

NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR LITERACY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Mexico Coalition for Literacy Receives \$20,000 Verizon Grant to Support the Almost 1M New Mexicans Who Cannot Read and Write

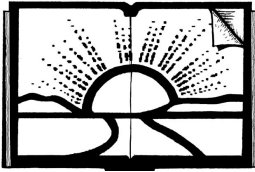
SANTA FE, NM – At a time when the nation’s schoolchildren have made little or no progress in reading proficiency in recent years and 48% of New Mexico’s 4th graders scored below basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress’ reading test, it may be no surprise that almost half of adult New Mexicans cannot read or write above the 6th grade level in their own native language, English. In fact, when the State of Arizona projects how many prison beds it will need, it factors in the number of children who cannot read well in fourth grade. That is exactly why the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) will use its \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to expand its outreach services to underserved populations and provide essential pre-service training for volunteer tutors throughout the state. Albuquerque-based Marten Griego, author and publisher of *Leaving the House of Tears*, is an advocate for literacy who will provide speeches and motivational workshops by request. He is also available for interviews.

Just twelve years ago, this award-winning author and a motivational speaker was functionally illiterate.

Griego’s success story began with the services that differentiate the NMCL’s adult literacy programs from others: free one-to-one, confidential tutoring. He is the logical spokesperson to promote the NMCL’s outreach efforts. “What an honor and a privilege to say to the world, ‘I’m applying my gift of literacy’,” Griego said. The NMCL will use its Verizon grant to host community outreach events at approximately thirteen locations in New Mexico.

“Today my mission is quite clear, to promote literacy and to recognize and thank those

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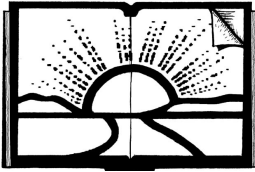
who have made literacy organizations possible,” said Griego. He also carries on the legacy of his dedicated volunteer tutor, the famous Mr. Gordon Suits. Griego will present a series of workshops for adult literacy tutors and students, such as “The Gordon Suits Student Workshop.”

Despite the NMCL’s strong track record of success, there are fourteen counties that currently have no adult literacy programs, and existing programs are desperate for volunteer tutors. “Training people to be certified tutors is one of the best investments we can make towards eliminating illiteracy,” said Carl Erhart, Verizon Southwest’s Regional President. “Through collaboration with [the] NMCL we can achieve our mutual goal which is to help people achieve the skills they need to live, learn, and work in the 21st Century.”

During the 2008-9 program year, 5,265 individuals received literacy services funded by the NMCL through grants, donations, and the Adult Literacy Legislative Appropriation of the Department of Cultural Affairs/New Mexico State Library. It is estimated that as many as one million adults in New Mexico could benefit from literacy tutoring to the benefit of the state. Adult literacy programs increase both workers’ productivity and earnings. For example, if each of the students served by New Mexico adult literacy programs in the 2008-9 program year increased their earnings by just one dollar per hour, their total annual income would increase by a modest \$8.1 million.

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About the NMCL: Located in Santa Fe, the NMCL is a statewide funding, training, technical assistance, and professional development organization that provides assistance to local adult literacy programs around the state. Information about literacy in New Mexico, including the locations of local programs offering free, private, one-to-one tutoring and how you can volunteer to teach an adult to read, can be found on the NMCL’s website (www.nmcl.org), by e-mailing info@nmcl.org, or by calling 800-233-7587. The NMCL open its doors to the public for 1-hour informational tours at noon on the first Wednesday of each month. Call to reserve seating or get details. For more information about this topic or to schedule an interview with Marten Griego or Heather Heunermund, contact the NMCL by any means listed above.



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About Verizon: The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon Communications, is committed to improving literacy and K-12 education actively fosters prevention and awareness of domestic violence; and promotes the use of technology in health-care delivery. For more information on the foundation's involvement in literacy, visit their free educational Website: www.Thinkfinity.org. For more information on the foundation itself visit: www.verizonfoundation.org

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