

## President's Message

Happy New Year and greetings to all of the wonderful members of the El Paso Reading Council. I hope that 2005 proves to be very prosperous for all of us. The new year gives us such a wonderful opportunity to reflect and make changes (beyond those stubborn pounds to shed) for the year that is stretched out before us. Instead of the regular President's Message, I would like to hand the pen over to one of El Paso's greatest advocates for literacy- Congressman Sylvestre Reyes. Happy Reading, and don't forget to join us at our next "Reading Round up" as we welcome Dr. Mary Ellen Vogt, Presiding President of the International Reading Association.

Denise J. Sowers, President

Article on Literacy

Congressman Silvestre Reyes

October 1, 2004

I can think of no more important goal than increasing literacy in El Paso. Recently, there was a study which originated from the University of Wisconsin -Whitewater, that ranked El Paso as the least literate large city in the country. The study considered several factors including the number of libraries and library resources, the number of journal publishers, and the number of people who subscribe to the local newspaper. The study was hastily put together and didn't take into account the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of the U.S. - Mexico border region and El Paso in particular. For example, one of the variables that was included in the study, was newspaper readership - but only those that read a newspaper written in English were counted. This one variable discounted many people in El Paso who get their news from *El Diario* and other Spanish language media on a daily basis. Many of these people are extremely literate and proficient not only in Spanish, but English as well. They simply chose to get their news from a non-English paper.

It is easy to merely look at the numbers from the ivory tower of academia, and develop broad generalizations about our population without giving a single thought to the unique challenges of the border or the implications of labeling a community as one thing or another. When the Wisconsin study first came out, it made me angry because I believe being ranked as the most illiterate, the least humorous, or most sweaty city in the country hurts the people in this great community. It not only hurts our image and maybe even our feelings about ourselves, but it could also adversely impact our ability to attract business, industry, jobs and other assets that we so desperately need in this community. For example, I have been working diligently in Congress to assure that El Paso will come out on the receiving end of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program. The issues that the military always considers when making decisions about committing resources to a particular area, is the quality of education, the quality of healthcare, and the quality of life. Let's face it, studies like the Wisconsin study or the Old Spice survey for that matter, sell papers, but they could also have true and dire consequences for our community. We must do a better job at highlighting the great things that we have to offer.

Can we do better with issues of literacy? Absolutely. We can and we must. I admit that literacy is a major issue in El Paso that we must make significant strides to address. How are we going to do this? I believe it is going to take contribution and commitment

from each and every one of us to make the goal of increasing literacy a top priority. From the federal, state, county and local levels of government, we need to do all we can to increase support and funding for our libraries, schools, and programs that contribute to literacy for community. We must find creative solutions as well. Immediately after the Wisconsin study was released, community leaders rallied together and began developing creative ways to address the problem. There are many great ideas that are being considered by the schools, libraries, the business community, government representatives, the Empowerment Zone, and others to truly begin addressing this issue.

We must take the issue of literacy seriously, but we must never lose sight of the many assets that we have in this community. For example, as a Member of the United States Congress, I am often afforded the opportunity to visit many of the schools in our community. I have found, on a consistent basis, that our students are bright and able to compete in the state and across the nation. In fact, this Congressional district sends more students to the military academies than any other Congressional district in the country. I am proud of our students and the work that our educators and parents do on a daily basis to prepare our young people for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Further, I believe that the new global economy and expanded free-trade relationships with Central and South America will bring opportunities to our students and our predominately bilingual population in fostering trade and governmental relationships and managing international business. Our world is becoming evermore inter-dependent and inter-connected and I believe that El Paso is in a unique position to capitalize on this new global economy.

Increasing literacy is an important goal that we must remain committed to in order to achieve. At the same time, we need to applaud the efforts that we are making and celebrate our accomplishments. El Pasoans consistently meet the challenges that we face by rolling up our sleeves and getting involved. This is already taking place with the issue of increasing literacy, and I have no doubt that we will meet this challenge head-on and see outstanding results. This community has the greatest people in the country, something that no study can measure, but we who live here all know it. Let's face the challenge of increasing literacy, while at the same time never losing sight of our tremendous assets and our unique cultural and linguist diversity.



"A Reading Round Up"

# January Dinner Meeting

## Leaders' Night

Submitted by Norma De La Rosa

### MaryEllen Vogt



Dr. Vogt's topic will be, "Vogt's Top Ten: Or What I've Learned About Teaching Reading."

MaryEllen Vogt, professor emeritus, California State University, Long Beach, is president of the International Reading Association for a term ending in 2005. Vogt's other contributions to IRA include Board of Directors (1993–1996), Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project (RWCT) in Estonia (1997–2000), Special Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist (1996–1999), and International Task Force on Critical Issues in Literacy (1999–2002). Vogt received her B.A. from Colorado State University, her M.A. from California State University, Stanislaus, and her Ed.D. in language and literacy from the University of California, Berkeley. She was a classroom teacher and reading specialist for 15 years. She was also active in the California Reading Association, serving as area director and president. An inductee into the California Reading Hall of Fame, she also received the Distinguished Faculty Teaching Award from California State University. Vogt has published numerous articles and chapters in professional journals and texts and coauthored five books, including *Creativity and Innovation in Content Area Teaching*, *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners*, and *Reading Specialists in the REAL World: A Sociocultural View*. She has presented at hundreds of local, state, regional, national, and international conferences.

#### *Statement of philosophy*

"There are few things in a teacher's career that are more disheartening and challenging than watching a conscientious and intelligent student struggle to access information or gain pleasure from reading. Those of us involved with the International Reading Association are committed to working with educators and families to ensure that children, adolescents, and adults have equitable opportunities to become literate and productive citizens, so necessary for our ever-changing world."

#### *Presentation topics*

Improving comprehension  
Teaching reading as a thinking process  
Reading in the content areas  
Making content comprehensible for English learners

#### **Menu**

Mixed Green Salad with Ranch or Italian Dressing  
Chicken Breast "Coq Au Vin"  
Topped with red wine cream, onion crispies, and bacon  
Wild Rice Pilaf  
Carrots, Celery and Broccoli  
Dinner Rolls and Butter  
Strawberry Shortcake  
Tea and coffee  
EPRC Dinner Meeting  
Jan. 27, 2005 at Airport Hilton Hotel  
Social Hour 5:30 pm  
Dinner at 6:30 pm  
Tickets are \$26 for EPRC members  
\$50 for nonmembers

#### **Deadline for reservations is Jan. 20, 2005**

*Please note: no reservations accepted after deadline because of arrangements with hotel. Make reservations early through your building representative. Thank you.*

*Our thanks to Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company and Ms. Grace Barbera, Educational Sales Consultant with Houghton Mifflin for sponsoring our speaker for this dinner meeting. Door prizes will be awarded at the end of the evening.*

## **“Rounding Up” Reservations**

by Sylvia Carrillo & Kristen Navarro

We wanted to thank all of our building reps. for a successful Librarians’ Night. We encourage you to continue to use e mail to secure your reservations. On our web site ([www.elpasoreading.us](http://www.elpasoreading.us)), on the Welcome Page simply scroll to the bottom of the page and “Click here for reservations form.” This allows you a place to e mail us your reservations for the January dinner meeting. It’s simple, painless, and fast! There is even a text box for you to write comments.

We are trying to become “glitch free,” however, we must be very strict with deadlines and financial responsibilities. No additions, deletions, or changes can be made after Jan. 20, 2005. We are currently taking reservations now through Jan. 20th.

Because seating arrangements are made in advance, we would ask that you respect the placement of schools and not move placards or place settings as the caterer sets the tables by groups of ten.

If you are unable to e mail us your reservations, remember our fax number is 757-8073. We would remind you again that only building representatives are to place the reservations.

Building representatives also please remember to secure reservations and payment prior to the dinner meeting. All reservations must be paid for as we have a financial responsibility to the facility.

## **Decorations**

by Carol Leonard & Lisa Medina

Remember there will be “deputies” at the exits, so please do not remove the table decorations. At our last meeting in April you will have a chance to secure the hat of your choice. Thank you!

## **Newspapers in Education Workshop**

**Date:** Sat. Jan. 29, 2005

**Time:** 8:00-11:30 am

**Location:** El Paso Times Plaza, 300 N. Campbell

**Audience:** Elementary, Middle, & High School Teachers

**For additional information, contact your building representative for a registration form or email Mary Broderick-Vargas at [mvargas@elpasoreading.us](mailto:mvargas@elpasoreading.us) or contact Mona Pacheco at [mpacheco@elpasotimes.com](mailto:mpacheco@elpasotimes.com)**

**Registration Deadline:** Jan. 14, 2005

**There will be on site registration the day of the workshop as well.**

## **Membership Update**

By Jana Rivera

I love the Christmas season for many reasons. One reason is a tradition my mom and I have of exchanging a book on Christmas day. It was wonderful to be able to sit and read without interruption this holiday season.

Many of our members have been concerned with membership notices they have received in the mail. If you have already joined EPRC, please disregard this notice. Due to an overlapping of when current membership forms were processed and when memberships expired, some of you received a notice. Current membership dues were processed and transmitted to the state and national organizations at the beginning of December.

Finally, I would like to encourage our members to check the website to see if your school or a friend’s school has a campus representative and if not, help us by finding a person to take on this role.

Thank you again for your continued support of EPRC through your new or renewed memberships.

**Please note that the following announcement has been posted on IRA’s website ([www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org))**

**Please let others know. Thanks.**

**Jill Lewis**

**IRA PREPARES TO PROVIDE TSUNAMI RELIEF**

IRA is accepting cash donations in support of relief efforts for regions of south Asia affected by the recent tsunami disaster. IRA will focus contributions on the needs of children and schools in the disaster area. Send your check to: IRA Tsunami Relief, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware 19714-8139 USA. Include the notation “IRA Tsunami Relief” on your check. All funds received by IRA will be used directly for relief efforts. More information will be posted on the IRA web site as specific initiatives are developed.

If you wish to make an immediate relief donation you can go to the following web site: [http://www.google.com/tsunami\\_relief.html](http://www.google.com/tsunami_relief.html)

# Reading Awards

## Outstanding Progress in Reading

Submitted by Phyllis Sully  
EPRC Awards Chairperson

Happy New Year El Paso Reading Council members, let's start the New Year off right by highlighting the accomplishments of our students. What better way to bring in 2005 than by celebrating your students' success. Don't delay, nominate your students today. The deadlines for nominations are as follows: January dinner meeting is January 7, 2005 and April dinner meeting is April 1, 2005. You don't have to wait for the deadline to nominate your students. Copies of nomination applications may be picked up from your building representative. Please fax your application to Phyllis Sully at 851-7580 or mail them to me at 1736 Victor Lopez, El Paso, Texas 79936.

## Legislative Report

Submitted by Paul Haupt

## Government Relations Report

### Overview

- \* Funding
- \* Lame Duck—IDEA
- \* Looking ahead

### Funding

The House and Senate agreed to a continuing resolution (H.J. Res. 107) to keep the government funded through November 20. Over the next several days, before the October 8 recess, the Congressional leadership anticipates completing several regular appropriations bills. However, these would not include the education bill. In November members will then pass an omnibus funding bill for the balance of the year for those areas that did not complete the regular process. It is anticipated that education will be in that omnibus bill.

### Lame Duck—IDEA

Congress will be coming back into session for the appropriations bills, and some observers believe that the House and Senate will conference IDEA at that

time and pass the bill. The Senate hasn't formally named its conferees, but it is expected that all members of the subcommittee will be included. The House needs to name its conferees before the Senate can proceed with naming.

### Looking Ahead

Congress is moving quickly to finish whatever it can so members can get home to campaign for the next 30 days before the election. While a major shift in control by the political parties is not expected, there may well be a significant shift of members who chaircommittees, especially in the Senate. Also, several members of Congress are in tight races.

In November the House and Senate members will return to select leaders for the 109th Congress. At that time they will have to pass either an omnibus funding bill (expected) or another short term continuing resolution. They may also want to complete action on politically charged legislation, such as the reauthorization of IDEA, but the issues could just as easily slide to the new Congress.

Richard Long  
Director of Government Relations  
Washington Office  
International Reading Association

## Schedules and Agendas - January 2005

## State Board of Education Meetings

**February 17-18, 2005**

**April 28-29, 2005**

**July 14-15, 2005**

**September 15-16, 2005**

**November 17-18, 2005**

**2005 Upcoming Texas Conferences**  
(in no particular order)

**Visit the Rising Star web page at <http://www.risingstar.education.txstate.edu> for information on:**

- The Rising Star Young Writers' and Artists' Conference, May 7, 2005, San Marcos
- The Teachers' Writing Conference on the day before the student conference

**Visit the TASA web page at <http://www.tasanet.org/> for information on:**

- TASA Midwinter 2005 Conference, January 31 - February 2, 2005, Austin Convention Center
- Texas Assessment Conference, February 6-9, 2005, Renaissance Austin Hotel

**Visit the TAIR web page at <http://www.tair-online.org/> for information on:**

- January 22, 2005, LeTourneau University
- February 14, 2005, Austin Area
- February 21, 2005, Midwestern University
- April 30, 2005 w/IRA Preconvention Inst., TAIR Border Literacy Conference by UT San Antonio Reading Department

**Visit the TCTELA web page at <http://www.tcte.org/> for information on:**

- The 40th Annual TCTELA Conference, January 21-23, 2005, San Antonio Omni Hotel

**Visit the CREST web page at <http://www.angelfire.com/tx5/crest/index.htm> for information on:**

- The Spring 2005 conference (not posted yet)

**Visit the IRA web page at <http://www.reading.org/> for information on:**

- The 50th Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, May 1-5, 2005, San Antonio

**Visit the TSRA web page <http://www.tsra.us/> for information on:**

- The Texas State Reading Association Conference, November 3-5, 2005, Westin Galleria Hotel, Houston

**Visit the TEPSA web page at <http://www.tepsa.org/> for information on:**

- Elementary and Early Childhood Conference, January 22, 2005, Austin Marriott at the Capitol
- [Summer Conference](#), June 8-10, 2005, Austin Renaissance Hotel

**Visit the TASSP web page at <http://www.tassp.org/> for information on:**

- **Summer Workshop**, June 8-10, 2005, Austin Convention Center

## **Congratulations Pebble Hills!**

At the November dinner meeting it was announced that Pebble Hills Elementary School in the Ysleta Independent School District was the Membership Drive Contest winners for the 2004-2005 school year. The faculty and students were treated to a morning with author Rick Riordan. The students were very impressed with Mr. Riordan's story telling ability.

A special thank you to EPRC for the author visit and to Mr. Robert Martinez, Principal, Ms. Ivette Gonzalez, Assistant Principal, and Debbie McClain, EPRC Building Representative for making all of this happen.



**Author Rick Riordan**

**El Paso Reading Council  
P. O. Box 372010  
El Paso, TX 79937-2010  
“A Reading Round Up!”**



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## **Change of Address Form**

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**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**School/District** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #** \_\_\_\_\_

**E Mail Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to EPRC ATTN: Change of Address**

**P. O. Box 372010**

**El Paso, TX 79937-2010**

**or e mail to [dmcclain@elpasoreading.us](mailto:dmcclain@elpasoreading.us)**