

HUMANITIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

SUMMER 1999

TEACHER EDUCATION BILL PASSED BY LEGISLATURE

The Texas Council for the Humanities is pleased to announce the passage of a bill by the Texas State Legislature that helps TCH partner with the state in delivering its summer teacher workshops more widely.

The 76th Texas State Legislature passed SB 724, a bill which authorizes any regional education service center to contract with TCH for services under section 8.053 of the Education Code, including providing continuing education courses and programs for teachers. The effect of the law will be to permit TCH's Texas Humanities Resource Center to contract with regional educational service centers to offer its summer teacher workshops, "Teaching the Humanities with Technology," under state funding. As the Texas Council will access funds already appropriated and earmarked for continuing education of teachers, the legislation has no impact on Texans' tax burden; rather, it adds to the variety of resources open to the state and permits partnership with private entities such as TCH that have proven records of delivering excellent workshops.

Over the past two years, TCH has brought workshops in five locations to some 120 elementary and secondary school teachers. All the teachers have returned to campuses to share their new-found techniques and insights with "dozens more colleagues," as one enthusiastic participant reports. The total impact of these five workshops, calculating thirty children per class per teacher with five classes each day, and each participant sharing his or her experiences with just four other teachers, brings the new expertise and ideas gained to more than 90,000 students!

Partnering has been with the University of Texas at El Paso, The University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Temple College and the Institute for the Humanities at Salado, and the Scurry County Museum in Snyder. Themes have

included "Border Studies" and "Texas History, Texas Cultures." The 1999 summer workshops will be on the theme of "Ancient Cultures," held in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin, Texas Woman's University in Denton, and Temple College and the Institute for the Humanities at Salado (please see page 20).

This bill was carried in the Senate by Senator Judith Zaffirini of Laredo and Representative David Lengefeld of Hamilton. Major assistance in committee hearings was offered by Representative Scott Hochberg of Houston. The bill passed through the Education Committee of the Senate and the Public Education Committee of the House without opposition, was put on the Local and Uncontested Calendar in each legislative division and passed without opposition.

TCH's other legislative initiative, introduced in the Senate as SB 723 by Senator Zaffirini and in the House as HB 2226 by Representative Henry Cuellar, also of Laredo, sought to remove a clause from the legislation passed in 1993 creating the Texas Academy of Foreign Languages and Cultures that

prohibited the Academy from accessing any General Revenue Funds. Removal of that clause would have permitted the Academy to contract with state agencies to provide such services as foreign language scholarships and foreign language teacher workshops under its aegis. SB 723 passed the Finance Committee of the Senate without opposition, but the House Appropriations Committee showed resistance to letting this program access state funds, even through contracting with state agencies to serve existing appropriations and programs.

TCH is most grateful for the support of Senator Zaffirini, Representatives Cuellar and Lengefeld, and Representative Hochberg in efforts to partner with the State of Texas. The Council will be meeting with regional education service centers to initiate the contracting process. ♦



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TEXAS COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

giving wings to ideas

Update on Federal Appropriations for NEH

The U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved the FY 2000 allocations to appropriations subcommittees. The preliminary numbers are not good. The House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee is facing a cut of \$2.7 billion, with the Senate FY 2000 allocation at \$400 million below the current year. To these cuts must be added an additional \$300 million to cover FY 2000 budget commitments attributable to actions taken during the prior fiscal year.

It appears the House Subcommittee may defer markup on the Interior bill, which includes funds for the National Endowment for the Humanities and, through it, for the state humanities councils, until the fall while politicians await the Congressional Budget Office surplus numbers for July. That information will affect political calculations about altering the budget caps set in the 1997 Balanced Budget Bill. Proceeding under the allocation numbers as they presently are given has led staffers for the Appropriations Committees to suggest that even achieving level funding for the NEH looks problematic, with many other agencies in the Interior budget facing reductions.

Funding levels for state humanities councils have been level after steep cuts in FY 1995, with inflation constituting de facto further reductions in public funding. About thirty state legislatures have now begun

to provide appropriations for state councils; Texas now joins their ranks in permitting TCH to compete for dollars appropriated to state agencies for their purposes. ♦

PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE HUMANITIES

The Texas Council for the Humanities
requests applications and nominations for
Board Membership
for terms of office beginning January 1, 2000

A minimum of two openings—representing both academic and public sectors—will be filled. Nominations are sought from teachers, scholars, educational administrators, and from individuals from business, agriculture, the various professions, labor, and cultural and civic organizations. Nominations from teachers are particularly encouraged.

Directors serve without compensation but are reimbursed for travel expenses. They formulate TCH policy, approve programs, and review grant applications at meetings held in May and November.

Nominations should include a cover letter describing the candidate's qualifications and indication that he or she is willing to serve, and six copies of the person's resume.

PLEASE SUBMIT NOMINATIONS TO
Barbara Gubbin, Nominations and Elections Committee
Texas Council for the Humanities
3809-A South 2nd Street, Austin, Texas 78704

NOMINATIONS ARE DUE BY AUGUST 15.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary, continued from page 2

James F. Veninga, TCH executive director emeritus and president of the Institute for the Humanities at Salado, who spoke on "Protecting Democracy: The Humanities and the Culture We Need" and showed slides documenting the history and contributions of the Texas Council since its beginning.

Veninga was followed by Ferris, who spoke on "The Many Voices of the Humanities in Texas," relating folklore to the history and continuance of the rich and varied cultural and ethnic traditions of Texas.

Executive director Richard Hull then thanked the speakers and audience and invited all to a reception in the Great Hall of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum. A private dinner for board, board alumni, and guests followed at the University Club, Darrell K. Royall Memorial Stadium, University of Texas campus.

Two publications were specially commissioned by the board of directors in celebration of the twenty-fifth

anniversary: James Veninga's book, *The Humanities and the Civic Imagination*, which includes a brief history of TCH, published by the University of North Texas Press; a special double issue of *Texas Journal of Ideas, History and Culture*, sampling through the regions and urban centers of Texas the programs of the Council over the twenty-five years, was prepared by Catherine Williams, with first copies delivered the night of the anniversary banquet.

A videotape of the anniversary lectures is being prepared; individuals interested in purchasing a copy at cost should contact the Council offices. Copies of the commemorative issue of *Texas Journal* may be ordered from the TCH. Copies of *The Humanities and the Civic Imagination* are available to members of the Texas Alliance for the Humanities for \$16.45, including postage and handling, or may be ordered from the University of North Texas Press for \$19.45 by calling 1-800-826-8911. ♦

"Your feelings for the humanities make my heart soar. Your descriptions open the eyes of those of us who have come to take the treasures of Texas for granted, and cause us to appreciate them all the more."

—Lady Bird Johnson, on receiving a copy of Ferris remarks at TCH's 25th anniversary celebration. President Lyndon Johnson signed the legislation that brought the two endowments into existence in September 1965.

TCH'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION A SUCCESS



CAROL WOLFE



PAMELA KENDALL



LAURA COSTA



LINDA BLACK



BRUCE HORN



JEAN SKLAR



WILLIAM FERRIS AND RICHARD HULL ACKNOWLEDGE THE WHITLEY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, CHICK BANK OF TEXAS, AND AUS-TEX PRINTING FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO TCH'S ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

March 12 and 13 saw more than two hundred people participate in various activities celebrating the Texas Council for the Humanities' 25th anniversary, organized by a committee of TCH board alumni ably chaired by Max and Gene Alice Sherman of Austin.

William Ferris, chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, traveled from Washington, D.C. to Austin for the two-day event. Ferris, a noted folklorist, film maker, author, and creator of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, spoke and performed Friday morning at Johnston High School in Austin, encouraging students to engage in preserving their

families' oral traditions with tape recorders, and illustrating how blues and other folk music carry traces of historical events by singing and analyzing songs like "Honky-Tonk Blues" and "Baby, Don't You Leave Me Now." He and Richard Hull, executive director of TCH, were interviewed later on KUT-FM's "Eklectikos" program, hosted by John Aielli, and Ferris taped an interview that afternoon with Tom Spencer, host of KERA-TV's show, "Austin at Issue," for later broadcast.

On Saturday, Monte Youngs, director of programs and grants for TCH, hosted a film festival of three TCH-supported, award-winning films: "Orphan Trains," "Divided Highways," and "The Death of Davy Crockett." After each film a humanities scholar involved in that project spoke and led a discussion of the film's theme, aim, and importance: Stephen Curley, professor of history at Texas A&M Galveston; Robert Abzug, professor of history and American studies at UT-Austin, and Brian Huberman, filmmaker and associate professor of art and art history, Rice University.



TCH CHAIR LINDEN HECK HOWELL WELCOMES PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS AT THE ANNIVERSARY LECTURE.

Saturday afternoon more than two hundred supporters gathered for the TCH Anniversary Lecture, "Human Ties." Program host Max Sherman, professor and dean emeritus of the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, was introduced by Linden Heck Howell, chair of the TCH board of directors and principal in Heck Petroleum Services of Midland. Sherman introduced

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MONTE YOUNGS HOSTS SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF THREE TCH-FUNDED FILMS.



RICHARD HULL, JAMES VENINGA, AND WILLIAM FERRIS DISCUSS THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF PUBLIC HUMANITIES PROGRAMMING IN TEXAS.

Report from the Executive Director

Primetime: New Initiative for Family Reading



The January 26, 1999 issue of the *Dallas Morning News* carried an editorial by William McKenzie discussing how reading is a major civic issue, nationwide and in Texas. It quotes favorably Governor George W. Bush's inaugural address that reading "is the new civil right." McKenzie cites the governor's budget request for a total of \$83 million to train kindergarten and first- and second-grade teachers in the best reading methods. And his budget also asked for nearly \$108 million to help teachers intervene with young children who aren't reading well.

The article was striking for what it doesn't say. It seems to suggest that teaching children to read is entirely the responsibility of the schools. Nothing is said about helping families prepare children for school-based reading instruction. A child who encounters reading for the first time as a kindergartener, and finds that other classmates can already read, confronts peer superiority and a sense of failure from the start. With no home support, that child is likely to fall farther and farther behind.

At its May meeting the board of directors of TCH decided to address this problem with a program that intervenes outside of the school through helping families acquire the practice of reading together.

Initially developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, *Prime Time Family Reading Time* is a



humanities-based family reading program that is delivered in local libraries over the span of six to eight weeks. A humanities scholar, a master storyteller, and a librarian team one evening each week to engage families with young children in the technique and practice of telling and reading stories expressing important character traits such as courage, intelligence, honesty, and perseverance, and to engage in critical thinking and discussion about the stories, interpreting stories in relation to experiences of family members. Families that participate report themselves strengthened and deepened by the experience and typically become regular users of library facilities and programs.

Intended for families who are not traditional library users and who do not engage in family reading, the program is being adapted for Texas audiences by adding to the curriculum books reflecting Texas themes, traditions, and cultures. Two pilot projects in Texas have convinced the board that *Prime Time* is an important new direction for TCH. The Arlington Public Library hosted the program over a six-week period in the fall of 1998; the Diboll Public Library will feature it in September and October of 1999.

TCH is now seeking funding from foundations and corporations to support the new program, which will be piloted and developed with private contributions before being offered to local and state governments. ♦



Castañeda Presents Research on Cultural Transmission

At the May meeting of the TCH board of directors, Antonia Castañeda, professor of history at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, presented details of her work on recovering history from women's ballads and lullabies. Castañeda has discovered that ballads and lullabies constitute an important oral historical record and assist in understanding the complex intersection of peoples and cultures. She demonstrated in her lecture, with the assistance of taped recordings, transcriptions, and translations of ballads and lullabies, that the phenomenon is widespread among global cultures.

Members of the TCH board of directors and staff found the presentation highly stimulating. Many spoke afterwards of similar traditions in their families. Castañeda's work promises to be important for a better understanding of how cultural values are preserved and a fuller appreciation of women's contributions in transmitting cultural history from one generation to another. ♦

Veninga Award for Excellence Fund Announced

The board of directors is pleased to announce another new initiative of the Texas Council for the Humanities: The James F. Veninga Award for Excellence in the Humanities.

Designed both to honor Veninga for his twenty-three years of service to TCH and to provide a means to give statewide and national recognition to individuals and organizations who have made extraordinary contributions to the humanities in Texas, the new award program is part of TCH's ongoing efforts to build public understanding and appreciation of the important role the humanities can play in the life of our state and nation.

The first award will be selected next spring, for presentation in the fall of 2000. Further information and forms for nominations will be distributed early in the year 2000. Individuals wishing to contribute to the Veninga Award for Excellence fund may send their contributions to the TCH offices, clearly marked for the award. ♦