

A Program
of the



Institute for
Positive Living

O P E N B O O K

A multi-faceted after-school program for young adolescents in which participants are engaged in activities that encourage the development of reading, writing and critical thinking skills.

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Reading Facts](#) [Sites](#) [Volunteers](#) [Publications](#) [My Journal](#) [Sponsors](#)

CHECK US OUT!

[Author Event with Barbara Hathaway](#)
[Author Event with Jewell Parker Rhodes](#)

Author Event with Barbara Hathaway



“Read everything—books, cereal boxes, the bible! Read everything! That was one of the messages that young people got to hear from award-winning author Barbara Hathaway during an Open Book Program Author Event on March 17, 2012.

“Read Everything!” Author Barbara Hathaway Tells Open Book Youth during March Open Book Author Event

“Read everything—books, cereal boxes, the bible! Read everything! If you want to be a writer, you have to read and you have to read well so you know the language.” That was one of the messages that young people got to hear from award-winning author Barbara Hathaway during an Open Book Program Author Event on March 17, 2012 at Williams Prep Academy Middle School, 2710 S. Dearborn Street in Chicago. More than 200 African American inner city students, 9-14, and their teachers and parents attended the event sponsored by the Institute for Positive Living’s Open Book Program.

Students from the Institute for Positive Living’s Open Book Program performed excerpts from Hathaway’s book, *Missy Violet and Me* and got their books signed by the author. In attendance were Open Book participants from Mayo Elementary, 249 E. 37th Street, Scott Joplin Elementary, 7931 South Honore, Schmid Elementary School, 9755 S. Greenwood Ave., University of Chicago-Donoghue, 707 East 37th Street and Williams Prep Academy Middle School, 2710 S. Dearborn Street.

Hathaway's debut book, *Missy Violet and Me*, was inspired by the experiences of the author's grandmother, who worked as a midwife in the rural south during the 1930s. Written in the ingenuous voice of Viney, an 11-year-old African-American girl, the novel chronicles her summer apprenticeship to Missy Violet, a charismatic midwife who was born into slavery. Though excited about the prospect of helping the woman with her "baby catchin'," Viney has a lot to learn. Her lessons include learning about healing herbs and other remedies and delivering baked goods to shut-ins with rambunctious cousin Charles.

Following the Open Book performances, Hathaway discussed her book and answered questions about her career as an author. But first, she exclaimed: “I am blown away! I have tears in my eyes.”

Hathaway, who is a great-grandmother, spent most of her working life employed at a women’s clinic in New York City.



The skit by Open Book participants from Williams Prep Academy Middle School featured an imaginative scene in which students dressed as herbs and flowers are paced in Missy Violet's Bag. The skit was based on Missy Violet and Me by Award-winning Author Barbara Hathaway.



The skit by Open Book participants from Mayo Elementary School featured an imaginative scene about the importance of the midwife.

Hathaway's admiration for the midwives who worked at the clinic coupled with the stories she heard from her mother about her relative who delivered everyone—black and white—in the southern town her family came from led her to write *Missy Violet and Me*.

Answering questions, Hathaway told the Open Book participants, their teachers and parents:

- “The stories in the book are mostly fiction, but are based on people I met in the south. I was a city girl, but every summer visited the south and grandparents.”
- “I had no experience. I read books about writing and took a creative writing course—but you don't have to go to [writing] school to become a writer.”

A panel of judges including the author graded each performance on qualities ranging from enunciation to creativity and first, second and third place trophies were awarded. The First Place Trophy went to Mayo Elementary, Williams Prep Academy took second place and Schmidt took third place. Other participating schools were University of Chicago-Donoqhue Elementary School and Scott Joplin Elementary School.

The Open Book Program focuses on stimulating interest in reading quality, culturally relevant children's literature through a variety of activities including literary circles, drama, and Internet experiences. During each program segment, participants do an in-depth study of one or two books. Authors and author/illustrators have included Sandra Belton, Ashley Bryan, Debbi Chocolate, Sharon Flake, Jan Spivey Gilchrist, Nikki Grimes, Catherine Ingram, Jewell Parker Rhodes, M. LaVora Perry, Harriette Gillem Robinet, Charles R. Smith, Jr., Hope Anita Smith, Glennette Tilley Turner, Darwin MacBeth Walton, Walter Dean Myers, and Camille Yarbrough.

“Author interaction is a key ingredient in the success of the Open Book Program,” states founder Marrice Coverson, president of the Institute for Positive Living and executive director of Open Book. “The talk-show format gives students the opportunity to interact with one another and to experience the books through the dramatic productions that each school has prepared.” For information on the Student/Author event or the Open Book Program, contact Marrice Coverson at 773-924-9802. Information about Open Book including examples of student work can be obtained on the World Wide Web at www.openbookprogram.org.



Open Book participants from Williams Prep Academy Middle School are all smiles as they accept the Second Place Trophy for their performance based on Missy Violet and Me by Award-

winning Author Barbara Hathaway.



Open Book participants from Mayo Elementary are all smiles as they accept the First Place Trophy for their performance based on Missy Violet and Me by Award-winning Author Barbara Hathaway.



Open Book participants from Schmidt Elementary are all smiles as they accept the Third Place Trophy for their performance based on Missy Violet and Me by Award-winning Author Barbara Hathaway.



Open Book participants from Scott Joplin Elementary School are pictured as they wait to get their books signed during the book-signing portion of the Open Book Program Author Event with Barbara Hathaway on March 17, 2012.

[Back to the top](#)