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Dawn Owens

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In Memory of Dr. Ronald Reigner

Dawn Owens, Ph.D.

Leaders and members of Georgia Association of Literacy Advocates (GALA), formerly Georgia Reading Association (GRA), were deeply saddened by the recent passing of a revered friend, Dr. Ronald Reigner. The association extends sincere appreciation for the contributions of Dr. Reigner, a Georgia Reading Association (GRA) Past President. Dr. Reigner served the organization faithfully in numerous positions during the past twenty years, including GRA President, GRA Executive Committee member, GRA Board of Directors member, GRA committee chair, local council president, and student council sponsor/liaison.

Dr. Reigner's work in the field of literacy was extensive. He was an active member of International Literacy Association (ILA) and Illinois Reading Association prior to becoming a professor at the University of West Georgia. He represented GRA at ILA conventions and was a respected presenter at many conferences. He served as ILA Special Interest Group Concern for Affect in Reading Education (C.A.R.E.) President and Journal for C.A.R.E. Editor. He was a member of the review board of Georgia Journal of Reading. He created and chaired the College of Coastal Georgia Annual Literacy Symposium. Dr. Reigner was instrumental in securing leading reading researchers and authors as conference speakers. He utilized these professional people to present

community, literacy activities and programs for inner city children and educators. He advanced the work of Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy in Carroll County and Glynn County. Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, now know as Ferst Readers, is an organization that provides free books on a monthly basis to children from birth to five years of age. He was a founding member of the Community Action Team for Carroll County.

At conferences, he served as a presenter, chaired and presided over sessions, and often served at the hospitality table, heartily welcoming participants and providing information. Dr. Reigner was a highly renowned professor and an exceedingly qualified presenter who involved many of his students in his professional presentations. He led efforts to structure registration provisions to allow college students to work at conferences to cover registration fees. Dr. Reigner sponsored membership in professional organizations at the national and state levels by paying the full membership fees or paying half the fees for large groups of new members. Dr. Reigner sponsored the initial ILA membership of two current GALA officers. He helped charter and supported local councils.

Dr. Reigner was instrumental in promoting literacy by encouraging many colleagues and all of his students to join the ranks of ILA and GALA, submitting

articles for publication, remaining current on literacy and reading research, and being an avid reader. He was always equipped with a quick reference list of reasons to belong to his beloved ILA and GALA. He was engaging when he talked of current literacy literature and innovative instruction. Ron was able to instantaneously provide a list of suggested selections, classic and current titles, for professional and personal reading pleasure.

Ron Reigner possessed the demeanor of a relaxed gentleman in every situation. He was an exemplary listener, thought through issues, offered sound ideas and solutions, and sought to be inclusive of all participants in professional or social conversations.

Dr. Reigner was an inspiration to family, colleagues, and friends. Even facing the difficult challenges of the last few years, Dr. Reigner was thinking of ways to remain active and to continue to provide dedicated service to GALA. He attended the GALA Summer Leadership Training last July. He made a sizable, monetary contribution to ensure a GALA publication was completed this past year, participated in virtual meetings, donated professional and student literature, sought to secure eminent people for intricate positions in the organization, and maintained a positive, encouraging attitude despite facing daily, personal health struggles. Ron provided a shining example of dedicated service and illuminated the path of literacy for all.