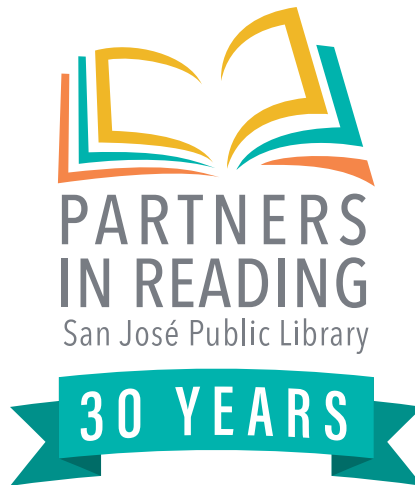


# ***I Wish...***

**Stories by Adult Learners**



Adult Literacy & ESL  
2018-2019

## ***I Wish... Production Team***



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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the San José Public Library, the City of San José, or any other funders of the Partners in Reading program. No official endorsement by these agencies should be inferred.



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## Acknowledgments

This year's book, *I Wish...*, is a collection of many life stories—from those of its authors who bravely share their wishes with strangers to those of the supporters and team members who make the Partners in Reading (PAR) program and the publication of this book possible. This year *I Wish...* brings dreams to life:

- To the adult learners who make wishes and write about them for others to read, you have made this book possible. Through your stories, readers have the pleasure of meeting you and learning a little about you. Keep learning and writing. And thank you for sharing your dreams.
- To the volunteers who dedicate their time to helping adults blossom into authors, you are appreciated by all. You establish the relationships and trust that encourage your learners to believe they can achieve. You provide the support that enables learners to become writers and gain even more success in their lives. You are invaluable to your learners and to the PAR program.

- This book could not have been launched without the expert assistance of professional writer and author MaryLee McNeal. Each year she holds a workshop where she enthusiastically coaches and inspires learners to write compelling stories that invite readers in. MaryLee also provides handouts to tutors and learners to help them continue to polish their stories.
- Victoria Scott is a dedicated volunteer who lightly edits learners' stories so that nothing interferes with their expression and meaning. She has edited learner stories for PAR for 12 years and always ensures that the learners' words and intentions remain true.
- The San José Public Library and the City of San José fund and support PAR to help meet the Library's mission of enriching lives and fostering lifelong learning. This service also helps ensure that every member of the community has access to a vast array of ideas and information. The Library's seven Family Learning Centers offer neighborhood centers where participants can meet and participate in additional family- and community-related programs, and SJPL Works assists with job-seeking skills, interviewing, and career development.



- The San José Public Library Foundation provides key funding to enhance the Library's reach in offering programs and services to the San José community. We are thankful for the Foundation's support.
- For 35 years California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) of the California State Library has supported literacy programs annually, both financially and through program resources, to libraries throughout California. PAR is a thankful beneficiary of this annual funding that allows us to offer critical literacy services and resources to adults and families throughout San José.

Partners in Reading staff thank you for supporting this program and empowering adults to improve their lives. We thank you for caring and for the opportunities you create for so many.

# **Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support**

## **2017-2018 Funders**

- City of San José, San José Public Library
- California State Library, California Library Literacy Services
- San José Public Library Foundation

## **Donors**

- David A. and Yun Chan-Anderson
- Brian Badenoch and Sarah-Ann Bishop
- Toshiko Miraflor
- Anonymous

Our special thanks to Doris Mae Carson, the 2017 Frist Humanitarian Award recipient, for her generous support of the Partners in Reading program.

## **Business Donors**

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- The Fish Market
- The Habit Burger Grill
- The Studio Climbing
- Tomato Thyme
- Trader Joe's
- Winchester Mystery House

## Introduction

Each year Partners in Reading (PAR) issues a challenge to our learners: Write a story, with help from a tutor, to become a published author. It sounds simple, but it can become a difficult charge. The PAR staff comes up with a new, very broad topic each year, and is always fascinated by the variety of stories that it inspires. This year's topic, *I Wish...*, is no exception. Not only did many returning authors contribute a story, but so did experienced learners who had not participated before, plus new learners who were eager to write. We are thrilled to present this collection of “wishes” from 72 authors, an increase of 11 authors over last year.

Many learners and tutors begin the process by attending the writing workshop offered each year by our amazing facilitator MaryLee McNeal. There they spend time reflecting as they narrow down their topic and make a list of key things they want to include in their story. Before they leave the workshop, learners have not only jotted down notes but also composed the most difficult part—the first sentence. They then expand upon that first sentence by adding important details. During the workshop, MaryLee often reads earlier stories by PAR authors who have returned to write about the topic chosen for the current year. The potential new authors in attendance listen very attentively and quickly realize that they, too, can write a story that will be interesting and that will make its mark on readers of this collection.

Writers who are unable to attend or who don't finish their stories during the workshop can proceed with the help of comprehensive handouts prepared by MaryLee. With these guidelines tutors and learners can work step by step, from brainstorming to drafting the first sentence, creating the sentences that provide detail, and then adding the concluding sentence. Then together they work on editing the story and providing clarification, always keeping the reader in mind.

Learner authors soon understand that writing is a process. Good writers do not just set pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and instantly compose perfect phrases that flow well and sound beautiful. Writing involves a lot of rewriting and editing. It is not for the faint of heart. For this reason, we salute our authors this year and every year for taking the plunge and completing the many steps of writing a story.

We hope you will appreciate all these stories and how much effort went into creating each one of them. As you read, you will be charmed, moved, or even saddened by many of these stories. Topics range from grandparents to family in general, travel, food, education, health, and several other themes. Each story is special, and we know you will be enchanted by reading the words of our intrepid PAR authors. Thank you for sharing in the results of their hard work. Also, if you haven't already done so, please think about becoming a PAR donor or program participant, whether as a volunteer or as a learner.

## Program Highlights

In 1989 the San José Public Library (SJPL) was awarded California State Library funding to launch an adult literacy program in the City of San José. Partners in Reading (PAR) was created, with instruction offered primarily one-to-one at library locations by trained volunteer tutors. California Library Literacy Services (CLLS), which manages funding for more than a hundred programs throughout the state, has continued to offer that funding ever since. This year PAR is celebrating 30 years of helping adults build reading, writing, technology, and life skills, while CLLS is celebrating 35 years of literacy support. PAR and CLLS have joined forces during this time not only to make San José a more literate city, but also to engage participants in PAR as lifelong learners (and earners).

Since its inception, PAR has served more than 6,000 adult learners, and volunteers have given over 276,000 hours (at today's equivalent of \$8,000,000)\*. Learners consistently gain confidence in reading to their children, helping them with homework, and advocating for them at school; gain skills in applying for and doing their jobs; increase their abilities to manage their health and their households; and become more active in their communities.

Who are PAR learners and volunteers? The learners who join this award-winning program need help with everyday literacy tasks. They want to enhance their skills so they can complete

*\*According to the Independent Sector the Value of Volunteer Time—California*

tasks that many adults do without thinking about them. The aim is first to help them do these things and then to help them do them easily and effortlessly. Volunteers are adults who have time and talent and want to share them with others. After completing training, they work in libraries throughout San José to introduce adult learners to new ways of learning that foster success. As our name suggests, together learners and volunteers become true partners in reading.

We appreciate the dedication and efforts of every one of our volunteers; to name each one would fill many pages of this book. We thank you all for caring deeply and giving your time to help others improve the life skills that promote human development. The two volunteers recognized here, Doris Carson and Brian Badenoch, have been involved with PAR for a very long time.



Doris has worked with her current learner for 10 years. With her help, he has advanced in his job in many ways. He has completed college and has begun graduate school. Doris also volunteers for San José Regional Medical Center and was recently honored by their parent company, Hospital Corporation

of America (HCA), with the Frist Humanitarian Award for her 15 years of volunteer service at the hospital. With this honor Doris was flown to Nashville, Tennessee, where a video was released of action shots of her volunteer projects at the Medical Center

and at PAR. In her honor HCA donated a portion of the award to her favorite charity, which Doris has generously contributed to PAR.

Brian has distinguished himself with PAR. In the early days of the program he managed the technology portion of the program, which always seemed in need of attention. But that wasn't enough to scare him off. Since then he has been a dedicated volunteer and currently partners with two longtime learners. In total Brian has been volunteering with PAR for 26 years.

In addition to basic adult literacy tutoring, which takes place both one-to-one and in small groups, PAR holds very popular ESL classes for beginning, intermediate, and advanced English-language learners. The aim is to build the English-language conversation skills of ESL learners enough that they can qualify for PAR tutoring, become literate in English, and continue learning.

PAR also has a robust digital literacy component, which is especially relevant for a program located in the heart of Silicon Valley. Learners can get help from trained computer instructors so that they can use computers, smartphones, tablets, and e-readers. These twenty-first-century skills allow them to learn and function in a variety of individualized ways that go hand-in-hand with the literacy learning they do with their tutors.



One such example is Career Online High School, which helps adults earn a career certificate and an accredited high school diploma comprised of 36 online classes. To date, 98 students have been awarded free scholarships from SJPL. SJPL has held two very moving graduation ceremonies at the City Hall Rotunda. Thirty-nine students have already graduated, who can now go on to further education and/or apply for better jobs without the worry of being turned down because they lack a diploma.

PAR serves all SJPL branch locations, and in addition, five branches and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library house small collections of easy-to-read materials for all patrons to use and check out. Now called Quick Reads, please look for them outside the PAR office and at Edenvale, Evergreen, Educational Park, Pearl Avenue, and Santa Teresa branch libraries.

PAR looks forward to serving more adults with more trained volunteers in the years ahead to promote lifelong learning for all.



---

## A Certificate Opens Doors

*By Abraham*

My wish is I need a good job for the future. When I apply for jobs I want to have a choice, so my life will be better for the future. First I want to say thank you to Partners in Reading because they always help me. It is not easy, but I got here. I'm very lucky to have this chance.

When I finish school I will have a good life because I will get a better job for the future. I work hard but I do not get much money. If I get the certificate I can get more money. I have noticed changes. When I first came to the program, I couldn't understand. Now I read books well and I use the computer well for typing, for reading the news, and for maps. I send email, too. Thank you to everyone who has helped me for my future.



---

Abraham needs to get his HiSET certificate to get a better job.

---

# I Wish I Owned a VW Van

By Faalaa Achica



---

Faalaa wants everyone to know how much he loves VW vans and how happy he would be if he had one. He has wanted a VW van for as long as he can remember.

I wish I owned a 1982 light blue VW van. Light blue is my favorite color. The 1982 VW van has a side door. I love VW vans! I want to drive around in my VW van. I could drive to Santa Cruz. I could drive to my favorite lagoon. I could go fishing with my friends. I could go camping. I could go to the beach and go swimming. When I was a boy, I went swimming in the ocean in Samoa.

I want a CD player in my VW van so I can listen to music as I drive around. I want good speakers in the front and back doors. I want my van to have a refrigerator, a sink, a table with a bench to sit on, and a fold-up bed.

Before I get a VW van, I have to get my driver's license. I don't have one. I have to learn all the traffic signs. I have to learn all the rules of the road. I have to pass the two tests. I have to pass the written test. I have to pass the driving test. I wish I could learn how to drive so that I can get a VW van. After I learn to drive and after I pass the tests, I will buy my VW van. That is my biggest wish.



---

# I Want to Drive!

*By Megnaga Aimru*

I have wanted to learn how to drive ever since I was 16 years old. I wanted to drive to go to places without my dad or sisters. Now I want to drive a car because I could work for Uber. I could go to places like the mall and my sister's house. I could take my daughter to the museum and drive my boyfriend to work.

I haven't learned to drive because my reading isn't good. I tried to take the online driving test on my phone five times, but I failed every time. The words are hard to read on the test! People said it is an easy test, but I don't think so.

This month I got the DMV rule book, and I will study with my neighbor and friends. I will take the DMV test on August 6, the day before my birthday.

If I pass the test, I will get my insurance and save money for my car. I want a green car. If I pass the DMV test, the first place I will go is to the mall to shop. If I don't pass the test, I will never give up. I will take it again until I pass!



---

Driving is important  
to Megnaga.

---

## The Place Where I Was Born

By Claudia Alvarez



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Claudia dedicated this story to her mother, who has helped Claudia's wishes come true.

I wish one day to return to the place where I was born. When I look back at pictures of my early years, some memories come to my mind. I lived my first four years in a beautiful port with warm tropical weather, kind people, and amazing views of the ocean.

I remember mornings of walking, holding my mom's hand, and playing with my older brother in a large street of a lively city that ended at the beach. I walked slowly, enjoying the fresh breeze that was coming from the sea, the thrilling noise of the commercial ships announcing their arrival at the port, and the unforgettable smell of oil that came from the local refinery where my father worked.



"I wonder if the city will be different now," I ask myself. It would be a dream come true to have my family by my side with this vision of us being happy in the place I was born. Finally, I could show my sons the place where my life began in the beautiful port of Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, Mexico.

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## Wishes, Dreams, and Hopes

By Carmen Arias

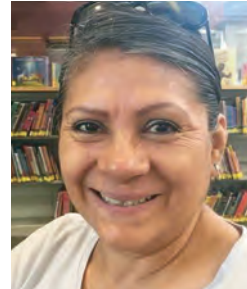
“I wish I could see you, my sister. I have not seen you for a long time. After missing you for 27 years, I’ll probably see you in one year.”

Who is my sister? Juanita lives in Mexico City. I will probably travel there by plane next year. It’s difficult for my sister to come here because it’s very expensive. She does not have a lot of money.

I wish to make different flavors of tamales with her—chicken with salsa verde, and pork with salsa roja. When we make the tamales, the smell will be very good. I feel happy when we make these. I will buy everything in the supermarket there. Chicken breasts, corn leaves, tomatillos, tomatoes, chiles, onions, garlic, pork meat, and masa (corn dough).

I remember the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) in Mexico. The smell of the marigold flowers! I tasted sugar skulls. Juanita was thirteen years old and I was fourteen.

*(continued)*



---

Carmen remembers her sister in the past when they made things together all the time.





I remember the house. The roof had cardboard, and sometimes it was broken. It rained and the roof leaked inside. I put pots and baskets in different places. The floor was wet. The rain ended. I swept the floor and sent the water outside. Outside it was very muddy. The streets were muddy, too. We tried to fix the leaks in the roof with burning asphalt. I still have scars on my arms where I was burned. I remember the strong smell of hot burning asphalt.

I dream of my sister Juanita. We talk of how we were children. I think our wish to see each other will come true.





---

## For My Daughter Gia

*By S. Arizmendi*

I would like it so much if time did not pass so quickly. I have learned so many things by your side. I discovered virtues and defects in myself that I didn't know existed. You have changed my life in such a rosy way. For you, I would fight against the whole world if it were necessary. For you, I discover that being a mother comes with superpowers. My baby, every time I look at you, my heart and my spirit fill with love and kisses to give you.

This second stage of your growth has left me with unforgettable memories in my heart. I look forward to the memories to come because you still have a long way to go. God willing, we will travel it together. Meanwhile, we will continue learning about each other and you will always be my baby, my pretty girl. I wish you a super happy second birthday and that God will fill you with blessings and new adventures in your life. My baby girl, never forget that Mami loves you.

---

S. wrote this story for her daughter. Her daughter is growing up, and she would like her to feel proud of her mom.



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## A Healthy Lifestyle

*By Vaneska Aviles*

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Vaneska wants to be healthy and in good shape. She has made plans to reach her goal.

I want to be healthy and in good shape. Every day I think about improving my physical condition, and I try to watch what I eat. I go to the gym from time to time. So far I do not have any diseases; but I want to always be in good physical condition and look good.

In my twenties, I was in good athletic condition. I had a personal trainer, a healthy lifestyle, and, especially, I had a lot of discipline. For different reasons, I put that lifestyle aside, and little by little I lost the discipline.

I would like to recover my healthy lifestyle and have a flat abdomen, reduce body fat, tone my body, and improve my skin and hair. I have the knowledge to achieve my goal. I know that what I need is willpower and discipline. I plan to go to the gym at least four days a week, and walk in the park. I want to reduce to a minimum the consumption of saturated fats and sugars, drink at least 2 liters of water a day, and consume more fruits and vegetables.



---

I think my wish can be fun if I involve my husband and friends in some parts of my healthy lifestyle. For example, I would like to go with them to hike, go to dance classes, or just take a walk together. I will measure my results and make notes of all the foods I eat, noting the days I exercise.



*“Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.”*

– Swami Sivananda

---

## Now I Am a Better Reader

*By Robert Bettencourt, Sr.*



---

Robert wrote this story because he wants people to know that his tutor is helping him achieve his goals.

My wish for the longest time was to be able to look at a word and pronounce it. I recall growing up in Chicago and having trouble pronouncing words. In school, when it came time to read as a group, they would skip me. Along with that, I would not get support in school or at home to improve my reading. For years the only thing I could do was try to remember words and recall them from memory when reading.

Throughout my life I was bothered that I did not finish high school. It took 26 years, but I did it! Yet I still did not improve my reading much. At SVAE (Silicon Valley Adult Education) a tutor named Natalie found out that I had not been properly taught the principles of reading.



She introduced me to the Partners in Reading program, and I signed up for a commitment of six months at three hours a week. I started with Jonathan in October 2017, and he helped me learn the Wilson Reading System. It has helped me a lot! I can now look at words with enjoyment because for the first time I have the tools to figure them out. I need to thank all those people who put me here with Jonathan. Now my wish is coming true. I can finally look at a word and try to pronounce it.

---

## A Home for My Family

*By Lorpu Boakai*

I wish I could buy a house in San José, California. I also wish for my sister to come and for us to live together as one family. My house will be a five-bedroom house, and I want my house to have a big kitchen. The kitchen will be my favorite place. I can cook dinners and bake my bread.

I also want a large living room and dining room and a garage for my car. When I have the house, I would like my sister to visit me. They live in West Africa, Monrovia, Liberia. If they come we can live as one family. I am working toward buying my house. I would like my house to be in downtown San José. It will be easier for me to get to my job. I won't have to drive to work. That is my wish.

I would also love to have foster kids in my house. I like to have kids in the house with me. And I would like to celebrate Thanksgiving in my house. I would also like to host a Christmas party every year, and that is my wish.

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Lorpu likes to be in PAR. She enjoys reading and writing, so she wrote this story.



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## Moving On

*By Robert Byers*



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Robert is a 66-year-old retiree. He has been a widower for two and a half years.

My wish was to get away from home for a while. My wife, Renee, had two heart attacks and kidney failure. A friend, Elias, and his wife, Marcela, moved in with me to help me take care of her. They were a big help. After she passed away, I was very lonely even though Elias and Marcela still lived with me. My home felt empty without Renee and had too many memories that made me feel sad and depressed.

In April, Marcela invited me to join her on a three-week trip to Mexico to visit their relatives. This was my chance. We flew to Mexico City and stayed with Marcela's mother and other relatives. They drove us around to visit more relatives in several other cities. My favorite experience was being in the ocean in Acapulco. The weather was hot but the water was cold and salty. I didn't understand a lot of Spanish but I had a lot of fun anyway. I even danced again. Marcela's mother had a ranch and grew most of the food they ate. I loved being in the country and eating homemade Mexican food.

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Being away from home, meeting good people, and seeing new things was the best thing for my spirit. My wish coming true helped me feel happy and content again. I still miss Renee, but now I am ready to move on with my life.



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Acapulco, Mexico

*“Good teachers know how to bring out the best in students.”*

– Charles Kuralt

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## California Grandma

By A. Chang

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A. is a grandmother and she wanted to share her love for her grandson with everybody.

I wish I could see my grandson Tyler more often. The first time I saw him he was one month old. He was only wearing a white shirt and a diaper. He had no hair and had brown skin. Only his mouth looked like his mom's. All his other features looked like my son's. Three years later I saw him again, and he looked very different. He was taller, had curly hair, a full mouth of teeth, and he could independently dress himself. But he had put the wrong shoe on the wrong foot. His left shoe was on the right foot and his right shoe was on the left foot. He thought I was a stranger. My son told him, "That is your California Grandma." Then he very kindly smiled at me.



My son lives in Georgia, and that is why I can't see my grandson a lot. I miss him and love him very much. During my visit, he got close to me and I felt that he loves me. I wish I could see him in California, because I want to teach him so many fun things and how to use chopsticks. I want to teach him how to speak and write in Chinese. Even though I can't see him a lot, I talk to him every two weeks on the phone. My son is planning to come to see me at Chinese New Year, and I cannot wait!

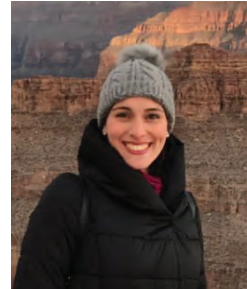


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## I Want a Better Job

*By Gabriela Colina-Leon*

When you are a child you want many things. When you are a teenager you probably want to graduate from high school. When you are an adult you want to be a doctor, a teacher, maybe an engineer. Or you simply want to achieve something. Why do people feel that way? The answer is because everybody has wishes.



I have a lot of wishes in my life and I try to achieve each one of them. Today my major wish is to learn to speak English very well, for many reasons. The first reason is because it is a personal goal. Currently I work in a daycare center. I love to work with children but I would like to get a job in my profession. I went to Rafael Bellosó Chacín University in Venezuela for five years and graduated with a license in public accounting. I hope one day to work again in this area because it is my passion. Mastering English will allow me to develop professionally and also it will give me more confidence in myself. In the near future I hope to write and speak English fluently, so I have to work hard for that.

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Gabriela wrote her story because it is a good exercise to improve her writing skills, and also because she wants to share her goals with other people.

I always think that you can do anything, but you need to give your best effort if you want to make your wish come true.

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## My Birthday Wish

*By Robert Daniel*



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Robert chose this wish because his birthday is a special day for his whole family. He wanted to share that birthdays are a good part of life and good to celebrate.

I wish every day was my birthday. It feels so good, I love it! Most of the time my whole family is all together with me. They come from Utah, upstate New York, Florida, and Dominica. Every one of my family is laughing with each other. I will be cooking spareribs and chicken on the grill, which we always have for special occasions.

All my children love my cooking. We will have rice, beans, and vegetables with the barbeque. Later we will have homemade ice cream. On my birthday, my wife, Patti, makes my favorite Caribbean Spice Cake. In a cooler there is some beer, coke, lemonade, and orange juice for everyone.

I see lots of happiness, love, and togetherness. In the background we have reggae music playing and some people will be dancing, some will be talking, and others will be relaxing.

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I am surrounded by my children and friends and I feel happy. Everyone is happy on this loving day. I wish this for everyone, every day. To have birthdays just like this! Happy, dancing, eating, and laughing all together with loved ones, One Love!



*“Happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort.”*

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

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## Why I Left Home

*By O'Neal Durgin, Jr.*



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O'Neal wrote this story to tell why he left home and the long road it took to spend time with his mom and dad again.

I wish I could have spent more time with my mom and dad. I lost a lot of time by leaving home at 17 years old. I had a lot of wants I couldn't get at home. That's why I left home. I wanted a new car, but I got an old car. I wanted to get a good job so I could buy a house.

When I left Louisiana my mom gave me \$40 and my dad gave me \$40 and I gave my cousin \$40, which left me with \$40.

I stayed with my brother in San Francisco for ten days. Then I was on my way to Palo Alto. I found a job at the Red Cottage Restaurant. I could eat two meals a day. I had to walk to work for two months before I could buy a car. I worked for about two years. Then I left for another job at Stanford Hospital. Then I went home to see my mom and dad. When I got back I decided to get into construction.

My wish came true, but it took a while.

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## My Dream House

*By Sophie Fan*

I wish I could own a bed and breakfast house at the beach.

When I was younger, I went to the beach with my family every summer. This place is called Kenting, in the south of Taiwan. I like that place very much. It is a simple town, and people are friendly, enthusiastic, and hospitable. There is a mountain view, a sea view, and Kenting National Park. The sand is white on the beach. When I walk on the beach it makes me relax.

I hope I will have a house there like a B&B. Each room will have a balcony and a big window to see wonderful sunrises and sunsets, mountain views and sea views. There will be a coffee bar at the B&B. I can cook delicious and healthy breakfasts with specialty coffee for every guest, to start a great day.

The house must be close to the beach and Kenting Boulevard. When you are tired at the beach, you can go back to the house to take a break. You can wear flip-flops to walk to Kenting Boulevard and find delicious food at night.

*(continued)*



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Sophie comes from Taiwan. She loved traveling when she was a child. She's married now and has a son, and she still enjoys traveling with her family. Every time the joy and surprises of the journey will become unforgettable memories.



Small Bay Beach,  
Kentington, Taiwan

For this wish to come true, I will save money to buy land and build my own favorite house. I want to design my own favorite style. From choosing building materials to decorating, I will do everything by myself. Then I will pay the workers to help me build the house.

I hope I can do it soon.

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Kenting Beach House  
No.136, Dawan Rd.,  
Kenting Street,  
Kenting, Taiwan



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## My Many Wishes

*By Monica Fernandez*

I wish to be a tutor and a public speaker. Then I can teach and have my voice be heard in the community. I wish there was no homelessness in San José. I wish I could be president of the United States. Then the prices of housing wouldn't be so high and no more paying taxes. I wish that the world wouldn't have things like earthquakes, disasters, and floods. I also wish I wasn't mentally ill and didn't have to take medications. I wish I was never in a board and care home. I wish I didn't have a case manager because I don't need one. I wish I had kids and was married and had a family, like my brothers and sisters.

I wish that I could write a book about myself. I wish that I could see my father again. I wish I was a basketball player and also on television. I wish I could meet my favorite singer. I wish I could perform on stage. I wish that everything will happen better for me. I wish I didn't have so many problems. I wish Donna Summer was still alive. I wish I was a nurse or a doctor to help the needy and the elderly. I wish I was a restaurant owner. Then I could feed everybody and help others. I wish I could move out of the board and care home and live in Mexico in an apartment on the beach.



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Monica wrote this story because she likes to write.

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# My Wish to Win the Lottery

By Alvin Fore



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Alvin's fantasy is to win the lottery. That way he can help his family and make their dreams come true.

I wish to win the lottery to help my family. Every third Thursday of the month, I get paid my disability check. I pay my bills and my rent. If I have any money left over I will go to the store to buy Lotto tickets. It's been a long time since I started to play the lottery. I've won about 12 times. The most I've ever won is \$88. I wish I will win at least 20 or 30 million dollars.

It sounds like a lot of money, but I will share it with my family. I have six sisters, Belinda, Debbie, Shelley, Denise, Regina, and Vickie, and one brother, Billy. So the lottery money I would share with my family would make their lives easier. Maybe some of them will quit their jobs. And some of them may help their kids, too. If my mom and dad were still alive, I would share it with them, too.



What would I do with the money? I would like to buy a small house and then I would take some trips. I would like to travel to other places, like New Orleans, Jamaica, and Hawaii. And then I would like to give money to Shriners Hospitals for Children and St. Jude Children's Hospitals. But I am only wishing to win the lottery. If only it came true!



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## Three Reasons Why I Want to Visit Mexico City

By Chelo Garcia

My wish is to travel and see famous sites in Mexico City. My friend, Julian, lives in the city of Puebla. He asked me if I would like to come and visit. He would be my tour guide for my trip.

First, I would like to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is very loved by all Mexican people. I wish to stand in front of the amazing and miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I would say to the radiant Lady of Guadalupe, “Thank you for my beautiful family.”

Second, I would like to visit the Pyramids of Teotihuacán in Mexico City. I want to know more about its mysterious and impressive history. I wish to spend the entire day at the Pyramid of the Sun. It is the longest building in Teotihuacán. I would also explore the Temple of Quetzalcóatl and go to the top of the Pyramid of the Moon. I imagine how I would feel when I walk up the steep stairs to the top of the pyramid. I would sit down to look at the spectacular view.

*(continued)*



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Chelo wrote about travel to Mexico City because she was born in Zacatecas but never had the opportunity to visit Mexico City.



Pyramids of Teotihuacán  
in Mexico City

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Finally, my last place to visit would be Quintana Roo because there are a lot of beaches there with beautiful turquoise water and fine white sand. I would walk along the beach and swim in the warm ocean. I would lie on the dock and feel the warm sun on me and smell the fresh ocean water. I would forget everything for one to two days, or maybe even a week!

I have been saving my money for five years, and I hope this year I can make my travel wish come true.

Playa Paraiso Beach,  
Quintana Roo, Mexico



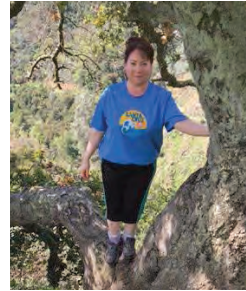
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## Improving English for a Better Life

*By Imelda Garcia*

I was born in Zacatecas, Mexico, and have been living in San José since 2001. My wish is to improve my English speaking, writing, and listening skills. I feel it is very important to speak, write, and listen well in English while living in the United States.

Since I have lived in San José for 17 years, I would like to improve my education. In October 2016 I joined the PAR program because it is a very good program that can help motivate learners to study English by assigning each participant a tutor. I have a very nice tutor, and her name is Kim. She has helped me improve my English speaking and writing skills. The program also hosts and allows participation in important educational events throughout the year. To make my wish come true, I study and read with my nephews every day at home. I also watch television in English at home and practice speaking with other people at work.  
*(continued)*



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Imelda wants to recommend family and friends to the PAR program because it is very educational.

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In my opinion, speaking and writing English well is necessary to communicate with other people. It will enable me to translate for my parents at their doctor's appointments. I will also be able to help my nephews with their homework. Overall, I want to learn and improve my English because I will be more helpful to my family, have more opportunities at work, and be able to communicate better. Thank you PAR for your support, and Kim for being my tutor in helping me make my wish come true.



Adult Learning Tutor  
© Martin Pinnau Photography

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## Libraries for Mexicali

By Maria Garcia-Jimenez

I wish my hometown, Mexicali, Baja California, had libraries in its schools. A big problem I remember from when I attended school there was the lack of access to books. Most schools didn't have libraries. Here in San José we can find libraries in every neighborhood and even in every school. I have also found that some schools have pantry libraries. Pantry libraries are small bookshelves that contain books and food for kids. Kids can bring a book and take a book, and families in need can receive free food. So my wish is to bring pantry libraries to schools in Mexicali. It would be great if children of all ages had the opportunity to explore books and expand their reading skills.

Since I moved to California, my children have had access to books. Some organizations (like PAR) have even given them books. This has encouraged them to read more and has helped expand their vocabularies.

*(continued)*

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Maria wrote about libraries because her wish is that her hometown's schools will be able to have libraries in the future.



Little Free Pantry/Library,  
Rock Valley, Sioux City, Iowa



Little Free Library  
<https://littlefreelibrary.org>

After seeing how much my own children's reading skills have improved, I have thought about contacting the administrators at the schools I attended in Mexico and donating books to start a pantry library.

I can organize a fundraiser and collect books to bring to the schools in Mexicali. It would be great if my old schools also had a food pantry, and maybe in the future they could start a library in at least one of the schools. If my dream comes true, my hometown will have better prepared and well-read children.



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## Wanting to Know My Grandparents

*By Paul Garza*

I wish I knew my grandparents on my father's side. I got to know my grandparents on my mother's side but not my father's. My grandfather was from Spain and my grandmother was from Germany. I'm curious about how they met and how they came to Mexico. I never got to meet them because they lived too far away. I wonder if I would have met them if I had been able to speak both of their languages, which were German and Spanish from Spain. I would have learned both languages if I had a chance to know them.

I would have liked to know what year it was when they met. I have always been a curious person. I would have liked to know both of their histories. How old were they when they met, and what was it like in those days? I know that they lived on a ranch. I imagine that they had cattle and horses and that they had to grow their own vegetables and fruits. And I imagine that they were hard-working people in those years. I love history—and what better history than my own family?



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Paul's wish is to know his grandparents' history.



Vintage wedding photo  
Spain c.1920

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## My Wish: To Get My College Degree!

By FTG

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FTG wrote this story for her tutor, Grada B. She writes, “Thank you for making my life so much brighter and useful. I’m really happy to see you every Friday.”

It always bothered me that I didn’t finish college. I come from a large family, and my dad was the only person working. He owned a business, and when his business went down and he was not earning enough money to support us, that was the time I dropped out of college and got a job to support my family.

I was so happy to find a job with only a high school diploma. I thought I was on top of the world—until I got laid off from my job. At that time I realized I should continue my education and earn my degree. I tried to take one college class at a time, however, my job is so labor-intensive and time-consuming. I wish I knew how to balance work and college. I might have a better job and have time to enjoy life.

I am really happy I created an opportunity for my siblings to follow their dreams. Three of them have professional jobs and are doing well. It brings a smile to my face to make it happen for them.



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Now it's time for me to follow my dream. Even though it's hard, I would like to continue and get my college degree.

One day I wish for my dream to come true.



Graduates holding college degrees



*“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”*

– Winston Churchill

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## I Wish I Had Joined the Army

By Rosemary G.



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Rosemary wrote this story to help her practice her writing skills and her spelling.

I wish I could start all over again and do things I didn't do in the past. After I got out of school, I would have liked to join the Army and continue going to school to improve my education.

At that time I didn't think of my future. I thought more about meeting my family's needs, such as taking care of my mother, nieces, and nephews. Additionally, I really didn't get encouragement from my parents about setting a goal in life and having a career that would help me financially in the near future.

I also wish I had gotten some knowledge about taking care of my mother, who had diabetes, so she would be in better health. I love my mother, but it was a lot of responsibility taking care of her by myself. I didn't get help from my brothers and sisters. They were too busy doing their own things. There were times I had to leave her alone at home to go to work, but I was afraid she would lose her balance, fall, and hurt herself.



I know I can't change the past. But I can go forward, and move on toward the future.

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## My New Life in San José, California

*By Tatiana*

Last year, I made one of the most important decisions of my life. In August 2017, I came to the United States from El Salvador. I was born, raised, and lived in El Salvador my whole life. My husband and I decided to move to San José because he started his master's program at the University of San Francisco.



It has been a difficult process for me because I changed my life completely: I left my family, my job, and my friends. Also the language was an important barrier that made this transition more complicated for me. I wanted to improve my English speaking, reading, and writing, so I began the Partners in Reading Program to develop my English skills. I also attend ESL (English as a Second Language) class every day because it is important for me to learn English perfectly.

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Tatiana is from El Salvador. She recently moved to San José, California, with her husband to begin a new life.

I wish to feel confident and independent in order to get a job in my chosen field, which is business administration. I also wish to read my favorite books and to talk well and understand any English conversation. My wish for 2018 is to be able to achieve my goal, and I'm making that wish come true!

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# My Travel Diaries

*By Herman Haro*

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Herman has been a PAR learner for about three years. His story about his wish states his ideal travel locations and places he wishes to explore and enjoy. Writing a story every year has always been exciting for him.



Leaning Tower of Pisa  
© Saffron Blaze

I wish I could travel to Europe. I especially wish to travel to two countries in Europe, namely, Spain and Italy. TV shows have been a great inspiration for me to add this wish to my bucket list. I always wanted to go sightseeing, enjoy different places, meet new people, and experience the diversity and the new culture.

I am curious to travel to Italy because it is the origin of beautiful and massive architecture. I want to visit Rome, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and Vatican City. I am sure the single sight of these places would give me the utmost content. I also love Italian cuisine. Since my childhood, I have always dreamed of traveling to Spain. In Spain, I would especially like to visit a town named Haro in the province of La Rioja. I am curious to trace the roots of my ancestry up to four generations back. I also wish to visit Barcelona and the capital city, Madrid.

I do have plans to set up an economic resource to make my wish come true. Also, I am planning a long vacation next year. With these two things combined, I am assured I will mark my wish completed on my bucket list.

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# The House of My Dreams

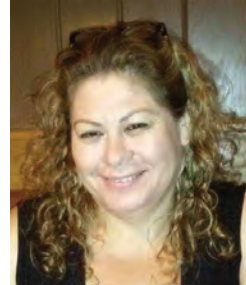
*By Irma H.*

I wish I lived by the ocean.

The house of my dreams will have a big open kitchen with a twelve-seat dining table for my family and friends. I want a red brick chimney in the living room, and also a view of Half Moon Bay in my backyard.

I wish to have a big garden, because I want to have a lot of roses. I like to smell the scent when they bloom.

I would also like to have dogs because I love them. From the house I could walk to the beach with family and friends. At night we could make a bonfire, talk, laugh, make jokes, and dance under the stars and also make s'mores. During the day I see myself walking along the beach with no shoes on and feeling the sand on my feet, hearing the sound of the seagulls flying in the sky. I also love the particular smell of the ocean and being in contact with nature. This is what I picture my dream house would be like. I hope one day my dream will come true and I will have the same house shown here.



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Writing this story made Irma feel that her dream will come true some day.



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## Al Mady wa Al Mostakbal (My Past and My Future)

*By Zeinab Ibrahim*



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Zeinab is from Egypt. She is studying English so she can be a citizen and live with her family in America.

First of all, I wish to learn English very quickly because I want to understand everything. For example, I want to go to the doctor by myself and go to the bank by myself, too. I want to be independent. It is difficult to be independent in the U.S. because I feel sad, annoyed, and frustrated when I can't understand other people, especially when they speak quickly. In Egypt I was independent. I worked by myself without needing help from other people, and I was able to help other people.

I also wish to find a job suitable for my age and my experience. I have experience in healthcare, teaching people how to be nurses. I also was a high school principal. I loved having contact with my students. I loved teaching and sharing knowledge, and going on vacation together. About every month we would go to see some tourist destinations, such as the pyramids, the Sphinx, Luxor, Sharm el Sheikh, the Red Sea, and going on camel rides in the desert. I wanted my students to experience these places and learn about their country.

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I wish that I could find something similar to my old job here in America. I would like to work with students or with seniors at an adult care center. I have experience in this field, so this is where I can help the most. I am thankful for all the people in my life who help me with this wish. I appreciate everybody who supports me, such as my school, the library, all the teachers, and my family.

*“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”*

– William Arthur Ward



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## The Value of a Good Education

*By Guillermo Jaime*



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Guillermo wrote this story about education because he thinks it is very important for children in the future.

My wife and I are immigrants. We emigrated from Mexico. Upon arriving, our main objective was to find important employment and build a stable environment for our children, Jorge, Omar, Ana, and Alex. This has been difficult in Silicon Valley, but over the years of achieving the American dream, our goals have evolved. One of the most important goals is the factor of education.

Education has always been important to my family. For me, education wasn't a luxury. For my children, education is a necessity. Besides achieving higher potential earnings, my children will acquire many positive spinoffs from their education. An education promotes critical thinking, furnishes informed voters, and it gives the freedom to turn dreams into reality.

However, these benefits come with many sacrifices. It is increasingly expensive, often requires learning about things that are not practical or meaningful, and is possible only with good technical and communication skills.



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This makes it especially difficult for new members of society who must first learn these skills before becoming more productive.

Today, I am honing my communication skills, seeing my daughter Ana graduate from Sonoma State University, and waiting for my son Alex to graduate from Bellarmine College Preparatory next spring. With strong dedication, our wish is that they will carry on this tradition and instill the same family values in their families.



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Sonoma State  
University

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## My Recipe Book

*By Aya Kumatani*



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Aya is a Japanese cooking teacher. She loves to cook and share her recipes with others.

I wish I could write my own recipe book.

I have been teaching Japanese cooking for two years. One month ago, my student suggested that I make my recipe book so she can create daily menus. The book will be a record of my old and new recipes. I will put in a lot of photos of my dishes.

First I will write the book in Japanese, and in the future I will translate it into English. To make my wish come true, I have to cook three healthy and delicious dishes every day and write down the recipes of those dishes. I will take pictures of them. My wish is to have 100 recipes in the book. When I have drafted my book, I will give it to a company in Japan that can sell it online and print the book on-demand. I will also sell printed books in my class here in the United States.

I am excited to have my first grandchild in August this year. It would be nice if my wish comes true so that my recipe book will be a legacy for my grandchild and future grandchildren.

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## A Language Chameleon

*By Gabby*

I want to speak English like a native speaker. For that I need to transform myself like a chameleon. They simply change color and look exactly like the tree they are climbing or the rock they are sitting on. Well, I can dream.... It is about me and my ability to use English every day, to understand, listen, speak, and write without translating, and read a book, watch a movie, or hang out with friends.

I study every day to achieve this transformation. My steps are: motivation, discipline, and practice. The challenge is to imitate the native pronunciation through videos that show the positions of the lips and tongue for the alphabet and all the combinations. At the same time, I participate in the Partners in Reading (PAR) Program and take an ESL class at the Rose Garden Branch Library. I send emails to Thea, my PAR tutor, where I write stories to practice my English composition, and take dictation with her to train my ear. Also I visit websites about the landmark places in the Bay Area, keep a diary of idioms, and sing songs in English.

*(continued)*

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Writing her story helped Gabby discover the longing in her heart for a life lived more fully. She wants to turn obstacles into opportunities, develop her goals, and then use all her resources to achieve those goals.





My wish is happening every day since I became aware that this is my new home and I will not be here for just a season. English is the official language of this country, and learning it will make me feel more integrated and give me a sense of belonging. I hope to be a language chameleon in a very short time to be able to work in my career. When I speak English like a native, my wish will have come true because I will feel independent. I will gain confidence in myself and it will allow me to reach my goals.

*“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.”*

– Pele

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## I Wish I Could Eliminate Needless Worries

By Rosa Lee

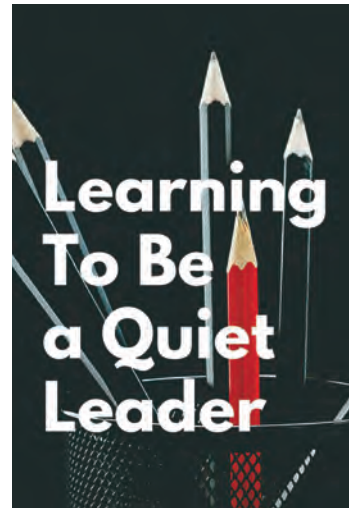
Have you ever heard the saying, “Speech is the picture of the mind?” I had grown up with this saying from my father. He always emphasized the importance of speech and taught me to watch my mouth. These teachings are based on traditional values of politeness, non-confrontation, and modesty. Unfortunately, these teachings became a barrier to learning a new language once I moved to the United States. Whenever I talked with new people, I was afraid that people would judge me because of my poor English skills. And this made me become quiet more and more. Recently, I have been trying to overcome these concerns. I took courage from some commentary about communication, and also from my tutor, Sara.

A few months ago, I read a column about the “7% rule” that only 7 percent of communication is the actual words spoken and the other 93 percent is nonverbal. This has helped me let go of my obsession that speech is the only way to converse, so that I shouldn’t make mistakes when I talk. Although I fail to find an adequate word, I can use the nonverbal way to communicate. Thus I feel more comfortable when I talk with other people.

*(continued)*

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Rosa wanted to share her experience with other people who are learning English.





Since I met my tutor, Sara, through the PAR program, I have become more relaxed about talking, too. She always waits for me until I finish my words, and she doesn't hurry me, so I can leisurely focus on the whole conversation. Additionally, she praises more than anyone else, and that leads me to feel confident.

Thankfully, my fear about English has become less and less. Furthermore, I am looking forward to talking with close people. Although some worries still remain in my mind, I wish to eliminate them soon.

*“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.”*

**– Henry Ford**

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## Small Steps!

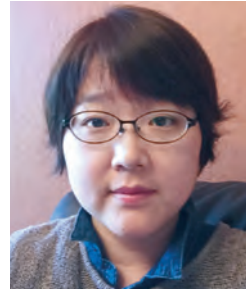
*By Yeongmi Lee*

When I was young, I wished to be a doctor, nun, or maybe a teacher. Now, I wish to be a good mom. I wish to show my son how to do his best by taking one step at a time in life.

People have different roles in their lives. I, too, have different roles: wife, mom, friend, teacher, and student. I know that it's impossible to live out all the roles perfectly. But I also know that I can do my best in all of those roles. It's hard to actually carry out "effort" in action. But in the same way that my parents showed me how "effort" is important, I also want to pass this value on to my son by living it out in my life.

I hope that it won't be portrayed as a drag or a hard task but a joyful, happy process, with me passionately taking one little step at a time, making my best effort.

Like my parents did for me, I hope that this value will be shown to my son.



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Yeongmi is a mom with one child. She wrote this story for her son.



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## Spicy Roy's Caribbean Grill

*By Fitzroy Leslie*



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Fitzroy has a big passion for the food industry. He has been cooking since he was 17.

My wish is that one day my dream will come true for Spicy Roy's Caribbean Grill, where I'll bring true Jamaican food to America.

The first time I went to a Jamaican restaurant in the Bay Area, my wife took me, and when we got to the restaurant we were excited and wanted to order everything from the menu. But when we got the food, we were disappointed. The food was really nasty. The chicken was baked and then they put whatever they call jerk sauce on the chicken, and that was a red flag for us. You couldn't even taste the coconut milk in the rice.

I got to see some of the chefs. At first I thought, "Wow, they are Jamaican." Nope, they were all Mexican. There's nothing wrong with Mexicans cooking Jamaican food, but there should be at least one Jamaican in the kitchen.

From there I told myself that when my restaurant opens, we will not make that mistake. We'll be diverse in the staff and make sure everyone learns the traditional Jamaican style of cooking.



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I grew up eating spicy food in the Caribbean, so when I moved to the U.S. it was a little hard for me to find out that not everyone can handle spice.

We used to do a popup BBQ every weekend at Jack’s Bar in downtown San José, where we served Ellen some jerk chicken. When she said that it was too spicy for her, I was thinking, “Really? That’s not spicy.” But when I think back, I say to myself, “I can’t do that because everyone has different taste buds.” So I won’t laugh and call her a baby, even though she always tells me that it was so spicy I made her cry.

Whenever my restaurant gets the chance to open its doors, it will be a fully seated restaurant. The colors of the restaurant will be red, green, and yellow. Each person will wear a different color. Inside the restaurant will be paintings of Jamaican art of how the food vendors do it in Jamaica, and a picture of Bob Marley, and some reggae music in the background.

This is the dream I have had for years, and I believe that dream will come true.



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Colorful cafe interior

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## A New Career in a New Country

By J. L.

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J. L. came from South Korea due to her husband's job and for her children to have an English education.

I wish to have a job in a large store to help others.

I came from South Korea due to my husband's job and for my children to have an English education. When I was young, I wanted to teach preschool kids at my daughter's school, so I became a preschool teacher for two years in Korea. Now that my children are older, I want to change careers.



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Costco employee meets President Obama, Lanham, Md. Photo by Mike Theiler-Pool/Getty

Many times I remember seeing the cashier or customer associate smiling at me when I went to buy groceries or other things. I'll never forget the time I went to Costco to return a large TV that my family had used for three weeks. I was so nervous because the TV was expensive. I thought the clerk was going to be upset. Instead, the return went smoothly and I was impressed to see the clerk treat me so patiently and kindly. I remember him and other associates being courteous, friendly, and helpful when I needed help. I felt very happy. So I thought I also want to do the same—to make customers feel happy and welcome.

When my English skills improve, I wish to work in a large store like Costco or Walmart.

## A Professional Chinese Calligrapher

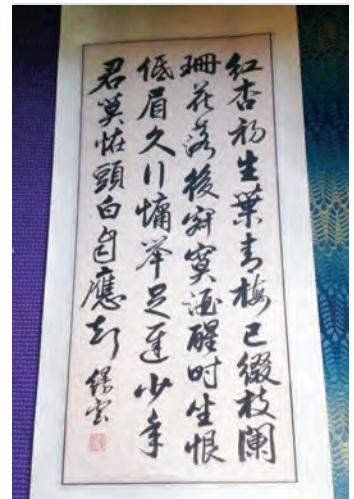
By Piyeh Liu

At the age of 12, I learned Chinese calligraphy. I was interested in this style of writing, and it became my favorite class in school. When I finished college, I became an elementary school teacher and then I pursued learning Chinese calligraphy with a professional teacher, Wong Ching Zhe 王靜芝, in Taiwan. I will never forget what my teacher said: “Calligraphy is a cultural treasure of China, and Chinese calligraphy has flourished for several thousand years. Chinese people need to keep this treasure alive and bring it to greater heights of development.”

Calligraphy has five styles: seal script, clerical script, standard script, cursive script, and semi-cursive script. It is very hard work and you have to take your time. You need patience and you need to be confident. Calligraphy has become a passion in my life and it's very relaxing to me. I learned a lot of skills from former famous Chinese professional calligraphers like Wong Chi Zhe 王羲之, Su Duong Pou 蘇東坡, and Chu Sui Liang 褚遂良.

*(continued)*

Piyeh has loved Chinese calligraphy for a long time. It feels good when she is doing calligraphy. It has become a passion in her life.





Tree painting with  
Chinese calligraphy

I wish I could have become a professional Chinese calligrapher. I taught calligraphy for more than ten years in Taiwan, then I continued learning, teaching, and creating my own calligraphy style. To me a professional Chinese calligrapher must have many exhibitions of their work. They also give cultural lectures about Chinese calligraphy and its cultural importance. In addition, a professional Chinese calligrapher develops a style that becomes popular among the people.

Currently my wish to be a professional Chinese calligrapher will remain my dream. My focus now is on caring for my family and continuing to develop my style of Chinese calligraphy.

*“A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.”*

– Brad Henry

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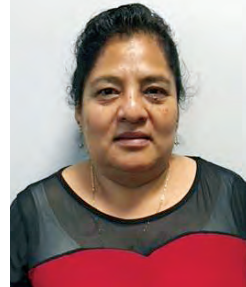
## I Closed My Eyes and Wished

By Porfiria Lopez

All my life I wished to study, but it was so difficult. I was just in sixth grade in Mexico when I had to stop. I was thirteen years old, and I needed to help with chores at home. In addition, the middle school was too far away from my town. I was so sad, but at that time I could only dream of being in the classroom with my friends.

Five years had passed when the neighboring town decided to build a middle school. It made me happy; I told my father to sign me up there. However, after my third day in class, my sister was born. That morning my father said to me, “Before you go to school, you need to prepare food for your mother. And when you come back from school, you’ll have to finish the chores at home.” I would have my four brothers and five sisters AND my homework to take care of. WOW! Impossible! To be a student was only a dream!

*(continued)*



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Porfiria likes to write to improve her skills. She is so happy with what she has learned. She feels so proud of everything she has.

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However, one day after moving to the United States, I found information about English classes. A woman at the library showed me the Partners in Reading program. I completed everything I needed to get a tutor. I never believed I could be a student again, but right now I read, write, speak, and understand English. I also do math and use a computer. I am so happy for what I've learned at King Library. I can't believe it! Indeed, my wish has become a reality!



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## New Country, New Life

*By Solange Maffi*

When I moved from Brazil I didn't move just to another country, I moved my entire life.

I moved from Brazil to the U.S. a year and a half ago because of my husband's job. Here I found a lot of challenges, but I learned much from each one.

First, I needed to learn how to do a lot of things at the same time, such as taking care of my baby, keeping my house clean, cooking, and doing everything that I needed to do to take care of my family.

After ten months we were able to start my son at a daycare, and this was the beginning of a new stage for me: it was time to take care of myself and to learn English.

I improved my health by losing more than 20 pounds in just four months by eating healthy food that I learned how to cook on the internet. I started to study English at a college, but I realized I needed specific classes to focus on my needs. My friend told me about the Partners in Reading program and I went to look it up.

*(continued)*



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Solange wrote this story to inspire those who have moved recently to the U.S. Partners in Reading can help you with the English language, and then you can help yourself with the other challenges that you find here.

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I started the program a few months ago and I am very happy because I already can see that my language skills are better. Now, I like to read English books and I'm reading about two books per month.

I really enjoy studying with my tutor, Anthony. Every class is different, and he keeps me motivated to learn more each day.

I'm grateful for the people who created and maintain this program, especially the volunteers for being generous with their time.

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Students learning English





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## A Wish for Education

By SRM

In December of 2017 I was excited that my family's wish came true. We wished for my son to graduate from college.

Our family wanted him to have a better, more stable life than my wife and I had. Without a degree, my wife and I work very hard for not a lot of money, and we struggle to pay our bills. We often work two or three jobs at the same time to support our life.

About eight years ago, my son was working as a custodian at San José State University, often working from 10:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. He was trying to take classes at Evergreen Valley College, so he would wake up at 3:00 p.m. for school. Watching him struggle made us feel sorry for him.

My wife and I encouraged him to stop working so he could concentrate on college. He had always wanted to earn a degree in computer science, and with our help he transferred to San José State University.

*(continued)*



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SRM wrote this story to share with his friends and family and with other people throughout the world.

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His graduation was a special day for our family. He was the first to earn a college degree. I hope he will get a better life soon. I am very proud of everything he has done.



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## The Note in My Overalls

By Rosario Martínez

I wished I had a better school education. I was born in Jalisco, México, where I only got a few years of education. When I grew up, I came to San José, California, where I met my husband. After two years we decided to get married and become parents. Now we have two handsome boys.

I had saved my wish for a better education in my overalls when I was younger. When my boys started school, it reminded me of the importance of education for them and myself. I discovered opportunities to make my wish happen. I attended many workshops; I volunteered and was involved in their schools. I planted the seed to continue my academic education no matter what.

After my boys grew up, I decided to take action with my note from my overalls and get my GED. I practiced talking in English with English-speaking people. I like to remember that faith and persistence go together. I discovered I was stronger than people told me.

*(continued)*



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Rosario decided to write this story to encourage other people to complete their wishes.



I worked really hard in my classes and at home doing my homework. I could see my wish coming true, and finally I got my GED certificate!

Now I feel like a new person, and I'm thankful to my family and to all the people who helped me and told me, "You can do it!" Always remember you might need somebody to help you to complete your wish, but YOU need to decide to do it!!

*“Education is the key to success in life, and teachers make a lasting impact in the lives of their students.”*

**– Solomon Ortiz**

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## My Wish Is for Everybody to Go to School

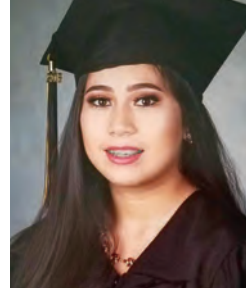
*By Maria Esther Melendrez*

On my last vacation, I met a woman who made a big sacrifice to take her daughters to school. She lives in the mountains and she needs to ride a horse for two hours every day to take her daughters to school.

When I met her, she told me she doesn't know how to read and write, and it is difficult and sad to live like that. That's why it is very important to her that her kids go to school.

I can imagine this woman was riding on a horse with her two daughters, maybe in the rain, wind, or heat. I feel sad when I think about this. Still, a lot of kids don't have schools in the places where they live.

My wish is for everybody to have the same opportunity to study no matter what gender or age. I want them to have good schools and libraries and continue with a higher education. I want all kids and young people to appreciate the opportunity. I think that to get a good education is to be rich.



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Maria is proud to write this story because she has the opportunity to write what she thinks. She is thankful for this program.

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## Where Have Our Children Gone?

*By Maria G. Mendoza*



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Maria wrote this story because of her kids. She sends them to school every day and she wants them to come back home safely. She wants them to know that they are here for a reason. She wants them to respect everybody, including students who are younger than they are. She wants them to know that everyone is special in some way.

Before I start, I would like to ask for a moment of silence for all the children we have lost at the hands of other children.

I wish that we could have our children back. I want to be able to send my kids to school and not be afraid or wonder if they will come back home that day. I want to see our children fight with books and pencils for an education, for a future—not with guns that create violence at our children’s second home. Let us pray for our children who to this day still have a gun in their hands, pray that they will let go of this gun, and pray to let them hold a pencil instead. I wish to have our children back.

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## A Hug for My Grandmother

By Sandra Mendoza

I have lived in San José, California, for twenty-two years. I wish to visit my grandmother, Maria Carmen, who lives in Jalisco, Mexico.

I wish to visit my grandmother because I have fond memories of her, such as her delicious food.

I also remember when she used to make me and my siblings and cousins handmade tortillas in an open-flame oven, and when we used to gather fruits and vegetables from her garden.

I remember that my grandmother was very poor, and she used to take me to collect recyclables at the local dump for protecting her shack from the environment, and also to collect materials to make adobe bricks.

I remember my grandmother ironing clothes with irons that would be placed on an open flame.

I remember having to walk from my home to her shack and her advice to ensure I would not step on rocks or puddles.

*(continued)*



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Sandra's grandmother is her inspiration because she is a very strong person and very loving. She is Sandra's angel and friend.

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I remember my grandmother's personality and how she is a very hard-working person.

My grandmother is in her 80s now, and to this day she continues to work very hard, taking care of her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

Unfortunately, my grandmother cannot visit because she takes care of my ill uncles and her own illnesses do not allow her to board a plane.

My grandmother is an excellent and wonderful woman, whom I admire and love very much.

For these reasons, I wish to visit my grandmother.

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Making tortillas on an open flame





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## The House on the Hill

By Toshiko Miraflor

I wish I could live in the house that is standing on a hill facing the China Sea.

The ocean views from the house are magnificent! You can see the blue sky, the cobalt blue ocean, breaking white waves, fishing boats, and the red-brown roofs of fishermen's houses. I am amazed at such a beautiful contrast of color. It seems like the house has everything that I am longing for!

I found the house in the early summer more than 15 years ago, when I visited Kitanaka village. That is on my childhood home, Okinawa Island, located to the southwest of the mainland of Japan. One day my friend Mutsuko and her friends took me to that house. A couple owned the house, and they opened a mini café after they retired. The café has just three tables; one is in the living room, the others are in the dining room and on the patio. The wife cooks vegetarian food, and her husband makes coffee and tea. The café opens from 4 to 7 p.m., by reservation only.

*(continued)*

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Toshiko wants to share the story of her dream house with family and friends.



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Okinawa, Japan

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If I could live in that house, I would plant flowers over the grass and I would spend all my time painting pictures. Sometimes I would invite my good friends for dinner. Then we would have nice conversations of the same old story until late. If I have a chance to visit my hometown, definitely I would visit the house again. Living in the house is just my dream; it would never come true. However, I will keep dreaming of that house for the rest of my life.

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Okinawa's beaches attract many people each year to travel. Map/Adoption from Visit Okinawa, Okinawa Tourist Convention Bureau



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## Recipes for the Soul

*By Donaji Montes*

I wish my granny had shared her bread pudding recipe with me!

Have you ever met a lovely lady who shares her love through soul food? If you have, maybe you met my granny!!! I called her Ango or Abue. The best way to show her love was through food. She prepared a special dish for every member of the family. Mine was bread pudding. She didn't have her recipes written down, and she made sure not to share them!

She avoided writing recipes to ensure tasty food just by smelling it, adding a little bit of this and that, and then tasting from the pot. She would make a special dish for you every time you visited her and requested it, but she would never share one single recipe.

Before I entered the university, I went to the jungle and realized that at least I would need to learn how to cook rice and beans. With that I could survive!

*(continued)*

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Donaji is a Mexican foodie and a businesswoman in Silicon Valley. She sticks to her beliefs and values. She wants to honor her granny with this story by sharing a little bit about her.



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I came back and asked my Abue, who didn't allow me to make notes but gently showed me how to do it. Since I didn't take notes, I forgot the way she taught me!!!

My Abue was sick for almost seven years and passed away earlier this year. I have made an agreement with her now that she is in heaven: I wish that she will share her bread pudding recipe with me and allow me to pass on her legacy and keep sharing my love not only with words and actions but also with food!

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Donaji Montes  
(far left) with her  
Abue and family



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## My Very First Friend

*By Kathleen Nicolas*

My wish is for my best friend, Tatiana. I hope she will have better health. We've been friends since we were babies and we've had a lot of fun together. We came to each other's birthday parties. Tatiana and I both went to Castellero Middle School and Pioneer High School. In high school we sang in the choir together. That was really fun. Every day we ate lunch together. Sometimes Tatiana came to my dance recitals, and she also watched me perform in the Moscow Ballet.

Sadly, in 2008, Tatiana got very sick. She had leukemia and was in the hospital. I went to visit her many times. I missed seeing her at school. Because Tatiana was sick, she missed her graduation in 2009. Instead, she graduated in 2010. My mom, dad, and I went to Tatiana's graduation. In March 2018, Tatiana had surgery. I went to visit her in the hospital.

This year Tatiana came over to my house for her birthday. We watched two movies and we ate popcorn. We were happy together. I love my best friend Tatiana and I hope she feels better.



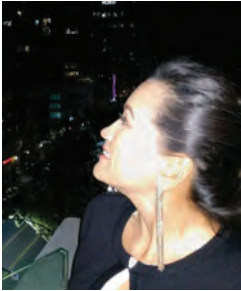
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Kathleen wrote this story about Tatiana because she is Kathleen's best friend.

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## Flying Without Wings

*By Mayfe Nieto*



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Mayfe wrote this story to take the opportunity to share her feelings.

A wish can be many things. What do you want? What ambitions do you have in life? I think everyone has many different wishes and they are working toward making them happen. Today I would like to share with you some of my wishes.

I wish to cherish every day and every moment that I have because I don't know what will happen tomorrow. I want to share my happiness each day with the people near me. I'm happy to have a job I enjoy. I wish to continue to work hard to achieve my dreams.

Around the world people are aspiring to reach their goals or wishes. Sometimes success can come easily and sometimes it's hard to get, but it doesn't mean we should stop striving to find a way to overcome obstacles that get in the way of our wishes. It all depends on how much we desire something and how long we are willing to fight to get that special thing—and when we do, we feel like we are “flying without wings.” So we should never give up having wishes and working to make them a reality.

My wish for everyone is that we can all make the desires in our hearts come true.

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## My Journey for Citizenship

By Soonhee Park

While living in Korea, my husband received a job offer from a California company. We carefully prayed about moving to the United States so our children would have a wonderful education and a better life. Working permits and visas were applied for.

I was nervous because many cultural things were difficult. After five years, we received a green card and my family eagerly applied for citizenship by filling out the N400 form, paying \$680 per person, and getting fingerprinted.

Our interview was six months later. Nervously, we studied U.S. history by using books, flash cards, and YouTube videos. Meticulously, we quizzed each other.

Confidently, we went to Immigration Services for our interview and civics exam. While waiting, my family prayed for wisdom and bravery. The interviewer guided me to her office. I raised my right hand and swore to tell the truth. She verified information on my driver's license, passport, and green card. The test began.

*(continued)*



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Soonhee wrote her story to tell others how she became a U.S. citizen.

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The interviewer asked me ten U.S. history questions, and had me read a sentence and write one dictation sentence. Finally, she told me, “Congratulations, you passed!” My husband and son passed, too. We felt as happy as larks. At the Naturalization Oath Ceremony, we swore allegiance to the U.S. and received our citizenship.

Through these steps, I remembered this Bible verse: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

My wish came true! I am a U.S. citizen!

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Naturalization  
Oath Ceremony





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# My Wish for My Daughter!

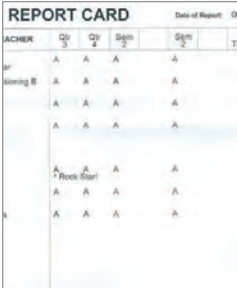
By Jackie Pham

One thing I wish for is that my daughter has a good future full of happiness and success. Some things I can do to support her in being successful are to make sure she does her homework, stays healthy, and gets plenty of sleep.

It's important to support her, because if she does well in school now, it will open doors for her and give her options for success in the future. My daughter is very happy when she gets good grades and excels at school. She has received all A grades in sixth and seventh grades. I help her with her homework by listening when she practices her speeches and by reviewing her assignments. I will support her decisions and reward her when she does well. Maybe in the future she will become a U.S. Senator.

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Jackie wrote this story for her daughter. She loves her daughter very much.



REPORT CARD						Date of Report:	05
ACHER	Q1 3	Q2 4	Sem 2	Sem 2	TR		
	A	A	A	A			
Working B	A	A	A	A			
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## “Just Do You”

*By Darryl*

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Darryl hopes to inspire people to go after their dreams.



Every dream needs someone to wish it. I heard this in one of my favorite songs, “Just Do You” by India Arie. Every time I set out to make my dream a reality, I listen to this song. It keeps me inspired and fired up.

India Arie sings, “There’s a story waiting for you to write it.” Mine will be about how I love my wife and daughters.

“There’s a treasure waiting for you to find it.” I found my treasure at PAR. I learned how to read.

“There’s a picture waiting for you to paint it.” My picture will show me owning my own successful business.

“There’s a dollar waiting for you to make it.” That is true. I’m coming for you, Mr. Dollar.

You see, I have many dreams as sung by India Arie, and even more dreams, too.

My wish is that all of my dreams become reality.

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## On School Days

*By Paco Reyes*

My two children wake up early in the morning on school days. Sometimes they use an alarm clock, but sometimes they don't want to wake up. Then their mother goes in the room and loudly tells them, "Wake up!," the teenagers say, "I need more sleep." They get mad. However, they have to get up because they need to go to school.

After my kids wake up, they get out of bed and stumble to the bathroom to get ready for school. The first step they need to do is to get the toothbrush, take the toothpaste, and brush their teeth. Then they are ready to wash their faces. Finally, they go to the kitchen to get a good breakfast. At last their bodies and minds are ready for school.

It is important to me that my kids go to school with fresh minds to be able to focus on their schoolwork. If they have fresh minds, they can better understand all the information that the teachers are teaching. My kids need to learn to be prepared for the future. I want them to do all this because it is my wish that my children go to college and get better jobs for more opportunities. I want better futures for them.

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Paco wrote this story because all families with children have similar days. He hopes that all families will continue to support their children in going to college.



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## Wishes From Childhood

*By Edel Riano*



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When Edel was a child, all around him were happiness and wishes, but today life is complicated.

When I was eight years old, everything around me was beautiful. The trees were so big they seemed to touch the sky; all the things around me were beautiful and not so complicated. But now my adult life is more difficult and full of rules. In the time when I was a boy I wished to have many things—for example, a dog as a pet, and a party for my birthday with lots of food and a lot of children to play with me.

I was very happy in my ignorance of not knowing anything about the attitude of adults. I would have smiled even if my parents or uncles gave me nothing for my birthday. If my parents or uncles did not give me the desired gift, I would smile anyway. I did not care and I kept playing. It fascinated me to play soccer because at the end of the game the coach gave us ice cream with chocolate for playing, so it made me forget all the things I wished to have.

I was a boy at that time. I was not interested in following the laws of society and working. I only wished to have a lot of friends and travel to space. But today I am an adult and I work and respect the laws. I wish to be a child again.

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## A Safe Haven for Dogs

By J. R.

I wish no dogs would be abused, and all dogs could find homes. Dogs love unconditionally, so it upsets me when people abuse them. For example, people use pit bulls for fighting and then throw them outside like a piece of trash when they can't fight anymore. When people move out of their homes, they sometimes abandon their dogs. When people give their dogs to an animal shelter, if the dogs are not adopted they are put to sleep. People should only get a dog if they can give it a home, food, and shelter for the rest of its life.

I once had a puppy. She was a pit bull and lab mix. Her name was Diamond, and she was a very smart and lovable dog. I had had her for ten years when she was diagnosed with kidney failure. I had no choice but to put her to sleep. It was the saddest thing I ever had to do. My boyfriend and I both cried. I kept asking for another dog, but he said, "No." Three weeks went by, so I went to the animal shelter by myself and found Shiloh. I didn't pick him out—he picked me out. He jumped on the fence and licked me. I took him home that day. My boyfriend told me he wasn't ready for another dog.

*(continued)*

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J. R. wrote this story because she wants to save all animals.



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Shiloh took to me rather quickly, but he had some behavior issues, like whining every time I left the house. He also chewed up my king-size bed. When I got home, I was so mad! One side of the mattress looked like a racetrack and the other side had a big hole in it. I had to buy a whole new bed, and two weeks later he chewed my new mattress. At that point I was ready to take him back to the pound. A friend told me not to do it because they would put him to sleep. My mom gave me a cage that solved my problem. When my boyfriend and I leave, we put Shiloh in the cage with some toys and some relaxing music. Shiloh is now happy in his new home.



Doggy destruction



Problem solved

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## My Heart's Desire

*Ida Joy Robinson*

I wish I could meet my Mr. Right. I am now feeling ready, visible, and available for dating. For me, a Mr. Right would be around my age, healthy, spiritual, fun, honest, and educated. He would be a man to celebrate life with. This wish became apparent to me this past February, because I missed spending Valentine's Day with that special someone. We might have gone out to dinner, a movie, a dance, or just hung out.

Once, in college, a peer made a comment that I would make a nice pet. I have never been anyone's pet, but I have many positive assets. I have a vibrant, witty, charming, and fun personality. I am also resourceful, attractive, happy, and friendly to those who come my way. A skill I have that attracts men is my delicious cooking. My ex-husband asked me to marry him after tasting a bowl of black-eyed peas that I had made. I still love to cook, so when Mr. Right comes along, he, too, can enjoy a tasty meal prepared just for him.

When I meet Mr. Right, we will begin our journey together with gratitude.



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Ida wrote this story because at this time in her life, she realizes how important companionship and having the right relationship are to her.

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## A Happy Life With MS (Multiple Sclerosis)

*By Maryam*



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Maryam is an immigrant from Iran, and she is a yoga instructor. She wants to inspire people to live fulfilled lives even when they have an illness.

It is 2000. I am in the doctor's office and I hear three words: "You have MS." I panic, I worry, and I am afraid for my future. I see myself as someone who cannot walk anymore. Within three years I have three attacks and am hospitalized. Then my doctor prescribes injections three times a week. I do this for ten years. The side effects get worse, and my body starts itching at the injection sites. So, I make a wish: I wish to stop my injections. But the doctor says no.

Instead of arguing with him, I decide to do something myself. I know how yoga helps people be mentally and physically stronger. So I see yoga as a possible way to fulfill my wish. In 2014, I begin to take more classes, start yoga instructor training, and get my certificate. My body becomes stronger, my balance improves, numbness decreases in my hands and legs. At the end of 2014, I stop my injections. Since then, I haven't had any attacks.



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My wish has come true! My energy and balance continue to get better. Now, I see yoga as a powerful tool to help people create new visions for their lives, like I did. When I see my clients happy and satisfied, mentally and physically, I am filled with joy. My next wish is to establish a yoga society to help people with illness live joyful lives.



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## An Ideal Home for My Family

*By Elena*

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Elena has warm memories from her childhood and wants her deepest wish to come true.

My family lives in a two-bedroom apartment but it isn't enough space for everyone. My husband and I have two kids. Our daughter is in college and our son is in middle school. They can't stand sharing their room. I often think about being able to move to a larger place. A house would be best. I don't need anything expensive or fancy, I just want my family to feel like they have enough room.

My dream is to create my own little garden. I would plant some flowers like sunflowers, daisies, and carnations, and herbs like sage, lavender, and lemon balm. I imagine a tiny waterfall in a corner of the garden so we can hear the relaxing trickle of water.

I could buy some outdoor furniture at a thrift store or garage sale. A table and chairs could be installed under some trees or in another shady spot. We would invite our friends, and our kids could entertain their friends, too.

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I like to make pierogi, and my husband cooks pilaf (rice with lamb). We would serve kvass, a drink made from water, sugar, yeast, and rye bread that takes four days to make. A handful of raisins is added the day before the kvass is served.

I have fond memories of good times with my parents and grandparents, and I want my kids to have fond memories, too. I would love to make this dream come true.



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## Dream Big

*By Lupe Sigala*

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Lupe wants to thank Partners in Reading for allowing her to “Dream Big.”

My wish is to be good at expressing my thoughts in written English. Sometimes I imagine beautiful poems in Spanish, and I wish I could write them in English. I also believe good English writing skills will help me express myself in my community.

I want to be able to fill out forms in English by myself. I also want to write my own letters. Mostly I wish I could write my own sermons in English. I want my writing to reach the hearts of many other people.

My library has a program that can help me make my wish come true. The program has people who are willing to help people like me. We don’t know English very well yet, but we want to learn. The program has a small staff of friendly experts and volunteers. These people are willing to give their time so we can learn. One of the volunteers is my tutor. He uses material from the program and advice from the experts to help me read, write, and speak better English. He helps me make my dreams come true.

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In my church there are many people who don't know English at all. I wish I could help them fill out their forms. I wish I could help their kids do their homework. Helping other people is very important to me. In order to do this, I need to learn myself.

I believe I can be a better writer. With the program experts, their material, my tutor, and my hard work, I am improving! I want to thank the library for a great program that lets me dream big and make my wish come true.



Helping with homework  
*How Kids Learn Resilience*  
The Atlantic magazine  
archives 2016-06

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## London Here I Come

*By Rajinder Singh*



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Rajinder wrote this story because he is going to Great Britain and the story will help him get ready for the trip.

I want to write a story about my wish list. I want to go to London! When I asked my sister, she said that she would love to be my travel buddy. It has been a long time—30 years ago! I want to visit my relatives. I have an aunt and cousin living there.

First I need to get a passport. I will need a suitcase, and some spending money. The money there is called pounds. Once I get my ticket and passport, I will go to security. Here, they will check that everything is in order. Then we will look to see what gate we will go out of. Soon it will be time to board! I hope to get a middle seat.

After takeoff, I hope to get a drink and a nice meal. I'll keep my seatbelt on for the whole flight. Before I know it, I will have arrived at Heathrow Airport in London. Boy, do I feel tired. Jet lag! Then it will be off to the Tube, the London subway. What do I want to see in London? London Bridge, the big Ferris wheel, and maybe a nice pub. I also want to see Buckingham Palace.

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Most of my family lives outside of London, in Nottingham and Birmingham. We will have a nice time with them. I hope to go shopping, take a boat ride, and see the ducks and seashore. My family will take us to their favorite places. I want to go to an Indian Temple. I can't wait to go out to eat for some fish and chips!

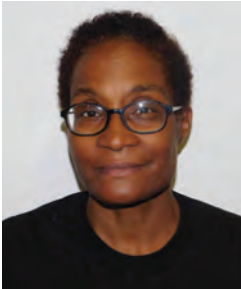
Soon it will be time to say goodbye. I might feel a little down to leave my family. On the way to the airport, I will think about all the places I have gone and the people I have met. When I get home, I will have lots of pictures and stories to tell of my wish come true!



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## Joseph and George

*By Jacqueline Smith*



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Jacqueline wrote this story to honor her godmother, Pauline Walker, and her brother, Clarence Dumas.

I wish I could spend time with both of my grandfathers, Joseph and George. Grandpa D and Little Daddy, as I lovingly called them, never never met each other. I imagine myself with both of them in Grandpa D's living room. The room had lots of light, and the windows had long white drapes that hung from the ceiling to the floor. Behind the drapes were shades that kept the room cool on a hot day. When the shades were up and the sun shined through, it was as if the room was in heaven.

Grandpa D and Little Daddy talked about growing up in the South, going to church, and the importance of having strong family values. My parents shared stories of the past, too. They made us giggle. We looked through black and white pictures of my dad's family. There were many photos of his brothers during their time in the military, and school pictures of his sisters. Little Daddy talked about living by himself in San Francisco, where you could hear the birds and see the boats on the Bay when it wasn't foggy. He told us a story of when he took my younger brothers deep-sea fishing.





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Little Daddy and my mom talked about roses,  
her favorite flowers. Grandpa D and Little  
Daddy played checkers, and my uncles would  
challenge the winner. You could feel the love in  
the room. Thinking about this wish makes me  
smile and fills my heart with joy.



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*"Ron Suki, still the real  
Checker King"*  
© www.thechessdrum.net

*"You don't learn to walk by following rules. You learn by  
doing, and by falling over."*

– Richard Branson

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## My Grandmother

*By Leo Smith*



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Leo wrote this story to remind him of his grandmothers.

I only met them when they came to visit my mother. I met them in Hugo, Oklahoma. They came to see us. When I spoke to my grandmother, she had white hair. When she was in her 90s she told us she had a treat for us. It was persimmons. Then I spent a whole week there. She had 20 different trees. At that time in their house they had many toys, so we had to watch out for the toys.

My other grandmother made us sleep. She had silver hair. My daddy's parents visited and got us gifts. When my great grandmother passed, one of my cousins told me to kiss her forehead while she was in the casket so I wouldn't be scared of her. My dad was a hunter. My grandmother taught us how to ride a bike. She had hazel eyes. I wish she had lived a little longer.

I love my grandmother and great grandmother. My grandma is very special to me. I miss my grandparents and great grandparents. I would like to see them again.

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## Going to College

By S. S.

If I could have any wish right now, I would like to go back in time and make better use of my time. I know that time travel is impossible, but there probably were times when I could've made better decisions or worked harder in school. If I can't travel back in time, then at least I can try to improve myself now by going back to school to have a better life in the future. Going back to school is important to me because I am the youngest of five children and none of my siblings has gone to college; my parents came from a different country where education was barely available.

Going back to college will have a good impact on my own life and on future generations in my family. This step will take place only after I know that I'm fully comfortable with my reading and spelling. With the Partners in Reading program, I have seen improvement in my reading and I feel more confident in what I'm reading and spelling. Although I can't go back in time, I can make good decisions now and work hard toward my goal of going to college.



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San José State  
University

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## We Can Overcome

*By Rufus Stevenson*

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Rufus wrote this story to give homeless veterans some hope.

I wish homeless veterans could find permanent housing. I was a homeless veteran. My wish came true in 2015. I lived in a big house with three other veterans in downtown San José for about two years, and now I have my own one-bedroom apartment. It was hard because of some legal issues, mental illness, substance abuse, learning disabilities, pride, and shame.

I started off at the VA (Veterans Administration) in Menlo Park, California, in the substance abuse program and Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program (HVRP). They helped me restore my confidence in myself. “I create what happens to me.” I will never forget that. I took up golf and won some tournaments. My best move was when I started a literacy class at Menlo Park Public Library (Project Read). It helped me apply for a job at the VA hospital where I work today. I also took a literacy class through Partners in Reading at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San José.

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Thanks to all the people at Project Read in Menlo Park, and at Partners in Reading in San José. Dreams do come true. Hope to cope. From impossibility to reality. Reading and writing helped me recover.

“There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not.” —Robert F. Kennedy

To the special people in my life who have listened without judgment, helped without conditions, understood with empathy, and believed in me, thank you from the bottom of my heart. You know who you are. Thanks.



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# When My Life Changed

*By Andrew*

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Andrew has improved his reading and writing over his 10 years in the program. He uses his skills in his work as a lay minister.



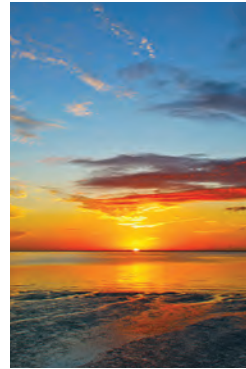
When you think about wishes, you always assume it's for kids. Kids always want to be bigger, stronger, famous, rich, something like that. When you think about adults, their wishes are not the same as children's. They have been tarnished by life situations, and some adults never wish because they think it's foolish. But it's great that we can write about our wishes.

Mine would be to go back to 1984. Why 1984? Well, let me tell you. That was the trip that we took to Hawaii—my mom, my dad, my two brothers, and me. It was a great time—the first time going on a plane, flying to Hawaii, and everything about Hawaii was nice. We were there for about a week or so. It was late August, and then September 1<sup>st</sup> happened.

What happened on September 1<sup>st</sup>? That morning started just like every other morning, with breakfast, but as boys will be boys, we got in trouble. My dad told my brothers and me, "We are not going to the beach today." When my dad said we were not going to go, we were not going to go. We were sad, so we turned on the TV and watched cartoons.

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An hour went by, and my dad came to us and told us to get ready. We asked, “Get ready for what?” And he said, “We’re going to the beach.” My brothers and I looked at each other, puzzled, but we got ready because this didn’t happen often. We got to the beach, took some pictures, then my mom and brothers and I went swimming. My dad went snorkeling away from us. Some time went by, and my mom asked my older brother to get Dad. While my dad was snorkeling, he had a heart attack. My brother and a stranger pulled him out of the water. We called 911, the ambulance showed up, he got CPR, but unfortunately he passed away.



That was a very sad time. My father died when I was 11 years old. My father never saw me grow up, graduate from high school, get married, and do what I’m doing today. There’s times when I remember that he was an influence on my life. It would be awesome if I could see him now. I think he would be proud of me.

*“I am a teacher. It’s how I define myself. A good teacher isn’t someone who gives the answers out to their kids but is understanding of needs and challenges and gives tools to help other people succeed.”*

– Justin Trudeau

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## My American Dream

*By Veronica Suárez*



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Veronica wrote this story because she wants to follow her American Dream.

It is my wish to work here in the United States. Twenty-two years ago, when I lived in Guadalajara, Mexico, I was employed and worked hard in many supermarkets.

When I arrived in this country, I wanted to work but I was recently married. My husband and I wanted to have a family and I would stay at home. I found a job as a housekeeper. It was a horrible time. I was an immigrant, I didn't speak English, and the babysitter mistreated my two-year-old son. And then I got pregnant. My husband suggested that I should stop working. It was a good idea. That job was not for me, especially the bathrooms!

I like to feel useful, provide a service, inform and attend to people. I always know what I want and where to find it. In this country I have learned that each supermarket is for a different need. When I buy my groceries, I can't help but put myself in the place of the employees. I want to work like they do. I can't work like that in this country because I am not a citizen, but soon I hope I can.



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My two-year-old son is now twenty-one, and he can help me obtain a work permit. During the process of fixing my residency, I reflect about all the opportunity that I will have to work in any supermarket like I want!

Thanks to the Partners in Reading program, I have improved my English. During my study time I realized that I can do everything I want, and I like that. Now I'm more informed, confident, and prepared about the jobs in this country. I like to give 100 percent in everything I do because I like to enjoy everything I do.



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## Sori Naneh

*By Ali Taghizadeh*

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Ali wanted to share the value of the time he had with his grandmother, Sori Naneh, because he never got to say goodbye. They both emigrated to different countries.

I wish I could see my grand moma and say goodbye. I had to leave my family in Iran unexpectedly and couldn't visit her to say goodbye. If I could see her now, I would tell her I am sorry I couldn't hug her one more time. I would tell her that I haven't forgotten all the memories I have from her home. I would say, "Yes, Grand Moma, you were right. Your family are always immigrants." I would ask her a question that is important to me: "Were you proud to be an immigrant?" My grand moma immigrated to Iran from Azerbaijan. This is important, too, because I am very happy, proud, and blessed to be an immigrant to the U.S.A.

I know my grand moma would say many good things, like that she was proud of her family and the things she was able to teach us about living with dignity and humility. She would say that her family was forced to leave Baku to move to Iran, and that circumstances were hard but that she and her family were happy. I would tell her that I also had to leave and continue life in another place to make a future for myself.

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If my wish were to come true, I would say to her, “Twelve years since the last time I heard your voice, I still hear you in my heart and remember what you taught me.” Then I would kiss my Sori Naneh and hug her one last time.



*“There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”*

– Edith Wharton

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## Back to My Country With My Family

*By Maria Torrico*

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Maria came to this country from Bolivia. She is married and has three children.

I wish I could go back to my country, Bolivia, with my children to show them where I grew up. I would like them to talk with my mom, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I would like to show them my elementary school and the places where I grew up.

I can imagine it happening. It would be a great wish come true to see my mother, brothers, also my cousins and my friends. I would show my children the big house where I grew up. It had many fruit trees and flowers. I would show them my elementary school, which is very close to my house.

All my mom's brothers and sisters live in the same area. They are neighbors because my grandparents bought the land and gave some to each of their children. I would like to go to my cousins' houses. I'm sure my children would like it.

The area where I lived is a beautiful place, close to the mountains. The water came down from the streams. There was a German beer



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Laguna Colorada, Bolivia

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company named Taquina. I went to play there with my German friends. I had fun pushing cars with wheels to different sections. The beer company was huge, but all the neighbors knew each other.

I also enjoyed going to the soccer games with my uncles. My family would watch a soccer game. It would be a good experience with my family to enjoy my country where I grew up. Maybe one day my wish will come true.



Bolivia's Juan Carlos Arce (#7) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Chile during their 2018 World Cup qualifier football match in La Paz, on September 5, 2017.  
© AFP/AIZAR  
RALDES

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## The Downtown San José Neighborhood

*By Gerardo Vazquez Padilla*



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Gerardo is a local pastor in downtown San José. He wrote this story because he wants to highlight the problems in downtown San José.

When I arrived in San José many years ago, I noticed that the city was generally clean. Everybody had a place to live, and there were few homeless people. We could all find jobs easily.

Now the city has grown. I see a lot of changes, but not in a good way. There's garbage all over, many homeless people in the streets, some of whom use doorways for a toilet. The parks are not safe for children to use because there are drug addicts and mentally unstable people there. The downtown neighborhood has become dirty, dangerous, and without a place for children to play.

I see all these problems because I serve the Latino community at the First United Methodist Church across the street from City Hall. I hear all these concerns from my parishioners. They live indoors because it's not safe to be outside. Women and children are especially endangered because some men expose themselves. For example, apartment laundromats are used by them for taking showers in the nude.

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The other day a group of youth came to me in fear. They told me that several gang members had threatened them with a gun and told them to go away because the neighborhood belonged to the gang. I told their parents to call the police, but they didn't. They were afraid of repercussions from the gang members. They were also afraid because of their immigration status.

I wish that the experiences of all the children in downtown San José could take place in a safe and clean neighborhood. I wish the children could have access to parks and feel safe. The children are the future of our city. We need to focus on ways to help them become better citizens.

I know that housing is very expensive and the growth process is difficult. However, it is my wish that the city leaders meet with people from the neighborhood to figure out what can be done to solve these problems. We urgently need attention paid to these concerns.



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San José First  
United Methodist  
Church.  
© 2015 ShinyA G.

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## Traveling With My Team

*By Mercy Wong*



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Mercy wrote this story because she wants to learn to be a writer.

My dream is to go one time to the National Special Olympic Games. They play different sports in different months. I want to play basketball in January. The basketball game is in Seattle.

I love to travel with my team and stay at a motel and dorm. I like to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner with my friends. We also play fun games during breaks. My coaches, Keith and Kyle, go with the team. My team will compete with other teams.

Other sports in different months are track, gymnastics and swimming. I want to play basketball and win medals. I like for people to cheer me on, to say, “Go Mercy, Go!”





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## People Need a More Active Life

By Viktor Yakauleu

I wish that people would pay more attention to their health.

The modern lifestyle lets us have many opportunities to do everyday chores more easily than decades ago. It gives us a lot of free time. Cars reduce the transportation time and fast-food restaurants offer quick access to meals. Electronic devices let you contact other people without meeting them.

But everything has another side. Most people do not have enough movement or activity in their daily life. In the morning we go to work by car or public transport. The work at the office makes you sit at a desk. For lunch people eat high-calorie foods. Then we return home and eat the same calories for dinner. Many people spend a long time sitting on a sofa, watching TV or chatting on social networks. Of course, that is a part of modern life, but everything must have a limit because it affects our health, too.

*(continued)*



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Viktor thinks people need a more active life.

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First of all, it results in obesity, overweight, and back pain, and can be a cause of many diseases. Second, it leads to sleeplessness. Doctors recommend to not use any devices with screens (displays) for one hour before bed. Third, the human brain needs a constant workout, just like muscles do. Studies show that reading good books helps us more than watching TV. Lastly, TV, PCs, and smartphones have become our close friends, and sometimes this is a problem for establishing a good relationship between people.

I wish and recommend that people walk 10,000 steps every day, eat more fruits and vegetables, and read books. Libraries in San José offer a lot of them. If you don't know English so well, the PAR program will help you.



© Dan Gold

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## My Two Hometowns

By Rumiko

To my sorrow, it is almost time for us to return to Japan. My family and I have lived in San José since 2012, when my husband transferred here. I don't want to leave San José. Last year, I stated in my essay in the PAR learner book that San José has become my new hometown. I would like to enjoy my American life longer and continue studying English, walking, and quilting. On the other hand, I want to return to my normal life in Japan because many of my friends have returned to Japan and my family has been looking forward to my return. I miss my family, my friends, my job, and Japanese life.

I wish I could live in both countries. If possible, I'd prefer to go back and forth between Japan and the United States. Through my life in the U.S. and Japan, I've realized both countries have good points. There are wonderful open spaces for hiking, kind people, and a good English learning system in the United States. Then, there is beautiful scenery, good food, quality products, and a culture that values politeness and harmony in Japan.

*(continued)*

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Rumiko has lived in San José for five and a half years. Probably this is her last essay for PAR books.



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I would like to spend summer, autumn, and winter in San José because the weather is comfortable. Then I would like to stay in Japan from New Year's to spring because I could enjoy the beautiful blooming cherry blossoms. I wish I could move freely between my two hometowns forever.

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Cherry Blossoms  
in Japan



*“When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached,  
don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.”*

**– Confucius**

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## Seeing the Bright Side

By Haya

I wish I could have a positive attitude in any difficult situation I may run across. When I prepare our dinner, I usually listen to the radio in my language. This is a little relaxing time for me in the comfort of my first language. A couple of days ago, one woman was presented on the radio program. Currently, she is a writer, traveler, and coaching counselor for young people, but she had been a delinquent teenager. Even though I already knew about her amazing story, it was so interesting to listen to it in her own voice. She worked hard to become successful, and then she was diagnosed with cancer at 25 years old. This changed her perspective about what's important in life. She wrote a bucket list of seventy items and started completing them one by one. She traveled all over the world, acted in an Indian film, wrote a book, ran a marathon, became a professional photographer, and she has already accomplished many items on her list, and she is still working on others.

*(continued)*

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As someone living in a foreign country, due to a language barrier, Haya is faced with a lot of everyday difficulties. That's why it is important to her to see the bright side and to think in a positive way—to focus on more meaningful things.



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At the end of the story, I felt that it was not her story that made me look at myself, but her attitude and way of thinking when faced with difficulties. I realized that when facing problems, I can find solutions if I keep a positive attitude and look on the bright side. That's why I wish to learn to focus on a positive solution instead of on my worries.



*“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”*

– Lao Tzu

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## Strengthening Our Children

By Nobuko Yatsuzuka

I wish Japanese compulsory education would make students have occasion to converse with native English speakers. In Japan, I studied English from middle school through college. I remember that I took many tests and copied in my notebooks the many notes that the teacher wrote down on the blackboard. I remember how I strived to improve my English in order to get good results. I focused on grammar and writing for the duration of my English education. But as a result, I was not able to increase my ability to communicate with others in spoken English. My way of studying English was not practical.

Now I'm actually living in the United States. I struggle to pronounce English correctly. Additionally, I noticed we have a tendency to get cold feet when we talk with different races. Also Japanese phonetic sounds differ from English sounds. There are sounds that we pronounce frequently that are not used in English, and there are English sounds that are not used in Japanese.

*(continued)*

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Nobuko learned written English in Japan, but she struggles with spoken English here in the United States. She hopes her son and children in Japan can acquire communication skills in English while having fun.



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Despite these differences, my four-year-old son speaks English correctly by copying what his preschool teacher says. I realize that it's essential to acquire practical English by speaking with native speakers and by reading the newspaper and children's books. If Japanese institutions included conversation class with native English speakers beginning in kindergarten, then students' spoken English ability would improve. If my wish comes true, many children in Japan would have greater opportunity for success in school, and also the self-confidence to compete in the global workplace.

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Niji-Iro Japanese  
Immersion  
Elementary School,  
Livonia, MI



[www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/livonia/2014/09/03/new-school-year-opens-new-chapter-japanese-school-livonia/15017085/](http://www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/livonia/2014/09/03/new-school-year-opens-new-chapter-japanese-school-livonia/15017085/)



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## My Dream

*By Ling Yeung*

Ever since I was in college, I have wished to be the best chef in the world. If so, it would fulfill most of my dreams, and I would be able to use my celebrity influence to help others everywhere.

I have a passion for cooking and a dream to live around the world. For me, different countries have their unique ingredients and good chefs. I wish to taste different types of food, explore their culture, and develop rich relationships. It would be a good opportunity for me to share Chinese culture around the world and create some crossover cuisine.

Also, I would want to use my influence to attract people to contribute to their community. While staying in a country, I would open a cooking school for people who have trouble finding a job or for people who need inspiration or lack purpose. Through their cooking skills, they can build their confidence and better understand themselves in order to get back into the job market.

*(continued)*



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This has been Ling's second year with Partners in Reading. She thanks her tutor, Eileen, who has brightened her life. Ling is shown on the left, with Eileen on the right.

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I know my wish to be the best chef in the world won't come true, but I can become the best chef in my community. For example, I can start by volunteering to cook for local seniors at the community center.

Loaves & Fishes  
Family Kitchen,  
San José  
[www.loavesfishes.org/volunteer/](http://www.loavesfishes.org/volunteer/)



*“Success is where preparation and opportunity meet.”*  
– Bobby Unser



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Get Involved:  
<http://libraries.volunteermatch.org/>

*5 reasons to*  
**VOLUNTEER:**

1. Develop new skills
2. Help a cause that lights you up
3. Meet new people
4. Connect with your community
5. Expand your horizons

