

19TH ANNUAL SPELLING BEE SET FOR MAY 28 AT A-B TECH



Prestige and bragging rights will be on the line later this month when teams from area publications, colleges, schools, and businesses participate in the Literacy Council of Buncombe County's 19th Annual Spelling Bee. Expect frequent laughter to calm jittery nerves. This year's emcee is popular newspaper columnist Susan Reinhardt.

The Spelling Bee will begin at 7 P.M. on May 28 at the A-B Tech's Laurel Auditorium, 340 Victoria Road, Asheville. Tickets are \$5 at the door and include a chance to win door prizes donated by a variety of local businesses.

Home Trust Bank is making the Official Bee Challenge this year, "guaranteeing" to beat last year's winner, the Asheville City Schools team. "Who ever knew spelling could be so much fun?" says Jocelyn Reese, one of last year's champs.

The event is a major fund-raiser for the Literacy Council, and this year's goal is \$37,000. All the money will go to support basic literacy and English language instruction as well as drop-out prevention programs for area teenagers.

Want to make a contribution? Contact Mignon Durham at 254.3442 or by email at mignond@litcouncil.com.

explains, "to help people reach their full potential as parents, workers, individuals, and citizens."

Many of those who have gone through the program have made a lasting impression on both the staff and the volunteers.

"Our oldest student was a 94-year-old man in an assisted living facility," says Amanda with a smile. "He told us he just wanted to learn something new." The staff where the man is living reports a marked improvement in not only his attitude but also in his willingness to participate in various activities.

Erin Krauss, volunteer coordinator for the Literacy Council, recalls another student: "There was a woman in her 70s who, despite her inability to read, was running a licensed daycare center. She's well on her way now to getting her high school diploma and she already has her sights set on becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant."

There's the story of a woman from South America who was working as a housekeeper at a local hotel. She's now the manager of a bed-and-breakfast. And there's also Adult Education student who began in 2000 as a student and is now tutoring others.

About two-thirds of the students are part of ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). The other third are in the Adult Literacy Education program. While the Literacy Council

has traditionally worked only with adults, the organization has recently taken on a new initiative. "The program is called 'Learn to Finish' and is aimed at 15- to 17-year-olds who are risk of not completing a high school education," says Amanda. The focus, she says, is not only on the teenagers but also on training teachers to work with these students.

Over a nine-month period, the Literacy Council's volunteer tutors meet with their students at a variety of locations: churches, community centers, private homes, and at the organization's offices at 31 College Place in Asheville.

While each student is asked for a \$20 donation to offset the costs of course materials and books, the organization relies primarily on donations from individuals and from various groups including the Community Founda-

tion of WNC and United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County.

Interested in helping out? Consider sponsoring a student for a year (it only costs \$1.84 a day) or perhaps sign up to be a tutor. "Only two hours a week can change a life," says Erin.

For more information, visit their website at litcouncil.com. You can reach them at 254.3442 or by email at literacytutors@litcouncil.com.



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