

My Hero

PARTNERS IN READING



San José Public Library

Adult Literacy Program

2011

“My Hero” Production Team

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A Note About the Cover

The cover is based on a game called Scrabble, where you use letter tiles to build words. The words can go forward and down. Playing Scrabble is a great way to practice spelling and to learn new words. PAR took the themes of this book—heroes, moms, and dads—and made a Scrabble board with those words. Can you make new words from these words? Count the numbers on the letter tiles to add up your points.

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



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- California State Library Literacy Services for their financial support and efforts to advance adult literacy to programs big and small throughout California.

Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support

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Introduction

Partners in Reading (PAR) would like to thank every learner who wrote a story for this year's book *My Hero*. Writing is not easy, but it can be fun. First you need something to write about, and then you need a plan. Then you need to make some notes and write the story. Then you need to go back many times and make it better. Sometimes you ask questions about what other information needs to be added. What needs to be taken out? Is my reader going to understand me? Is there a way to say anything better? The writers in this book did all of those things.

Thank you for sharing your words with many readers. You took a risk and let other people into your lives to read your stories and to learn more about you. We hope you liked doing it and that you will do it again. Your words will become lessons for others in the program. They will also inspire others to write their stories too.

Thank you also to the tutors who give so much time and effort to help adults meet their goals. You meet week after week in a library to share your skills so that others can become more involved in the world around them, so their world can be enriched. PAR tutors open doors for others in ways that are difficult to measure. What's the value to a mother who can now read a bedtime story to her child, or a father who can now help his son with homework? The value of being able to apply for and now qualify for a job? The importance of finally understanding one's doctor and for the first time asking questions about

the illness? It's through tutor support that adults realize these accomplishments. There is no way to express adequate appreciation.

Thank you to the City of San José and the San José Public Library. They support PAR in ways that enable tutors to help learners achieve their goals in literacy and in life. Our hope is that many people will read these stories and also be inspired to write a story for the book next year.

To all of the published authors in this book, and to all the learners who have the courage to walk through the doors of the library each week and work hard to improve their reading and writing, you are our heroes.

Debra

by Abraham

My hero is Debra. I meet Debra at the library. She is my tutor for spelling. I was very happy because Debra is so good in explaining spelling slowly. I get help with writing and sentences, too. Now I can read the book okay. This will help reading to be more interesting. I will work hard with her.



Abraham likes to study grammar and likes to use computers to send emails.

“I come to PAR to learn to read better and because I want to learn bigger words. I like reading junior novel books. I read and write at home.

These are two of my favorite activities, so coming here helps me.”

– M. T.

My Inspiration

by Balbir Singh



Balbir came to the U. S. in 1980 from India, where she completed the third grade. She has four children and three grandchildren. She is an extremely motivated learner and has been working with PAR for about 2½ years. She hopes to speak, read, and write English well, so that one day she can teach others and help her grandchildren as well.

When asked, “Who is my hero?” without a doubt, the first person that came to my mind was my dear grandmother. She was and will always be my inspiration, teacher, mother, and best friend. She was a very hard-working and smart lady.

My life in India, during the time when I was physically with her, was full of pain, darkness, and loneliness. She was the one thing in my life that was good. She would tell me stories, watch out for me, tell me about her life and teach me philosophies that she learned. She was the only person who would go out of her way for me, believed me and had faith in me. Many people in the village where I grew up respected her, and to me she was a gift from God. She was a very honest person. My whole family did not see that I was worth anything but for cooking and doing all the chores. My grandmother, however, would remind me of how precious she thought I was. When I think of her or talk about her, it makes me happy.

My circumstances in life have been very bad, and her teachings have given me the strength, power, faith, and ability to overcome all those hard times. When I think of her, I smile and almost cry because she brought hope to the girl who was supposed to be hopeless. She did not have an education because at that time women did not have a school. She taught me to gain knowledge by listening and watching other people. Because of her influence, I learned to adapt and overcome hardships. I wish I could give her a hug, kiss her, and thank her for coming into my life. I had to face a lot of challenges in my life, which I overcame because of my dear grandmother. All those challenges taught me a great deal about life. Today I am a very happy person, mentally and spiritually, because of my grandmother's lessons.

Jimmy Is a Good Man

by Faalaa Achica



Faalaa is happy that he is learning to read. He comes four days a week to the library to work with his tutor.

Jimmy helps me. He gave me my first job. I worked in his car wash in Palo Alto. It closed. He helped me get all my papers so that I can work. Now he is looking for a job for me.

Jimmy fixes his own car. Sometimes he goes to Pick-n-Pull to get car parts. He lets me watch him repair his car. I learn what to do.

Jimmy and his wife Lucy live in East Palo Alto across the street from my family. I visit them in their house on the weekend. Sometimes Jimmy and Lucy take me places; to doctor's appointments, too. They buy me clothes and shoes. Sometimes Jimmy and Lucy invite me for Sunday dinner with their daughter DeAnna and their grandson James. I wear my good Sunday clothes.

Jimmy talks to me. He likes to fix things. Jimmy is a good man.

Rose Showed Us How

by Emebet Akalewold

My hero is Rose. She has been Director of Nursing at the Sub-Acute Saratoga Children's Hospital for more than 16 years and has extensive experience in critical care. She provides ongoing leadership and education in Nursing Systems Development and promotes quality care.

She is a very hard worker. The way she works makes all employees work hard. The hospital is very neat and clean. I watched my bosses in my previous jobs, and they didn't do things like Rose. They told us to do our job, but Rose showed us how to do our job. That makes Rose my hero.

Emebet has been in the program for 1½ years. She is improving her English, which helps her at work.

My Hero

by Ines Alatorre

Ines comes from Mexico. She has been in the United States for 17 years. She has 3 brothers, 5 sisters, and 3 children. She became a grandmother in July 2011. She volunteers for the Red Cross, and worked on the census. Her hobbies are reading novels and walking.

My hero is my mother. When my mom was 8 years old, my grandma had to leave her with her mom's godparents. My mom couldn't understand why her mother treated her that way. My mom wondered, "What was wrong with me? Why didn't she take me with her? Why did she change my life that way?" After a while, she started to fit in with her new family. Five years later, the oldest daughter was abducted by a drug dealer. Then the entire family moved away because the godparents wanted to protect the other children. When my mom was 15 years old, she moved to another port, where she met my father, who didn't want her to work anymore. Despite my mom's hardships, she had the courage to start a business and take care of her family.

About 35 years ago, my mother started her own business in her home. One day, she invited her friend who worked as a nurse in a clinic to come eat lunch. But her friend Lupita came over with two of her coworkers who were doctors. Since they loved her food, they asked my mother to cook for them. That's how my mother had the idea of opening her business by cooking meals for them. My mom thought about that and she said, "Why don't I have my own business without my husband?" and she started it. She sold food to the medical clinic in her town.

At first, she was very nervous because her husband didn't want her to have her own business. My father didn't like that she made more money than him. But my mom was determined. She found a way to buy her supplies to open her business. At that time, the woman's role was to stay at home and take care of her husband, then her children. My mom broke the social rule. She is a woman. She was able to run her business at the time.

My mom found a way to spend time with her children. She woke up early every morning to get her children ready to go to school. Then, the rest of the day she spent her time running her business. But when we arrived from school, she took care of us. Because of the way she grew up, she didn't want her children to have the same hardships she had. She wanted her children to be educated and prepared for the future. She wanted all her children to have a good education, and she almost accomplished her goal for her children. Most of us went to college, and she was proud of what she achieved. The most important value for her was for her family to be together.

I feel proud that she started her business, kept her family together, and ensured that her children got a good education on their own. Through her business, she was able to earn enough money to contribute to her family's income and goals.

I know that my mom wants the whole family to succeed in life. She never gives up on anyone in the family. She's the one who keeps everyone in the family going. I'm so happy that my mom is a strong person. My mother taught me that nothing is impossible. There's always a way of achieving your goals.

“I recommend that everyone volunteer with the Partners in Reading program at least once. The rewarding experience of teaching someone literacy goes without saying—it's wonderful on many levels. What you probably don't know is that the program is very well organized, and offers tons of free tutoring resources, from books to helpful coordinators. I had a great coordinator who made an effort to work with me individually, and guide me throughout my tutoring experience. That personal support isn't available just anywhere! ”

– C. H.

My Hero Is My Dad

by Megnaga Aimru

Megnaga came to the United States September 11, 1996. When she first went to school, she was nervous because she didn't speak English. Now she speaks English well, and is attending San José City College, where she wants to get a degree in child development. She started working with PAR in summer 2010.

My hero is my dad, who came from Ethiopia to California when I was small. He brought my family to San José. When I was ten he went to school to learn English, and worked for the police office. That was his favorite job.

When I was little, my dad was always there for me if I got hurt. He knew when I was sad. If I needed something, he would get it for me. He always took me to play tennis. When I went to school my dad always walked with me.

When I turned 18, my dad took me to the beach. We went in the water, played games, went on rides, and ate a lot. We had cake when we got home. It was my best birthday ever.

My dad is strong, and he always tells me to be strong, to try my best, and to follow my heart.

When my dad gets old, I will be there for him. No matter what happens, I will always love him, and he will always be my hero.

My Three Heroes

by Juanita Avila

My heroes are my mother, father, and my sister Enedina. They all took care of me as I was growing up. They all taught me how to be a better person.



My mother is my first hero, because she gave me life. My mother had twelve children and still worked a ten-hour shift. She always shopped at Goodwill stores to save money, because she had so many children. My mom always made me feel safe. My mother will always be my hero, because she stood strong even through tough times and kept our family together.

Juanita really wants to keep improving her spelling and reading. She is very proud of herself. She hopes to motivate other people who have the same problem to go to Partners in Reading.

My father is my second hero, because he taught me how to survive in this world. My father had twelve children and never gave up on any of us. My father has a good sense of humor and makes everyone laugh. My father worked hard to make ends meet. My father will always be my hero for his unconditional love and support.



My sister Enedina is my third hero, because she was like a second mother to me. My sister Enedina was the oldest in our family. She always helped strangers and went out of her way to help other people. Enedina was generous and caring, too. My sister Enedina had such a big heart that if anyone needed a helping hand she was there to give it.

I am who I am today because having my three heroes in my life made me a stronger person. My three heroes all have taught me very important values of life. My three heroes are my mother, father, and sister Enedina.

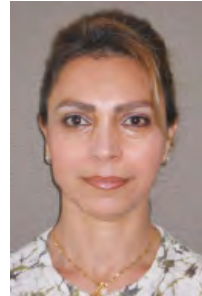
A Real Hero

by Farah Azizi

I was listening to the radio. Delilah was on the air, and a gentleman called her and said he would like to say thank you to the young man who contributed his kidney to him. A young man 21 years old had volunteered to save a person's life. I thought, "He is a superhero. He is a selfless man. Bless him." A hero could be a soldier who is sacrificing his life to save people and the country. Heroes could be a group of doctors who help people in disasters with their loyalty. A hero could be a man who has courage to solve and keep people safe from nuclear radiation. Also a hero might be a woman who adopts nine boys and girls and raises them.



But we should know these heroes have learned bravery and loyalty at school from teachers. Can you imagine what it would be like with no schools or teachers? So in my opinion a teacher is a real hero. They patiently instruct students how to live as real humans who think about others and do for someone else.



Farah feels lucky to be in this program. Her tutor helps her fill out papers. She really likes her tutor. Her reading and writing have improved.

Heroes

by Andrew

Andrew writes:
"I have been in
the PAR
program for
3+ years and I
have learned
so much in
that time."

You may ask yourself, "What is a hero?" You might think that a hero is a person that is strong or brave, someone like a firefighter or a police officer. You might think a hero is smart. That would bring you to think of teachers and scientists. You also might think of your mom and dad as heroes. But the heroes in my life are all the people that work in the PAR program. I am talking about the ones that work in the office and the tutors that help people like you and me to learn to read and write better. Just think about it. What would we do if PAR was not here? I know you might think that is not a hero, but to me all the men and women that work and take time out of their busy lives to help a stranger, giving the gift of hope—to me, they are all heroes.

Joan Hill

by Alvin Fore

My mom was my hero ever since I was a little boy. She lived in New York City in 1930. She had four daughters and two sons, and my mom's name was Joan Hill. She was there for me when I was in rehab.



There is more to my mom's story that I cannot fit into a short time. I love my mom very much.

“My tutor is very intelligent. I am free to ask him anything, and I always get an answer. I know PAR helps people like me, whether immigrants or people who were born here, but people who don't have an opportunity to go to school.”

– S. B.

Oprah

by Earlene Chapman

Earlene wants to start an Oprah Book Club at PAR.

Oprah is my favorite TV person. I admire her because she is a beautiful, loving, spiritual person. I have watched her show over the 25 years, when I had the opportunity. She is a feminist. She wants the best for women so they CAN succeed in life. She is a mentor to women. Oprah enjoys humanitarian work, for example, her schools for girls and boys in Africa. She has an organization called Angel Network that benefits many people, women's health issues, and anyone in distress. Oprah has a kind heart. She has helped so many people all over the world. She has integrity. I love the fact that she is honest and open about her life, she has had many difficulties in her life, and had to overcome many obstacles to become such a successful woman, famous and wealthy.

Oprah wanted women to know that their lives are valuable. She let women feel equally open to talk about their lives and experiences. We all have learned from her show because she is very knowledgeable. Oprah selected the best professions, such as doctors in every field, finance advisers, any professional person to give helpful information to both women and men. It feels like I am visiting with a friend when I watch her show: it is as if we understand each other; we have great times together; she makes me laugh and cry. It's as if I am visiting with my best friend. I like the idea of her book club that encourages people to enjoy reading. I wanted to have that experience so I came to Partners in Reading to improve my reading and writing skills. And now it's working for me, I can enjoy reading books more. You can understand why she is my hero. I will miss my friend's talk show, and I am looking forward to what her future plans will be.

My Grandmother, My Hero

by Sal Fuentes



The program has helped Sal be able to perform better in his work environment and everyday tasks with reading and writing. He is thankful that this program exists.

My hero is my grandmother, for many reasons. Where should I start? Let's start with the biggest accomplishment of her life—raising twelve children on her own, in a country that was not her homeland and full of obstacles and barriers for her, but which were overcome by her hunger to provide food and shelter for her family. How did she find herself in this predicament? She was brought to this country by my grandfather, with many promises of a better life, but to her surprise he was a different man here than the one she knew back home in Mexico.

My grandfather came to the U.S. by himself, to establish himself economically before he made the big move of bringing his wife and twelve children here. Unfortunately, during that time he became an alcoholic. My grandmother started to notice a more distant person when she talked to him on the telephone, and less money was being sent

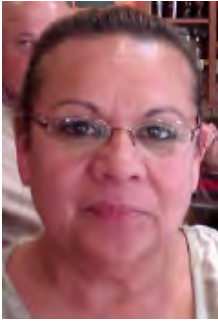
to cover the family expenses; she had to make do with what he sent. She rose to the challenge and started to play the roles of both mother and father. Her day would start at four o'clock in the morning and would end at twelve midnight. She would prepare breakfast and lunch with the help of her older daughters and sons, and she would wash and iron for her own family and other families in the evenings until midnight. She tapped into her creativity to make ends meet and she became a really good seamstress, making dresses for the girls and pants and shirts for the boys. She got so good at making dresses that she caught the attention of other mothers, who asked her where she purchased them. When she answered that she made them herself, they asked her to make their daughters' dresses. This is how she made some extra money. She finally got fed up with the early mornings and the late nights and the rigors of coping by herself, and called my grandfather and told him either to return or to bring them to where he was. He got everything together and the move happened. Within a week, she realized that he was an alcoholic.

There was a struggle for about a year to make things work, but unfortunately my grandfather was not able to control his addiction to alcohol. This is when my grandmother had to find the courage to make the choice to continue on her own, knowing that was the better path for her and her twelve children. She sat down with her three oldest children and told them what she had decided to do and how they would do it. They had to move out, but before they did that they had to find jobs and save money to rent a home. My grandmother and her two eldest children found jobs at a cannery. While they worked, the third and fourth oldest took care of all the other children; my mother was the third oldest. Throughout the struggle of saving enough money to move out, my grandfather made it more difficult by taking their money to feed his addiction for alcohol. However, my grandmother found the strength to boost her morale and the morale of the three oldest. They finally saved enough and moved out, and slowly but surely my grandfather left them alone.

When my mother worked, my grandmother took care of me, from my birth until four years of age. I did not know of all her struggles and accomplishments until later. She was so sweet and kind to me. I never would have thought there was such a strong woman behind all that sweetness. I can remember the mornings would start with us kneeling before a picture of the Virgin Mary and the Cross and praying. We would have breakfast and then we would go outside and she would work on her garden while I played with my toys. These are lovely memories. Sometimes I think, "How did she overcome such a big challenge in her life?" When I feel that I can't do something, it is too difficult, or I am too tired to go on, I tap into her strength, and that is why my grandmother is, and always will be, my hero.

My Hero Is My Tutor

by Emelia Gomez



My hero is my tutor, Joanie. I admire her because she is the one who is teaching me to read. I don't think I would be comfortable with any other person. I liked her when I first met her. She talked with me from day one. She was accepting and very caring. I met her at the library, and we have been working together for two years.

Emelia has three sisters and two brothers. Her hobby is going to action movies. Emelia says, "My experience with PAR: I just love those people. Right now I work with children."

Joanie works with computers and is very smart. She is tall, slender, and she likes to drink coffee and read books. Joanie says I'm her hero because of the strength and determination I show every day. When Joanie was away, the office people asked me if I would like another tutor and I said, "No thanks, I will wait for Joanie."

It is very important to me to read and write. My mom wanted me to learn to read and write because when she was young her father made her stay home from school and go to work in the fields to make money. So when my mom passed on I said, "Mom, I promise you. I am going to finish my school." This is why my hero is my tutor Joanie.



“I want to improve my reading. My goal is to get my GED or my diploma. It looks hard, but I will try. ”
- T. C.

My Hero Is Meles Zenawi

by Maarnet Gebremariam

My hero is Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. He was born in Adwa, Tigray, in Northern Ethiopia, on May 8, 1955. I heard him first on the radio when I was in sixth grade.

As I grew, I became interested in Meles because I heard my neighbors talk about him. They were soldiers who fought with him against the Derg. The Derg was a military dictatorship that killed thousands of Ethiopians. At that time Meles was a medical student, and when the Derg started to kill people he joined the Opposition as a soldier. The Opposition defeated the Derg, and Meles became its leader. After that he became the president of the Transitional Government. In 1995 Meles Zenawi became the prime minister of Ethiopia.

He is strong, intelligent, honest, and he speaks very well. He fights for the poor people of Ethiopia so that they can have democratic rights. He is also very diplomatic with African leaders and international leaders. People call Meles “the greatest strategist of the twenty-first century in Africa.” He is also a generous and kind person. I am very proud of Meles Zenawi. That’s why he is my hero, and the hero of Ethiopia.

“Helping adults improve their reading skills is very rewarding and gratifying. The learners are enthusiastic and are excited when they understand words, pronunciation, and concepts new to them. I am excited for them. ”

– J. M.

My Mom, My Hero

by Rosemary Hernandez Kersting

Rosemary's dream is to one day write a story of her life, because she has so many things to say. She is a great-grandmother with a big, loving family, and they are all proud of her. She likes reading all kinds of stories, and is excited about her first submission to the PAR book.

My hero has to be my mom. She taught me everything I know. She taught me how to be strong and become a lady at a very young age. I became a little lady. I would do what a big lady could do.

My mom was only seven months pregnant when I was born. I weighed only two pounds. I was so little that she had to hold my tiny little mouth open to stick the bottle nipple into my mouth to feed me goat's milk.

At that time, I only had one brother. He told me that my bed was a shoebox and that they had found me in a dump. These things would hurt me and I would cry my you-know-what off. My mom would just laugh and get mad at my brother.

Then my mom decided to move to Tijuana, Mexico. There I would help take care of my brothers and sisters. I helped a lot. I got sick a lot, too. Mom would take care of me her own way, with old folk remedies, the Mexican way.

In 1955 my mom gave birth to my new sister, and me and my brother would fight to carry the new baby, so my mother would tell my brother that she would have one for him very soon. So in the next nine months, my new brother was born. So I got the first baby and my brother got the next one. We just didn't know she was actually giving us the responsibility of taking care of them.

I can remember up to when I was about five years old. Mom worked in the United States every day. She would go and come home, and I would be so happy that Mom was home with me. By now I could cook and sew and do all kinds of things. I would learn the hard way. She trusted me to take care of all the kids. I did a good job. I was a big lady now. Mom had shown me how to be a strong woman. I had to be strong for my brothers and sisters. I had to show them I was the big sister. I was like their mother.

Life was good in Mexico. I had a good life there. Then in 1960, Mom decided to bring us to the USA. Wow! That was so scary. I was like, "What happened? I just got here." By now, I was able to take care of myself.

What I liked the most was going out to eat with her. I remember when Mom would take us to see her mom. She would take me to eat Chinese food. She loved Chinese food. My mom taught me everything I know. I think she was getting me ready for life. I just didn't know that was what she was doing. I love and miss my mother very much.

I have many memories of my mother. She would work hard for us. I would see all this and learn how to be a hard worker too. She would take care of all her kids, all by herself. My mom had a big heart and would always make special trips to help my family down in Mexico. She would take all kinds of things to them, wishing she was still here.

My mother passed away on July 3, 2000. She was the greatest mother in the world. She was so special to me. She is still special to me. She showed me how to be strong in life. I am who I am because of her. I admire her for being so strong. She worked very hard to bring all her children to the United States for a better life. I think I am like her in so many ways.

All I have is memories, good ones of my mom. All the things she taught me I am going to show my grandkids and great grandkids so they can make it in life, all 14 of them.

My mother made a strong woman out of me, so she has to be my hero.

The Best Grandmother in Tres Pinos

by Michael Gonzales



Michael has improved writing and spelling. He reads signs.

My hero was my grandma, who came from Mexicali to the United States in 1941.

She was a pretty woman with jet black hair. She had a good heart and a good spirit.

She was the best grandmother in Tres Pinos. She took care of 11 grandchildren in my family. She did a lot of work in her house. She cleaned and she liked her flowers in her yard. She liked to collect rocks for her yard, and she knew her type of rocks. She liked to go for walks to the river to pick her rocks with me a lot of the time. She had a good life because she got married to my grandpa, she moved to California, and she did what she liked.



A Hero Doesn't Give Up on You

by Anthony Ramirez

My godmother is very supportive, joyful, lovable, caring, outgoing, and is always there for me in a time of need. She has been in my life since I was 6 months old, and she has loved me since I was a little baby and after I turned into a grown man. A hero doesn't give up on you even if you give up on yourself.



Anthony is a hard worker and has a lot of goals for his life. He is making them happen.

“I had been thinking about becoming a tutor for a while, but didn't know how to get started or where to call. I saw a tiny little ad in the classified section of one of the throw-away newspapers (which I guess I didn't throw away that time). I had that ad on my bulletin board for a couple of years before I finally made the call and got started. Boy, am I glad I did!”

– B. C.

My Grandmother Is My Hero

by Fitzroy Leslie



Fitzroy is proud of himself and proud of this program. He hopes a lot of people join it because it will turn their lives around.

She was from St. Catherine, Jamaica.

My grandmother was strong for her age. She worked hard and believed in what she did.

She was a people person, very kind and friendly. Every neighbor knew her by her name. They called her Antira, and she gave a genuine smile to everyone.

She touched earth and things grew. Her garden was beautiful with lots of vegetables.

She would raise her pigs, goats, and chickens and still go to the woods to get oilnuts to make castor oil. She would climb up on the oilnut tree to pick the oilnuts, then she would come home and put them in the sun to dry.

When the sun penetrated through them, the seeds flew out of the shells. Then she got them together, separated the oilnut seeds from the shells and the dust, and then she would put a pot on a wood fire outside and parch them.

Then my neighbor Denzel and I would help her beat them in a mortar, and she put on another pot with water to boil. She put the ground oilnuts in it and let it boil. She would skim the oil from the water and put it in a different pot on the fire and let it boil down to castor oil. Then she sold it to make a living for us.

If that's not hard work, boy, then you tell me what is work.

She is my hero.



“I like to give back, and tutoring is something I’m good at. And it’s fun! ”

– B. B.

My Hero

by D. M.

D. has been in the program for six months. Her English is much better, and so is her reading and writing. Her tutor Karin helps her a lot.

My hero is my tutor Karin. She helps me in many different ways: with my language arts, grammar, and reading/writing skills.

I like my tutoring lessons and my teacher because I have only had this program for four months and I have improved a lot. I improved very much in writing, reading, and Karin also helps me with my English by having good conversations, learning new vocabulary, and the meaning of the words.

I also like that she got me reading books from the library. Before the program I never came to the library and never checked out books. Now I check out the books about every week and read at home. With those stories I am learning more and more. It also helps me with my reading and language arts, because I have learned so much more reading comprehension from the stories.

I am so proud because I know, in my heart and in my brain, that my English writing has improved. Because every week I write at least 5 sentences for our story. That makes me very happy and thankful for my tutor and the program Partners in Reading.

Karin helps me a lot. She is a very nice and friendly person. I like Karin because she is an intelligent lady and an honest person, and she is helping me so much. I never saw a teacher like that before. She is a very good person to me.

That is why she is my hero.

I also like Karin because she is a funny lady and sometimes we sit down and just talk. We talk about the stories, we talk about our families and friends. We enjoy reading the book *Stories Plus* and also the Partners in Reading series together.

She is my hero because I look up to her and want to be just like her. I want to teach other people like me how to read and write better.

My Mom Is My Hero

by Lupe Maldonado



She is loving, caring, and giving. She understands and is a sweet heart. She is all that I can ask for in a mother. She is my hero. I want to be like her.



Lupe enjoys the program because it has taught her a lot.

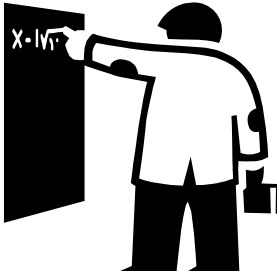
“I enjoy PAR because it is a good opportunity to improve my English. It’s important to me so I can have better communication. Thanks to everyone who makes Partners in Reading possible. ”

– L. V.

My Hero, My Son

by Francisco Reyes

My hero is my son Bryan. He is working hard studying in school. Because Bryan is progressing well in all subjects, his teachers are very happy. He always does his homework and brings it back to school. Bryan



helps the other students and helps his sister in their subjects. Bryan wants to go to college. I am proud of my son Bryan.

Francisco was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States in 2000. Married, with two children, Francisco believes that it is important to learn about other cultures and their languages. Francisco believes that children are this country's future.

My Hero

by Vicky Nguyen



Vicky is a Vietnamese lady and she says she is very old. She is still a student.

My friend Tony Nguyen is my hero. He came to the United States as a refugee with his family in 1980. After the Communists took over Vietnam, he could not live under them because he was a soldier in South Vietnam. He brought his family out of Vietnam and came to the U.S. He had a wife, Cathy, and three kids: 7-year-old Caroline, 5-year-old Michael, and 3-year-old Cindy.

After two months on welfare, he got an assembly job at an electronics company. He worked hard and sent Caroline and Michael to school. The family had a difficult time communicating with people, because they did not know English. They had to migrate to this country suddenly; they did not have time to learn English.

They really needed to learn English. Tony worked all day, and after work he went to school to learn English. Every day he came home late after school, and on some nights he did the school homework late—after his kids went to bed.

Tony worked very hard to get his driver's license. He really needed it for his family's survival. Three years later he graduated from San José City College. Now, Tony has got a good job and he makes good money.



Tony has been hard-working, strong willed, and intelligent in making his family happy. Tony Nguyen is really my hero.

My Mother Is My Hero

by Jackie Smith



Jackie is a new grandma, and it's fun and challenging.

Dedicated to Maxine L. Dumas

My mother is a big hero in my life. She cared for me in so many ways. She also shared her life by giving of herself, in letting me have friends to have a play day when I was young. I went camping in the summer. We went to summer school and had cooking, but most of all, as a teenager my sister and I had the opportunity to be in a special event called the Cosmetology Board by all the parents who belonged to it.

We had to share our goals and hobbies, talents and hopes. These were put in a magazine. We young ladies and men practiced the waltz for weeks. The partners had to step at the same time; we had to keep our mind on the steps so it came out right at the event. One of the biggest leaders in the community of black cosmetology, Ms. Vanznell, and my mother networked well. We had to pick out two different kinds of dresses for the big event in Los Altos. We would have to make good use of our time every day.

This is why my mom is a hero who never gives up but puts up with teenagers. She had a way of keeping the girls busy. Mother had to take us to San José in 1975, the best times of our life. We had a commitment, and it was to become a young teen who was different and fun. My parent mentor is still living: she is 95 years young. Looking fabulous is the name of that game. This is why my mother is my hero, with hearts on her ears.

“I like learning how to read. That’s why I come to PAR. It’s fun. I like doing workbooks. I like coming with my friend Mallory to reading class. I like reading third-grade books. ”

- N. Z.

Unsung Heroes

by Darryl Redfield

Darryl's tutor writes: "Darryl is a joy to have for a learner. I have known him for more than three years and am so pleased with his progress."

Let me tell you about my heroes.

I have more heroes than I can write about on two pages, but let me give it a whirl. My heroes do not know that they are heroes to me. Each week I see them working hard to perfect the art of reading and writing. You may think it's unusual to have learners as heroes, nevertheless the learners inspire me to work harder to reach my goals to become a better reader and writer.

One learner in the next room loudly studies his sounds. I admire his determination, I know how difficult it is, please don't stop. Another learner I met when I got started always told me, "Don't give up, it's hard, but keep going."



I have a hectic schedule with work, school, and family life, and sometimes it's hard to schedule the lessons. Sometimes I feel like this:

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest. It makes me lie down only when exhausted. It leads me to deep depression, it hounds my soul. It leads me in circles of frenzy for activity's sake. Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never get it all done, for my "ideal" is with me. Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me. They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule. They anoint my head with migraines; my in-basket overflows. Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

Marcia K. Hornok, "Psalm 23, Antithesis"

I think about the other learners in their hectic schedules and their family life, and work, and still they make it here to study hard. Some families make it to Families for Literacy (FFL) during the week. It makes me realize I'm not the only one who has a busy lifestyle.

I was blessed with two artists who took my mind and molded it into a phenomenal reading machine; they are heroes, too. This year I read *Of Mice and Men*, my first novel.



I would like to say "Thank you" to all my unsung heroes who have encouraged me so much. Thank you, PAR.

My Hero Is Vicky

by Rajinder Singh

My hero I chose is Vicky because she is my job coach. And she also hands me my schedules at work. She is also smart and funny. Her workers follow Vicky's rules. Vicky also makes me laugh sometimes. Vicky also gives lunch breaks for 15 minutes. Also Vicky's dog likes me and also catches frisbees. Vicky invites me to every party she holds. She lets her co-workers BBQ. She gave me a Snuggie. She also does races, such as egg races and sack races. She does water balloon races with her co-workers. She helps me clean tables and helps with orders. She cleans at the end of the day. She opens the café and does safety meetings.



Rajinder likes to work on the computer. He likes his job at the museum.

Monica's Hero

by Monica Ramirez



Monica lives in San José with her family. She enjoys coming to PAR to read and write. She loves raising her two boys, ages 2 and 4. Monica enjoys listening to music and watching fashion. It is her dream to be rich someday.

My grandpa, Manuel Galvan, is my hero. He was born in Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico, on October 30, 1912. He is my mom's dad. He used to take me places. He used to take me to Carl's Jr. or Mark's Hot Dogs, during the week or sometimes on a weekend.

Grandpa, Grandma, Mom, my brother and sister, along with Uncle David, all lived together on Jackson Ave., San José. We would all eat together with my cousin Priscilla. We would have breakfast at home or in a restaurant.

I was spoiled by Grandpa because he used to buy me all kinds of stuff. He would buy us a swing set and a playhouse. He would wait for the bus to come home. He knew what time I would leave in the morning and what time I would come home from school. He would sit in a chair in the driveway.

Since he died, I miss him so much. Because I was small, I did not go to his funeral. I missed school for two weeks because I was crying and did not feel like going to kindergarten.



I love my grandpa because of all the wonderful things he did for us. My hope is to raise my children to be like him.

“I’m a volunteer, but the pay is most important to me, even with all the hard work: I think most tutors get involved for the ‘warm fuzzies’ they get from helping others. This is their pay. ”

– R. R.

Teens Have it Hard

by Corina Rath

My hero is my daughter Corina. Not only her, but all teenagers that make it through tough times in their lives. I feel teens have it hard in schools and in their homes. When my daughter was in junior high school, I divorced her father. As a result of the divorce, her emotional stability was weakened and she almost didn't graduate junior high school.

I think about all that she has gone through, and how the media has had a negative influence on her. Yet she still stays in school. It is difficult for teens to attend school and get a good education. Lots of kids are being raised in single-parent homes, or if both parents are in the home they both work. Classrooms have more students, and there are not enough teachers to go around.

When Corina began going to high school, she became a different person. She did well in school and even got involved in school activities. She was a cheerleader all through high school. She even encouraged some of her friends to get involved in school activities.



Corina graduated from high school, and I was so proud of her. It is hard for teenagers to graduate from high school, and it is easier for them to drop out of school or turn to drugs and drinking. When our children graduate or do something good in life, we need to let them know that we are proud of them and that they are our heroes.

Thank you, Corina, for being my hero.

My Hero: Dr. J. Ruiz

by Floridalma Rivas

Floridalma has been in the U.S. for two years. She is studying at San José City College. She enjoys PAR, which is helping her improve her English skills. She likes to travel and read in her free time.

To talk about only one person who has been a hero in my life is very difficult because there are many people that I consider to be my heroes, and I admire them for doing something very brave or good. Today, I chose one of them, Dr. J. Ruiz. He was my co-worker in a public hospital named La Trinidad. He taught me things about my profession in several ways. First of all, he taught me a lot of qualities that a doctor should have to give excellent attention to their patients. For example, he recommended that I stay calm in adverse situations, such as when a pregnant woman has seizures or bleeding and needs urgent attention. If I am relaxed I can think clearly, so I can solve problems, especially in some situations in which the life of the mother or the child is in danger.



Another important thing that he taught me was to have patience and to listen to people because they are often anxious and need understanding and trust that someone will listen and believe them and help them to solve their problems. He said to me, "You should never forget that your patients will be your best teachers, and you can learn from them."

In addition, he helped me have confidence in myself and never doubt my skills and knowledge. Also, he helped me to develop my surgical skills. He was my assistant during my first surgery as a gynecologist, and he was always there when I needed him. For example, he came immediately when I had difficult cases such as complications during delivery, bleeding during surgery, and other problems.

In other words, he trained me to respond adequately to all the moments that a doctor faces every day. In summary, these were some of the most important things that he taught me and the reason why he is one of the people that made a difference in my life. He died, but his teachings live with me, and he always will be one of my heroes.

It Takes a Strong Woman to Do What She Does

by Janeen Robbins

Janeen lives in San José with her boyfriend and pets, a dog and an iguana (who actually get along very well). She just started working out at a gym and enjoys working out, babysitting, and going to the movies. She has been with PAR for many years, and has seen a big improvement in her reading and writing. Janeen works as a special education aide for the county.

This page is dedicated to my friend Melissa

My hero is my best friend, Melissa. I first met her about 10 years ago, when I was working with her son Zachary as a one-to-one aide in a county program.

Melissa is a single mom with two autistic sons aged 17 and 15 years old. She is always picking them up from school and taking them to different places in the community. She also takes care of her sick mother, who needs to be taken to dialysis three times a week.

Melissa is a caring and giving person. She gave her sons and mother the bedrooms in their house and sleeps on the couch in the living room. Two years ago she had to take her family to a motel to live for six months after her house burned.

Melissa is a friend to me in many ways. She trusts me to babysit her sons every weekend, and I have become very close to them. She says that she is very proud of me for staying with the Partners in Reading program, and says that she notices the improvement in my reading and writing.

Melissa is my hero because she is a fantastic mom and a fantastic friend.

“Being a reading tutor with Partners in Reading involves dedication, sharing, inspiration, creativity and the joy of partnering with someone to help them achieve goals that are life-enhancing and life-transforming.”

My Hero

by Seynab Samatar

Seynab is married and has four children. She was born in Somalia. When she left her country she was 14 and didn't finish school. She left the rest of her family in her country. Seynab finished high school in a refugee camp and lives with family friends.

My hero is Oprah Winfrey. She was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, a small town, on January 29, 1954. She lived with her grandmother until she was 6 years old. Her family was very poor. At a very young age she learned how to read. Her reading and speaking have helped her all her life.

Oprah suffered a lot when she lived with her mom. She became pregnant when she was living with her mom. She was left alone much of the time. Sadly, her baby died.

After that, Oprah ran away from her home. The police sent her to a foster family, but the shelter was full. After that she had to go to her father. He was living in Nashville, Tennessee. His name is Vernon Winfrey.

Living with her father was not easy for Oprah. He was very strict, more than her mother. She had to come home at 6:00 p.m. Every night before she slept, she had to read. She did not like that. She suffered a lot, but after she studied, she succeeded in her life. Especially her reading and speaking helped her to succeed.

She went to Tennessee State University and studied speech and the performing arts. She worked as a television reporter. Also she worked on a television talk show and she made films.

She is the owner of Harpo Production Company, a company that makes movies and television shows. Harpo spelled backwards is Oprah.

I like her because of so many things she does, such as her help and heart. She gives \$1,000,000.00 every year to deserving people. She helps so many people in the United States and outside. She helps important people who do good things, for example, Dr. Phil and Dr. Oz.

Oprah made some movies, such as *The Color Purple*, for which she won an Academy Award. Also *Beloved*, written by Toni Morrison, which tells the story of Margaret Garner who kills her own daughter because she doesn't want her to become a slave.

One reason why I admire Oprah is because of her background. How she succeeded. The second reason why I like her is that she helped so many people. She has done many good things. In South Africa she built a school, and in Ethiopia in East Africa. She gives them tools and supplies to build a new house.

I hope Oprah will help Somali women and their children who have suffered from starvation and male abuse for more than 20 years.

An Honest Man and a Hard Worker

by Gheberkidane Tewolde

President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea is my hero. He fought for independence for the country for thirty years. He changed the country in these ways: education, agriculture, jobs for the people, good roads, good water to drink, and controlled malaria. There are many doctors and it is easy to visit a doctor.

He is a strong president and very intelligent. He cares for the Eritrean people. He is an honest man and a hard worker. He believes that Christians and Muslims should live together and respect each other. He wants peace, especially with neighboring countries.

For these reasons Isaias Afewerki, the President of Eritrea, is my hero.

Real Life Heroes

by Richard Truchetta

Rich hopes his story will help someone who reads it. He is now acting as a supervisor at work.

I grew up listening to music, enjoying it, and being part of it. Music has helped me get through some hard times, but to the musicians it is more than just music. It is a lifestyle, a family, and we all look out for each other. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. They don't have to be presidents, firemen, or police, even regular people can be heroes. This is the story of my heroes.

In 1988 I was living a bad life. I was mixed up in the wrong crowd and doing some bad things. I knew I wasn't myself but I just couldn't stop. Iron Maiden had already come out and said that they don't do drugs. One night while sitting in my room, I couldn't sleep. My room was covered in Iron Maiden posters, Snake posters, and black lights. I looked to my left, and Bruce from Iron Maiden came out of my poster and began to look at me. Bruce just looked at me, arms crossed in his poster pose.

Then all of a sudden he pointed at me and began to shake his head side to side in total shame. I backed up, quickly looked up, and pleaded with God. I couldn't do this anymore. I'm done with this lifestyle. The next morning I made a few phone calls to the people I called "friends." I gave them all my stuff and from that day forward led a better life. Without even talking to them, Iron Maiden changed my life.



There have been many times I have met with bands and they have helped me, but in 2002 it was particularly special. My dad had been battling with coronary obstructive pulmonary disease. This was really hard on me because he was always there for me. I got the chance to meet Ronnie James Dio, the lead singer of Dio. I was able to get backstage and hang out with him. I talked to him about my dad's condition. Dio told me to be there for my dad because I only have one. Hearing it from such a legendary guy was really helpful.

I was there through my dad's condition until he passed in 2003. Later that year I had the chance to meet Dio again backstage. Dio remembered me. Even though he was so famous he still never forgot me. He asked me about my dad and I told him of his passing. He gave his condolences and we had a beer together. He looked at me and said, "Your father's magic is in your heart." Dio then went ahead and played a song for me that night. He was not a selfish man. Dio passed in 2010, but he will always be one of my heroes.

My Mom, the One Hero

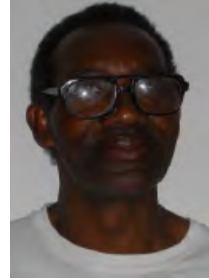
by Leo Smith

She was a sweet mom.

She would bake four different types of cakes when we were kids and had school affairs that had us kids march to win a cake.

She would make candy black licorice, but I really did not like it at all. She was very well known for her peanut brittle candy.

The best one for the home was pinto beans, and roast beef and rice and potatoes.



Leo Smith takes care of two grandkids and two nephews.

My Hero

by Thanh Tran

Thanh was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States with his mother when he was a teenager. His dad was an American soldier during the Vietnam War, and his mom is Vietnamese. He is married and has three children. He is studying for his citizenship exam and hopes to become a citizen in the next couple of years.

My hero is my grandmother. She is a hard worker. She is tall and skinny with a strong back and strong shoulders. When I was very young until I was 13, I lived with my grandmother, my mom, and my aunt. Four uncles lived there, too. She told jokes. She took me with her to visit her cousin by bus. That was the first trip I ever took. A couple of years later she told my mom to take the train to somewhere, and I was very happy to be on the train. That was the first time.

She asked my mom to make paperwork to go to America. My mom said "Why?" and my grandmother said, "It is good for both of you and for the family." Also she asked my mom, "Remember the radio, they were asking for that?" One night my mom was listening to the BBC radio. Two local policemen heard, and next morning they came and asked her to either not listen or donate it to the government. "Yes, I remember."

My grandmother also said to remember “the job your sister has right now.” My mom and her sister had applied for a job in one company owned by the government. They denied my mom. The reason they denied her was because she was married to an American soldier. At that time there were no private companies, only government-owned companies. Since she was denied by that company she couldn’t get hired anywhere because all companies were government-owned only.

I remember one afternoon, I asked my grandmother if I could help carry that bag for her. On the way home, people she knew they saw that, and they told her, “Your grandson can help you now.” She was proud of that. My hero said the most important thing is you study hard. “That will help me and help yourself.” She helped me to understand life. I love my hero.

Flynn Rider, a Brave and Funny Hero

by Mallory Tufts



Mallory writes: "I live with my mom and our pet bird Andy. My hobbies are collecting Disney movies and writing stories. I have worked at T.J. Maxx, Toys R Us, Walgreens, and Fresh Choice. In PAR I get to read Disney books and write stories."

I chose a fictional character from a Disney movie as my hero because I like movies, especially Disney movies. My fictional character hero's name is Flynn Rider from the movie *Tangled*. His real name in the movie *Tangled* is Eugene Fitzherbert. He was a thief until he met and then fell in love with a beautiful woman named Rapunzel who is 18 years old and a princess who was kidnapped from her real parents by Mother Gothel when she was a baby.

I like the character Flynn Rider from the movie *Tangled* because he is funny and a handsome and brave and clever guy. He is 25 years old. Prince in disguise. He is funny when he notices his wanted poster and then gets upset when they get it wrong, and then later when he is tied up by Rapunzel in the chair. He is brave when he goes off to rescue Rapunzel, his true love, from Mother Gothel.

I like Flynn Rider because he makes me laugh when I see the movie *Tangled*, especially with the funny things he says. *Tangled* is one of my favorite movies.



“I keep coming to PAR because my communication is improving. My boss says he understands me better now. ”

– A. B.

What Makes Me Happy?

by Thomas Valentine



Thomas was a Freedom Rider in the 1960s. He rode buses to make sure that bus stations were desegregated in Mississippi and Louisiana, and in Birmingham, Alabama.

When I was in my 20s, I assumed that I wasn't going to make it past 30. I'm on my 69th year and I am still here. In those 30 extra years, I've seen change and love.

It gives me joy to see new technology. I love change. It doesn't scare me. Technology has changed me. My grandchildren know a world that is so different from the one I knew. Even revolutions are powered by technology now. That kind of power, of communication, leads to change.

When I was 10, I told my mother that I wanted a little United Nations. It gives me joy to see young people who don't see skin color as much and have appreciation for others. My joy and happiness in the last 39 years is that I raised a lot of kids. I've seen them grow and raise their own children. That's been a gift. And loving the children in my daycare and family kept me young as they grew. Each has their own story and my part in their stories makes me happy.

My Heroes

by Nassreen Zarea

My heroes are my family. They are my heroes because they are nice. I admire my mom, dad, and sister because they are kind to me. They take care of me. They help me. They are patient. My mom and dad are my heroes because they teach me things. They always cheer for me. I respect my sister Farrah because she goes to college. She tries her best. My family are my heroes and I love and appreciate them. I love them.



Nassreen is 23 years old. She has a dog and cat. She goes to Silicon Valley Diversified Network, which is an Adult Day Program. She enjoys doing many activities, such as bowling, dance class, yoga, and volunteering. She enjoys learning how to read with Sal, her PAR tutor.

My Hero Is My Mother

by Genet Asres

Genet came to the United States in 2004 from Ethiopia. She is a single parent of a one-and-a-half-year-old daughter. She has been with PAR for about a year. Her hobbies are gardening and helping people. She works as a nursing aide for in-home care.

She lived in Ethiopia her whole life. She is my hero because she did many good things for others.

Life was hard for her because she was a single mother and grandmother. When I was growing up she took care of her four children and her four grandchildren. At the same time she worked outside of the house, she took care of eight children and a sister-in-law.

She got up at four in the morning. For all of us she made breakfast. She woke us up and she got us dressed and she gave us breakfast.

After that she took us halfway to school and she watched us until we disappeared from sight. Sometimes she went with us to the school gate. When we got to school she went back to the other children. Then she washed them and fed them.

Next she cleaned the house and washed the dishes. After she did this she walked to work at another house that was 4 or 5 miles away. After that she went shopping for food for ten people and she carried it for 5 miles home.

When she got home she couldn't sit and rest because she had to cook for us before we came home from school.

Sometimes there was no water left so she would go down the hill to the river to get it. She would carry the water up the hill in a 5-gallon bucket on her head. The hill was steep and the hard work made her sweat a lot. Her face would be all wet.

Even when she was busy with her family and her work, she helped the community. If someone was sick, she would visit them right away. If someone needed help, she would listen to their problems and help them to feel better.

Even though her life was hard, she was happy and always smiled and always told us everything would be fine.

Tutors' Reflections

Heroes Take Action

by Meredith Eidem

Meredith has been a PAR tutor for three years. She is inspired by the rewarding energy she gets from her learners.

"But I know I just had it in my hand. Please help me! I don't know where my parking permit ticket is," I said desperately to the parking garage attendant. "I have to go to the library because I am a tutor," I said, looking at my watch. "I will pay you per hour if I have to."

"No. You have to pay the \$15.00 for a lost ticket," he grunted.

"That's ridiculous. I just had it. I was on the third floor. I'll go back to check." I was about to dash to the elevator when I heard behind me:

"Hey, I just got this. Who do I give it to?"

"Oh, wow, Ronnie—it's you. You won't believe what I have done. I can't find my parking permit ticket and I know I just had it."

“Is this it?” he asked, a grin spreading across his face. He held up a rectangular piece of paper. “I just picked this up on the third floor.”

“You’re amazing!” My trials were over.

Ronnie is amazing in many other ways. He has set Partners in Reading as one of his primary goals. Even though he works the late to early morning shift, he attends our sessions no matter how tired he might be. He has a positive, upbeat attitude regardless of the fact that noon is actually late night for him and he needs to get home to get a few hours of sleep before his next busy day. He makes time to read with his five-year-old daughter, too. He has another goal of bringing her to the children’s room in the library once a week for special family time, where they can grow to love reading together. Knowing that he is improving his reading skills is leading him to think about looking for a new job.

I believe with his mindset and will power he can achieve these goals that he is not afraid to meet head on. Heroes are people we want to emulate. I would love to have Ronnie’s humility, strength, and dedication to fulfilling a dream.

Fitz, You Are My Hero

by Barbara Coffman

Barbara is a mother of two, grandmother of three, physical therapist assistant for 30 years, CPR instructor, and PAR tutor for 2½ years. She is so happy to have found PAR. It's a very fulfilling activity for her. Her hobbies are gardening, needlework, and flute lessons.

As a tutor in Partners in Reading, I am aware that this book is written by learners. But I would like to tell you about my hero.

On April 22, 2011, my learner and I had finished our session and said goodbye inside the MLK Library. I went down the steps and started toward the street to go to the parking structure. A young man spoke to me, but I didn't hear what he said so I turned and said, "Excuse me?"

Suddenly he started yelling at me. I thought, "Mistaken identity," and started across the street. But he kept pace with me, yelling and shouting. I was very frightened and starting to shake. I heard another man's voice say, "Leave her alone, man." I glanced up and it was my learner, walking between me and the young man. I felt so protected!

The three of us continued across San Fernando Street with the young man yelling. He even threatened to fight my learner! There was a parking meter attendant, and I called to him to call 911, which he did. The parking meter attendant said to the young man several times, "You have to calm down!"

There are usually police officers inside the Flames Restaurant, where we were standing, but not that day. We laughed in a shaky way that they are never there when you need them. In what seemed like a year but was only a couple of minutes, one, then two, then five police officers were there.

They took our statements, and one officer said they would take the young man to the hospital, that he was hearing voices. And then it was over.

My learner never left my side. He stood with his arm around me until the officers said we were free to leave. I am so grateful to him.

I want to say, "Thank you, Fitz. You are my hero."

Four Haiku

by Gretchen Leavitt

Gretchen has
tutored for over
three years and
enjoys choral
singing in her
spare time.

Reading and writing
is a mystery to some.
I think I'll tutor.

Listening, learning,
we receive from each other
unexpected gifts.

New worlds unfolding,
he delights in what he's learned
through the written word.

Why do I tutor?
To engage with another,
to grow and to learn.

Program Highlights

New Ventures and New Partners

Partners in Reading (PAR) has had an exciting year providing Adult and Family Literacy services to the residents of San José as well as implementing new Work Wise and ESL programs. Tutors have become more involved in supporting their colleagues through the Tutor Support Group. PAR's Computer Lab is more active, with new computer instructors engaging and teaching the learners. And there have been many chances to learn new skills and share insights with one another. PAR has a new web presence and is now on Facebook.

Here are a few of our new ventures and new partners:

- Work Wise is a grant-funded program for currently employed workers who wish to improve their English-language and literacy skills on the job. Customized vocational training programs have been and are being designed by PAR staff for custodians, housekeeping staff, food service workers, and teacher assistants in Head Start.
- New working relationships have been established with San José State University, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, Head Start Program, and Good Samaritan Hospital as a result of the Work Wise program.

- ESL classes for parents were initiated this year at Dahl Elementary. Two PAR volunteers who have taught ESL, Dianne Lane and Ellen Hill, have been teaching classes for parents whose children participate in preschool programs. These popular classes have had over 25 participants.
- Close partnerships have been developed with Catholic Charities in support of the parents' program at Dahl Elementary. In addition PAR is working closely with the Parole Department, presenting PAR services to agencies and individuals involved with the system.
- A pilot program was started to recruit adult learners by an adult learner, Corina Rath. Corina understands the challenges of being a learner in the program and can clearly address those issues. As a result, Corina contacted and recruited from an array of social service and community agencies that serve potential learners. PAR now has a broader presence in the community of learners.
- A dynamic committee of 13 volunteers was recruited and trained by Catherine McBain to represent PAR at fairs and events and to present the PAR story to community groups. Their purpose is to spread the word, communicate the tremendous need for adult literacy services, and recruit volunteers and learners for the program. Their efforts have been beneficial.
- PAR has a new look on the San José Public Library website www.partnersinreading.org, with more information, current updates on PAR events, resources for tutors and learners, and links to other literacy sources. Also check out our engaging

Facebook site developed by Ellen Loebel. "Like" us at www.facebook.com/PartnersInReading.sjpl . Share ideas with others about adult literacy and find out some interesting facts.

- Families for Literacy reached many families and distributed over 500 books to children under five years of age and their siblings to help develop a home library that supports the love of reading and cultivates beginning literacy skills.

New Activities in the Computer Lab

Do you want to post an ad on Craigslist? Find a new or used car on the Internet? Practice your reading skills? Listen to and say English phrases? Just come to the PAR computer lab. Through the efforts of Deborah Estreicher, and now Julie Cullen, computer instructors are available to work one-to-one with learners (and tutors if they wish). They will also offer periodic classes on popular topics.

Instructors provide a range of services. They will orient the learner to the instructional software programs that provide practice with reading skills, spelling, vocabulary, ESL and language development. They teach the basics of the computer, help learners create their own email accounts, assist adults in using the basic Windows programs and provide support as they search the Internet, create social networking accounts, and tap some interesting websites that make learning fun.

Simply make an appointment with one of the instructors by contacting Parisa Nikouei or Julie Cullen at 408-808-2361. The instructors are helpful, fun, and interesting.

PAR Volunteers

PAR prospers because of the many contributions from the volunteers in the program. Not only do we have a couple hundred active tutors, but we have volunteers providing other services, such as outreach, event planning, administrative tasks, tech support, and many creative suggestions.

A very involved group of volunteer tutors, including Ray Blockie, Sue Rizzi, Jim Barbeau, Steve Robinson, Ellen Hill, Brian Badenoch, and Gretchen Leavitt, has formed the Tutor Support Group. Over the past couple of years the Tutor Support Group has created *PAR-ticipate*, the PAR tutor discussion website where you can ask questions of your colleagues, share resources, and keep up with the latest PAR developments. In addition, the Tutor Support Group has developed a database of teaching and learning resources and provides training workshops for tutors in the program. They also contribute to tutor training and offer support to new tutors during their beginning months of working with a learner. Recently Ray, Jim, and Sue convened tutors from various branches to share ideas and address pressing learning issues. These opportunities and all the services provided by the Tutor Support Group have been very worthwhile and benefit all those involved.

Volunteers are stepping up and taking other leadership roles in PAR as well. PAR tutors can now be viewed on the California State Library Get Involved website describing their volunteering experiences; volunteers coordinate the décor and layout of PAR events; other volunteers are PAR photographers and videographers; Parisa Nikouei coordinates the computer instructors' schedules and classes; and still other volunteers promote the program, recruit tutors, and provide outreach to the community.

These contributions are what make PAR successful and effective, and allow PAR to expand its services and reach a broader base of adults in the San José community.

Thank you.

Special Learning Opportunities

Tutors, staff, and learners participated in a number of special learning opportunities offered through workshops and classes. Some were delivered by staff members, others by volunteer tutors; one was developed in collaboration with San José State University (SJSU), and another was presented by an adult learner in the program. The purpose was to help develop new teaching and learning skills. We thank those who taught and who contributed their ideas and expertise. We also appreciate everyone who participates and takes time to learn something new.

Here are some of the interesting topics offered this past year:

- *Getting Started (Adult Learners)*: four-session class to help learners get the right start when beginning the program, led by Ellen Loebel.
- *Using Phonics to Develop Reading Skills (Tutors)*: workshop to present the many ways phonics can effectively be integrated into teaching reading, led by Catherine McBain.
- *Writers' Workshop (Adult Learners and Tutors)*: annual workshop delivered by MaryLee McNeal to help prepare adult learners to write an essay for the PAR book.
- *English Pronunciation (Tutors)*: workshop targeted to present techniques that assist second-language learners with their English pronunciation, developed by Catherine McBain.
- *Teaching ESL in the Workplace (Tutors)*: workshop that presents ESL techniques used to develop language in the workplace as well as with a learner, led by Carla Macchello.
- *Motivating Change (Tutors)*: workshop designed by Kathleen O'Brien to provide insight into and tips for supporting change in ourselves and adult learners.
- *Job Interviewing for Adult Learners*: workshop designed in collaboration with SJSU to provide learners with skills and practice for job interviewing, developed by Luann Budd and Sarah Carvalho.

- *Teaching Word Attack Skills: Conquering Words One Syllable at a Time (Tutors)*: workshop created by Catherine McBain to present valuable methods of teaching syllabication to unlock words and meaning.
- *ESL Grammar Workshop for Tutors*: workshop presented by Ellen Loebel and Carla Macchello that supports English-language development among second-language speakers through effective grammar techniques.
- *Building Confidence in Adult Learners (Tutors)*: workshop developed by Kathleen O'Brien to help tutors identify and use methods to promote self-confidence in learners.
- *Learn about Organic Gardening, Nutrition, and Saving Money (Learners and Their Families)*: workshop presented to Families for Literacy by Helena Nguyen to promote organic gardening and to explain its many benefits.
- *Developing Comprehension Skills Through Short Stories (Adult Learners)*: twelve-session class taught by Kelley Foot to develop deeper comprehension skills among learners working toward their GED.

New Words

These are new words from the stories in this book. Here are some ways to learn these words, what they mean, how to spell them, and how to use them when you are talking and when you are writing.

1. Read the new word or listen to your tutor read it. Then repeat it.
2. Guess what the definition is, and then read the definition and the example sentence.
3. Then turn to the page in the book to find the new word. Can you find it?
4. Read the whole sentence with the word. Does it make sense now that you have read what it means and seen it in another example?
5. Write the word on a card. On the other side of the card write what it means and the example sentence.
6. Now write a sentence using your own words on a separate piece of paper.
7. Try to use the word when you are talking, too.

abducted, 6

Stolen, kidnapped – The child was **abducted** in the middle of the night and then her parents called the police.

admire, 22

To look up to someone – I **admire** people who work hard and are kind to others.

anxious, 51

To be nervous, scared, and worried – I am usually **anxious** before I take a test.

applied, 63

Made a formal request, asked for something, usually a job – He **applied** for a job and was excited when he was hired.

appreciate, 67

To think well of, to like – Most people **appreciate** the weather in California most of the time.

assumed, 66

Thought it was true – I **assumed** that it would rain since there were a lot of clouds in the sky and it was cold and dark.

comprehension, 34

Understanding – Good **comprehension** is important when reading anything.

contributed, 13

Gave without getting anything back – The tutor **contributed** her time to PAR so that she could help many learners with their reading and writing.

diplomatic, 25

Tactful – The leader had to be very **diplomatic** with the group in order to succeed.

disappeared, 68

To stop being seen – The clouds **disappeared** at lunch time and then it got very hot.

explaining, 1

Giving the meaning of, making understandable – The students are **explaining** the lesson to their tutor.

fantastic, 53

Really great – I saw a **fantastic** movie over the weekend that I want to see again.

favorite, 10

The one I like best – My **favorite** ice cream is chocolate.

fictional, 64

Not real, a story or book that is made up – Even if you are reading something about a **fictional** person, you can learn a lot about how to be a better person.

funeral, 47

A celebration for someone who has died to remember them - The **funeral** was very sad, but it helped to remember the man who died.

genuine, 32

Real – I prefer people who are **genuine** because I can get to know them really well.

giving, 36

A person who thinks about others, generous – **Giving** people often volunteer with PAR.

graduate, 48

To finish school – The students will **graduate** next June and then have a big party.

hectic, 43

Too busy – With school, work, and family, his schedule is very **hectic**. There is very little time to sleep.

hero, 15

A person who is admired for having courage – The boy's **hero** was afraid of nothing and was strong and brave.

licorice, 61

A type of candy that can be red or black and comes in a long string – Some people like to buy **licorice** at the movie theater.

malaria, 57

A disease that comes from mosquitoes – **Malaria** is often found in countries that are hot and wet.

mentor, 41

Someone who shows or guides another person and gives advice – My **mentor** was an excellent teacher, and I learned many things from her when we worked together.

musician, 58

People who play music – Some **musicians** can play many instruments, such as the piano, the guitar, and the drums.

obstacles, 18

Things that get in the way – In life there are often many **obstacles** but it is important to know how to get around them and succeed.

overcome, 3

To get past something that is difficult – He had lots of problems that he worked hard to **overcome**.

previous, 5

Before - The **previous** book I read was very funny. The book I am reading now is very serious.

progressing, 37

Moving forward, improving – The students are **progressing** each week as they learn more and work hard.

refugee, 38

A person who had to leave their country because it was too dangerous to stay there – San José has a lot of **refugees** from many different countries.

repair, 4

To fix – I took a class on how to **repair** my bike.

responsibility, 27

Able to act independently and make good decisions – It is important to teach **responsibility** to children when they are young.

schedules, 45

The times you have to be places, for example at work – My work **schedules** are different on Mondays and Wednesdays because I work early on Mondays and late on Wednesdays.

spirit, 30

Attitude – She was very happy and always had a good **spirit**.

succeed, 55

Did well – Learners in PAR **succeed** because they are studying what they need and because they can ask their tutor questions.

supportive, 31

Someone who gives help and comfort – **Supportive** friends and family are very important in my life.

tutors, 14

Private teachers – PAR **tutors** are the best because they give a lot of time and they help many people improve reading and writing.

unconditional, 11

Without reservations – Most parents have **unconditional** love for their children. They love them more than anything.

valuable, 17

Worth a lot – The gold watch was very **valuable**. She sold it for a lot of money.