

# Literacy Conference Celebrates Fifth Anniversary At GVSU

The School of Education's fifth annual Celebrate Literacy Conference featured two days of energized presentations and techniques toward getting children hooked on books.

Featuring authors, book illustrators and government representatives, more than 300 in-service and pre-service teachers attended the Oct. 18-19 celebration of top literacy practices and children's literature at GVSU's Kirkhof Center.

"It was about teachers and about getting kids excited about reading and excited about books," event coordinator Liz Storey said. "There were discussions and presentations on some of the new strategies available to stress the importance and entice kids to become readers themselves."

At least one school, Jefferson Elementary in Grand Rapids, attended the event for a professional development day with the entire staff participating.

They were rewarded with an on-site school visit by children's author Tom Woodruff, one of many who had their works on display during the two-day conference.

"It energizes a staff with new ideas to take back and use in their classrooms," Storey said. "It gives them an opportunity to look at and learn about latest literacy materials, both professional books and children's books, and to hear from award-winning authors and illustrators."

"Motivation and spark is important. If we get teachers excited about teaching reading and about new books, they can take it back and share it



'Buck Wilder' creator Tim Smith energizes the audience at the Kirkhof Center.

with their kids.

"We would like to expand the scope of this sort of thing into schools for children through author and illustrator classroom visits."

Representatives from the state of Michigan presented information on a new reading initiative.

Although the well received poetry readings sponsored by GVSU on Oct. 18 were a separate entity, Naomi Shihab Nye — a popular poet and children's book author — took part in Friday's Celebrate Literacy festivities before her readings later that evening.

"We were very lucky she agreed to take part," Storey said. "She was just fabulous, and it was one of the many highlights of the conference."

Tim Smith — creator of Buck Wilder books and a first-year participant at Celebrate Literacy — returned for the fifth anniversary with an animated presentation on writing for children and schools.

"We have a lot of outstanding authors and illustrators right here in Michigan," Storey said. "By making that connection for kids, they can become more excited about reading and get hooked on books."

Other authors, illustrators and presenters at the conference included Tim Rasinski, Nancy Padak, Jeffrey Wilhelm, Cyd Moore, Gary Schmidt, Joel Tanis, Kevin Kammeraad, Shirley Neitzel, Jane Stroschin and Carolyn Stich.



Large displays of books and illustrations draw plenty of attention from guests.

## Colleagues

Published by The School of Education  
Grand Valley State University  
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