

The English-Speaking Union
Education, Scholarship, Understanding

Greensboro Branch
2014 - 2015 Annual report

Names of Officers:

President: Mrs. Shirley Spears
Past President: Mrs. Bette Dunker
President Elect: Mrs. Judy Jolly
Vice President for Membership: Dr. Christopher Hodgkins
Vice President for Arrangements: Mrs. Ann Snyder
Treasurer: Mr. George Robison, III
Assistant Treasurer: Mr. John MacRae
Recording Secretary: Mrs. Dorothy Sowerby
Corresponding Secretary: Mrs. Leslie Daisy
Scholarship Chair: Mrs. Sonja Kelley
Shakespeare Chair: Mrs. Anne Jones
Historian: Dr. Trelles Case
Hospitality Chairs: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Huss
Newsletter Editor: Mrs. Ann Miller
Advisors to the Board of Directors: Mrs. Kitty Robison, Mr. Richmond Bernhardt and Mrs. Carmen Redding

Membership:

The Greensboro Branch currently has 116 active members. Our June, 2015 retreat will ask each board member to bring in one new member couple and one new single member. Since we have 7 institutions of higher education in our immediate area, our Vice President for Membership is concentrating his efforts toward faculty and graduate students. We are now discussing ways to encourage more of our members to become national patrons. Two of our board members also serve as members of the National Board of the ESUUS.

Members' Programs & Recruitment:

At our Mini-Retreat in June, 2014, all board members were given copies of the "Straight Talk" document as our guide toward achieving the "Best Practices" for our branch. Section 3 on Programming was indispensable as we planned programs for the 2014-2015 ESU year. We were able to incorporate a number of the suggested program

strategies in our calendar. Some were successful and some were not so successful. There were others that we wanted to try but could not seem to get “off the ground.”

Under the section on “General Characteristics of Successful Program Strategies”, we discussed various programs that might attract younger groups. For younger adults we talked about a movie at our downtown restored theater with dinner after at one of the popular restaurants within walking distance of the theater. An idea for a program at the local Children’s Museum was discarded. We also discussed an ice cream social but need to do more research as to school calendars, venues, etc. We are still looking for program ideas that attract a younger group.

For programs that focus on milestone events we were fortunate to have our Wrench Speaker, Lord Lisvane to talk about the Magna Carta. We also partnered with our local museum to celebrate the birthday of “hometown boy” William Sydney Porter--O’Henry of literary fame. That program was “tailored to the locality” as well. Both were successes.

The O’ Henry program at the Greensboro Historical Museum in September was a true sponsorship with both groups publicizing the event to their members. It was a dinner meeting at the museum with a local theater group performing vignettes based on O’ Henry’s stories after dinner. The cost for the evening (dinner and performance) was \$40.00 per person. and it was sold out several days before the event.

In October we were fortunate to secure Dr. Henry P. (Phil) Williams, III, a member of the Charlottesville Branch of the ESUUS, to present “The Crossing of the Dan”, an account of the strategies employed by General Nathanael Greene and Lord Charles Cornwallis during the war for American Independence. General Greene and Lord Cornwallis later met here at the Battle for Guilford Courthouse. Dr. Williams, attired in authentic military regalia of his American soldier ancestor, was a big hit with the dinner audience at the Greensboro Country Club.

For our November meeting we changed the time and the venue. We met for lunch on Sunday at the Starmount Forest Country Club. Our speaker was Francine Netter Roberson, President of the Research Triangle Branch of the ESU and author of *Medicine’s Michelangelo*, a biography of her famous father, Frank Netter. He was a doctor and an artist whose genius was such that his award-winning *Atlas of Human Anatomy* is today the most popular and best selling anatomy atlas in the English language. It was an outstanding presentation rewarded with many questions and much discussion afterwards.

The results of a branch survey showed most branch members had little interest in a December ESU event and the board agreed. There was much discussion about the Christmas Gift of Membership to ESU as outlined in the *Straight Talk* document. The initial enthusiasm waned and no Gifts of Membership were received. It was suggested that in 2015 we have the gift certificates printed around September and start publicity on this around the middle of October. A holiday fund-raising letter was sent to branch membership by the president and \$1,075.00 was received for the branch programs.

In January we returned to the Greensboro Country Club for a dinner meeting featuring Dr. Elliot Engel speaking on "The Inimitable Winston Churchill." Professor Engel has been called "quite possibly the most insightful, personable, and entertaining academic lecturer to come out of academia in the last fifty years." Despite dire predictions for an ice storm that evening, over 70 fans of Dr. Engel were in attendance for his dynamic presentation.

Always a favorite "not to be missed" evening, our annual Mardi Gras covered dish dinner and silent auction was our February event. It was held in the beautiful home of Mary Gay and Don Brady. While there is no charge for the evening, donations to help fund our projects are accepted. \$2,550.00 was raised to benefit our Education Fund.

In March our Shakespeare Competition returned to the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Twelve students from area high schools competed for the opportunity to go to New York for the National ESUUS Shakespeare Competition. After the competition, students, teachers, parents and guests were treated to lunch in the beautiful Alumni House on the university campus.

We had the pleasure of hosting Lord Robert Lisvane and the Reverend Lady Jane Lisvane in April for our Wrench Speaker event. They are a delightful couple and they especially enjoyed the beautiful spring flowers that were blooming in Greensboro---taking many pictures. Lord Lisvane's very informative talk on the Magna Carta was on Tuesday evening after dinner at the Greensboro Country Club. We are very grateful that Mary Nicoll was able to secure a Magna Carta scholar to come to the United States during this 800th anniversary year of the "Great Charter."

Our Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2015 in the Haywood Duke Room of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. After dinner Mrs. Linda Danford will present "Romans in Britain - A Lasting Legacy."

Educational Programs

We participate in several National ESUUS programs - The Wrench Speaker Event, the Shakespeare Competition, The BUSS Scholarship program for teachers, the Page Scholar program, Shakespeare Teacher Intensives and new for 2015-2016 the Luard Morse Scholarship for HBCU students.

The Wrench Speaker event was outlined above as was our Shakespeare Competition.

Additional information on our successful Shakespeare Competition is that Greensboro gives the winner \$500.00, second place receives \$300.00 and third place receives \$100.00 other competitors receive \$50.00. Teachers receive a "thank you" gift of \$50.00 and tickets to performances at Triad Stage. We also sponsor a luncheon for students, teachers and parents.

After a hiatus of a few years, we are working to sponsor a Shakespeare Teacher Intensives workshop at UNC-G this year. UNCG/AWRN will provide the space and logistical help and the Greensboro Branch will cover expenses.

Our BUSS Scholarship winner this year is Victoria Allen, a teacher at Grimsley High School in Greensboro. She wishes to attend Exeter College in Oxford this summer.

In addition, one of our branch members, Meredith Stevens, who teaches drama at Northern Guilford High School in Greensboro has applied as an independent scholar to study at Shakespeare's Globe Theater in London. Alice Uhl in the ESUUS office in New York is working with her. (Meredith's students have won our Shakespeare Competitions for the past three years.)

We worked with Alice Uhl to secure a Page Scholar from Argentina for this year, but when the scholar's schedule was announced in late January, there was a conflict with our Mardi Gras event. We hope to schedule a scholar early in the fall of 2015. Last year our Page Scholar was from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Bennett College in Greensboro is an HBCU College and a UNCF school. As such, we believe Bennett students may be eligible to apply for the ESUUS' Luard Morse Scholarship. Our branch president has met with Dr. Rosalind Fuse-Hall, the President of Bennett College, about this program. Dr. Fuse-Hall is interested in the program and Ms. Yolanda Johnson in her office will follow up with our New York office.

Fundraising Activities and Finances

As outlined above, we raised \$1,075.00 as a result of our December fundraising letter. In February our Mardi Gras event raised \$2,550.00. We have received two grants --one for \$750.00 and one for \$1,000.00. We have received a total of \$3,525.00 from the national office as our share of dues and contributions. This gives us a total income for the 2014-2015 season of \$8,900.00 as of now. Our expenses this year are budgeted at \$5418.00 (we don't have year end figures yet). We are financially stable and are able to cover the costs of our programs.

Faced with an aging population, like many similar organizations we struggle to maintain a healthy membership. However, due to dedicated members, our Greensboro Branch ESU is a vibrant organization. We strive for diversity in our programs and venues. Our partnerships with the Greensboro Historical Museum and UNCG continued this year and we are already planning events with both next year. We are looking at new partnerships (local colleges, etc) and new programs such as English In Action. As someone (I believe it was Alice Irby) once said, "Our goals are worthy."

Shirley Spears, President Greensboro Branch

