

Author visits three Calcasieu schools

BY HEATHER REGAN WHITE
AMERICAN PRESS

'Carry out your dream no matter how unlikely it may seem.'

Terry O'Neal
Author

SULPHUR — In recognition of Teen Read Week, author Terry O'Neal visited three Calcasieu schools Friday to share her work and inspire students to "Make Some Noise."

O'Neal, a native of Stockton, Calif., has family in Lake Charles. She has published three volumes of poetry, two children's books and a novel.

She is also the editor of three annual poetry anthologies, which contain work submitted to her Web site — www.MakeSomeNoise.biz — by teens ages 12-18.

O'Neal told Sulphur High ninth-grade students that she always loved to write but didn't think it would be practical as a career.

She began work on her first collection of poetry, "Motion Sickness," in 1994 while attending college, working full time and being eight

months pregnant with her second child.

She said the sight of her first published work on a bookstore shelf in 1999 inspired her to make writing her life.

"Carry out your dream no matter how unlikely it may seem," she said.

And while it's nice to have other people enjoy your work, she said, "you should write for yourself first."

O'Neal travels the country with her husband and manager, speaking to teens about their potential.

Friday she also spoke at S.J. Welsh Middle School, Barbe High and Central Library.



BRAD PUCKETT / AMERICAN PRESS

Author Terry O'Neal, whose poetry has been published in numerous magazines, journals and newspapers, visited Sulphur High, S.J. Welsh Middle School and Barbe High School on Friday as part of Teen Read Week. She had an open discussion centered on her award-winning novel, "Sweet Lavender." The book has been adapted to a full-length feature screenplay. "Sweet Lavender" is a 1960s coming-of-age story of a young girl awakening to the bittersweet realities of life while growing up in a small Louisiana town.