



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ADULTS
WITH SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS**

**NAASLN Membership News & Views
Issue Fifteen – April 2007**

NAASLN Membership News & Views is an outgrowth of the NAASLN Vision to offer our members a centralized hub of information, professional development, technical assistance, communication on issues and trends, and advocacy initiatives on behalf of adults with special learning needs.

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**NAASLN President’s Thoughts—
Singing Praises of Unsung Heroes**

February and March have been busy months for NAASLN. Board members presented workshop strands at the Illinois Association Adult and Community Education Conference (IAACE), the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education conference (TALAE), and the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE).

During the IAACE Conference’s Awards Luncheon, Peg Kennedy, a NAASLN board member and developmental support specialist, was awarded the Support Staff of the Year award. We are extremely pleased for her because we know that Peg’s dedication and efforts are exemplary.

Peg's award reminded me of all the sung and unsung heroes in our field of adult

education, which I have heard referred to as the “red-headed stepchild at an Italian wedding.” Our programs are under funded and unrecognized, yet our adult educators still soldier onward. How can this be?

We soldier onward because of the people we are fighting for. Our adult programs are the last bastion for adults, who, for whatever reason, have special learning needs — needs that must be addressed before they can advance both educationally and socially. We are fighting to prevent the consequences of a lost battle.

We see adults enter our programs with little confidence that this step will make a real difference in their lives. Yet they arrive with a small flicker of hope. The adult educator's initial smile, welcome, and offer of assistance fans that flicker into a flame. The student begins to gain skills and open doors for the first time that previously had been slammed tightly shut.

The unsung heroes of adult education are both the educator and the students. Both face challenges and battles that discourage progress. But their willingness to move forward, do what it takes to make a difference, to keep their eyes on the prize, is what makes the difference.

Watching a student move from one level to another, whether it is obtaining a GED, graduating with an AA degree, or receiving a state certification that had been out of reach earlier, may be the only reward that our unsung heroes may receive, but this reward keeps us in the fight.

NAASLN salutes all those adult educators who continue to soldier on!

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IACEA Puts All the Pieces Together

Illinois Adult and Continuing Education Association, Inc. (IACEA) featured a NAASLN strand for its March 2007 conference. Among the conferences most popular sessions were those by NAASLN presenters. They were *The Brain, Emotions and Learning: Understanding the Key Prerequisites to Successful Instruction and Employment; Supporting Persons with Persistent Mental Illnesses in Education and Work; Dyslexia: Not Just a Reading Problem; Attention Deficit Disorders: Not Just a Behavioral Problem; Don't Tell Me How to Study: Teach Me How; and Memory Tools for Forgetful Adults: Ways to Remember What You Learn.*



NAASLN Vice-President Debra Watkins (left) and Peg Kennedy, NAASLN board member, greet attendees at the NAASLN booth at IACEA. Peg, a developmental support specialist, was awarded the Support Staff of the Year award at the conference.

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Spotlight Topic of the Month

Guidelines for Working with Students with Special Learning Needs — Solving the Dilemma of Working with Students with Special Learning Needs in Illinois Adult Education Programs,

By Bevan Gibson, Director, Southern Illinois Professional Development Center, Edwardsville, Illinois

The dilemma of effectively addressing the ever-increasing population of students with special learning needs is one that has touched adult education programs in Illinois as well as in the entire country. In Illinois, instructors from various programs throughout the state expressed concerns about students with learning difficulties in their classrooms and also their ability, or lack thereof, to address the diverse needs of these students. Instructors indicated their need for staff development that would not only give them insight into the characteristics and special needs of these students, but also provide instructional strategies they could use in the classroom. They also saw a need to assess strengths and weaknesses, and help students use this knowledge to be successful in the classroom as well as in all aspects of life.

Thanks to the Institute to Credential Special Learning Needs Resource Specialists (ICSLNRS), Illinois now has a working means to solve the dilemma of working with students with special learning needs. [Click here to read the full article and to learn how this was accomplished.](#)

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Website of the month: www.excellenceinadulthood.com

The Excellence in Adult Education website is provided by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). This dynamic website is designed for Adult Education and Family Literacy teachers to use for both professional and personal development. Teachers can look around the site and discover the vast amount of resources at their disposal to help with the teaching and learning process. The website provides articles on topics such as classroom, recruitment/retention, research, special projects, and testing/assessment. Discussion forums are provided for these articles. Links are provided to national organizations, state organizations, GED and ICCB, as well as the four Adult Education service centers in the Illinois Adult Education Service Center Network.

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- **Opportunity Alert: U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education launches the National STAR Training Network Website:**

www.startoolkit.org.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education is pleased to announce the launch of the National STAR Training Network Web site. The Web site contains information on the Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) initiative, created to assist states and local programs in making systemic and instructional changes required to improve the reading achievement of intermediate-level adult learners (G.L.E. 4.0-8.9). STAR provides teachers and administrators with Web-based tools that translate reading research into practice and high quality training and technical assistance to build capacity for reading reform.

The National STAR Training Network is offering two training and technical assistance packages to states and local programs. The new Web site describes these services and provides an array of tools to help you learn about and plan to implement evidence-based reading instruction.

We invite you to visit the website at www.startoolkit.org to learn more about how you can improve adult learners' reading achievement.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NAASLN Road Trip Tracks

NAASLN conferences often are described as national in scope, but local in intimacy. Until our 2008 national conference, which will be announced shortly, check out the following events, which will be featuring NAASLN tracks. And watch the **NAASLN Website Calendar** for more information on these and other upcoming events.

July 8-11, 2007

Correctional Education Association (CEA) presents its 62nd Conference, "Excellence in Education: Enhance, Enlighten, Enrich, Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, GA. NAASLN will present a Pre Conference Symposium, Sunday, July 8, 2007. For more information contact CEA, 1-800-783-1232 or go to www.ceanational.org.

Other upcoming events related to helping adults with special learning needs:

June 28-July 2, 2007

No Barriers Festival

No Barriers USA's FESTIVAL 2007 in Squaw Valley, CA, will share cutting-edge techniques and technologies that enable people with challenges to live as actively as possible. Not to be missed... Interactive clinics in adaptive rock climbing, scuba

discovery, kayaking, cycling, mountain bike cycling, rope course, introductory Segway use, and trekking excursions, some using devices such as talking-GPS and walking poles. Other events include an equipment fair, speakers, and films. For more information, go to www.nobarriersusa.org/festival-2007.html.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

NAASLN is devoted to enhancing the opportunities for life-long learning for adults with special learning needs by improving the efforts of adult educators working with these individuals in the full range of life-long learning programs, i.e., ABE, ESL, GED, volunteer-based and community-based literacy programs.

Future Newsletter Submissions

Help us meet your needs. Recommend or submit an article, event announcements, book reviews, and web sites links. Either E-mail newsletter@naasln.org or send to:

Joan Hudson-Miller, 14214 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90066 or
Fax to 310-354-2601.

All submissions will be reviewed for appropriateness for our readership and will be selected at the discretion of the newsletter editors.

Sharing information

Do you have ideas on how you would like to better network with other members? Are there other features you would like to see in this Newsletter and on our website? E-mail newsletter@naasln.org or leave a message on at 888-5NAASLN (888-562-2756).

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Help Spread the Word

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