

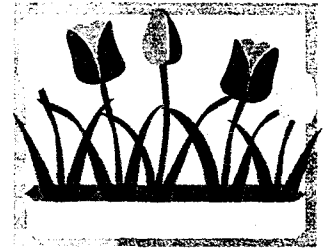
**Special points of interest:**

- Short Story Contest information.
- Patricia Mc Kissack visits Jonesboro School.
- Ellen Drake Award nominations, Send them now!

Winter 2008

**From the President:**

Hello all SIRC members! I hope this newsletter finds you ready to think spring, Spring Celebration, that is!! After recovering from the ice storm, I am more ready for Spring than in years past. I know that many of you may have endured long day without electricity or woke up to what looked like a tornado from fallen trees that weakened from the ice. Through all of the confusion of getting wood for a fire, calling to check on family members, and praying that the leaning pine tree loaded with ice could find the strength to last one more day, my children and I enjoyed a wonderful book together. The boys wanted to read "Where Crocodiles Have Wings" by Patricia McKissack. She wrote this book about going places in your imagination. It really added some fun to the cold icy day. This book enticed my thoughts to the beautiful days of Spring. Spring Celebration is just around the corner. The SIRC Board members are getting ready for this exciting night to celebrate the wonderful short stories written by area young authors. I encourage everyone to think Spring Celebration!!! Send your students' short stories to the judges for the contest. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the creativity of your students!

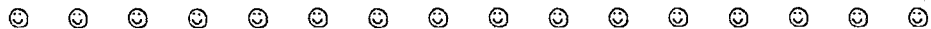


Celebrate Spring!

Welcome to Spring!

*Jennifer Osman*

*President*



Okay, SIRC members, we want to try something new. . . We want to hear from you! Please share your great ideas, books you enjoy, lessons you love, we want to hear them. Submit your inspiring ideas via email to : Lori Rich @ [Lrich@anna37.union.k12.il.us](mailto:Lrich@anna37.union.k12.il.us) They will be shared in the next SIRC newsletter.



## The Advocacy Connection

The Congress has passed the Labor/Health and Human Services/ Education appropriations bill. This has resulted in an education program that is now part of the FY08 Omnibus Spending Bill.

Head Start Reauthorization was signed and some of the key points of interest to the IRA are:

- Improvement of teacher qualifications
- Requirement of Head Start agencies to implement research based early childhood curricula
- Requirement that each Head Start agency ensures that all of its teachers receive ongoing training in language and emergent literacy.
- Adds language-detailing use of training funds to support enhanced early language and preliteracy development of children in Head Start programs.



For Your Information. . .

"2008 will open with the House and Senate education committee focused on NCLB. . ."

A provision in the House version (HR4137) will allow state partnership grants for developing and implementing a program to strengthen content knowledge and teaching skills of elementary and secondary school literacy coaches. The grants will, if enacted, provide many opportunities for teachers and principals. HR 4137 is expected to be brought to the House floor for

a vote and then passed in early 2008. IRA will lead an effort to retain the House provision through lobbying efforts, coalition building and grassroots advocacy.

Looking ahead: 2008 will open with the House and Senate education committee focused on NCLB, the Congressional funding committees expecting less allocations for the upcoming year, a continued push to implement Response to Intervention, new literacy requirements for Head Start and many states having smaller budgets to work with as the impact of the sub-prime mortgage market continues to impact the U. S. economy.

For more information on this topic go to the IRA website for updates.

Kathy Merz, IRC Legislative Committee member

## Well-known author visits Southern Illinois. . .

Were you there? Did you experience the enthusiasm as well-known author, Patricia Mc Kissack entered the library of Jonesboro Elementary School? If you were, then you know the feeling of true entertainment. Patricia, along with her husband, Frederick engrossed members with their love of children's stories on the evening of November 14. Their books were brought to life, as they shared some of their love of children's literature with members of SIRC. Wife-and-husband writing team Patricia and Fredrick McKissack began collaborating in the early 1980s, when they both faced turning points in their careers. Fredrick had been a civil engineer and then a construction worker. Patricia had been a junior high English teacher and then a children's book editor. One day Fredrick asked Patricia, "If you could do anything you in this whole wide world for the rest of your life, what would you do?" Patricia responded, "Write books." Fredrick said he'd like to join her. So the two of them, with the help of their three young sons, set out to make that dream come true. Now, nearly 100 books and 20 years later, the Mc Kissacks' partnership is as strong as ever. Most of the books they write together are biographies and nonfiction books about the history of African Americans. (On her own, Patricia also writes fiction.) Fredrick likes doing the research for their books, and Patricia prefers writing, but both of them shape every book together. Fredrick says the couple works so closely that they "even sigh at the same time."



# 2008 Short Story Contest

## How to Enter

Up to three stories per classroom may be submitted, postmarked by **March 14, 2008**. There will be three Southern Illinois winners per grade level. To be eligible, **all entries must have an entry blank attached**. (Master on the back of this sheet.) Identifying information is to be only on the entry blank. Only the title may be on the story. Entries will not be returned, so please keep a copy. **First place winners are asked to read their stories at the awards dinner.**

## Judging Criteria

Stories will be judged on the *creativity* and *organization* of the short story. *Appropriateness of language, theme, and message* will also be considered. *Conventions* will be considered, but to a lesser extent. Emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity. **There is a word limit of 1500 words.** Illustrations are optional and will not influence the outcome.

## Awards for 2008

A first, second, and third place winner will be chosen in each grade, second through eighth. The 21 winning stories will be compiled into an *SIRC 2008 Short Story Contest Yearbook*. Each first, second, and third place winner will receive a copy of the yearbook.

All winners will be invited to attend Southern Illinois Reading Council's Spring Celebrations Program and Reception on Tuesday, April 15, at the Carbondale Civic Center. There they will receive their awards and a bookstore gift certificate. First place winners will read their winning stories.

**Winners will be notified by March 31, 2008.**

## Send entries to:

**Second Grade:** Concetta Lamendola, P.O. Box 221, Murphysboro, IL 62966

**Third Grade:** Kathy Merz, 506 Cambridge Dr., DeSoto, IL 62924

**Fourth Grade:** Kathy Stegle and Karen Hubbs, 2185 Lick Creek Rd., Anna, IL 62906

**Fifth Grade:** Judy White, 492 E. Industrial Pk.Rd., Murphysboro, IL 62966

**Sixth Grade:** Debbie Braden. 9985 Old Highway 51N, Cobden, IL 62920

**Seventh Grade:** Margaret Grueninger and Jennifer Osman, 105 Woodland Trail, Anna, IL 62906

**Eighth Grade:** Cindy Pender and Pat Searcy, 33964 Wilderness Retreat Rd., Jonesboro, IL 62952

**Entries must be postmarked no later than March 14, 2008.**

### Questions?

Shiryl Walquist

634-2255

[shirylwalquist@agristar.net](mailto:shirylwalquist@agristar.net)

**SIRC Short Story Contest Entry Blank**  
(Entry blank required; attach to front of story)

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_ School phone \_\_\_\_\_

Story title: \_\_\_\_\_

Total word count: \_\_\_\_\_

Verification:

We verify that this story:

\_\_\_\_\_ is original work of this student

\_\_\_\_\_ has been typed\*

\_\_\_\_\_ meets the word count limit of **1500 words**.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Entries failing to meet the above criteria will be disqualified.

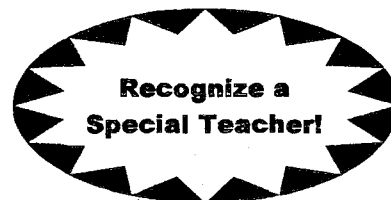
Notes:

Three stories may be entered per classroom. If a teacher has more than one section of a class, three may be sent from each section.

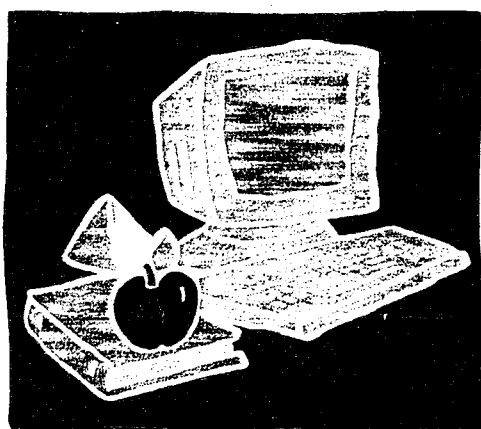
Someone other than the student may type the entry. However, no changes in content, spelling, etc. may be made.

\*Double spacing, size 12 font is preferable.

# Ellen Drake Memorial Award



Ellen Drake began her teaching career as a Title Reading teacher in the District 95 schools. In 1972, she was employed at Unity point School where she taught first grade and Title Reading until her death in 1998. Ellen loved children and books. In the words of a former student, she can best be remembered as "a phenomenal teacher, agreeable neighbor, and faultless friend."



The Southern Illinois Reading Council has established an annual memorial award to recognize an exemplary teacher that promotes literacy. SIRC will award \$100 for classroom use by the recipient.

A one page letter is all that is necessary to nominate a fellow teacher you feel is deserving of this award. Please cite examples of why you feel the teacher you are nominating should receive this award.

Recipient must:

- Be a teacher. (pre k-grade 12)
- Demonstrate exemplary teaching of reading/language arts
- Be respected and admired by students, parents, and colleagues

*Winners will be notified by mail and awards will be presented at the SIRC Spring Celebration in April.*

Letters of nomination should include:

- \*name
- \*home address
- \*school
- \*grade level taught
- \*number of years nominee has taught
- \*name and phone number of person nominating the nomination

Please send nominations to:

Lori Rich  
4750 Boyd Road  
Anna IL 62906

or  
Deanna Diel  
11616 Sherry Lynn Drive  
Carbondale IL 62901