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**The Results Are In: The Latest “Read Out Loud” Campaign
Assisted Nearly 700 New D.C. Adult Learners**

Campaign Also Energized New Community Support for Adult Education Services

Washington, DC, April 28th, 2008 — D.C. LEARNs is pleased to announce that **nearly 700 Washington, D.C. residents** were assisted in locating and registering for an adult education program as a result of the latest Read Out Loud Campaign (www.readoutloud.org) from late December through early February. This year’s campaign was buoyed by a proclamation from Washington D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty declaring January 29th “Read Out Loud Day,” and featured a number of new or enhanced components designed by D.C. LEARNs to encourage more D.C. residents to improve their literacy skills in one of the nearly 100 programs offering literacy services citywide.

D.C. LEARNs maintain the city’s only comprehensive database of local child, family and adult literacy programs in the metropolitan area and staffs the Read Out Loud hotline eight hours every weekday, in Spanish and English, matching callers to appropriate literacy programs and services. These services include: Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED preparation, External Diploma Programs (EDP, an alternative high school diploma program) English as a Second Language (ESL), computer classes, workplace education, and family literacy programs.

The latest Read Out Loud campaign components included:

- The creation and dissemination of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in both English and Spanish (Spanish was new this year);

- The design and distribution of 3,000 flyers and 50,000 bookmarks, distributed in areas where potential adult learners live, work, shop, and commute; and
- The creation and placement of 350 multilingual ROL posters and dioramas in metro stations and on metro buses.

Many callers to the Read Out Loud hotline at D.C. LEARNs in January noted that seeing the Read Out Loud material in Spanish was the reason that the ads caught their attention. “After working on several of these campaigns over the years, we now have a better idea of where and how to tailor the materials,” says Cesar Watt’s D.C. LEARNs’ Hotline and Outreach Manager. “We also tried to work more on a grass roots level to get the word out. We sent volunteers to talk with local small business owners—barber shops, grocery stores, churches, recreation centers—and asked them to help us distribute flyers and bookmarks.”

Funding for the PSAs, ads, and signs was provided by Fannie Mae, Verizon, the D.C. Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), and individual donations, provides additional support for D.C. LEARNs’ hotline. The entire campaign was a coordinated effort between D.C. LEARNs and the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE).

Watts says that the 671 inquiries received during this year’s campaign included more special requests than ever before, especially inquiries about programs working with clients with learning disabilities.

The latest Read Out Loud Campaign also resulted in an increased number of individual volunteers and corporate partners currently involved in improving adult literacy services for potential learners. Among the recent successes are:

- The establishment of partnerships between local corporations and ROL-affiliated programs, providing literacy services to those in need; and
- The placement of more than twenty volunteers with community based providers.

Both L’Enfant Plaza Hotel and the Four Seasons Hotel have initiated ESL classes for their employees. In addition, a significant number of social service agencies, such as Children’s National

Medical Center, D.C. Superior Court, and a number of public charter schools now use the Read Out Loud Hotline to connect their clients with literacy services.

Roberto Castillo saw the announcement in at a metro bus and he decided to call immediately because he was seeking classes of ESL classes, “I was surprised,” Mr. Castle said. “I didn’t know so many programs in D.C. offered ESL classes! Now in return to the community I am going to distribute bookmarks at my church and with the day labor workers in Northeast.”

“We are very encouraged by the results of this year’s campaign,” says Jeff Carter, the Executive Director of D.C. LEARNs. “The number of calls we received clearly demonstrates that D.C. residents who want to improve their reading and writing skills or who lack a high school diploma have not given up hope. They will come forward if you provide good information about the kinds of adult education services that are available, work with the community to get the word out, and offer encouragement and support to people when they call.”

Carter adds a few notes of caution, however. “As we drive up demand for literacy and adult education services, we must ensure that quality adult education services are available for everyone who calls. Some programs here in the District have waiting lists of many months, or even a year or more. I hope that the success of our campaign encourages both the private and public sectors to invest more in these programs.”

Carter also points out that while the latest campaign may be concluding the Read Out Loud hotline operates year-round. “This is a year-round effort,” he says. “We receive calls every day, and we are committed to keeping our program database up-to-date and to answering calls all year,” although he adds, “if we are to continue to maintain this service, we will need to work even harder in the coming months and years to bring in new supporters and partners.”

Adult Education Services

Adult education programs serve adult learners who are 16 years old or older, and who have one or more of the following needs:

- They do not have basic education skills.
- They do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency.
- They need to improve their ability to speak, read, or write the English language.

These programs provided either free or at minimal cost to adult learners. In the District, most of these programs are community-based nonprofit organizations. Many receive local and/or federal funding, although few programs are able to rely solely on government funds to maintain their services.

Next Steps for Read Out Loud

Future goals, according to Watts, include: increasing the number of volunteers; augmenting Read Out Loud marketing efforts during key enrollment times (January, late March, June and August); and increasing the number of languages in which Read Out Loud materials are produced and marketed, addressing a growing need for literacy services for speakers of Amharic, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

D.C. LEARNs (<http://www.dclearns.org>) is a nonprofit citywide coalition of more than 80 members (<http://www.dclearns.org/members.html>), most of whom are organizations providing adult, family, and children's literacy services to the residents of Washington, D.C. Our mission is to work with these organizations to strengthen adult, family, and children's literacy services and present a strong, unified voice on the importance of literacy as an investment in the community. We work to raise public awareness of literacy issues, recruit volunteers, and provide the materials, research, training, and technical assistance needed to raise the quality of literacy services available to D.C. residents.

D.C. LEARNs manages the Read Out Loud Literacy Hotline, 1-866-READ-OUT (1-866-732-3688). Read Out Loud is Washington, D.C.'s public service campaign designed to help people looking to improve their literacy skills find opportunities and services available here in the District of Columbia.

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