

## *When Hard Work Isn't Enough...*

- Nearly 70 percent of adults who are poor, unemployed or welfare recipients have limited literacy skills.
- Less than half of the students who graduate from the nation's high schools are adequately prepared to attend college. The numbers are much worse for blacks and Hispanics.
- In Philadelphia:
  - More than 34 percent of adults lack a high school diploma.
  - One in five first-time 9th graders drops out of the Philadelphia public school system within four years.
- While the majority of Philadelphia public schools showed improvement on recent statewide tests [PSSA], “the reality is we still have a majority of our kids performing below basic [proficiency] and two-thirds of our kids are below national norms,” says Paul Vallas, CEO, School District of Philadelphia.

## *GPUAC Creates Opportunity*

Created by veteran educator Marciene S. Mattleman, **ASAP (After School Activities Partnerships)** has served more than 1,700 Philadelphia students in 83 after school and summer recreation programs. ASAP also publishes a comprehensive directory of after school recreation activities taking place throughout the city.

More than 800 parents have taken advantage of the **Black Alliance for Educational Options, Philadelphia Chapter (BAEO)**'s “Parents with POWER!” sessions. Workshop topics include Strong Fathers, Strong Schools, Building & Strengthening Your School's Parent Organization, and Educational Options.

GPUAC's **Education Children and Youth Committee** released its new *Directory of Philadelphia Charter Schools, 2003–2004*, available in hard copy and on-line, [www.gpuac.org](http://www.gpuac.org). The Committee is also involved in parent engagement and early childhood learning projects.

**PHILADELPHIA READS** recruits, trains and places nearly 3,000 volunteers each year from businesses and professional organizations, matching them with thousands of public school students who now receive one-on-one literacy coaching. PHILADELPHIA READS has also collected and distributed more than 100,000 new and gently used books.

Through **Project REACH**, more than 200 youths annually participate in programs to identify their academic shortcomings and improve their grades in English, math and science. Services are offered to at-risk middle and high school students who live or attend school in North Philadelphia.

**Teenshop**, founded and led by CBS-3 reporter Eleanor Jean Hendley, holds weekend youth development workshops for girls, ages 13 to 18. Workshops include Money Matters, Social Graces, and Health and Fitness. Four chapters are located in Philadelphia.

“PECO Energy is proud to support the Philadelphia READS program and GPUAC's many other initiatives, all designed to strengthen the communities in which we live and work.

Be it economic development, education or neighborhood services, GPUAC does it all.”

**GEORGE LYONS, JR.**  
Vice President  
PECO Energy (Exelon Corp.)



TOMMY TARRHOI

## READING BUDDIES

Conspicuously cheerful among the bulletin board clutter in Pedro Rivera's workspace are two brightly-colored, hand-drawn bookmarks—tokens of thanks from students that are enthusiastic learners because of his caring efforts.

Pedro Rivera (*pictured below, right*) is a reading partner for PNC Bank's PHILADELPHIA READS team, which hosts weekly one-on-one reading sessions between PNC volunteers and elementary school children from North Philadelphia's Hunter School. Achieving the goal of encouraging young students to read is bolstered by Pedro's participation, and his bilingual abilities are invaluable to the school's predominantly

Puerto Rican student population. Pedro received his early schooling in an English-only environment on a U.S. military base in Puerto Rico.

Despite his demanding schedule as an estate planning attorney for one of the region's largest financial institutions, Pedro treasures the weekly student sessions and is particularly proud of the progress made by his reading buddy Yamayra Melendez (*pictured below, left*), who has grown from a shy, reluctant classroom participant to an avid reader of children's fiction during their two-year relationship. Her promotion to the third grade, enthusiasm and improved test scores are a shining example of how all children can succeed. ●

## STRAIGHT A's FOR MOTHER AND SON

Quiet little Naadir Britt (*pictured above with his teacher, Margaret Curtis*) had no idea that one interview would change his life. He had just completed first grade at his neighborhood public school, with good grades, but reading below grade level in a classroom of unruly students. For the first time, Naadir did not want to go to school.

Lanetta Britt wanted a

new educational option for her child. She sought help from the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) Scholarship Program.

After a family application and interview process, the Brittts were delighted to learn that they were awarded a two-year full tuition scholarship to attend a private school of their choice. They applied to The Lotus Academy. The school accepted Naadir, but after testing

requested that Naadir repeat the first grade, a tough decision that was thoughtfully embraced by both mother and son.

Last year Naadir completed the first grade at Lotus, mastering all of his subjects with rave reviews from his teachers and increased self-esteem.

Lanetta returned to school herself. She and Naadir celebrated when they both received straight A's on their final report cards. ●

## PARENT EMPOWERMENT

In fall 2003, GPUAC released its newest product for parents, *A Directory of Philadelphia Charter Schools*. It contains

detailed information about the 48 charter schools operating in 2003-04, and is available in hard copy and on-line ([www.gpuac.org](http://www.gpuac.org)).

GPUAC released its first Philadelphia Charter School Directory in 2001 and has partnered with FOUNDATIONS, Inc. to create other reference tools about charter schools. ●

