



## **Celebrate International Literacy Day on Sept. 8, 2008: Pass it On!**

### **What is International Literacy Day?**

International Literacy Day was created by UNESCO in 1967 and is now celebrated on September 8<sup>th</sup> to focus attention on the need to promote world literacy. UNESCO estimates that 800 million adults worldwide cannot read or write, and two thirds of the illiterate adults are women. More than 120 million children around the world have illiterate parents and no access to education in their communities.

### **How does illiteracy affect us in Houston?**

- Texas ranks fourth from the bottom among states with serious illiteracy problems. (U.S. Department of Education)
- Only 71.8% of Houstonians age 25 or older have a high school diploma. This is 12.1 points lower than the national graduation rate of 83.9%. (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2004)
- Approximately one million adults in the Houston metropolitan area, one third of our population, are functionally illiterate in English. This means they cannot follow simple directions, fill out an application, read their child's school report card, or understand directions on medication. (Houston READ Commission)
- A language other than English is the normal communication in 36.2% of homes in Harris County (US Census 2002)

### **What can you do to get involved?**

Complete one or more of these simple activities to help Literacy Advance of Houston recognize International Literacy Day and the need for literacy education in our community:

- Sponsor a book collection at your office or church, and donate the books to a social service agency, nursing homes, school, and adult literacy program.
- Collect school supplies and donate them to organizations serving those in need.
- Visit your neighborhood library and offer to help with family literacy services.
- Write an article in your business or club newsletter about the impact of illiteracy.
- Post flyers about free literacy education programs at your office or business.
- Become a literacy volunteer, and encourage your friends and family to join you.
- Make a financial donation to support agency that provides literacy education services.
- Invite a literacy expert to talk with your book club or discussion group.
- Encourage your child's school to offer literacy tutoring for parents, and offer to help.
- Go to [www.advancinglives.org](http://www.advancinglives.org) for more ideas on how you can advance literacy.