

LAWYERS for literacy

Helping Children Read to Succeed



Newsletter
Fall 2010

LFL Looks to Banner Year of Service

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Lucas Fleming
Lawyers for Literacy
Founder & President

Tutors and Donations Are Essential to Program

Lawyers for Literacy (LFL) will help more children pass the reading portion of the FCAT than ever this school year, thanks in large part to the volunteer tutors who step forward from the Tampa Bay area legal community.

Last school year 31 tutors coached selected third grade students at five bay area elementary schools.

Students served by LFL are those who have fallen short on school district preliminary reading assessments but show promise given their classroom performance and attitude.

"This year five additional schools are coming online if we have the tutors available," said LFL founder and President Lucas Fleming.

Tutors are being sought for an added St Petersburg school as well as two additional schools in Clearwater and two more Tampa.

With 60 tutors found over the next two months Lawyers for Literacy will need donations to equip them and their students for the once a sessions that will run January to early April 2011.

1200 grade level books coupled with reading improvement materials and supplies will fill 60 book bags as funds are raised.

Corporate donors in the

past have included Wal-Mart & Sam's Club. Private and individual donations have come from the Gemmer Foundation, area law firms and individuals including tutors themselves.

"It all needs to come together by early December as we hold our tutor orientation and confirm with the schools the number of tutors we can provide" said Steve Graves, the new LFL Executive Director charged with bringing tutors, schools, funds and supplies together for the expanding LFL reading program.

"Nothing's more important than the rapport that the tutors have with their students. That's what enables children to learn and improve so much" says Fleming.

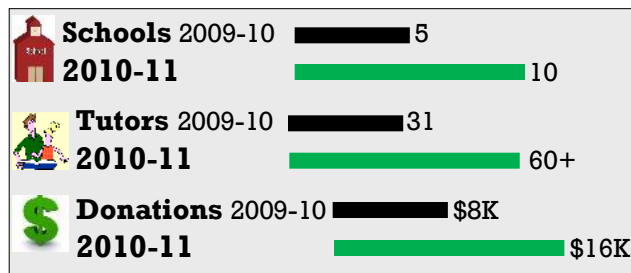
"And it's charitable support that provides the tutors, books and materials so that students can rise to grade level with their reading skills," concluded Graves.

2010-2011 Calendar

- **Thursday Nov. 4, 2010**
Kick-off Reception for Tutors & School Leaders
- **Early December, 2010**
Tutor Orientation at a St Pete, Clearwater and Tampa school (dates to be announced)
- **January 11-13, 2011**
Tutoring begins at all schools
- **April 5-7, 2011**
Tutoring ends at all schools
- **April 11-21, 2011**
FCAT testing
- **April (TBA)**
Concluding gathering at each participating school

See Participating Schools
on Page 4

LFL Sets Goals



Volunteer Tutors Benefit

“Great experience. I would recommend it to any attorney. The instruction, materials, and support make it a great experience.”

- tutor and attorney
Beth Houghton

Spotlight Tutor Scott Wagman



Scott Wagman has been tutoring with LFL for five years in St. Petersburg. He says “I got a real kick out of seeing the improvement that was evident over several months of tutoring. The kids really enjoyed the attention and caring and now, as I still run into some of my previous students, it's great to see their physical growth, but also their remembrance of the experience that helped them pass the FCAT.”

A Lawyers for Literacy (LFL) tutor can make a wonderful impact on a child's life by helping him or her to read better.

Success in reading leads to success in life.

Tutors gain personal satisfaction for helping a young student develop a joy for reading and thereby improve their education and career opportunities in life.

Students that participate have been deemed able

to pass FCAT reading but have not been performing successfully or consistently on school district evaluation exams.

Teachers and parents of students report a marked increase in students self-esteem as they become better readers.

Each tutor and student pair form a bond that enables the student to learn.

Tutors relate that they also benefit by making professional connections with other tutors who are part of the Tampa Bay area legal community be they attorneys, judges, legal support or law students.



Sample Tutoring Session

Tutoring sessions are from 45 to 60 minutes in length depending on what the school has arranged. The student and teacher meet and the student eats his or her lunch while chatting or listening. The student might read aloud for 10

minutes from a book they are currently working on as the tutor coaches on **fluency** (rate, accuracy and expression), **vocabulary** (understanding the meaning of words within the context) and **comprehension** (making sense of

a particular passage).

The session might continue with vocabulary building for 10 minutes.

In the final minutes the tutor might share and discuss a reading item of interest that he or she has brought in.

Kick-off Reception Nov. 18

LFL will hold its annual Program Kick-off Reception on Thursday, November 18th at the home of LFL President Lucas Fleming in Saint Petersburg.

Taking part will be past and prospective tutors along with the principals, reading coordinators

from each of the schools to be served in the coming year.

Corporate, law firm and individual donors for the 2010-2011 year's program will also be honored guests.

Special recognition will be made to those tutors who have been tutoring

five or more years with LFL program.

“We will also have a list of books reviewed and reading level rated such that tutors can select those they might like to work from,” commented Lucas Fleming LFL President. The tutoring begins the second week of January 2011.

Sponsors Sought for Book Libraries

Sponsors are being sought to meet the cost of books and other student learning materials.

Each student receives a library of 20 paperback books (which they keep since often there are no books in their home) along with study materials such as a child dictionary, vocabulary book, exercise and timed reading sheets.

Supplies are also given to students and tutors in the form of a book bags,

pencils, highlight pens, reward stickers, and a



small inexpensive stopwatch for timings and building reading speed.

A \$95 donation equips a

single student and his or her tutor for the program.

Donors able to sponsor and thus be recognized for sponsoring a school (typically 6 or 7 at-risk students being tutored) can do so for \$595.

Donations are tax deductible under IRS rules. Lawyers for Literacy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is a federal and state recognized public supported charity.

Encouraging students to improve their reading is a key to their success in school and in life.

Arne Duncan, 2009,
Secretary, U.S.
Department of
Education

Donations Carry the Reading Assistance Program Forward

Corporate donations from Wal-Mart and Sam's Club have gotten the LFL fundraising rolling in past years.

Grants from the Gemmer Foundation, United Insurance Management and St Pete Bar have had

a big impact complimented by those from law firms such as Flaxman Young; Koch, Smith & Hoffman; and the Fleming Law Group. Individual donations, like those from Amanda Clapp, John Dixon, Lorraine Kelly, and Steven Wein-

berg were especially important in making sure even more students and tutors were supplied.

Full details on making a donation are available at LawyersForLiteracy.org

Monies need to be in place by December 2010.

Illiteracy and Juvenile Crime Related—Interventions Needed

During a single year, an estimated 2.18 million youth under the age of 18 are arrested in the United States (Puzzanchera, 2009). In addition, nearly 93,000 youth are in public and private detention and correctional institutions with an average cost of \$240.99 per day per

youth (American Correctional Association, 2008). A disproportionate number of these youth have not acquired adequate literacy skills. Youth with low literacy skills not only are (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzzanchera, 2008), not only are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice sys-

tem, but also have a higher likelihood of negative outcomes post incarceration. the correlation between low literacy and involvement in the juvenile justice system has been highlighted and the positive impact of reading interventions for youth has been well illustrated.

**Spotlight
Principal** 
Mary Jane Dann



Mary Jane Dann is the Principal at Jamerson Elementary in St Pete. She has also been an LFL tutor the past three years and says "it is great to see how motivated and more confident students become as they acquire skills they can use." In in regard to book selection "there are now many interesting non-fiction titles too" that will be of interest to tutors and students.

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Having practiced as a state prosecutor and a criminal defense attorney for more than twelve years, St. Petersburg attorney Lucas Fleming is reminded daily of the growing epidemic of teens and young adults in the criminal justice system. When he began examining the problem further in search of a remedy, he learned of the direct correlation between illiteracy and crime.

In Florida, third grade is the first level for FCAT testing (the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, a statewide, mandatory exam that children in grades 3-11 must pass each year in order to be promoted to the next grade level). A National Literacy Trust study suggests that children's level of ability at the age of seven is "a good predictor of their future level of achievement" and that children who fail a grade are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to succeed in general.

In light of these statistics, Fleming recognized that early intervention and support could prevent at-risk children from falling into the void of the juvenile system. The result was Lawyers for Literacy, a non-profit organization that enlists volunteers to work with third-grade children to prepare them for the reading portion of the FCAT by increasing their reading proficiency, speed, and comprehension. Since its inception in 2003, the Lawyers for Literacy reading program has been expanding to reach more schools and students in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties.

2010-2011 LFL Schools -Tentative-

- **St Petersburg (4)**
Campbell Park
Jamerson
New Heights *
Sanderlin
- **Clearwater (3)**
Eisenhower *
High Point *
Sandy Lane*
- **Tampa (3)**
West Tampa
Rampello*
Mitchell*

* New this year

We're online at
LawyersForLiteracy.org

LFL Brings on New Executive Director

In early September Lawyers For Literacy brought on an association management professional Steve Graves to serve as part-time LFL Executive Director.

St Petersburg resident Graves has 20+ years experience in non-profit organization management on local, national and international levels. He has earned his Certified Association Executive designation.

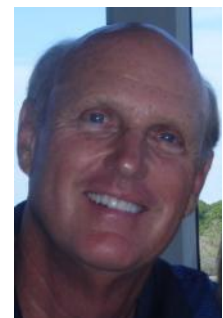
He comes to LFL from head positions the last four years with business

district redevelopment programs in Grand Central and 22nd St. So. in St Pete. He also managed the organization of swimming pool professionals in our three county area. He has lead international and national associations for swimming teachers, the latter of which he founded and directed 1988-2001.

With a B.S. in Education from Illinois State University where he was an All-American Swimmer Graves went on to teach and coach including a

four year tenure with Canterbury School of Florida in St Petersburg.

His oldest daughter Amy is a third year law student at Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville.



Steve Graves
Lawyers for Literacy
Executive Director