

Celebrate Literacy Is A Success Story

Crystal Bowman has a "job" that anyone would love.

She is an author by trade and her favorite pastime is writing poetry. That makes her job her favorite pastime. As a result, she has had 28 books published.

"Writing for me is like breathing," Bowman said. "It's my passion and is just something I have to do."

"The fact that I can write books that children enjoy reading is a bonus. It adds purpose to what I do. When we can help children learn from our writing, it gives our writing a great purpose."

Bowman was one of more than 20 authors and illustrators participating in the 2004 Celebrate Literacy Conference sponsored by the College of Education. She has been attending and presenting at Celebrate Literacy since its inception.

"It's about getting kids excited about reading and connecting children with literature," Bowman said. "Reading doesn't always have to be for an educational purpose. People can read for fun."

"When children are excited about reading and can learn from what they read, it makes it all the more worthwhile."

After being held at GVSU's Allendale campus for its first six years, the Celebrate Literacy Conference moved to the Eberhard Center in downtown Grand Rapids in 2004. The Oct. 22-23 literary extravaganza attracted nearly 500 teachers, administrators and lovers of the written word.

Gordon Korman, who has sold over 7 million children's books, was a keynote speaker.

"Literacy is a good thing, so let's go for it and make it happen," Korman told those in attendance. "I do celebrate literacy when I write. I write to be fun and to have fun."



Crystal Bowman displays the fruits of her labor at the 2004 Celebrate Literacy Conference.

Korman's address was as animated as some of his books, including "No More Dead Dogs," noting that titles, as much as anything else, move the product off the shelves when it comes to children's literature.

The noted children's author took a few fun shots at himself: "The great thing about children's literature," he said, "is that you can really be popular, but no one over the age of 14 knows who you are."

Bowman participated in two of more than 20 workshops at the Celebrate Literacy Conference. Celebrate Literacy has been part of her fall calendar for the past eight years. She has participated in all but one Celebrate Literacy Conferences.

"I've seen it grow from several people, to dozens, to hundreds," Bowman said. "As authors and colleagues, we are able to meet, talk and exchange ideas."

'Harry Potter' Raises Reading Awareness

Recent reports of a Harry Potter sighting at the DeVos Center in downtown Grand Rapids have been slightly exaggerated. It was actually a Harry Potter reading. A "Reading Marathon," to be exact.

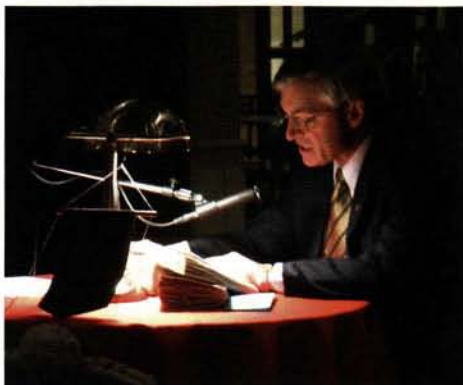
The second annual Reading Marathon hosted by the College of Education was held Oct. 14-15, from noon to noon at the DeVos Center in downtown Grand Rapids.

Approximately 100 readers made their way through the pages of the first three Harry Potter books.

Among those taking part were Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell, GVSU Provost Gail Davis, College of Education Dean Elaine Collins, along with several administrators from Grand Rapids Public Schools, GVSU students and faculty. In addition, high school students from West Michigan read passages in Latin, while several GVSU students read in Spanish.

Members of GVSU's Harry Potter Club helped keep the marathon reading moving into the wee hours of the night and early morning, while Dale Hovenkamp, a principal in the GRPS system, remained on site for the entire 24 hours.

Proceeds from the 24-hour charity event were donated to Grand Rapids Public Schools and Godfrey Lee Middle School classroom libraries. In 2003, more than \$3,000 was raised.



Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell takes his turn reading about Harry Potter at the 2004 Reading Marathon.

"One of the most critical elements in literacy is access to text and it is critical that all classrooms have libraries in them," said Nancy Patterson, Ph.D., GVSU's Literacy Studies Program Chair and organizer of the Reading Marathon. "This is such a fundamental need, and one that is relatively easy to address, yet so many classrooms do not have libraries. Much of this has to do with funding. If we can raise awareness that all classrooms need to have a wide range of books available to students, and if we can raise money toward that goal, we will have taken a meaningful step toward raising literacy rates."

Wildly Exciting Energizes Best Classroom Practices

Learning can be more than mildly exciting. It can be "Wildly Exciting" if some innovation and "Best Practices" are implemented into the classroom. That is one reason why the GVSU College of Education provided a summertime professional development workshop that teachers could literally get excited about.

"We wanted to teachers to know the series was going to be exciting both in content and the possibilities for applications in their classes," said Maggie VandeVelde, associate director of the College of Education's Student Information Center.

The five-day "Wildly Exciting" series featured workshops based on Best Practices to stimulate students in taking an active role in daily classroom learning activities.

Topics included "Orchestrating the Learner-Centered Classroom," "Strategies and Tools to Respond to the Needs of All Learners," "A New Zealand Perspective of Learning to Think Through Literacy" and "Strategies That Support Differentiated Instruction."

A limited enrollment of 225 K-12 teachers attended the five-day workshop.

"As the College of Education, we desired to offer a national level, high quality experience for area teachers," VandeVelde said.