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HOUSTON READ COMMISSION WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Gabriel Esparza and Alma Lara are appointed by Mayor Parker to help in battle against illiteracy

(Houston, Texas) July 2, 2010 – Mayor Parker has appointed Mr. Gabriel Esparza and Ms. Alma Lara to join Houston READ Commission’s Board of Directors. Houston READ Commission leads the Mayor’s Coalition for Literacy, an association of fifty literacy providers that offer ESL, GED, and ABE classes to tens of thousands of Houstonians struggling with basic English skills every year.

“Improving Houston’s literacy rate is key to our future,” said Mayor Annise Parker. “I know Alma Lara and Gabriel Esparza understand how important this is. They will be strong advocates as the Read Commission works to build upon its previous successes and expand community specific educational resources.”

Mayor Parker’s decision to appoint Mr. Esparza and Ms. Lara was met with enthusiasm from the Commission’s current Board members. Chairman Jeremy Radcliffe remarked, “One of my primary goals as chairman is to expand Houston READ Commission’s ties to the community. Mr. Esparza and Ms. Lara broaden our Board’s perspective through their respective experiences in the media and education. We are thrilled to have them on board.”

Esparza brings years of experience with Hispanic media to Houston READ Commission. As publisher of *¡Que Onda! Magazine*, a bilingual news and entertainment publication serving Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas/Ft. Worth, Esparza offers extensive knowledge about Houston’s Hispanic community and will help connect the Commission’s services to all Houstonians.

Lara is a devoted educator who served HISD for over thirty years in both teaching and administrative positions, including ten years as a principal in the North Central District. Her dedication to education earned her the HISD North Region Principal of the Year Award for 2001-2002 and HISD’s Association of Hispanic School Administrators’ Principal of the Year Award in 2003.

"I am excited and looking forward to sharing insights from my experiences as an educator in enhancing literacy in our communities," said Lara. "Education has been my lifelong passion. As such, I am committed to contribute to the goals and work of the READ Commission."

About Houston READ Commission

Houston READ Commission is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to lead and mobilize a coalition of literacy providers and resources to improve the literacy landscape of Houston.

Established in 1988 by the Mayor and City Council, Houston READ Commission oversees the Mayor's Coalition for Literacy, an association of more than one hundred and fifty literacy sites in Houston. These member organizations, known as literacy providers, strive to eliminate illiteracy by offering educational services geared toward the specific needs of their communities. Houston READ Commission's goal is to support and ensure providers' effectiveness.

Houston READ Commission advocates for the importance of literacy to the endurance of our city's and our country's economic and intellectual success. Establishing partnerships with the public libraries and the school districts and fostering relationships with the Mayor's Office and all of City Council, the READ Commission demonstrates that supporting literacy in Houston addresses the root cause of low employment, crime, high drop-out rates and excessive health care costs. By sponsoring literacy, these fundamental and influential systems of government, community and civic services support economic growth, help reduce crime, and improve education statistics in our great city.