
Thank You!



**Partners in Reading
Adult Literacy Program
San José Public Library
2007**

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Introduction

This collection of stories shares the importance of someone special in the lives of the learners in Partners in Reading, the adult literacy program at the San Jose Public Library. These dedicated adults are working to improve their reading and writing skills by meeting with a volunteer tutor each week.

For many learners this is the first attempt to express their ideas for publication. Others are more experienced authors. They all worked very hard to draft, revise, and polish their stories. Learners are beginning to find confidence in themselves as they explore written communication with their tutors' assistance.

This book gives learners the opportunity to say "Thank you" to that special person who has spent time helping or teaching them something of importance at a critical time in their lives. This newfound knowledge has opened a

window of opportunity to the world for many of our learners. It may have given them a new skill, helped with a promotion at work, allowed them to increase their faith, or provided something more purposeful to their lives. As new authors, they are eagerly awaiting the publication of this book so they can show their very own stories to those important people in their lives.

Learners chose to write about family members, tutors, religious leaders, or special friends. You will enjoy reading how Justina's sister encouraged her to study while providing financial support so she could afford to attend school, and of a mother's devotion from the personal sacrifice that Nid's mother made to help her family by making sure they always had enough to eat. Debbie shares that there is nothing her husband would not do for her, writing that "It's the little things he does that count." For Richard S. there was the generosity of his landlord at a time when his family really needed help, while Estelle tells of her faith and spiritual community that keep inspiring her to read and write. Isabel's story tells about her tutor Doris and how she helped to make changes in her life.

This is the ninth edition of a book of learner writings that PAR has published. It has inspired those who wrote for the book to continue to work hard on improving their writing skills. We thank the learners for sharing their stories with us.

We hope you enjoy reading this book!

Sue Carlton
Literacy Program Specialist

My Friend

by Omar Abdu

My tutor Julia helped me in many ways. She lives in San Jose. When I first started with Julia, my English was not very good. But my tutor helped me to learn how to read because my reading was bad. She taught me spelling and writing and many words. At the same time we played word games. And we cooked together at her house. She is not only my tutor, she is my friend, too. I will miss my tutor because she is going to move to Sacramento next month.

Omar has three sisters and one brother. He likes to swim, play soccer, hike, and go to the library. He works as a carpenter and has a three-year apprenticeship with the union. In one more year he will be a journeyman. He loves his job.

My Tutor

by Dorcia Allen



My tutor Sarah helps me know what I want to do at Partners in Reading. I heard about it from a friend. When I first came to the library and joined Partners in Reading, I was very interested in learning more about how to read and write better. My tutor helped me with my reading, vocabulary, and confidence. I'm beginning to learn the words and how they are used in a sentence. I am learning the vowels and the beginning verbs and the ending verbs.

I started in the middle of February 2007 and plan to be in the program for six months. I had difficulty with pronouncing words, spelling, and my English grammar. I have learned a lot from Sarah. She works very hard with me and I enjoy working with her. We work together Mondays and Fridays.

I'm looking forward to helping others in the near future with their English grammar. My dream is to find a good job after I finish this program.

Sarah is a very generous person with lots of ideas. I'm very glad that I'm able to work with my tutor Sarah.

Dorcia Allen heard about PAR through a man at her church who was a tutor. She has six children and is part of the program with her husband, André Charles. Her hobbies are working on the computer, reading, and spelling. She is in the program to learn better pronunciation and hopes to one day read the book "Biography of the Stars." This is her first year working with PAR.

Danny & Darlene

by Mary Anaya



My son Danny and his girlfriend Darlene helped me when I was hurt. I fell down and broke my arm in the living room in November 2006. I yelled. My son yelled, "What happened, Mom?" Then he picked me up. He took me to Valley Medical Emergency Room. I hurt very badly. Vicodin did not work. Danny and Darlene stayed with me. They took me home. Danny helped me to bed.

While I was getting better, Danny fixed breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. He helped me clean the house. While Danny helped clean, Darlene helped me take a shower and helped me get dressed. They would do the best that they could. Darlene would take me to the doctor and stay with me. Then she would take me back to the house and I would say "Thank you."

Since Mary came to Partners in Reading she has been reading and spelling more every day. She wants to learn more because she hopes to be a counselor for the Indian Center. Mary wants to thank Partners in Reading.

My Daughter Yolanda

by **Sylvia Brown**



My daughter Yolanda is helping me learn to read. She is 17. She is in the tenth grade and she has lots of homework. We sit at the table together. She does her homework, and I study. When I get stuck on long words, I say, "Yolanda, what is this word right here?" She stops what she is doing. She says, "Mom! That word is really easy." She uses her finger to help me see the parts of the word. She gives me hints. We get excited and laugh. "Blend it together!" I am glad she takes the time from homework to help me.

Sylvia Brown has six children. She likes playing and watching sports with her children. She has been with PAR since October 2006. She and her tutor Brian laugh a lot at their sessions.

My Wife Dorcia and How I Learned to Cook and Write Poetry

by **André Charles**

My wife Dorcia makes me feel happy and confident. Instead of making me feel bad, she makes me laugh. She makes me feel relaxed and confident.

Before I met Dorcia, a holiday seemed like just any other day. She wondered why I wasn't celebrating the holidays. She cheered me up by telling me what each holiday was about. I look forward to holidays coming now that I have someone to share the holidays with.

The first Thanksgiving I spent with her, she told me she was going to cook a Thanksgiving dinner. That's when I told her I'd make the cornbread. I had never made cornbread before. She let me go into the kitchen and try making it. When it was done, she looked at it and told me that I must have forgotten something. It didn't rise. It also stuck to the pan.

The next thing, she wanted me to go to the store and get

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some groceries to make a salad to go with the corn-bread. I told her that I didn't need a grocery list, I already knew what to get. I came home with cabbage. She told me, "Honey, that's not lettuce, that's cabbage!" I looked at it again and I said, "Oops!"

Before I met her, I didn't know anything about cooking. Now I know that you have to read the recipe. By actually listening to her about the recipe and about what to put into it, I know pretty much how to do it. All these times I had with her, she caught me unexpectedly by taking pictures.

When Dorcia and I first met, I noticed that she likes to read, so I took a walk with her to the library. I didn't really feel very confident about going there, but I went anyway. She gave me the confidence to do that. That's when I picked up a poetry book and found out I liked it. I found out that there was nothing hard about reading books. I also found out about the Partners in Reading program and the different things they have in the library, including computers, and how someone like me can learn new skills. Now I find myself improving the things that I didn't know before. When I left the library, I

picked up a library card.

After reading poetry books, I find myself writing poetry. I wrote this poem about love:

*True love is something that you cannot tear apart,
but comes from your heart.*



André and his wife, Dorcia

André likes to talk and work with others. He likes to encourage people to be the best that they can be and to accomplish their goals. André likes to maintain his apartment and to share things with his wife. In the future, André wants to continue to better himself by learning more skills at Partners in Reading.

Kind People at Church

by Bertha Chavez

When I was working, around 15 years ago, for the United Methodist Church, my husband and I tried to buy a house. The pastor, Jim, and two of my co-workers, Diana and Patricia, helped me a lot. The pastor let us borrow \$1,000 without interest. Pastor Jim asked me, "Bertha, how do you want to pay the loan back? Twenty dollars a month? Fifty?" I told him I would pay him back \$100 every month. They also helped me send papers to the bank. Diana told me, "Bertha, go and pray, because that is the last time I do paperwork for you!" She was joking with me, of course.

It took a long time for us to get the house, but I will never forget when we moved in. Before we bought the house, we lived in our apartment for 20 years. Can you believe 20 years living in a one-bedroom apartment with four children? I am never going to forget these people because they helped me so much. There are still very kind people in the world; you just have to find them.

Bertha is married, has four sons, and lives in San Jose, CA. She would like to learn more about computers. She would also like to improve her English and read more, especially about history. She still hopes that war will end. As a mother, she is very sad to hear about others suffering because of war. She would like to see everyone in the world live better and have more education.

My Wonderful Sister

by **Justina Gonzalez**

Most people have close personal relationships with family members. I have a close relationship with my sister Luz. I learn so much from her. God know what would become of me if I didn't have my sister. I would like to thank my sister Luz Maria for her support.

Everything started in a small town in Mexico, when I was ten years old and my parents decided to get divorced. There were nine children and my mom did not have skills to work. We just had a little money that my dad gave my mom. That is why my older sister Luz decided to work in an office. She made enough money to pay bills and buy food. We did not grow up in a wealthy family, but we always had enough food to eat. We were a happy family. Our family helped one another.

Luz always encouraged us to study. She wanted us to have educational successes. I really liked school. One day, I decided to enroll in college but my mother did not

have enough money for my schooling. My sister financially supported me. She worked so hard to give me everything I needed. She was the person who first inspired me to go to college and the person who gave me the opportunity to reach my goals.

For much of my childhood, I lived very happily. She helped me to build confidence, she was total support for me; she inspired me to have goals in my life. I want to express a special thanks to her. I really appreciated her for a lot of the things she did for me. She is my SISTER without a doubt; she is the most wonderful sister.

Justina was born in Mexico. She has lived in San Jose for ten years. She has two children. Justina likes to work with Don, her tutor. She has improved her reading since she joined PAR.

My Wife's Parents

by **Richard Hannaway**

Roger and Margaret, my wife's parents, are two of the most loving, caring, and generous people I know. They help me take care of my children and make sure that they are happy and have food, clothing, and good medical care. Roger and Margaret also paid for my ticket when I moved to California from St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. I am very grateful for the help they have given me.

When my daughter, Ashika, went to Stanford for testing, my wife Italia and her parents helped me to find out which testing she needed. They also made sure that she got all of the tests. Then they helped me to find out the right school where she can get help to learn.

There is nothing more important to Roger and Margaret than their family.

There is nothing that my husband Larry won't do for me.

Richard grew up on St. Vincent and the Grenadines Island in the Caribbean. He married his wife Italia in 2004 and then moved to California on February 14, 2006. Richard and Italia have three children: two girls and a boy. Richard likes to sing and listen to reggae music.

My Husband

by **Debbie Hodge**

It is the little things he does that count. I come home and he is vacuuming. I told him, "It seems that I kept better house when I was working." He said, "You said that, not me."

We met at church. He was there all the time. One day we started talking and we had a lot in common. He always had nieces and nephews around him. I thought he was married because he always had these kids around him. His nieces and nephews love him, but he doesn't give them any money, just time.

He looks like a muscle man. He thinks he's younger. He looks like he's 35 or 40 years old, but he is 58 years old. He looks good in a suit.

He is incredibly patient with the children. He took care of our six-week-old daughter while he worked swing shift. He is incredibly close to her now. Larry was also their Sunday School teacher. He was Daddy 24 hours a day but Teacher on Sunday, and they loved having him as their teacher. He

knows the Bible so well and can quote scripture.

Larry is very understanding. He is someone you can talk to. He is an excellent cook and he has spoiled me rotten. He is not picky. He is very laid back. But when he says “No” he means “No.” He means what he says.

He doesn't mind taking me places. When I write a grocery list and I can't spell a word, he tells me to just write it down and he brings me what I want. We know each other so well.

When I joined Partners in Reading he was excited and so happy. He's the one who keeps me going. He is so encouraging. He asks “When is your class? What days?” He is so considerate.

Debbie has three children, but raises four. She likes sewing and making clothes. She has been in Partners in Reading for twelve years. She has had some great tutors. She thinks that Partners in Reading is one of the greatest things that has happened to her.

The Best Sister

by **Maria Ibanez**

I would like to speak about my older sister. Her name is Irma. I was born in the small town of Durango, Mexico. Growing up, I had many siblings. My mother had a lot of jobs and did not have time to care for us all properly, so my sister took on the role of mother to help her.

I remember fondly the way she would help me with my homework, brush my hair, dress me, and do everything for me a mother would do. My sister put my well-being before herself, her friends, and her social life. I thank her profoundly. For these reasons, I esteem my sister Irma as the best sister anyone could ever have.

As time progressed, life led us in different directions. She now lives in another state, but I think of her always. No matter where I am, I wish her the best. May God bless her always. She changed my life. She taught me to love others, about respect, and the importance of family.

I feel fortunate for having my sister.

Maria Ibanez is a Mexican immigrant from Durango, Mexico. She lives in San Jose with her husband and two teenage sons. Maria is very interested in reading books and articles about health and nutrition. She recently created an e-mail account, with the help of her tutor, where she can continue to practice her writing as well as her typing. She is very excited to be able to communicate with her sons' school through e-mail and continues to build her confidence and abilities in reading, writing, speaking and responding in English.

My Mother, My Heroine

by Nid Jaronram



My mother worked very hard in her life in the fields in Thailand. I remember she took me and my younger sister to the field, and she was eight months pregnant at that time, and worked in the field, cutting the rice. Then she had the baby, but the baby died. My mother was very sad. “Why did the baby die?” I asked her. She told me, “Because I worked too hard.”

One morning she brought tobacco she had grown to the market to trade for some rice, because we didn’t have food to eat. “Can you buy me some milk?” I asked my mother. She stopped to think. “It’s a lot of money,” she said. But she bought it for me, and also rambutans (a kind of fruit).

When dinnertime came, we usually had rice, chili powder, fish sauce, and one egg. She broke one egg for

four people. But one night I gave my part of the egg back to her, because it was just a little bit and I wanted her to have it instead of me. I looked at her face, and tears were rolling down her cheeks. I knew she was crying because I had given my food to her. Sometimes we didn't have enough food to eat. But she always let me and my sister eat first, and after that she and my father would eat. She said, "No matter what happens, I want my kids to have a good meal."

My mother didn't want me to have to work in the fields like she had all her life, so she did the best she could. She sent me to school, where I learned to read and write. She sent me for only six years because she didn't have the money to send me for longer.

I stayed with her until I was fifteen years old, when I went to Bangkok to work in a laundry. My mother taught me how to take care of myself in the city of Bangkok. She told me, "Don't be afraid. Do the right thing. If someone asks you out to the club or disco, don't go." I kept thinking about her a lot when I was alone in Bangkok. Every night, before I went to sleep, I prayed for my parents. It helped me not be scared

when I was alone.

Every time I call my Mom, the first thing I ask her about is food: “What are you cooking for breakfast or lunch?” I miss her a lot, and I am so proud to be her daughter. She is the best mother on Earth.

While working in a laundry in Bangkok, Nid met her future husband, Steve. After he asked her to marry him, her childhood dream of flying to America came true. She passed her U.S. citizenship exam on June 5, 2007, and hopes her mother will now be able visit her in San Jose. Nid says, “Thank you, America, for letting me stay in your country. Thanks to Partners in Reading for the support, and thank you to my tutor Victoria for being patient with me.”

My Heavenly Father

by Estelle Mata

My Heavenly Father is the one who has given me the strength to keep on going, to keep on studying, not to give up. Without Him, I would have given up, and by hearing the testimony of people from church, I keep going. I heard in church that the pastor, Tony Ortiz, hadn't known how to read. I was talking to his wife, who said to me, "Don't give up, keep on going. If my husband could do it, you can do it, too." That helped me not to quit. It's not easy. It's very hard because certain vowels I don't hear. Something in my brain doesn't click. Or I get frustrated and I have to put it aside for awhile and go back to it later.

I keep on going for my grandchildren, so if they see me not quit, they won't quit either. Without education, you can't go anywhere. And you might as well do it when you're young, because when you get older you'll be too tired out from work. For me, what's the good of having a diploma if I can't even read or write? I should be proud of my diploma, but I'm not. Just because I made it to the twelfth grade, people

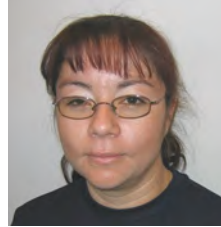
expect too much out of me. To me the diploma is nothing, just a piece of paper. That's the way I feel. Other people might feel differently.

The only thing I have left is my faith. Without that, I have nothing.

Estelle lives in San Jose with her daughter and grandson. When San Jose was primarily a farming community, she worked trimming cauliflower, then later in electronics assembly and at McWhorter's. She has been studying with PAR since 1991. Her goal is to learn to read well enough to be independent. She enjoys reading the Bible and cleaning.

I Can Do It

by Isabel Morenes



Doris became my tutor in 2005. I came to PAR because I didn't have time to go to ESL classes because I was working different hours. Doris has changed my life.

My life is different since I have been learning English with Doris. For example, I got a new job with more benefits because my English was more fluent. Now I'm working with American-born professionals, and I have more opportunities for advancement.

When I need to make an appointment for my kids with the doctor, I don't have any problems because Doris has explained how to make appointments over the phone with the secretary.

Now I can read books to my kids and help them with their homework. When my son has a problem with the pronunciation of a word, I look up the word in the

dictionary and I explain to him how to read the syllables. The kids help me with my pronunciation, also! They correct me when I'm reading some notes in English because sometimes I make a mistake.

My parents help me, also, by encouraging me and giving me confidence. When I call my parents, they always tell me, "You need to go to school," "You need to speak better English," "You need to go to college to learn a profession." They say, "You can do it."

I appreciate Doris because she gives me her time and patience. She is flexible when I can't take the class, so sometimes I have the class on a different day.

I WILL ALWAYS APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY.

Isabel was born in Mexico and has lived in the United States for ten years. She is the single mom of two, and likes to take her children on outings. Isabel is patient, determined, and optimistic, and is trying to instill the desire for education in her children as well.

My Grandmother

by **Freddy Moreno**



My grandmother, Genevieve Martinez, was always there for me. She was my favorite grandma. She taught me to always tell the truth and do things right. My grandmother was always taking care of my mom, my aunt, and me.

When I was ten years old, I went to live with my grandmother. She taught me how to take care of the house and garden. We went to church together a lot, too. She always took me to the movies and taught me to cook.

My grandmother was always working at her job in the restaurant everyday except Sunday, but she still had time for me. She listened to me and understood me. My grandmother always made sure I had what I needed. She never asked for anything for herself. She was a happy person and I liked spending time with her. She was a very special person who was very important in my life.

Freddy Moreno is a member of the San Jose High School class of 1972, and he likes to play the congo drums in Caesar Chavez Plaza. He is close to his aunt and uncle, Elsie Pedroza and Paz Naverato, and his niece Corina.

The Lord Jesus Christ

by **Gordon C. Nelson**



The Lord Jesus changed my life as an adult.

I was raised by my mom and my foster folks, because my mom couldn't take care of me and my sister while working at Fort Mason. She had some people from Denmark who helped raise me with their kids, too. I was going with my sister to Fort Mason Chapel on Sundays when I was little. We went to Sunday School after and they gave us a storybook about Jesus. We did some coloring, too.

In my teenage years, I had not been to church for quite a while, because I was having fun with my friends. My best friend was Paul Bigi. I also had other friends named Mario and his brother Alfredo Ortiz.

At about 21 years old, I had to leave San Francisco and move to San Jose, because my mother had to move to a drier climate. My mother and I lived in a mobile home on Oakland Road. My sister did not move with us; she went

out on her own, which she regretted later. I stayed with my mother until she died. My foster father and my mother died at the same time. My foster sister was trying to find me to tell me about her dad.

I started to go to different churches, because I was looking for the right one. There was a big hole in my heart when my mother died. I went to the House of God in San Jose, where I was baptized. I stayed because there were lots of friendly people and the pastor was nice, too. My best friend's wife took me to her church, the Church of God on Minnesota Avenue, where I met my wife Lenora.

Lenora and I attended two churches in the late 80's to try to decide which one was most helpful. We decided on Hillside Church. This is the church that helped me come to accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

The best thing is, Jesus forgave my sins, and even though I still sin, He forgives me. He is always with me, He takes care of all my needs. I have peace with God now and I am never lonely.

Some of the things people (who walk with the Lord) did for me:

- Another member gave his car to the church, and the church gave it to me.
- The Men's Bible Study helped me to study the Bible and have fellowship.
- Another member helped me get a job.

Jesus is coming back some day for us all, and I am looking forward to that day. My life is getting better day by day.

Gordon is married to Lenore and has a step-grandson, Christopher. Gordon works regularly with his tutor, and says that he is doing pretty well with reading.

Thanks to My Wonderful Tutor

by Huong Nguyen

My tutor Jean helps me to have more confidence in myself. Jean is teaching me to read and talk better in English.

We meet at the Partners in Reading office in the Martin Luther King Library every week for around two hours. She is showing me the correct way to read and talk, especially with the letter “s” sound at the end of words. I am also learning many new words that American people use every day but Vietnamese don’t use often.

Sometimes at work I read an e-mail or hear some words from my co-workers when they talk that I do not completely understand, and I will ask her. She is friendly and patiently listens to me. One special thing is that she chose a tape with two speeds. First, she lets me listen to the very slow tape. When I understand a little bit about the story, she puts the tape at normal speed. After I listen to some more chapters, she stops and asks me some questions. If I can’t answer, she lets me read the book. Then, I can

answer all the questions.

Learning about these things makes me more confident when talking to other people. It is important in my job to be able to talk to my boss, co-workers, and in meetings. I feel much more confident after working with Jean for the last five years. She has been such a big help to me.

Huong lives in San Jose with her family. She has two children: her daughter is now a student at De Anza College, and her son is a student at Evergreen College. She works in a medical device company in Fremont. Her husband works for the G.E. Company in Newark. She likes to read books and she likes to cook, too.

Breaking Pencils

by Virginia Olivo

José Villegas has helped enrich my life. I was a bus driver for four years and then I switched over to a new bus company. That's where I first met José, at the fuel pumps.

José helped me to know the bus yard and to log and fuel the bus. He was always there when I had questions or needed information. Later, when we became friends, he helped me wash my bus. We started having lunch together. He'd bring me his homemade burritos.

One day, the general manager, Kathy, approached José about becoming a delegated trainer. A delegated trainer teaches behind-the-wheel for new drivers and for drivers who need periodic training. At the time I was curious why she hadn't asked me as well. Then a few days later she approached me about becoming a trainer, too.

I was excited but scared. José and I discussed how difficult it would be to pass the Highway Patrol test. We decided that we could help each other.

It was very difficult for me to teach how to back up the bus

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in a straight line. José has a talent for backing-up maneuvers and for paralleling the bus. He offered to help me after class.

I remember getting frustrated while trying to back up the bus, and breaking pencils. He told me to look at the rear axle in the mirror. He helped me practice techniques of this type until I became good at them. It was all about practicing and he was very patient.

He also helped me pass the written test. I was having difficulties with all the rules and regulations. He even made his own lesson plans and used them to tutor me. He later used these lesson plans to help other drivers who were struggling with the exams. José is now known throughout the county as a great teacher. People come to him for extra help in passing the written test.

With José's help, we both became State Certified Delegated Trainers. We can now train people to become bus drivers anywhere in the State of California. We were both promoted and received raises. I really love my job. Without José's help, I wouldn't be teaching.

José is very serious about keeping up his studies on rules and regulations. He even took the manual to Hawaii while on vacation. I know this because I was there with him. Somewhere along the way, we fell in love.

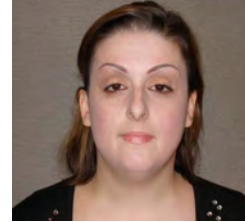


José and Virginia

Virginia was born and raised in downtown San Jose and graduated from San Jose High School. She is very proud of her beautiful daughter, Melissa, and of all of the positive changes Melissa has been making in her life. Virginia has an extremely close relationship with her grandson, Jacob, and her nephew, Adrian.

Virginia has been a bus driver here for over seventeen years. She considers it a privilege and a joy to be able to work with special needs children. She first started in the PAR program over four years ago. Today, she takes advantage of all the programs available, including workshops and leadership programs. Virginia enjoys going to the beach, aqua aerobics and seeing movies. She feels blessed by having such an enjoyable life.

My Mom Is My Best Friend



by **Phyllis Perakis**

Maria Perakis is my mom. My mom is very important in my life. There are many reasons she is so special. She helps me in so many ways. My mom has always been there for me. I was living with my kids and my husband. Then it did not work out with us, and my kids and I had to live with my mom. If I did not have my mom, I don't know where I would be living now. My mom and I can talk about a lot of things. We are very close friends. My mom puts her kids and grandkids first. She works very hard in the restaurant, and when she gets home she makes sure I am okay and that I am happy.

Another reason I wanted to write about my mom is because I admire her for being so strong. She has lost a lot of family members who were close to her. Her mom, Phyllis, died. And her other daughter, Katherine, died. But she still stays strong for the rest of the family. I don't know

how to thank my mom. The only way I can do it is to write in this book about how special my mom is to me.

Phyllis likes to be with her kids, Alex and Tasso. She works at her parents' restaurant.

A Special Person

by Hector Ramirez

I thank my tutor, Miss Kay, for being kind and patient in all these times that she has been tutoring me. She is a very special person. I have learned so much from her. She taught me how to read and write and how to make sentences. She also taught me how to become a better public speaker. I consider myself a happy person and more secure, thanks to her. I believe that education is part of every human happiness. Without education, it feels like we're disabled.

I remember when Miss Kay came to be my tutor. I used to get flyers from my son and daughter's school. I ignored them because I couldn't understand them. I remember going to the school meetings and sitting in the last row, fearing that I would be asked questions that I might not be able to answer because I couldn't speak or understand English that well.

I remember going for doctor's appointments and asking for a translator and waiting longer until they found one. I also remember going to social services and getting forms to fill out and not knowing how to do it, and feeling ashamed to ask for help. I'd rather walk away. My life was very frustrating and I wanted to just give up on everything. But those days are gone. I'm always going to be very grateful to Miss Kay. My tutor is one of those special persons in my life.

Hector and his wife Magdalena have four children, Xochilt, Yvette, Allen, and Joshua, and are helping to raise Yvette's son Jaden. His main hobby is music. He plays the guitar and piano and composes. He has been with PAR for six years. Five of those years have been with his current tutor. He is retired on disability.

My Grandson Means the World to Me

by **Elizabeth Sandoval**



My grandson Alex has been the inspiration of my life, from the day he was born until now, when he is two years old. After he was born, my daughter lived with me. I saw Alex every day, until my daughter and her husband moved to their own apartment.

On May 10, 2005, at 5:00 a.m., I was getting ready for work when my daughter Sara came to my bedroom door. She told me she was having contractions and she was on her way to the hospital. I was so excited that I did not go to work. I went to the hospital with my daughter and her husband. I stayed with her through the entire labor. When the time came for Alex to be delivered, the doctor was not there. The nurse had to deliver Alex. The delivery was so fast that the doctor did not have time to get there. When the doctor finally got there, she put Alex on Sara's chest and Sara cut the umbilical cord. Sara was crying and happy to

see the baby. I was also very happy when I saw him for the first time and thanked God that he was healthy. The pediatrician took Alex to clean, weigh, and verify that he was healthy. Alex was born at 6:42 p.m., weighed 7.7 pounds, and was 19.5 inches long. Family and friends were in the waiting room waiting for the good news.

When Alex left the hospital, he came to live with me. I got to see my grandson every day. I really enjoyed helping my daughter learn to be a mom. I did things like giving my grandson his first bath. I also showed my daughter how to burp him. Sometimes when he was fussy at night, I would take him and soothe him so my daughter could get some rest. As he got older, I would take him for a walk in the park. At the park, I would push him on the swing. We would also walk around the lake.

When he was a year and a half, my daughter and son-in-law moved into their own apartment. Now I don't see him as much as before. I go every Wednesday to see him.

While I visit him, we play a lot. He calls me every morning to say “Hi,Nana.” Sometime they bring him to me to babysit. We will be having a second birthday party soon and there will be a piñata for him.

These are all of the reasons my grandson is the inspiration of my life.



Elizabeth's grandson, Alex

Elizabeth was born in Honduras, Central America. She has three children and a grandson. She remarried last winter. She says, “Thanks to Partners in Reading for the support and thanks to my tutor Ian for being patient with me.”

My Father Mr. D

by Jackie Smith



My father John Dumas, also known as Mr. D, helped me and other individuals in several ways. He taught me to lend a hand in the family business, and he also taught me the importance of self-care. This helped build my self-esteem.

In the early 50's, my father's Aunt Frances Green, his godmother, hired him. She gave him his first job as a custodian. He cleaned her beauty shop. Aunt Frances also encouraged him to start his own business in cosmetology. He learned at an early age and went to high school and graduated. Later he served in the U.S. Navy, and seven years later he went to college and took small business courses. In 1962, just out beauty college, he was also mentored by Lucreda Vanzl, a well-known entrepreneur. She owned her own beauty salon and was very involved in the community, statewide organizations, and politics. She is still living at 96. She lives in a beautiful assisted living care home in Palo Alto.

My father is also grateful to Ms. Kitty, who sold him his first beauty salon. All of his sisters were supportive of his business and his family.

In the early 60's, I was three years old and I was in my first fashion show. My father, Mr. D, helped me walk across the stage. He coaxed me with a red ball. My picture was in the program; while I was growing up, that made me feel good about myself. Years later, my parents had more children. My sister and I danced and sang on stage. We were encouraged by the audience. My Aunt Ophelia was there, telling us how nice our hair looked and that we could be models in a big show. Because my father allowed us to participate in this show, it brought families in the community together.

We modeled our hairdos at fashion shows and parades, and people came to see us. My sister and I wore shiny silver and pink dresses and black shoes. At one fashion show, I remember my Aunt Ophelia wore a two-layered Afro and a long beautiful dress that matched it. My mother wore

an African dress with a colored print of white, black, olive green, and other dark colors. Mother had one sassy hairdo with a curly Afro. She has a face that complements any hairstyle. Her photograph was on my father's business card.

My father planned several shows, but the one in the early 70's was called the "Extravaganza." My two brothers were also in the show and modeled their Afros. My father's shop was one of the first salons that started doing Jheri curls. Later, with the help of a friend, they patented a shampoo product called Dumas.

In my early teens my younger sister and I modeled in a parade. In the 70's, I portrayed Madame C. J. Walker. Later on as a teenager, my brother, sister, and I were asked to be in a big gala called the Debutante Ball, to represent my dad the cosmetologist. We had to learn to dance the waltz. My sister and I wore long formal dresses. We were happy to participate in this big event. My brother and I participated in this event, and this year was even more exciting.

My father Mr. Dumas not only helped me, he gave opportunities to other young adults. He employed a multi-ethnic staff: Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Hispanics, and Caucasians. In the later 80's he had several small shops in San Jose and many employees. Later on he also taught people from other countries, for example, a young lady from Liberia was taught by him and took what she learned back home to teach in Africa. My dad also mentored and trained Miss Angelina, and in return she did some interior design work in his shop. He was very grateful.

My father is 73 years old and is still working in his beauty salon. It is now called M.O.T.F. (Minds of the Future). He continues to help me, my husband, my teenagers, and others. We are a big loving family.

Jackie and her husband, Leo, have three children, one daughter and two sons. She enjoys working on the computer. Jackie's reading has improved a lot, and now she is writing more. She also illustrates pictures from Bible texts.

This Is My Story; This Is My Life!

by **Judy Smith**



This is really my life and how I learned how to read. It's a story, but it's my life. There are people out there who need the Partners in Reading program and more programs like it, and people who take the time out to teach us and to help us get to our goals. When we fall down when we're little, later on there's a place like this to go learn. Everybody needs to get picked up again and have the courage to want it. But it takes the right program. It's a process; it's not just something easy. How did I get there? How did I get to that point? It had to be God. God set me up with the people who helped me.

My husband, Steve, encouraged me to take the test and go through the process. He tried to hold my hand the whole way, but Catherine [at PAR] said "No." I had to go in there on my own. There was no need for him to be there. I love him for just standing up for me and being there. He's a great man in my life.

My friend Irene is the one who got me the information so I could get a tutor. I've only known her for eight months, but I *know* her. She's a good friend to take the time out to get the information, to give me the courage, to give me the number to make the call, to offer to take me there. She did it with love behind it. She's an awesome friend and she could encourage others that way. It just takes the right person. God puts you with the right people. It's all God.

People who want to join PAR all get tested by Catherine. I don't know about anyone else, but I was nervous. I prayed the previous night for the doors to be open and for them to just take the time to test me, and she did. What words can I say? She's just . . . awesome. She doesn't mess around. She really took the time to test me. And right off the bat she said, "You could fake it, but it's just hurting yourself. If you can't do it, you can't do it."

She said, "We're here for you. If you're late or you're coming with your excuses—your grandkids or you can't make it for some other reason—it doesn't matter. We're here for you. If you want to mess it up, you're going to mess it up."

I never met a person like her. She was straight up. And I really liked her because she set my husband straight. She's

a great person and I hope that people really realize that Catherine and other people on the PAR staff are there to help us, to really help.

My tutor Amy is special. It doesn't matter what the age is. To me, she has the heart, she and her husband, to take the time out. She doesn't judge me for my age and for what I know. She just takes the time to teach me, and now I know how to read a little and spell the numbers 1 through 10. Amy says, "We're going to master the numbers and the reading." So I'm going to use her in my big testimony—this is the one! I want people to know that there are people like her willing to help people like us. Since I've been learning, I've shared with my sisters and brothers how much I'm learning from Amy. I'm encouraging them to get help.

Judy is married to Steve and has two boys, Freddie Carrillo and Albert Lewis, and a daughter, Priscilla Smith; now she has grandkids, too. Going to church is very important to Judy. She feels that her church group is her second family. Judy and Steve have their own business, Smith Lawn Service. Their goal is to build up their business so they can help others have jobs.

Help from an Unlike-ly Source

by Richard Solorio

It was Monday, October 15, 1994. I had just walked into work and was notified by my supervisor to go the Human Resources office. As I arrived at the HR office, I noticed that there were six other co-workers there. We were asked to meet in the conference room. A couple of minutes later, two people from HR came in and notified us that we had been laid off. We received our last check and our severance package. I arrived home immediately and called my wife at work to let her know that I would be picking up the kids that afternoon. I let her know that I had just got laid off. I assured her that we would be okay and I would find another good job.

It was Friday morning, October 19, 1994. I was preparing breakfast and getting the kids ready for school when my wife Rosa walked into the kitchen and said she had just got laid off. We finished sending the kids off to school. As

Rosa and I sat down, looking at our expenses, we came to the conclusion that we could not continue living in the house we were renting. We called our landlord, Don Laurenz, and informed him of our situation. Don paused for a moment and asked us how much we could afford to pay as rent. We replied with a number that was half of what the rent was. Again, he paused for a little bit. He replied, "Okay, you don't have to pay November's rent and for the next six months you can pay half the rent."

As I got off the phone with Don, Rosa and I looked at each other with total disbelief that this gentleman would do this for us, at the time of our need. Needless to say, I found a good job a couple of months down the road and then Rosa was rehired. I immediately called Don to notify him that our situation had changed for the better and we could pay the full amount of the rent. He paused for a moment and replied that it was okay for us to continue paying half the amount of the rent for the rest of the six months to help us out.

We were able to save enough money to purchase a home. In our gratitude toward Don, we painted the whole inside

of the house and got everything ready for his new tenants to move right in. When we finally met Don to turn over the keys, Rosa and I thanked him and told him how much we appreciated his helping us out at our time of need. He acknowledged our thanks and turned around and thanked us for helping him out! In our times of need, help can come from unexpected people who show an unbelievable amount of generosity.

Richard was born in Central California and lived for many years in Southern California before moving to San Jose. He has been married to his wife, Rosa, for 28 years. They have three children. His job is in heavy manufacturing at Northrup-Grumman, and he plays golf and gardens for fun. He has been working with PAR to improve his English skills for more than three years. He has recently taken the entry exam at Evergreen College, hoping to reach his goal of attaining an AA degree.

Mi Hermano

by **Maria Soto**

Without the help of my younger brother, Francisco, I never would have been able to come to the United States.

I was born in Puebla, Mexico in 1965. Our house was in a grove of trees, and I can still recall the juicy smells of apples, peaches, pears, and even avocados as they ripened throughout the summers of my youth. I had nine brothers and sisters, but when my father died we were split up to live with various relatives. I was sent to live with a cousin in Mexico City. Francisco came to the United State to live with another cousin who already lived in California. My mother stayed in Puebla. I was eight years old.

I was unable to continue with school in Mexico City because I had to babysit my cousin's children while she worked. I did this for seven years until I met my boyfriend, got married, and had my first child at 16 years of age. By the age of 22, I had three children, two boys and one girl,

and had left my husband. For the next two years, I worked at a magazine company while neighbors took care of my children. Francisco had stayed in touch with me during the sixteen years that had passed since our split, sending words of hope and also money when times were hard.

Then I had one of the best and worst days of my life. The best was that Francisco had saved enough money to bring me to California. The worst was that it was just me—I would have to leave my three children, Antonio, eight years old; Bernice, six; and Javier, five. My mother, still in Puebla, promised to take good care of them, but I will never forget the pain in my heart and the tears in their eyes as I left them.

I flew from Mexico City to San Jose, California, and was met at the airport by Francisco. He had arranged a job for me at a company called Sanmina, and I was to start work there the very next day. Francisco had also prepared a room for me to live in in his house.

Four years later, I was able to bring my oldest child, Antonio, to California, and we moved into our own apartment. One year later, one of my sisters brought

Bernice with her to San Jose to join us. Finally, two years later, I returned to Puebla and got Javier. After seven years, my family was together again.

Without the support, prayers, and love of Francisco, our family might still be struggling in Mexico. Now, in California, we have a chance for a better life.

Maria has six children, four of whom are married and two, Carlos, 15, and Abigale, 2, who still live at home. Maria started her own day care service, which keeps her extremely busy. She has been a learner since June 2006.

Asfaha's Love of His Mother, Hargu

by Asfaha Tewelde



When I was a child my mother took care of me. I lived in Asmara in East Africa, Eritrea. She took me to school and to church. She was gentle, very understanding, kind and strong. Every Sunday she took me to church. I liked going to church with my mother. Now I take my daughter, Saba, to church. Saba likes church. The best time in my life was with my mother.

Asfaha was born in Asmara, East Africa, Eritrea. He has a daughter and a son. He likes to read the Bible. He also likes to go to the library to work on the computer and with his tutor. He is learning to read.

My Partners in Reading Tutor



by **Maria Torrico**

My tutor at Partners in Reading helps me in important ways.

When I was in elementary school in my country, Bolivia, I could not read. I was so fearful to read in front of my classmates, but I finished high school. I still had problems with my comprehension. I couldn't pass the test to get into college. My tutor helps me a lot to read and understand what I read.

I can read books. When I read I fly around the world. I taught my children to read. I want my kids to go to college. I am setting an example by learning at Partners in Reading. I believe my children will go to college because they are hard workers.

I am going with my children to Bible study group. I can read in front of the group. I put into practice all my tutor taught

me. I am so happy I can feel the difference now. I have a dream to go to college here because my tutor is helping me to get my G.E.D. in English.

I say thank you to God for giving me the right person in my life. I will always be grateful to my tutor for her help.

Maria was born in Bolivia and came to California in 1991. She is married to Ed and has two children, Vaneza, 13, and Bryant, 11. She is studying to take the U.S. citizenship test. She loves the Partners in Reading Program.

My Friendly Tutor

by Dianna Tran



I am very happy that I met my tutor who is teaching me more English. My tutor helps me know more about reading, writing, and speaking in English. She helps me with pronunciation, too.

A long time ago, I went looking for a job. I knew how to load, sort, and color code, but I didn't speak enough English so I failed when I was interviewed. Now, I have a good tutor. She is teaching me more English and computer skills. When I interview, it will be better because I can talk more easily with people. People will understand me.

My tutor is friendly. She works hard on my pronunciation, and now I am starting to know more about the computer, too.

Dianna has lived in San Jose for 16 years. Her father, one brother and, older sister live in San Jose, and two brothers live in Maine. Dianna worked as a nurse in Vietnam, in a hospital and a doctor's office. Here she is employed in the semiconductor industry. In her spare time, Dianna enjoys knitting and crocheting. She also likes to garden.

My Helpful Daughter

by Daisy Ung



When I need help I always go to my youngest daughter, Susan. After my husband died, she helped me in many ways. She helped me sell my condo in Walnut Creek, California, and helped me move to an apartment in San Jose. After I moved to San Jose, she showed me how to go shopping for food by taking the bus.

Susan helped me find a new doctor and a new dentist. When I was sick she took me to see a doctor and she went to the drugstore to get my medicine. She cooked me plenty of chicken rice and delicious soup to make sure wasn't hungry. She said, "You eat a lot of good food and you'll get better faster."

My daughter also helped me find a new church where the service is in Chinese. She showed me how to take the bus and BART to San Francisco to visit my mother and father. She showed me how to go to the Oakridge Mall by bus.

One day on the bus I met a wonderful lady. She told me about a senior center. The next day, my daughter drove me to the Southside Senior Center. There I learned how to line dance and play ping pong. Now I go to a different senior center every day for lunch or for a class. Any place I go, I always take the bus and enjoy myself doing things.

I'll never forget how my daughter helped me in the hardest time of my life. Thank you, Susan! I'm so proud of you and I love you. I thank the Lord for giving me such a thoughtful and kind family.

Daisy moved to San Jose in 1993 after retiring in 1991. She has twelve lovely grandchildren and enjoys spending time with them. Daisy has been working with PAR tutors off and on for six or seven years. She would like to thank the PAR staff and her tutors for being so nice and helping her so much.

Gratitude to a Good Friend



by **Alberto Vidrio**

I would like to thank Vince Stryker for being a good friend. When I came to this country 18 years ago, it was very difficult to adapt to a completely different type of living, especially because I did not know anybody, except for my uncle José. He was the only family I had. But he worked two jobs, and I did not have time to see or talk to him. It was not until one year later that I met somebody who made a big change in my life.

His name is Vince Stryker. I owe him a lot of what I know now. He has been my teacher, my guide, and my best friend. With him I learned to appreciate my job, and put all my effort and my heart into all my projects.

He taught me how to use all of the tools I needed in my work, which consists of doing bathrooms, kitchens, tile,

foundations, irrigation, and essentially all types of construction.

Then he taught me how to take care and manage apartment buildings. He taught me how to select and make deals with people. He taught me how to take care of all the problems that relate to the apartment business, such as parking issues, noise, late payments, evictions, and just about anything else that involves the property. It is a challenging job and a rewarding one!

My most recent job was to build a new house in Watsonville, California. It was to be a 3,000 square foot two-story house with two living rooms, two bedrooms, four bathrooms, a dining room, and a huge kitchen. It was to be my boss Vince's home, and he put me in charge of building it. If I do say so myself, it turned out pretty nice. Vince and his wife moved in just before Christmas 2005. I am happy that Vince had the confidence in me to take on that big of a responsibility.

Also, in 1997, Vince offered me the opportunity to buy the

house that I am living in and currently upgrading. Vince owned the house and he signed it over to me. I agreed to pay him for the house in five years, but I wasn't able to meet that time frame. He then extended the repayment to eight years and it is now mine free and clear.

Vince has been more than just a boss to me. In fact, he often said to me, "You are the son I never had."

Alberto would like to thank this country and especially Mr. Vince Stryker for everything that he has helped Alberto learn. He says, "Friends like you are few."
