



The Big Read

The Big Read is an initiative created by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services to address plummeting literacy rates, especially among America's youth. The Big Read program has included monthlong events in over 400 communities across the U.S. since 2006. The Big Read Tampa took place through the month of September, featuring events at HCC campuses and Tampa Hillsborough Public Library branches across the county. The focus of The Big Read Tampa was the novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston.

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Eatonville, FL, a rural town near Orlando, in 1891. She graduated with a degree in anthropology from Columbia University and used her academic training to document African-American folklore, taking an automobile throughout the South to collect stories and songs. The stories she heard and the people she met provided inspiration for her novels, including *Their*

Eyes Were Watching God. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first published in 1937, tells the story of Janie Crawford, her search for love, her relationship with Tea Cake, and their travails, including getting caught in the infamous 1928 Okeechobee hurricane.

The HCC Plant City Campus hosted several events for The Big Read Tampa open to students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. They included book discussions about *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, film screenings, and as part of the HCC Plant City library's regular weekly Campus Reads program, readings by faculty and students from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The highlight of The Big Read Tampa at HCC Plant City was the appearance of Phyllis McEwen on September 11. McEwen appeared in character as Zora Neale Hurston and discussed Hurston's life, performed songs, and discussed the cultural impact of Hurston and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with an audience of students, faculty, staff, and community members.



SOUTHSHORE CENTER

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One new student, Telia Alexander, said, "The campus is new and innovative. I think it inspires the students to really succeed and reach a higher level of education." Reaching an even higher level of education is also an opportunity with the University Partnership Center. St. Leo University has begun upper level courses in business administration which lead to the bachelor's degree, and Webster University will begin offering graduate level classes in education during the spring term. Other colleges and universities are being discussed to extend this educational opportunity.

The student response to the new center has been rewarding. Enrollment has increased beyond anyone's expectation from about 280 students and 48 FTE in fall 2007 term at Sunpoint to over 1,500 students and 270 FTE in fall 2008 term at SouthShore, thus validating the need envisioned by Dr. Stephenson and the HCC Board of Trustees when they conceived of this plan years ago.

"SouthShore is committed to student service and to supporting students from their first contact through graduation or transfer," according to Dean of Academic Affairs Allen Witt. "Our faculty, counselors, advisors, and lab staff are forming a team to guide and support our students. We are building a seamless support system, called the SouthShore Academic Model (SAM) from our first semester. This model of proactive service to students will serve us well as we grow and expand programs."

While the move from Sunpoint to SouthShore happened with little fanfare, there will be a great deal of fanfare when the new building is formally dedicated on November 14, 2008. We hope to see you there.

Haiti Outreach

Less than 500 miles off the southeast coast of Florida, the nation of Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and among the poorest nations in the world. According to the World Bank, 78% of Haitians live on less than \$2 per day, and more than half of the population lives on less than \$1 per day. This level of poverty presents a host of issues. For example, basic sanitation, electricity, and running water are non-existent in much of the country, and more than half of the population is illiterate.

Over the past year, a small group of HCC faculty has begun working to make a difference in Haiti. In October 2007, HCC professors Dr. Craig Hardesty (mathematics), Teresa Galloway (English), and Kimberly Williams (history) spent nearly a week in the seaside town of Montrouis, Haiti, working with Life Connection Mission. A non-profit, humanitarian mission based in Germantown, Maryland, Life Connection hosts a school and daily feeding program for nearly 600 kids, as well as building projects, medical missionary clinics, and other community outreach.

Since that initial visit, HCC faculty, staff, and administration have rallied around the cause. The mathematics cluster donated more than 100 calculators and several boxes of school supplies. The Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society on the Plant City Campus conducted several donation drives, and both

the Plant City and SouthShore Campuses donated boxes of t-shirts for the students and teachers in Haiti. Several other individuals and groups have donated to the mission, including a generous Christmas donation by the nursing faculty at the Plant City Campus. The administration at the Plant City and SouthShore Campuses have been especially supportive of the mission.

The president of Life Connection Mission is a former math student of Dr. Hardesty's and is working closely with him to facilitate curriculum development, teacher training, building improvements, and official government certification for the mission school. Since October, Dr. Hardesty has made two additional trips to Haiti, and he is already planning a fourth trip in January 2009.

The mission greatly appreciates the enthusiastic support and generosity of the HCC community and looks forward to a continued partnership. The mission is always looking for interested volunteers to share their skills on medical mission teams, building projects, educational programs, and other initiatives. To learn more about the mission and how you can help, please visit their website at www.lifeconnectionmission.org or contact Dr. Hardesty at the SouthShore Center.



Dr. Hardesty with the entire faculty at the mission school posing in shirts donated by the Plant City Campus Health and Wellness Committee.