outstanding students. We are Literacy Action! - Page 4



Mobilizing the Young Professionals Community

Young Empowered Leading Literacy - Page 5

New Year, New Leader, New Success



Meet Literacy Action's new President and CEO, Karen Webster Parks
Page 2

Student Recognition Ceremony 2012!

April 19, 2012 - 5pm
Georgia-Pacific Auditorium



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Friends of LAI,

Since the agency's founding in 1968, thousands of low-literate adults have come through our doors seeking a quality of life that we all deserve. I am pleased to have the opportunity to serve LAI students and the LAI community as President & CEO. My tenure began April 4 - we are off to a great start thus far. In the last 8 months we have had many successes.



From left to right: Karen Webster Parks, James O. Rodgers, First Lady Sandra Deal, Kristin Gray, Christopher Miller, David Peterson

We finished the fiscal year having served 786 students — the most in over 5 years.

- We finished the fiscal year having served 786 students—the most in over 5 years. (Find other stats about our students on page 3.)
- The staff attended a 2-day retreat to set goals for the coming year and the board held its annual retreat to set the strategic plan for the next 3 years.
- Our 2011 Student Recognition Ceremony, featuring speaker Paul L. Howard, Jr, was a great success recognizing more than 100 students' achievements in multiple areas. (Read more about this on page 3.)
- We kicked off our first formalized friend-raising campaign in recent years on July 1st, growing our foundation, corporate and individual donations (See a list of our gracious 2010-2011 donors on pages 6-7.)

The students we serve give us the motivation to create a standard of excellence in our work. To that end,

I have 5 focus areas for my tenure as CEO at LAI:

1. An Organizational Assessment and Alignment
2. LAI Branding
3. Leadership Development and Succession Planning
4. Fund Development and Fiscal Responsibility
5. Delivering and Sustaining Transformational Programs

As we enter into the 2011-12 holiday season, I am reminded of the many blessings we all have received. At LAI, we are thankful for the opportunity to serve our students. I welcome you to visit and learn more about our students and the work we are doing. I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Karen Elaine Webster Parks



GED graduate and family.

Literacy Action Means... Success at Every Level!

If you really want to know the essence of LAI's mission, attend one of our annual Student Recognition Ceremonies where LAI students, staff, board, volunteers, and the community come together to celebrate and reflect upon students' achievements. Held at the Georgia-Pacific auditorium in 2011 over 100 students received certificates of achievement for completing classes such as Basic Computers, attendance awards, and special awards such as the President's Award and the Chairman's Award. Paul L. Howard, Jr., Attorney General of Fulton County, inspired students to continue moving toward their educational dreams.

Mark your calendar now and please join us on **April 19, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. at the Georgia-Pacific Auditorium.** You will walk away inspired!



SAVE THE DATE!
April 19, 2012
5pm
Georgia-Pacific Auditorium

Bank of America Honors Literacy Action Chairman

Over the course of 43 years, Literacy Action has found itself in the midst of exceptional leaders, community organizers, dedicated volunteers, and generous philanthropists. Wednesday night, October 26th, was no exception at the Bank of America 2011 Neighborhood Excellence Initiative Awards as David Peterson, Board Chair, was a recipient of one of five Local Heroes awards. Award recipients are recognized for their dedication to serving the Atlanta community and David is certainly an excellent example. Not only is he the chair of the Literacy Action board, but he also has played a critical role in the creation of Literacy Alliance of Metro Atlanta (LAMA). For his service, Bank of America provided him with a \$5,000 check that he so generously donated to Literacy Action.



Read.Post.Tweet.Learn: Literacy Action Goes Viral!

It is no secret that social media is taking the world of communications by storm. More people get their news, facts, and updates through sites like Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and more.

In February 2011, Literacy Action launched its social media platforms to the community with the unveiling of a brand new website, Twitter account, Facebook page, and blog. No small task for sure, but necessary in continuing our mission to advocate for the low-literate adults not only in the Metro Atlanta area, but state-wide and nationally.

We are now able to broadly communicate the day-to-day activities of our program, the progress of our students, and our community initiatives. Our sites are growing rapidly in popularity, with over 300 followers on Twitter, 150 fans on Facebook, and 52 posted blogs ranging from poetry readings to volunteer roundtables. We have connected with other adult literacy organizations, advocacy groups, national nonprofits, corporations, and politicians around the nation and abroad.

If you have yet to visit our sites, please take a tour and share us with all of your friends! In order to see the change that we so greatly want for our students and the more than 800,000 low-literate adults, we as a community must come together! Social media can be that avenue to bring this hidden issue out of the darkness and into the light.

Know Our Students, Know LAI FY 2010 vs. FY 2011

	2009-2010 LAI's students	2010-2011 LAI's students
Read below 5th grade level at entry	95%	80%
Employed	23%	19%
Low-income	90%	93%
Number of Classes Offered	103	113
Contact Hours	35088.4	37443

We are Literacy Action!



literacyaction.blogspot.com



Literacy Action, Inc.



www.literacyaction.org



@LAIAtlanta

RECENTLY, STAFF OF THE ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE volunteered their time to meet with our students and record their stories. The stories that follow are the results of that project.

MEET JESSIE

Jessie Johnson, sixty-two years young, grew up in LaGrange, Georgia, where she was raised by her aunt. Jessie's mother suffered an illness soon after she was born, so she and her siblings were separated and raised by different relatives. Jessie was 10 years old before she realized that the woman she and her aunt would often visit and care for was actually her mother. The separation from her mother and siblings affected her emotionally throughout her childhood.

Jessie enjoyed school. Her favorite subjects were Spanish and English. She maintained good grades through the 11th grade, but she was unable to complete the 12th grade and earn her diploma due to an unplanned pregnancy. Although leaving high school was a setback for her education, Jessie went on to complete training at Job Corps to become a key punch operator. Soon afterward, she moved to Pennsylvania to take a position at AT&T, where she worked as a key punch operator until technology advances eliminated that position. She then studied childhood development and worked with a day care center in Clinton, Ohio and East Orange, New Jersey. After years of working in the northern states, she decided to return to the South, and is currently living in the Atlanta area at a retirement community.

Jessie is the type of person who seeks challenge and growth, so she decided to pursue her GED. She sought out several options to achieve this goal, some of which were online schools, but was a little discouraged because she suspected most of the online options were scams. Not giving up on her goal, she came across an advertisement in a community newspaper for Literacy Action and soon after enrolled. She loves Literacy Action; the support and camaraderie she experiences there keeps her engaged. She thinks that others at her senior community would benefit if they enrolled in classes there. Jessie is passionate about learning new things everyday and challenging her mind! Her ultimate goal is to obtain her GED so that someday she can pursue a college degree in business.



MEET DIANE

At 66, Diane Wright could well be contemplating retirement and planning to spend more time with her seven children. Instead, she's making plans to attend college and then start a catering business. But first, she has to get her GED.

Wright is a student at Literacy Action, Inc. She's finished her course work and is only a 500-word essay away from her goal.

Wright is already a high school graduate. She attended Cooley High in Chicago for a year, then graduated from Wells High School. But Wells burned down, and when Wright recently went asking for her diploma, the school couldn't find it. She waited a year to try to get it, then decided to turn to Literacy Action to get her GED. Wright grew up on the south side of Chicago, the second-oldest of 10 children. Her parents, Janet and Thurman, were married for 50 years. Janet passed away last year at 82. Thurman, 85, still lives in Chicago. "I've had a happy life," Wright says.

Wright also has had a full career. She worked for Emory University for 19 years in food service, then with the Atlanta Housing Authority writing grant proposals. She injured her shoulder which caused nerve damage. She works during the holidays now for Honeybaked Ham. "I can't really work anywhere, but I go to work anyway," she says. "I just suffer with the pain. I hate sitting down." Wright learned about Literacy Action when she applied for and received a \$100,000 federal grant to help her former west side Atlanta community. She got the idea after talking with parents who couldn't read, and therefore couldn't teach their children to read. She got the Housing and Urban Development grant for five straight years. Wright is as opinionated as she is energetic, and she closely follows current affairs. She's upset about the Atlanta Public Schools cheating scandal, but believes only those who were complicit should go to jail, not those who were pressured to go along. "The only ones who suffered were our children," she says. Wright thinks public school children would be better off attending private schools. "What I think they should do is give parents those vouchers and let those kids go to private schools," she says. "Public education is not going to make it." But Wright is far more optimistic about her own future. She's certain she can go to college, get a degree in business management, and start a catering business, even when she's 70 years old. "I can do anything," she says. "I believe in me."





Y.E.L.L.

Young Empowered Leading Literacy

On September 22nd, Literacy Action held a kick-off event for its newly formed young professionals group *Young Empowered Leading Literacy* (YELL). The formation of this group came from several discussions on community outreach and the realization that one of the largest groups entering adult literacy programs is in fact young adults between the ages of 18-24.

Literacy Action formed this advocacy group to combat the growing number of low-literate adults, as well as bring this issue to the forefront of community epidemics. As we all know, low-literacy has detrimental social and economic consequences. It is important to understand how this issue impacts our daily lives, but also to arm the upcoming generation with the tools they need to win the fight. With so many avenues of communication that young professionals have mastered, this group has the potential to be a leading voice in our mission.

In 2012, Y.E.L.L. will be active in community gatherings, read-a-thons, and several other events. All information can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and the Literacy Action website.



LAI Board Member, Peter Stewart (right) with guests

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

HELLO FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COLLEAGUES of Literacy Action, Inc. What an amazing year this has been for Literacy Action! In the 2009-2010 fiscal

year we served 664 adult learners; in 2010-2011 we topped out at 786! Along the way, these students faced many steps and challenges to becoming more literate and self-sustaining adults. We are grateful for their tenacity!

In April, Literacy Action's new President and CEO, Karen Webster Parks, joined us. Karen comes with many years of leadership with private

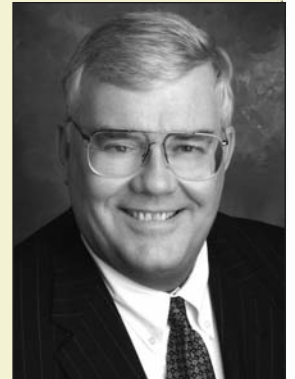
companies, non-profits, and the public sector. She also brings a passion for the impact adult literacy can have on communities, and is positioned to take the organization to a new, higher level. Please see her letter on page 2. We are proud to have her as our new leader.

A highlight of the last year was the creation of LAMA. The Literacy Alliance of Metro Atlanta was formed as a result of your Board asking how to have greater impact in adult literacy. Funded by a grant from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, the alliance has formed and developed a governance structure for more than 40 organizations working together to raise awareness and funds for adult and family literacy programs.

This year, Literacy Action is on the path to another year of excellence. We have added nine new trustees with diverse backgrounds to our board. Each one brings unique insight and shared passion for adult literacy. We have also been fortunate to create a new strategic plan beginning this fiscal year through fiscal year 2014. We are focused on doing what is needed for our students in an efficient and consistent way, and our updated strategic plan reflects that whole-heartedly.

Many thanks to each of you for your past and future support of Literacy Action. It is my honor to be the Chair at this historic time.

Dave Peterson



2010-2011 Donors

Thank you to our donors for helping Literacy Action achieve excellence in our 2010-2011 Fiscal Year.

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**Literacy Action's
 Mission is to build
 better futures for
 Atlanta's functionally
 low-literate population
 by teaching adults the
 life, literacy and work
 skills that empower
 them to reach their
 potential as self-
 sufficient individuals,
 parents, employees,
 and citizens.**

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Holiday Wish List

Want to make LAI's holiday bright?

Consider donating some of the following:

- Dry erase markers (black, red, blue, green)
- Paper Towels (used to clean classrooms)
- Green and yellow fastener file folders (with 2 fasteners)
- 2-inch 3-ring binders
- Loose leaf notebook paper (wide-ruled best)
- 80-100 small dry erase boards
- #2 Pencils
- Hand Soap

To Contribute to Literacy Action, contact us at: kgray@literacyaction.org
or visit <http://www.literacyaction.org>

