As a child I aspired to being a missionary to help needy children and families in Africa. My career went in another direction, however, and my professional years were spent helping people with reading difficulties and training reading specialists. My interest in Africa stemmed from the fact that my parents as young people in the 1920’s had gone to Liberia, an English-speaking nation in West Africa, to teach. They met in Liberia and after returning to America reunited, fell in love and married. I was their fourth child.

Fast forward many years. After teaching at Cal State Fullerton for 23 years I retired. I was keenly aware that the country where my heart had always been, Liberia, had suffered a brutal civil war that had devastated the infrastructure and killed hundreds of thousands of citizens. By 2009 Liberia was in the process of recovering and with the help of the UN there was excitement about rebuilding the nation. However, restoring education for the youth was an enormous challenge. A third of the public schools had been destroyed and many teachers had been killed or had fled to other countries. Many of the young people did not even receive a rudimentary education during the conflict. Now that peace was restored the teachers had little formal education; in fact they struggled with basic skills themselves. Approximately 60% of teachers had little certification for teaching.

Around this time I met some Liberian educators who were dedicated to helping restore education for many of the unfortunate, poorly educated youth. These young people were destined to become future leaders of the country. So, in January 2009 I recruited a small team of educators and took my experience in training teachers to several schools near the capital city of Monrovia. It was a daunting experience. That 2-week trip changed the course of my retirement life.

Since then I have returned several times. I serve on the board of directors of God’s Kids, an organization that has built eight orphanages in Liberia to give help and hope to forgotten children. Besides providing them with healthy living conditions, food and love in fully accredited orphanages, the children are given an education so they will have a promising future. I was asked to go to Liberia for the second time in October 2009 to assess the basic reading and language skills of these children to determine if their learning was progressing according to reports from the orphanage administration. To assess their reading skills I used a battery of reading instruments that included the San Diego Quick and an oral reading inventory consisting of graded reading passages drawn from relevant stories from the students’ own background.

Not surprisingly I discovered the students’ achievement in basic reading skills was dismal. Some 7th and 8th grade students were reading at primary levels and many elementary children were 2 to 3 years behind grade levels. There were exceptions, of course, but most of the children were reading at primary levels and many elementary children were 2 to 3 years behind grade levels. There were exceptions, of course, but most of the children were behind. We found serious gaps in phonemic awareness, letter sound knowledge, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. These results led to the conclusion that the teachers, who serve
Teaching in Liberia

as role models, have not received the prerequisite training to teach. Our organization made a decision, then, to focus on professional development for the teachers themselves.

As the educator on God’s Kids board, I have helped coordinate the project for the past several years. Last spring I participated in recruiting and training a team of educators for a weeklong teacher institute in July 2013 for 150 Liberian teachers. The team included a dynamic student from our Reading Master’s program at Cal State Fullerton, Katie Lautsch. Katie brought experience, creativity and enthusiasm to the team, and the Liberian teachers were overwhelmingly receptive and eager to learn. Katie tells what it was like from her perspective.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

By: Katie Lautsch

I learned about God’s Kids through my scholarship donor, Dr. Ruth Siegrist, at a California State University, Fullerton Department of Education REG brunch in March 2013. I thought I was going for the professional development and free breakfast, not realizing at the time that this meeting would change the course of my life. I accepted Ruth’s invitation to join a group of reading specialists and school administrators who would travel to Liberia, Africa during our summer break to instruct teachers in eight orphanages in reading and classroom management strategies.

Our first meeting with the Liberian teachers was a complete surprise. We thought we would be spending our first day touring a few of the eight God’s Kids orphanages. Instead, when we pulled up to Sis Eye orphanage, we were told that the teachers had been waiting in a large classroom for us for over three hours. These teachers waited patiently; they were thirsty for knowledge. They welcomed us with open arms, much like the orphans at the three other orphanages we toured. The children would run up and grab our hands as we exited our cars.

The classrooms in the orphanages had four unadorned walls that were open to each other near the roofline, much like cubicles. Their roofs were made out of corrugated metal so rainstorms and the noise from neighboring classrooms cause serious sound issues while teaching in these conditions. There were no glass panes or screens covering the windows, nor was there electricity or lighting. The classrooms had a few old chair and desk combinations as were common in the United States in the 1950’s desks, but not enough for every student. Each classroom had a chalkboard, but nothing else hanging on the walls. Amazing Grace Orphanage had three small classrooms for over 300 students. While the younger students were eager to see new faces, the older children were weary of visitors, untrusting because they see so many people come and never return. All of the schools had libraries with old U.S. textbooks from Houghton Mifflin and Harcourt, but the teachers do not use them because they cannot read them. The teachers claim they are unused because the texts are outdated, but they were usable materials.

Our main mission for this humanitarian trip was to provide professional development for over 150 teachers at each of the eight God’s Kids orphanages in Liberia. As a Kindergarten teacher, I was able to provide vital instruction on early literacy strategies. I was extremely nervous about teaching adults (who ranged in age from the 18 to 80 year olds), but these Liberian people were so receptive and attentive with the openness common in young children. The Liberian teachers were not afraid to act silly or embarrass themselves. Even the male teachers, who heavily outnumbered the female teachers, were comfortable singing, dancing, drawing and playing. It was so refreshing. One man came and said he was in my class back in the United States because the training was so fun! Another teacher asked me to tutor him in handwriting, which I was happy to do.

The teachers participated in team building activities such as building a web that supported a class built around teachers. We introduced graphic organizers and the Language Experience Approach as a way to generate class generated texts on the particular areas of study.

Days after returning from Liberia, I sat outside at the Irvine Spectrum and watched decorative fountains spray water into the air for the sake of beauty. I marveled at the drastic differences in life. We have so much to be perpetually thankful for as United States citizens. Yet every Liberian I spoke to was extremely faith-filled and grateful for simply being alive. They believe that life is good. They do not honk their horns or scream obscenities when driving, but instead they stop if they see a car “cutting them off” in order to let them go first. They smile and wave at strangers in vans. They sing and dance as if no one is watching. They are open to new ideas and want to do their best for best’s sake, not for the money. They have motivated me as an educator, and have inspired me as a human being. To them, I am eternally grateful. I am in awe of these brave people I met in Liberia and humbled to have been able to serve them.
Alumni Showcase

Robin Barry (2006)
4th Grade Teacher
Thomas Edison School
Anaheim Unified School District

Reading alumna, Robin Barry continues to promote literacy at Thomas Edison School in Anaheim. After spending 9 years providing reading intervention at Edison, Robin has spent the last four years providing challenges to the children in her 4th grade gifted classroom. She has become somewhat “addicted” to purchasing high quality children’s literature in gently used condition at thrift stores, yard sales, and church book sales, amassing several boxes full of books throughout the year. Recently, Robin decided a book sale was in order. It was convenient that the Thomas Edison PTA sponsors a Saturday parking lot sale every few months. Robin had her students organize and work at a booth selling the used books for 25 and 50 cents each with the proceeds going to the PTA. Student workers help do the actual selling and earn a free book (or two) for their time. Several other Edison teachers support her class’s effort by donating books and providing assistance in the setup of the booth. In addition, the school has been able to get the library discard books out to children for free at the same event. Parents are thrilled to be able to acquire books for their children at a low cost. Last year, over 700 free and inexpensive books made it into Edison family homes through the Saturday sales. The book sale event is rewarding for all involved—students, families, and PTA. It is especially gratifying for Robin Barry as she gets to spend a few non-classroom hours with many of her students as well as experiencing the joy of putting books into the hands and minds of children.

Ninth Annual College of Education Event

Sunday, April 13, 2014

Honor an Educator

Do you know an educator that you would like to have recognized by the CSUF College of Education? If so, you may want to check out this event. ‘Honor an Educator’ program was created in 2006 with two primary goals – to recognize educators who have made a difference in the lives of others, and to provide scholarships for current College of Education students. Alumni, faculty, and friends of the College are invited to submit names of honorees with a brief description of why they are being honored, along with a $100 donation to the scholarship fund in their honoree’s name. Honorees are sent a congratulatory letter from the Dean of the College, as well as an engraved photo frame as a permanent memento of thanks and appreciation of their outstanding contribution to excellence in education. Honoree’s names will be listed on the college’s website, along with donors’ names and descriptive paragraphs they wrote about the honorees.

For more information or to nominate an educator visit: http://ed.fullerton.edu/alumni/awards/honor-an-educator-awards/

Community College Partnership Highlighted

Erica Bowers and Kathi Bartle Angus presented "A Marriage of Convenience and Passion: A University and Community College Collaboration to Meet Community Needs" with Janet Bagwell (Saddleback College) and Angela Henderson (Fullerton College) at the College Reading and Learning Conference in Boston. The presentation highlighted the collaboration with the Reading Program and their community college partners in providing a practicum experience for future community college professionals.
OPPORTUNITY DRAWING TO SUPPORT THE HAZEL MILLER CROY READING CENTER

The Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center endowment is approaching $45,000. That is quite an accomplishment since it was only established over two years ago. Each year the annual interest earned from the endowment is made available to a distribution account. Funds in the distribution account are then used to support the activities in the Center. Examples of this use of funds include the purchase of iPod Nanos for use in the Pocket Tutor Project and Center scholarships for struggling readers.

For the past few years REG has sponsored an opportunity drawing at the breakfast to raise funds for the endowment account. We will continue the tradition this year. Here is how REG members can help and have some fun.

- Purchase tickets for the drawing with your registration for the event
- Bring cash or your checkbook to purchase tickets at the event
- Donate an item for the drawing – contact Kathi Bartle Angus at kangus@fullerton.edu
- Have fun “shopping” with your tickets at the event

Ticket Prices:
1 ticket for $1
12 tickets for $10
25 tickets for $20

If you cannot attend the breakfast and would like to make a donation to the Hazel Miller Croy Endowment, you can do so on the web: https://giving.fullerton.edu/default.aspx

REG GRANT APPLICATION DUE APRIL 1ST

The Reading Educators Guild grant was established in 2004 to provide financial support to an REG member. The $300 grant is intended to be a supplement to a typical classroom or professional materials budget. Applications must be submitted by April 1 to be considered for this funding round. See the REG website (http://reg.fullerton.edu) for the application form and submission information or email kangus@fullerton.edu to be sent the application form.

Criteria:
- Applicant must be an REG member.
- Funds are to be used for classroom books or professional materials only.
- By submitting the application, a recipient agrees to write a short (200 word) explanation of how the award was spent for publication in the REG newsletter.

To apply, complete and submit application to:
REG President
CSUF, Reading Department, CP570
PO Box 6868
Fullerton, CA 92834-6868

Or email to swilson@fullerton.edu

All applications must be submitted via U.S. mail or email by April 1 to be considered for this funding round.

BOARD ELECTION AND CHANGES TO REG CONSTITUTION PROPOSED

REG members will be asked to elect new officers at the March 15th meeting. If you are interested in serving on the board for the 2014-2016 term contact Lesley Zorola, President, at your earliest convenience. She can be reached at lзоролa@acsд.k12.ca.us

REG members will also be asked to approve changes to the organization’s constitution at the meeting. The constitution was last amended in 2000. Both the 2000 Constitution and the Proposed 2014 Constitution are available for members’ perusal on our website: http://ed.fullerton.edu/reg/. Look for Constitution under the About Us pull down menu. The board would like to thank fellow board members Chris Parmenter and Linda Vander Wende for their work in creating the updated version.
HAZEL MILLER CROY READING CENTER NEWS

By Erica Bowers, Director and
Kathi Bartle Angus, HMC Center Support Committee

The primary purpose of the Hazel Miller Croy (HMC) Center is to support the graduate reading practicum course on the CSUF Main Campus and at local community cohort sites. The Center provides high quality diagnostic and reading intervention services to school-age children in the community. Alumni often have very fond memories of the time they spent working closely with students, faculty and colleagues in the center. The purpose of the Center going forward is to expand existing assessment and intervention services to reach more K-12 students from the community, and to pursue a focused research agenda to advance the professional knowledge-base related to reading difficulties and remedies.

HMC Center projects for 2012-13 included:

• **Tutoring Project** – CSUF Reading M.S./Specialist Alumni were contracted to provide tutoring to children in the community during the practicum class. This service allows the Center to meet the needs of families in the community who are on the waiting list and brings additional revenues into the Center.

• **Assessment Project** – The HMC Reading Center continues to offer Reading Assessment packages to children who are on our waiting list. Reading assessment packages were conducted by CSUF Reading Department alumni.

• **Video Reflection Project** – As Center Director, Dr. Erica Bowers joined the Literacy Research Association’s (LRA) Special Interest Group (SIG) - the National Center Director Consortium. Members of this group developed a project to study the effect of video reflection on reading teacher practice. The initial findings of the project piloted spring 2012 were presented at the Literacy Research Association’s Annual Conference in San Diego in November 2012 by Dr. Erica Bowers and student research assistant, Lindsey Rutherford.

• **Pocket Tutor Publication**
Another new development for this year was the publication of the Pocket Tutor research as a chapter in a new book entitled, *Volume II: Advanced Literacy Practices: From the Clinic to the Classroom*. Authors of the chapter are Dr. Erica Bowers and Dr. Ula Manzo along with two alumni of the program, Ann Tarantine and Melissa Base.

Donations to the HMC Center are always welcome. To donate online go to: [https://giving.fullerton.edu](https://giving.fullerton.edu) and select Hazel Miller Croy Endowment (85017).

Or mail a check payable to: CSFPF (Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation) account 85017 to: University Advancement, 2600 E. Nutwood Ave., Suite 85 Fullerton, CA 92831.
**REG Spring Breakfast**

Join REG Board, READING Faculty & Alumni

Saturday, March 15, 2014
Cal State Fullerton Reading Center
Check-in: 9:00 a.m.
Breakfast & Program: 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Featuring**

Dr. Julian Jefferies

“Reading the World of Undocumented Youth in K-12 Schools: Awareness, Counseling and Advocacy”

An Opportunity Drawing will benefit the Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center.

Register on or before the 7th of March. Reservations at $25 per person. For full REG Spring Breakfast information and registration, contact Linda Cardwell at lindalcardwell@gmail.com or 949-364-3765.

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**Reading Educators Guild Membership**

Membership benefits include:
- three newsletters each year filled with alumni, department, and literacy news
- information about REG events (sponsored speakers, social, networking)
- directory of current members
- opportunity to apply for annual professional materials grant
- opportunity to be included on Reading Department Tutor List

In addition your dues support:
- scholarships for Reading Center children
- scholarships for current graduate students
- Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center activities

A membership information form is included with this edition of the newsletter. Please take a moment to update your information if necessary. We also would like to give you an opportunity to contribute to the Hancock Fund. The Hancock Fund along with dues enables REG to make significant contributions to Reading Department students and the community through the Reading Center. For your convenience a return envelope is enclosed. (You may use the same envelope to RSVP for the March breakfast. A single check is acceptable for both purposes.)

Thank you and have a happy and productive 2014!

Sincerely,

Linda Vander Wende
Vice-President, Membership, REG
beasleyljj@aol.com

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**FOLLOW THE READING DEPARTMENT & THE READING EDUCATORS GUILD ON...**

Facebook: Reading Educators Guild
Pinterest: REG CSUF
YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txrLw5nUTo&feature=youtu.be

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Join, Renew, or Donate