A Message from the Director:

Christina Koneazny

The strength of a program is drawn from those who provide its support. USC Readers Plus, would not be the program it is without the support that is provided by our graduate students and other office staff. Nearly eleven years ago, when I left the classroom as an elementary school teacher to take this position of program director, I was running this program with only our five on-site coordinators and one central coordinator. It was manageable then: we were strictly a reading program (America Counts had not been introduced); we had not yet pursued foundation funding to hire non-work-study students or coordinated our volunteer efforts; we had not yet created our assessment and evaluation design; and we had yet to introduce after school programs to our five schools. Those were much simpler times...and much more manageable.

Since that time, a great deal has changed. Not only have we added math tutoring and training to our program, but we have been aggressively (and quite successfully) pursuing foundation funding to hire students without work-study funds to add to our cadre of Readers and Math Mentors. We have been implementing (and constantly reworking) student assessments to measure student progress and success. And we have been running effective after school programs which provide both homework help and enrichment activities to students at all five of our partner schools.

All these “extras” would not be possible without our three very dedicated and capable graduate students who assist in program development and administration at every level, with specialization in reading, math and science instruction. This year, I have been equally thankful and amazed by the students surrounding me in the USC Readers Plus office at the JEP House. Lauren Carter (reading), Nick Richard (Math), and Matt Jung (Science) have taken over the reigns on many occasions as other JEP duties have called me.

Though we are recognizing all of our graduating USC Readers and Math Mentors in this newsletter (see page 10), I would like to give special recognition and a heartfelt thanks to Lauren, Nick and Matt for all of their contributions to the program this year and for their deep dedication to the work that we do. We wish you all the best in your post-USC Readers Plus endeavors and only hope that those who follow in your footsteps next year might come close to filling the big shoes you will be leaving behind.

Love & Peace-

Tina
The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.

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**Duties of a Coordinator**

- Committed to working 15-20 hours a week
- Scheduling and corresponding with teachers & office staff
- Conducting staff meetings and answering any necessary questions
- Working with assistant coordinators and organizing social events to unite the staff
- Creating schedules for individualized tutoring sessions during the school day
- Developing the after school program design and managing after school programs

**Duties of an Assistant Coordinator**

- Committed to working 12-15 hours a week
- Overseeing attendance of Readers and doing necessary paperwork
- Working with the coordinator to implement ideas to make the program more efficient
- Keeping the readers updated on lesson plans and other important events
- Assisting in after-school coordination and management

**CONGRATS** to the new assistant coordinators for FALL 2008!

32nd Elementary: Erica Edwards
Weemes Elementary: Karolyn Sanchez
Norwood Elementary: Chelsea Snyder
Foshay Elementary: Brooke Beverage
Vermont Elementary: Diana Coleman
My name is Casey McAlduff and I am the coordinator for USC ReadersPLUS at Norwood. You can also call me Chelsey, Cassie, or Kelsey if you so desire, as the kids tend to get myself and other blonde co-workers confused (I swear- we don't all look the same!) While this aspect of the job is always entertaining, my favorite part about working at Norwood is the benefits. Forget about health insurance or paid-vacations, this job offers something much better- you get to think like a kid again!

My name is Randi Thompson and I am the Assistant Coordinator at Norwood. After graduation I hope to go on to do Teach for America in Los Angeles, and then to law school. Everyday I face so many challenges, and experience failure and exhaustion, but also continue to be inspired and motivated to keep going. I love the Norwood Readers, and the students we work with...this is undoubtedly the most meaningful thing I have been a part of as a student at USC.

West Adams high-school mentor after-school kids!

High School Mentors from Gertz-Ressler High School have been going to Norwood's afterschool program every Wednesday afternoon to mentor 4th and 5th grade students. During their sessions, they are collaborating in putting together and practicing for a end of the year talent show. The students will be showcasing talents in areas such as art, dance, spoken word and other creative areas. Thanks to Lia Evans, an alumni coordinator of Readers Plus who is now working at Gertz-Ressler with the Teach for America Program, the high schoolers come in to not only teach and mentor the Norwood students, but to learn from them as well.

The talent show will be on April 30th at 4:30 PM in the Norwood Auditorium. Stop by and show your support!
My name is Eric Bruins and I am the coordinator at 32nd elementary. I have loved working at 32nd Street School for the past two years. Readers has given me a better perspective on education issues useful to me as a Public Policy major. In the future, I hope to work and live abroad doing international development work for a nonprofit.

My name is Alexi Coppinger, Assistant Coordinator at 32nd Street School. The students, staff, and parents at 32nd Street have such a special connection with USC Readers, and I am privileged to be an active member in this relationship. In the future, I plan to dedicate my life to working overseas in Africa, hoping to do my part to make the world a better place!

At 32nd Street we take pride in our enriching After School Program. Each week, a USC Reader plans activities for the students that go beyond regular classroom learning. Past weekly themes have included fairy tales, health and nutrition, theater, film, and volcanos. The activities combine knowledge, teamwork, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Our students grow and excel when given the chance to display their special talents.
Hi! I’m Caitlin FitzGerald, and I’m the site coordinator for Weemes Elementary. The years I’ve spent working at Weemes with ReadersPlus have been the most challenging but the most fun and rewarding times I’ve had at USC! As I’m studying to teach elementary school, I’ve learned so much at Weemes, from the kids’ obsession with Hannah Montana and High School Musical to how to help students become confident in their reading and math skills, but more importantly in themselves. I wish I could stay forever, but next year I’ll be leaving ReadersPlus to move on to student teaching and my last year at SC!

My name is Julia Payson and I am assistant coordinator at Weemes. I have loved being assistant coordinator and I am so excited to become coordinator for next fall! ReadersPLUS has been such a valuable experience for me so far. I feel more connected to the surrounding community, and I will never forget the students with whom I have worked throughout my time as a Reader. ReadersPLUS has even gotten me interested in possibly pursuing some type of future in education. I am a Political Science major, and this summer I am going to study education policy in Washington D.C. as an intern at a think tank. I can not wait to see how the Readers program will grow at Weemes next year!

Weemes fundraises for animals!

The after school students are raising money to donate an animal through Heifer International to a family living in poverty.

"Instead of providing hungry families with a non-renewable source of food, Heifer International provides a "living loan" of an animal. The family’s health and standard of living is greatly improved by what that animal can provide. This might be milk from a cow or goat, eggs from poultry, meat from rabbits, draft power from water buffalo or wool from llamas."

Weemes students will learn about issues such as poverty, gender equality, taking care of the environment, economics, and nutrition. For each book that they read during the program, the students will earn money to donate an animal of their choice at the end of the year.
What’s happening at Foshay?

A lot has been going on at Foshay Learning Center this semester!! We have one of the largest staffs we have ever had, currently we are at 14 Readers. Some of the special things we have been doing in afterschool include learning Irish Dance, Step Dance, career interests, Egypt, and many different sports. We also have begun doing many one day fun activities to break up the time, including an obstacle course, a scavenger hunt, a picnic, and a chalk mural. The USC Men’s Volleyball Team also recently visited our afterschool program and spent the day teaching our kids how to play volleyball. Finally, we are going to celebrate spring by putting on a dance show in which the Step and Irish Dancers will get to showcase their new talents to their parents. Life at Foshay is wonderful as always!!
Hello! My name is Marisela and I’m the site coordinator at Vermont Elementary. I’m a senior double majoring in History and Sociology. I’ve been with USC Readers Plus since Spring 2005. Then best thing about being a USC Reader is working with the wonderful students at Vermont and my super amazing staff. I’m going to miss them terribly when I graduate this May.

Greetings! My name is Angela and I’m the assistant coordinator at Vermont Elementary. This is my third year at Vermont and I simply love my job! Events such as an unannounced “Picture Day” can spell d-i-s-a-s-t-e-r for one-on-one sessions and after school takes some chutzpah but the students’ smiles and eagerness to learn each time they see you are priceless.

Student of the semester: Sara Montenegro

The USC Readers applaud Sara Montenegro for all of her hard work and dedication to learning. Sara has been in our After School Program for three years and brings a great attitude to the program every day. Although we'll miss her when she goes on to middle school at the end of the year, we know that she'll make us proud! You go girl!

Pen Pal Project

The After School kids at Vermont have been participating in their own International Reading Festival! Whitney Pepper, a fellow Reader, is studying abroad in London this semester but she has been participating in the program from abroad by being a pen pal to the students. The kids love writing to her and Whitney's individual responses to them are always much anticipated.
International Reading Festival: March 8, 2008

Regions of the world visited

Latin America

Asia

Africa

Europe

Middle East

Our 2nd Annual International Reading Festival was an overwhelming success, bringing over 80 students from our neighborhood schools to the campus of USC for a day of literacy, learning and fun with their families. Each student received two free books and a t-shirt, listened to folk and fairy tales, and engaged in hands-on activities presented by their USC Readers Plus mentors and volunteers. The Spring Reading Festival was centered on folk tales from five different regions around the world: Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. There was even a session introducing children to various quilting techniques and stories. In all, over 200 community residents—children and their family members—took part in the day’s special event.
Readers & JEP stand united for Relay for Life!

This year, the USC Readers & the JEP staff came together and fundraised over $4000 for the annual Relay For Life event. The 24-hour relay was held on April 5th & 6th.

We were the 2nd largest fundraising team!

Special thanks to Casey McAlduff, coordinator at Norwood Elementary, for organizing the team and constantly encouraging everyone to raise funds for the American Cancer Society.

Vermont Elementary Fundraises!

The Vermont Readers were excited about participating in Relay for Life again this year. Last year they raised $500 as a site. This year Readers, students, and school staff donated to their on-site piggy bank, raising a total of $810.00!
Why get double-certified?

The advantages of getting trained in both Reading and Math are endless. By combining reading and math lessons together, Readers can teach their students in more creative ways. If you are interested in becoming a double–certified mentor, talk to your coordinator and he/she will be happy to schedule you for a training!

Welcome SPRING 2008 New Readers!

Stacey Chiu
Channing Cochran
Nathan Dahlin
Chelsea Dunlap
Gary Goldman
Gezche Graves
Daniel Gross
Tiffany Wen
Roxana Moussavian
Courtney Silver
Karolyn Sanchez
Lorna Alkana
Brooke Beverage
Brina Collins
Leah Pace
Caroline Stone
Ariel Willis
Kevin Bautista
Branche Foston
Michael Saleeb
Bianca Garcia
Prerit Souda
Lorense Knowland
Shazia Marquez
Kevin Platt
Parag Shah
Vivien Zhang
Caroline Goodson
Justin Johnston
Andrea Martinez
Caren Scannel
Valerie Rubio
John Telen

Seniors
Ellen Armstrong
Jonathan Arkin
Marisela Mendez
Chey Gaston
Shaun Martinez
Jose Ortega, Jr.
Lindsay Osborn
Ellen Giuliano
Ashley Hinrichsen
Nathan Dahlin
Gezche Graves
Christian Dubau
Blanca Garcia

Major
Neuroscience
Cinema
History & Sociology
Psychology
Engineering
Broadcast Journalism & Political Science
Masters in Occupational Therapy
Communications & Italian
Business
Electrical Engineering & Music
Biomedical Engineering & Neuroscience
Music & Theatre
Social Sciences

School
Norwood
Norwood
Vermont
Foshay
Foshay
Foshay
Foshay
32nd
32nd
32nd
32nd
Weemes
Weemes