



Minnesota
Association for
Continuing Adult Education

2010 MACAE Awards Celebration

Have I told you that America is made up of people of every kind?

People of all races, religions and beliefs.
People from the coastlines and the mountains.
People who have made bright lights shine
by sharing their unique gifts
and giving us the courage to lift one another up,
to keep up the fight,
to work and build upon all that is good
in our nation.

Have I told you that they are all a part of you?
Have I told you that you are one of them,
and that you are the future?

Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States
From *Of Thee I Sing*

**Minnesota History Center
Saint Paul, Minnesota
Tuesday, November 23, 2010**

Introduction

The purpose of awards is to give recognition to MACAE members and others involved in adult education for outstanding performance. Two categories of awards are given this year:

- ◆ The Harlan Copeland Award for Excellence in Programming
- ◆ The Lucille Fischer Award for Outstanding ABE/GED Learners

The Harlan Copeland Award for Excellence in Programming

This award was started with a grant to MACAE from Dr. Harlan Copeland and his family. Dr. Copeland was a professor of adult education at the University of Minnesota for many years. He is a MACAE Past President, having been elected in 1976 and again in 1990. He is the author of MACAE's *Historical Record, 1975 – 1992*, published in 1993.

This award is given to an individual to recognize an exemplary or model program that he/she has planned, designed, implemented and evaluated. The following criteria are considered in making this award: elements of the program idea, assessment, program format, administrative support, evaluation and evidence of effectiveness. The recipient must be a MACAE member the past two years and must report on the project at a MACAE Fall Conference, at a Forum, in *MACAE Praxis*, or in *MACAE Update*.

The recipient this year is Ruth Stevens. The award carries a stipend of \$1,500.

Ruth Stevens is an ABE/GED instructor at the Hubbs Center in Saint Paul. The Hubbs Center discovered that it had a small group of learners who exhibited erratic attendance, poor retention, and low level reading skills. This group of learners appeared to be good subjects for new remediation strategies. Ruth and several other teachers were assigned to work with these low-performing learners.

Ruth approached the MACAE Awards committee for help in designing a research project. The topic proposed for her project was, "Evaluation of Retention and Academic Progress of ABE Students at the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning, Using the STAR Reading Approach and a Modified Hubbs Center Orientation Model." The project was to have the five areas called for by the Harlan Copeland Award design:

- ◆ The theoretical and praxis foundations upon which the idea is placed
- ◆ Program assessment
- ◆ Program design
- ◆ Administrative support
- ◆ Evaluation

STAR Projects had been developed by the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Vocational and Adult Education. STAR is a comprehensive training and professional development package to help Adult Basic Education (ABE) instructors use evidence-based reading instruction in the classroom. STAR is the acronym for **ST**udent **A**chievement in **R**eadng.

Minnesota and sixteen other states had received contracts from Office of Vocational and Adult Education to develop STAR projects. The Minnesota Department of Education ABE Unit held training for teachers, and three Hubbs Center teachers attended the training. Following this training, the three teachers implemented the STAR approach to teaching reading based on the model that they started to develop during the training.

The basic idea of STAR is to improve ABE classroom instructional practices in reading by translating research to practice. STAR is designed to help teachers:

- ◆ Choose appropriate diagnostic assessment tools for their adult students;
- ◆ Develop instructional approaches based on assessment results; and
- ◆ Examine program structures to support implementation of evidence-based reading instruction.

Ruth developed a plan to study several specific variables. The study itself was to start in September of 2008 and end in June 2010. This was implemented. This was the research part of the project. The enrollment of learners in the project is ongoing beyond June 2010.

The plan included four strategies:

1. To develop an orientation class for learners enrolled in STAR.
2. To use a curriculum that focused on soft skills, including weekly meetings with support staff, using a team teaching model, and using an enrollment strategy that was managed, that is, has specific days and weeks for enrollment, rather than an open enrollment policy.
3. To base the Reading curriculum and instruction around the STAR model of small group instruction.
4. To base instruction around individual needs of learners reflected in pre- and post-test scores on standardized tests such as the *Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)*.

The project produced improved test scores, improved retention, and improved attendance. Table 1 reflects improved hours of attendance, and Table 2 reflects improved reading scores.

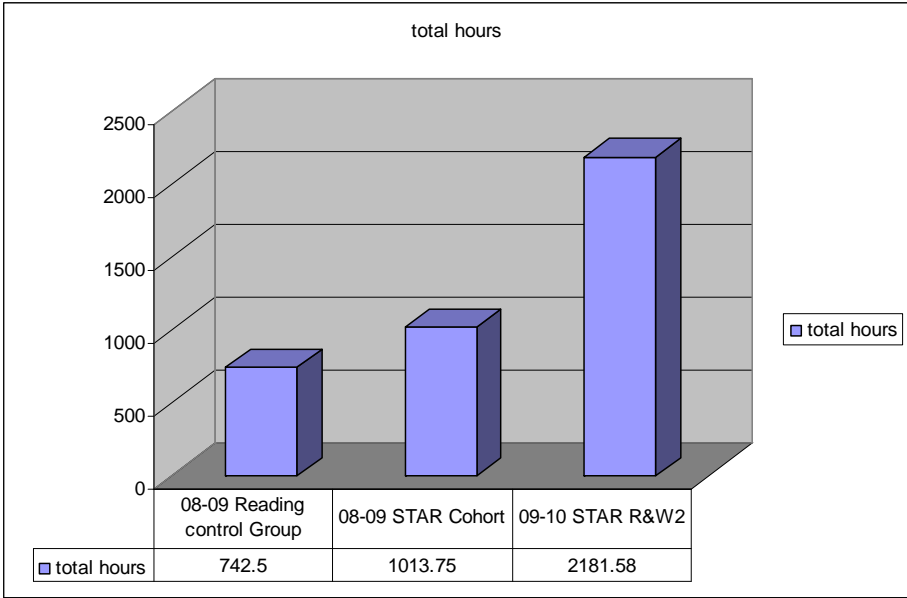


Table 1

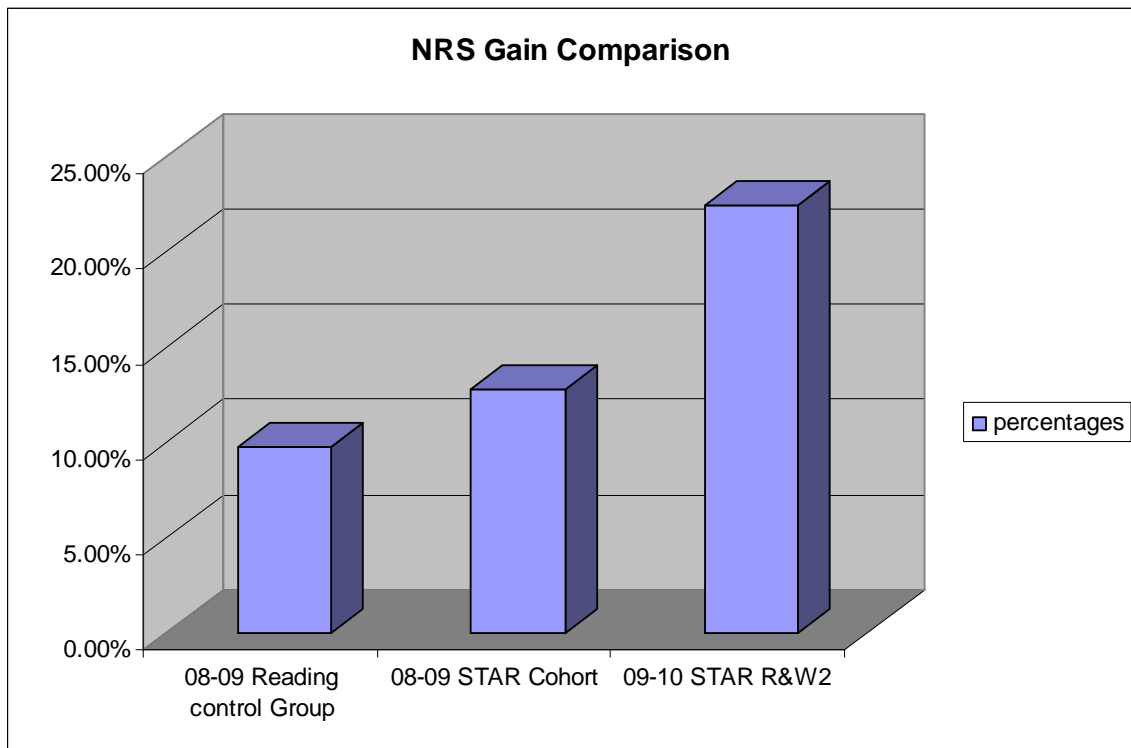


Table 2

The Lucille Fischer Award for Outstanding ABE/GED Learners

This award was inaugurated by the MACAE Board of Directors to honor the memory of Lucille Fischer, who was MACAE's first treasurer, elected in 1975. Mrs. Fischer served for many years as the instructional supervisor of the Saint Paul Schools Adult Basic and Continuing Education Program. She headed the MACAE committee that secured licensure for ABE/GED teachers in Minnesota.

Recipients of the Fischer Award are nominated by their programs for outstanding performance as a learner. The award carries with it a stipend of \$100. Six stipends are given this year. The recipients this year are the following:

- ◆ Najma Abdullah
- ◆ Sam Chubb
- ◆ Luis Moran Herrera
- ◆ Clara Hynes
- ◆ Cherrica Moutry
- ◆ Ruth Suttles

Najma Abdullah

As Najma's GED teacher it is a pleasure to nominate her for the Learner Award. Najma is a very hard working, caring, respectful and responsible learner. Najma comes to class two nights per week from 5:00pm unit 8:00pm. Najma characterizes all the best qualities of a student learner.

Hello, my name is Najma Abdallah and I immigrated to the United States fourteen years ago from Mogadisho Somalia. I am currently working as a nursing assistant at a nursing home. I am the mother of three children. I work hard ever day to be a mother of three children and a nursing assistant. My job is very physically demanding. So one day decided to go back to school and work on my GED. My goal is to get my GED and then go to vocational school and become an ultra-sound specialist.

When I first started working on my GED my math was at the fourth grade level, and nine months later, I am at the 12th grade level.

Dennis G. Walsh, GED Teacher, Wayzata West ABE

Sam Chubb

Sam Chubb is a model student in our ABE/ ELL program. He realizes the value of education. As a young man, he taught the Khmer language to primary students in his native Cambodia. During the years of extremely volatile political climate, he lived in the forest. He states his family hid for 3 years, 8 months, 20 days. After coming to safety, he became a police officer, serving for 24 years. His daughter sponsored him in August 2007 to come to the USA.

Sam immediately enrolled in English classes, starting in our beginner class. His work ethic and determination brought him to intermediate class after only six months of instruction. Sam was diligent in attending class five days a week, three hours a day. He was an excellent listener. He quickly became comfortable with the English language. His diligence paid off for him in communicating with his classmates. They, in turn, looked to him for support and extra help with their English. Sam decided also to attend evening English class for three hours, three nights a week. He participated in English classes 24 hours per week. In addition to school every day and more, Sam reviewed and retyped each day's lessons for reinforcement. After only eleven months, Sam was promoted to our advanced class. He chose to continue attending his morning intermediate class along with the advanced class for evenings. At this point, Sam composed extra worksheets for himself and his classmates to review their lessons one more time.

In our experience, there has rarely been a student so dedicated. His hard work and determination continue to help him improve his English skills. He is modest, kind, caring, and always willing to help classmates and teachers. Sam exemplifies the best qualities in an adult continuing education learner. He is well deserving of the recognition of the Fischer Award.

Diana Hoffman, Kathleen O'Neill, Ellen Allen; Teachers at Valley Green Workforce Center

Luis Morán Herrera

Luis Morán Herrera has had anything but an easy life, yet unless you asked him, you would have no idea how hard this calm man with a ready smile is working to improve his life situation. Luis grew up in Mexico City as the oldest of seven children. After his father had a stroke, Luis needed to leave school at the age of 14 to work in factories and restaurants in order to help support the family.

Now at the age of 52, Luis finally has the opportunity to pick up where he had left off so many years ago. When he is not attending English classes four days a week with CLUES, he is busy attending computer, work readiness and citizenship classes. In addition to this, he is taking parenting classes at Centro and finishing his middle school certificate through an online program in Mexico. Although his wife and 14 year-old son are still in Mexico, he talks on the phone with them daily and is quick to proudly show a worn photo of them that he carries in his wallet. When asked why he is so motivated in taking classes six days a week, Luis says “Raising a teenager is difficult and I want to help my wife. I want to show my son that education is important so I need to be a good example for him.”

In addition to taking classes six days per week and working fulltime as a cook at the restaurant Yum, Luis also volunteers in the CLUES office with admin projects twice a week. He patiently commutes by bus from his house in Bloomington to all of his classes in Minneapolis, a ride that can easily take over an hour each way. When asked where he finds the time, Luis says “Everyone says there is not enough time in life. There is time. We just have to make it for the things that are important. I could sit on the couch and watch TV, or I could do something useful.” In his free time that he apparently manages to find, Luis likes to read history and self-improvement books in English.

From a young man trying to support his family in Mexico, to a hardworking and motivated father today, Luis is an inspiration to what we can do if we really want to make a difference in our lives.

Once he passes his Citizenship exam, his goal is to bring his wife and son to Minnesota. “I could have them come right now, but that wouldn’t be right. I want to make sure that they come over here legally,” Luis says. When asked if he had any advice for other immigrants, he said with his signature smile, “Just don’t give up, you can do it.”

Angela Conley, CLUES

Clara Hynes

Clara Hynes was born in Mississippi in 1950 and attended public school through the seventh grade. Always charming and self-effacing, sometimes shy, Clara seems to think it unremarkable that she raised ten children and instilled in them the importance of education, though her own formal schooling ended at an early age. As an example of the strong impact Clara had on her children and extended family, a daughter of Clara’s is currently earning an advanced degree in nursing, while a grandchild is attending the University of Minnesota. In addition, Clara’s son-in-law attends class with her here at Winnetka Learning Center. Clara, a widow, continues to demonstrate persistence and the value of education to everyone she comes into contact with, including family members, teachers, classmates, customers, and others.

Clara has worked at a local McDonald's for about seven years. Each morning, she is at work by 5:30 to attend to her customers, who wait for their morning wake-up greeting at her drive-

through window. According to Marylyn Leaf, Administrative Assistant at Winnetka Learning Center, the love Clara gives and the loyalty she receives back from her customers is unparalleled. In Marylyn's words, she is "so in love with people." Several years ago, during the course of her morning drive-through visits, Marylyn struck up an acquaintance with Clara and learned that she wanted to return to school, both for herself and for her children. Though intimidated and unsure, Clara was ultimately convinced to begin ABE classes at Winnetka when guidance counselor Dan Woodbury went to McDonald's expressly to invite her to attend. Dan was able to allay her fears, and for his trouble, received a great big hug and agreement to attend school from Clara.

Clara was placed in the ABE/GED Transitions classroom, for students whose reading levels fall below a 6.0 grade level equivalent on the TABE. When she first started attending classes, Clara aspired to become a nursing assistant. She coped with her disappointment and quietly persisted when it soon became clear that her goal of obtaining a better job was years, rather than months, away.

Today, Clara loves her Tuesday and Thursday evening classes at Winnetka. She is rarely, if ever, absent, and is fully engaged in learning all the while she is here. A Project STAR reading initiative participant, she has made several level gains during her tenure here and her confidence has grown immensely. Clara's verbal appreciation of the slightest individualized attention is limitless, and she is well known as a hugger. As Clara's teacher, I have benefited this year from her honest and straightforward suggestions and clear insights about what she and other students in the class need. For example, she strongly supported and applauded my efforts to implement a bit more structure in class this fall: Clara has little time for slackers. Her enthusiasm and unflinching optimism inspires classmates and staff members alike and helps to create a loving, cohesive learning community. Her twin loves, of both learning and people, make Clara Hynes a prime candidate to receive a MACAE Lucille Fischer ABE Award. She *truly* is a deserving learner.

Colleen Crossley, Winnetka Learning Center, Robbinsdale

Cherrica Moutry

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Cherrica Moutry for the MACAE Lucille Fisher ABE Award. Cherrica has been a GED Learner Participant at Neighborhood House for only eight months, but she has logged well over 200 hours of GED classes since she began. Despite the numerous difficult challenges she has faced in her life, Cherrica has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to achieving her educational, professional, and personal goals with integrity, determination, and a gracious sense of humor. Not only does Cherrica have a remarkably strong drive to achieve her goals – she has come to love learning for its own sake. She feels so grateful for her opportunity to attend classes at Neighborhood House that she decided to give back to the community by volunteering in our food shelf at the Wellstone Center. Without question, she is the most deserving candidate for this award that I have ever had the honor and privilege of having in my classroom.

In my decade-long career as a Minnesota ABE educator at Twin Cities' community-based organizations, I have witnessed dozens of learners who have overcome various obstacles in their educational and personal journeys and been successful. Cherrica Moutry, however, is truly remarkable, and she is absolutely in a category of her very own making. She amazes and inspires all of the Neighborhood House instructors and coordinators as a single mom of 4 young

children, who works 40 hours a week and attends classes in our program at least 12 hours per week, in addition to countless hours of independent study she undertakes. Cherrica has been frequently mentioned in staff meetings as a prime example of a student who is succeeding in all the ways we hope and want our learners to succeed. She has near-perfect attendance in GED class, she collaborates willingly with other learners, seeks clarification to her questions, requests additional lesson materials, and strives constantly to improve herself academically and personally. Her TABE scores have risen dramatically since she began her studies, and one of her own personal proudest achievements is a 200 point improvement in her math score, though her reading scores have also improved just as dramatically.

Cherrica is deserving of this award not only for her very admirable academic successes in our program; she has also triumphed over exceptionally challenging personal obstacles which began in her childhood. She describes her journey as having started March 26, 1989, when she was awakened by her brother to find out that her mother had been horribly injured in a car accident. Cherrica, at age 13, began caring for her invalid mother's day-to-day needs until she was 26 years old, without the help of her family. She says that caring for her mother inspired her to dedicate her life to caring for others as well, and led to her current job as a personal attendant in a nursing home, which has now lifted her off of the dependency on welfare. During this period of time, Cherrica dropped out of school and became a single mother. She was also kidnapped, robbed, raped, and left for dead. She suffered nightmares about this horrendous experience for years, and is only now finally getting the therapy she needs to help her cope with the trauma. She was also a victim of repeated violent domestic assaults, and currently suffers from seizures as a result of being kicked in the head. She was forced to flee her hometown of Chicago to protect herself and her children, and came to St. Paul where she knew no one and had to start her life over.

I strongly believe that Cherrica deserves this award in part because she refuses to live her life as a victim despite having been one, and has returned to her education for empowerment rather than turning to drugs, alcohol, or some other damaging outlet to help her endure her psychological trauma. She knows that she owes herself and her children to get the education she needs to achieve her dream of being a nurse. She deserves to be recognized because she is a true role model, and her success reflects the collective success of MN ABE Programs statewide who support learners holistically and in an empowering way towards the goal of self-sufficiency and basic skills development.

Cherrica Moutry exemplifies the very reason we insist on universal basic education skills access for all adults in the state of Minnesota. She deserves this award not because she has successfully achieved all of her dreams, but because she has never let anyone or anything stand in the way of continuing to actualize her dreams of becoming an RN through Neighborhood House ABE/GED and Employment/Transitions Programs.

Nancy Meyer, Neighborhood House in St. Paul

Ruth Suttles

It is with the highest recommendation that we nominate Ruth Suttles as a deserving candidate to receive the Minnesota Association for Continuing Adult Education Lucille Fischer ABE Award. Ruth has been attending classes at South Suburban ABE since February 2009. Ruth's educational goal is to first earn her GED certificate and then to attend post-secondary education.

Soon after beginning her studies, Ruth shared that she had several reasons for returning to the classroom. In the distant past, Ruth had enjoyed school, done well and had even successfully attended several college courses. She regretted not completing her high school credentials and returned to school with great resolve to finish. Ruth was also motivated by a story she had recently heard about a woman who had finally finished high school and was now, at age 80, attending law school. Ruth is energetic and young at heart, but this particular story inspired Ruth, as an older student, to return to the classroom.

Upon starting her GED preparation class, Ruth soon realized that learning and succeeding in her studies was more challenging after years away from the classroom. She admitted that her memory was not as strong and she had “good days” and “bad days”. Despite this, Ruth pursued her preparation for the Literature, Social Studies and Science tests with great determination.

Preparing for the Writing test proved to be more difficult but Ruth was dedicated to improving her skills. She worked particularly long and hard at revising her essays. Ruth became more confident of her writing ability and often shared her pre-writing strategies with new students. The day she passed her Writing test was memorable. She literally shouted for joy and received a number of congratulatory hugs from her classmates, a testimony to their feelings of support for this impressive woman who had shared so much of herself in the classroom.

As Ruth began to review math for her final GED-subtest, she realized that it was quite challenging. Instead of giving up on her goal, she decided that if she added another class to her schedule it would provide for more study time. Ruth continues to attend two different ABE math classes.

Even though she experiences set-backs, Ruth continues to stay hopeful and motivated. Ruth’s commitment to her education is remarkable. Despite job loss, transportation difficulties, and health issues, Ruth is in class consistently and ready to learn. Ruth is a joy to teach because of her positive outlook. She is supportive and encouraging to her peers and often adds her support to others as they experience the difficulties of juggling educational and personal commitments.

Ruth values education and is committed to her studies. She asks for homework and studies nightly and during the weekends. She challenges herself and is on task and ready to learn during each class period. We have been fortunate to have Ruth as a student. She has made us better instructors, as we have had to evaluate our teaching strategies and differentiate our lessons as we assist Ruth towards her goal.

Ruth’s persistence to achieve her educational goals has been remarkable. We are convinced that Ruth is a lifelong learner and that she will continue to seek out opportunities to discover and investigate new ideas and information.

Carolyn Oleson and Barbara Verstraete, SSABE Teachers