

For Immediate Release

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ANNUAL MEETING RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT ILLITERACY IN NEW MEXICO

Las Cruces, NM (June 16 & 17, 2011) — The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) invites members of television, print, and radio to attend its Annual Meeting Welcoming Reception on Thursday, June 16 from 4—6 pm in the San Augustin/Soledad ballroom and its 23rd Annual Meeting and Conference on Friday, June 17 from 8 am—4 pm in the Guadalupe/Soledad ballroom at Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces to interview keynote speaker, Dr. Anita Hernandez, and other literacy supporters statewide. Dr. Hernandez is the Don and Sarrah Kidd Endowed Chair in Literacy at New Mexico State University (NMSU). The NMCL will be joined by dignitaries, adult literacy students, award recipients - including the Adult Literacy Student of the Year - and local literacy service providers throughout New Mexico. Interviews in advance of this event are most welcome.

Among the additional notables in attendance will be the President of the Children's Reading Foundation, Maria Flores, who recently held a literacy event in Las Cruces to kick off the new Foundation. Other dignitaries will be Senator Don Kidd, and his wife, Sarrah Kidd. Mr. Kidd is the President of Western Commerce Bank and has been a continued supporter of the NMCL throughout the years, whose bank is currently celebrating fifty years of service to the communities of Carlsbad and Albuquerque. Additionally, the NMCL will be joined by Ken Miyagishima, Mayor of Las Cruces; Ben Wakashige, Interim State Librarian and Luncheon Speaker; and Dr. Michael Morehead, Dean of the College of Education at NMSU. Ex-officio board member of the NMCL, First Gentleman Chuck Franco, and Governor Susana Martinez have also been invited to attend.

This year's theme is "Partnerships for Renewal: New State Government, New University Alliances - Renewed Support for Our Communities, Renewed Opportunities for Adult Learners." Keynote, Dr. Anita Hernandez, will connect everyone to the world of language and literacy through her work in the field and at NMSU. The NMCL is very honored to be named by Senator Kidd as a collaborating partner in the Literacy Chair's efforts to support adult literacy statewide. This will be a very special Annual Meeting as a result of this new partnership. According to Dr. Hernandez, "The United States can do more to improve literacy for all adults. Currently it ranks fifth among other industrialized

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countries. Adult literacy has a direct bearing on how well a country performs economically and politically. The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy advocates for all adults to improve their literacy and communication skills. Literacy is important because it allows adults to access information for themselves, their families, and the well-being of their community.”

In support of literacy, the NMCL will recognize the year’s most exemplary pillars, as well as the most exceptional student, from the twenty-seven programs it supports throughout the State. The list of recipients includes: Student of the Year: Patricia Corral, Literacy Link – Leamos, Silver City; Volunteer Tutor of the Year: Gabriela Medina, Catholic Charities, Albuquerque; Board Member of the Year: Valerie Brooker, Literacy Volunteers of Santa Fe; Exceptional Literacy Program: ProLiteracy IFLI in Crownpoint, Laguna, and Zuni; Trainer of the Year: Yvonne Post Wise, Rio Rancho; President’s Award: Dr. Janet Green, Director - School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management, NMSU; Distinguished Service: Representative Rhonda King, Stanley; Partnership: Western Commerce Bank, Carlsbad and Albuquerque; and Outgoing President: Richard Cervantes, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Albuquerque.

Since 1987, the NMCL has provided funding, training, technical assistance, access to its special lending library, and public relations to adult literacy programs throughout New Mexico. The NMCL was established under the Carruthers administration by First Lady, Kathy Carruthers, and has remained a State initiative since its founding. Begun as an effort to gain support through the Legislature to provide modest operating expenses for community-based adult literacy programs, the NMCL has grown both in stature and capacity to support these programs, all while maintaining a small and efficient staff of three.

The NMCL is funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs/State Library through the New Mexico State Legislature and also relies on fundraisers and community support to increase the number of students served. With one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, New Mexico also has one of the highest percentages of adults who are functionally illiterate. It is estimated that between 291,626—729,065 adult New Mexicans could benefit from literacy services. Sixteen percent of New Mexicans are estimated to be illiterate and thirty percent are estimated as functionally illiterate.

For more information about adult literacy, to schedule an interview, or refer a potential student, call the NMCL’s literacy hotline - 1-800-233-7587, email info@nmcl.org, or go to www.nmcl.org.

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