



Reading Is Power

Newsletter of the Open Book Program
Summer, 2001

Five Honored at Open Book Gala Recipients are first to get annual "Illuminati" awards

The Open Book Program honored five African American leaders who have contributed to after-school activities that encourage the development of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills during a gala fundraiser on March 8, 2001 in the Narcissus Room at Marshall Field's State Street, 111 N. State St. in Chicago.

Entertainment was provided by renowned Jazz Singer Maggie Brown and Open Book Performing Artists.

Honorees included Daryl Handy, former Director of Community Relations, Ameritech, Elzie L. Higginbottom, Chairman/CEO, East Lake Management, Ralph Hughes, Regional Director, Marshall Field's State Street, Emil Jones, Illinois Senate Minority Leader, and David Whittaker, Executive Director, Chicago Area Project. The five honorees were the first recipients of the Open Book Program's annual "Illuminati" awards.

"Each of these African American men have opened doors that have provided funding and resources for our unique program," stated Marrice Coverson, Open Book executive director and president of the Institute for Positive Living. "Their contributions have helped Open Book to expand from a pilot after-school program in the spring of 1999 to a program that serves nine locations in the 2000/2001 school year."



Marrice Coverson, Open Book Executive Director and President of the Institute for Positive Living congratulates this year's "Illuminati" award winners. The honorees are (l-r) Daryl Handy, former Director of Community Relations, Ameritech, Ralph Hughes, Regional Director, Marshall Field's State Street, Emil Jones, Illinois Senate Minority Leader, Elzie L. Higginbottom, Chairman/CEO, East Lake Management, and David Whittaker, Executive Director, Chicago Area Project.



Open Book Performing Artists Glenda Baker, James Meredith, Mashari Bain, and Dushon Brown show their stuff before the admiring crowd that attended the Open Book "Illuminati" award event on March 8 at Marshall Field's State Street. The actors, actresses, singers, dancers, and poets work with adolescent participants of the Open Book Program.



*Sandra Cisneros, author of **The House on Mango Street** signs the book of an Open Book participant.*

Sandra Cisneros Comes to Gads Hill

Open Book Starts First Site in the Hispanic Community

March 2001 marked another first for Open Book when the program opened its first site in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood at the Gads Hill Center, 1919 W. Cullerton in Pilsen. As their first book, students tackled *The House on Mango Street* by world-renowned author Sandra Cisneros. Cisneros is a novelist, poet, short story writer, and essayist whose work gives voice to working class Latino and Latina life in America. Her lyrical, realistic work blends aspects of “high” and popular culture.

The House on Mango Street tells the story of a young girl growing up in a Latino neighborhood in Chicago. The stories reflected many of the day-to-day incidents in the students’ lives.

The highlight of the program was a visit by the author on May 15. Cisneros stopped by the center to talk to the young people and sign books. In turn, she was treated to student and performing artist presentations. This was a homecoming of sorts for Cisneros. The author received her first work experience right there at the Gads Hill Center.



Children’s Book Author Harriette Gillem Robinet visited with Open Book participants during an Author Event in May. The event featured student performances; questions and answers about Robinet’s books “Walking to the Bus-Rider Blues” and “Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule;” and a book-signing.

A Message from Our Founder



Thank you for loving reading

This newsletter is dedicated to the funders of the Open Book Program. Special thanks to State Senator Emil Jones, the largest contributor of the Open Book Program.

Thank all of you for loving our children. Through our demonstration of love, they become evermore empowered to love themselves. That love for themselves will motivate them to want to be the best in everything they do. Therefore, reading will move from the list of “Do I have to” to the list of “Let me read that book!”

Many of our children’s families cannot afford for them to travel the world by plane, train, ship, bus or car. Some can’t even afford to travel out of the State of Illinois. However, through books these same children can go all over the world as many times as they please. They can experience many adventures and learn about other cultures through books.

By your continued investments, our children’s reading will become a favorite pas-time activity.

Our children can learn to read and, by accomplishing the art of reading, they will be able to compete on a greater level than they themselves could conceive. Through your support, our children will be able to look themselves in the mirror with pride on a continuous basis. They will be able to say, “I have a love for reading.” They will join hands with others who are promoting the love of reading. And someday—perhaps not in my lifetime, but someday—we will have a nation of children saying, “I have a love for reading.”

-- Marrison Coverson

Open Book Program Holds Their First “Talk Show” Style Author Event



Students from seven Open Book Program sites converged on Stuart Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology on December 2, 2000 for the Open Book Program’s first “Talk Show” style author event. Students got a chance to interview award-winning children’s book author Nikki Grimes. Student performances and a book signing were also featured.

More than 100 students from seven Open Book Program sites got a chance to interview award-winning children’s book author Nikki Grimes as part of a “Talk Show” style event on December 2, 2000 at Stuart Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Harlem-born Grimes is an African-American poet, journalist and author who has conducted readings and lectures throughout the U.S. and in Europe, Africa and Asia. The students had just completed two of Grimes books, *Jazmin’s Notebook* and *My Man Blue*. *Jazmin’s Notebook*, winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, is about 14-year-old Jazmin Shelby who fills her notebook with glimpses of her life and dreams in 1960s’ Harlem. *My Man Blue* consists of 14 poems inviting readers to witness a friendship between a boy without a

father and a man who has lost his son to the streets.

The event included dramatic performances based on the author’s books, author-student interaction, and book signings. Nikki Grimes gave a rousing presentation of her life and work. She began by greeting the students in Swedish, a language that she learned while living in Sweden. She told the students that people don’t expect her, a Black woman, to speak Swedish. It is unexpected. She used the story as a means of urging the students to go out and do the unexpected with their lives. She pointed out that when she was young, people didn’t expect a poor Black girl like her to become an author. But she did. She urged the students go out and pursue their hearts’ desires.

On the Midway at University of Chicago

The Open Book Off the Page Y2K+1 Book Festival Set for September 8th

The whole family will enjoy Open Book Off the Page Y2K+1, Open Book Program's first annual back-to-school reading festival on Saturday, September 8, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on the Midway Plaisance (59th and Ellis) at the University of Chicago. It will be a magical day filled with storytelling, drama, and music. There will be appearances and booksignings by award-winning authors of both children's and adult books. In addition, the festival will feature games, prizes, and refreshments.

The Open Book Program, part of the Institute for Positive Living, is a youth development program that stimulates love of reading through an exciting exploration of literature. Open Book incorporates dramatic arts and media to spark imagination, build skills and broaden horizons.

The Off the Page Y2K+1 Book Festival is sponsored by the Institute for Positive Living's Open Book Program in conjunction with Chicago Area Project, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Empowerment Zone, R.R. Donnelley & Sons, and the University of Chicago.

Patrons include Chicago Youth Centers, East Lake Management, Risk Management Information Systems, and Shell Oil.

For more information, contact Marrice Coverson or Todd Barnett at 773-924-9802.



The logo design for Open Book's Off the Page Y2K+1 Book Festival was designed by award-winning children's book illustrator and author Jan Spivey Gilchrist.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Help adolescents learn about the Power of Reading
Call us at 773-924-9802 or E-mail us at openbook@flash.net
Today!
