

# NEVADA

# Connections

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## Teri Zutter represents Nevada at Washington forum

*Editor's note: Teri Zutter, a popular, energetic, and seasoned ABE/ESL/GED instructor at Western Nevada Community College, represented Nevada at the "National Forum on Adult Literacy: Views from Teachers" in Washington, D.C. in September. Sponsored by the Division of Adult Education and Literacy DAEL), the 4-day meeting brought together exemplary adult education teachers from throughout the country to learn and share their views on key issues. Here is Teri's report.*

I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues and co-workers for their kind words and support of my attendance at the Forum. I met some wonderful people in our field, gained a better understanding of the management of our monies, and visited sites that hold the heart of patriotism in our country.

Trish McNeil, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, shared her thoughts and suggestions with us on how to best incorporate the new Workforce Investment Act into our programs. Miss McNeil felt that in some ways the new legislation supports our endeavors and in a few ways it presents some very real challenges.

### Major issues

There are three major difficulties adult educators face. The first one is the magnitude of the problem we are trying to fix. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey (September 1993), there are 90 million adults in the United States suffering from a lack of literacy. There are 7 million people who cannot read, 26 million people performing at level I literacy, and 23 million people functioning at level II literacy. It is extremely difficult to convince the American public and politicians that these data are realistic. The current low unemployment rate and the consistent decline in the number of welfare recipients exacerbate the misconception.

The second challenge for our programs comes from coping with the social stigma faced by our students. Fueled by a long held stereotype, our society perceives our students as "losers" who didn't "get it" the first time around. The attitude prevails that maybe students shouldn't be given a free second chance. People see adult education as a marginal training system used by our students as an immediate stepping stone into the job market, versus schools where students engage themselves in learning that will affect their reality holistically and last a lifetime.

Lastly, we must face the fact of measured sympathy and non-supportive views towards immigrants. Our society sometimes holds a less than helpful stance on immigration, which directly impacts our organizations.

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## **Zutter represents Nevada** *(Continued from page 1)*

The way the Workforce Investment Act will help us is to force administrations all along the channels to examine what our programs do, for whom, and how. There is going to be a stronger-than-ever emphasis on student achievement and accountability. We will be forced to build a system that proves to people what we do. We will have to use research to define what a good program is and write the interpretations directly and succinctly. Standards of program quality will be rewritten. Our definitions will promise to move the system ahead. The new funding provides for national and state activities in the area of professional development. The idea is to mainstream the system that we are defining. The legislation will require us to address life-long learning at the grass roots level, develop associations, and campaign for awareness. We will have to decide how we are going to blend broader policy proposals in conjunction with students who lack time and money and who have low levels of literacy skills, vast differences in learning styles, and copious amounts of fear. (Just a little challenging!)

### **Teachers' responses**

HELP!!

There was an outcry for more precise and faster communication from the administration in Washington to our programs and with each other across state lines. Computers and listservs should make this possible.

There was a plea for research to be done quickly and efficiently, with input from those of us working directly in the field, and for research results to be reported in a timely manner. An oxymoron (my interpretation) was developed—"standardization of diversity"—in response to Washington's desire for us to better define ourselves, increase accountability, and build a mainstreamed system. Of course, many petitioned for more money, full-time positions, and more time to do our work. It was agreed that we often are the administrators, counselors, record-keepers, liaisons, custodians, politicians, and teachers of our humble programs.

I left with the impression that we have a tremendous workload ahead of us in ultimately defining the complexities of our purpose. Also, it was strongly agreed that we, as individual teachers and organizations, need to be extremely proactive in engaging every facet of our local communities in our missions (especially small and big business).

I wish I could download precisely what occurred in virtual reality so that you could all have a chance to participate. I missed having you along and especially found myself looking for, and expecting to see, Vicky Newell. I could visualize her bustling about in the Capitol! I had a little fun and was blessed to see Arlington, the Monument, the Wall, the Lincoln Memorial and to walk across the Potomac Bridge.

I have a copy of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and would be happy to share it with any of you. We were told of particular note is Chapter 3, section 231. Please contact me at the office (887-3102) or at home (884-4185) or e-mail me at kenz@pyramid.net if you'd like a copy or have any questions.

### **Teri meets with Senators**

I met with Senator Bryan for 30 minutes and with Senator Reid for 15 minutes in their respective offices. First, I thanked them, then invited them to come see for themselves what we do, quickly boggled them with some statistics, begged for mercy on our endeavors, and lastly asked them what we could do for them. To my surprise, they both said they wanted evidence of our success in the form of stories and testimonies of individuals whose lives had changed due to the influences of our programs. I thought they were probably tired of hearing from us, but they both agreed they were not. In fact, they said those students' stories should be shared by the students themselves to create the greatest impact. They said to keep generously advocating our vocation.

## Another successful celebration!

Over 500 adult educators, students, and business and community leaders celebrated literacy at Nevada's Second Annual International Literacy Day Dinner, held September 10 at the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas. Former literacy student John Corcoran, who became a teacher, author, and real estate investor, spoke movingly about his experiences and urged the political candidates present to support literacy. Landra Ried received the Literacy Pioneer Award from Nevada's First Lady Sandy Miller, who was honored last year for her support of literacy issues. Chaired by Sharon Rorman of Southwest Gas, sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators and Nevada Bell Corporation, and supported by scores of local businesses and organizations, next year's event is already scheduled for International Literacy Day—September 8, 1999.

**Thanks to  
Nevada Bell  
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Southern  
Nevada Literacy  
Coalition!**



MPAEA is currently offering three scholarships:

- ◆ \$1,000 Memorial Scholarship—offered to a graduate student enrolled in an adult education program. Deadline 1/31/99.
- ◆ \$1,000 Scholarship for Innovation—designed to foster innovative approaches to adult education. Deadline 3/1/99.
- ◆ \$500 Professional Development Scholarship—intended to help defray expenses of conference attendance or other staff development activities. Deadline 1/31/99.

This scholarship has typically been awarded to someone wishing to attend the MPAEA conference. Each state gets one award, and in the past few years, only one person from Nevada has applied. Next year's conference will be held April 28-May 1 in Boise, Idaho. For more information contact Nevada Board Members Julee Henson (799-0170) or Sharyn Yanoshak (253-6280) or check out MPAEA's Web site: [www.uvsc.edu/mpaea](http://www.uvsc.edu/mpaea)

To request applications contact Charley Gregg, 651-5583. If you're not a member of MPAEA, request a membership brochure, also.



NAEA's annual conference will be held from May 5 through May 8 at the Atlantis Casino/Resort in Reno. This year's "finale" will be the Third Annual Literacy Awards Ceremony, a luncheon on the 8<sup>th</sup>. For more information contact Conference Chair and President-elect Vicky Newell.



## Mini-grant deadlines extended

**There are still significant monies left! The deadline for mini-grants for practitioners has been extended from November 30 to December 31, and the limit has been increased to \$1,000. Those who perform administrative duties may apply for administrative mini-grants anytime through April 30. Applications are available online from TMCC's Adult Education home page, [www.tmcc.edu/att/](http://www.tmcc.edu/att/) or from Charley Gregg, 651-5583.**



## Check this out!

Need a backdrop for a conference, exhibit, or meeting? Nevada's portable Adult Education Exhibit is available on loan from the State Literacy Resource Center. Developed last year by the Northern Nevada Literacy Coalition, the exhibit is easy to transport and assemble. There's even space to add information personalized to your program. Phone (800) 445-9673 or (702) 687-8340.

## Hasta la vista ...

*It has been a difficult process to say goodbye to my work and to those I've worked with in Nevada, and turn to developing a new life in Oregon. But the process has been easier due to the kind words from many of you. Many of you have said that I have improved the quality of adult education in Nevada and some even said I influenced their lives in a positive direction. Be that as it may, what I do know in my heart and mind is that each one of you working in adult education contributes to the improvement of our communities and our society. The work you do in adult education is truly transformational, for individual students and for society in general. It has been my personal and professional privilege to have the good fortune to work with so many dedicated adult educators throughout Nevada.*



*There have been wonderful advances in teaching methods over the past years, as well as advances in technology. There are increasing demands on programs to keep up with the whirlwind pace of change. If I may offer one more bit of advice, take a moment every now and then to reflect on what you are doing, and always keep the student as a focus of your efforts. When choosing a course of action, ask yourself, "Is this going to improve instruction to students?"*

*My warmest regards to all of you!*

—Vicky Ramakka

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