

Moody Hosts ESL Conference

April 14, 2008

More than 250 people attended the third annual English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry Conference at Moody Bible Institute on Saturday, April 12.

Moody hosts the one-day conference for beginner and advanced level ESL teachers, as a way to further minister to Chicagoans and network with community schools. Moody presented this training event in collaboration with Wheaton College's Institute for Cross-Cultural Training as well as their Graduate School's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program.

While advertised as a Chicagoland conference, attendees came to Moody's campus from as far as Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota. "That shows the need for this," says Wally Cirafesi, assistant professor of World Missions and Evangelism and director of TESOL at Moody Bible Institute. "Churches really want training in this."

Conference organizers at Moody were pleased to offer 14 distinct workshop choices. "This year, we covered different models of ministry," says Cirafessi. "You can have a one-on-one tutoring program, church based program, networking with other churches, etc." Alan Seaman, associate professor and director of the Wheaton College Graduate School TESOL program and this year's plenary session speaker, talked about these models.

For first-time attendee Carol Garrett of Woodstock, Ill., the diversity of the workshops made the conference experience very worthwhile. Garrett was apprehensive about her upcoming missions trip to teach English in Poland, but says the three workshops she attended have given her confidence. "The presenters were excellent," says Garrett. "I just feel so much better about going now."

Approximately 30 percent of conference attendees were experienced ESL professionals, and 70 percent were lay teachers. Sharon Schneider has taught English as a second language for six years in her Schaumburg, Ill. community, as well as three months in the Republic of Estonia, and wants to start an ESL ministry in her church. "It was wonderful," Schneider says of the conference. "I got so many ideas that I am excited about. If you are interested in ESL at all, this is probably the best conference you can attend for the practical ideas, information and resources. I plan to be back next year!"

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