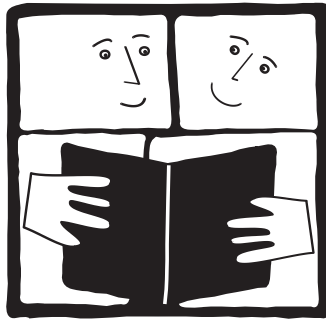


My Favorite...

Stories By Adult Learners

PARTNERS IN READING



San José Public Library

Adult Literacy Program
2015

My Favorite... Production Team

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

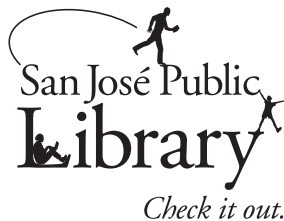


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Acknowledgments

Thank you from Partners in Reading (PAR) to everyone who has worked hard to make this book possible each year for our learners and tutors:

- Each year **PAR authors** write interesting and moving stories to capture their readers' hearts and imaginations.
- **PAR volunteers** are essential to the writing process, working with learners to brainstorm ideas, write many drafts, learn about the writing process, edit, and refine the stories to make them easy to read.
- **MaryLee McNeal** creates handouts that are easy to use to help authors move from the blank page to a page filled with knowledge and experience. MaryLee inspires learners to create and write so that their words can be enjoyed by all.
- **Victoria Scott** carefully reads the stories and clarifies them through the editing process if needed, so that they are easy to understand but the authors' ideas are preserved.

- **The San José Public Library** and the **City of San José** have championed PAR's contribution to the community for 26 years. They recognize that everyone benefits with improved reading, writing, and technology skills so adults and their families can lead richer lives by being more connected.
- **The San José Public Library Foundation** ensures that the community knows about and supports the work of the San José Public Library and PAR.
- Libraries throughout California have received financial support and guidance for more than 31 years from **California Library Literacy Services** through the California State Library.

Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support

2015 Funders

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

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- Gretchen E. Leavitt
- Chiu-Ping Lee
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- Vung Tau Restaurant
- Winchester Mystery House

Introduction

“In some parts of the world, students are going to school every day. It’s their normal life. But in other parts of the world, we are starving for education . . . it’s like a precious gift. It’s like a diamond.”

— Malala Yousafzai
Activist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Partners in Reading (PAR) learners at the San José Public Library are very inspirational. Many come from backgrounds or places such as Malala’s, where their education was not a priority or was interrupted. Others knew that education was important, but for a variety of reasons had trouble learning. Regardless of the paths they took before they were able to continue their learning, when they come to PAR they recognize, just like Malala, that the education they missed, or didn’t get, really is as valuable as a precious gem. They patiently wait for help until they are matched with a volunteer tutor. Then they step up and show themselves and those close to them, including their tutors, how valuable this gift like a diamond is to them.

This gift of learning can change learners’ present lives and their future expectations, both for themselves and for the next generations of their families. Their stories are here for you to read, enjoy, and learn from, as well.

This year our theme is so broad that 53 learners chose to write a story. Many of them have already seen their work in print in earlier PAR books; others wrote a story for the first time. Some stories take place right here in San José, while others describe favorite people, places, and activities from all over the world. Although the topic is “*My Favorite . . .*,” chances are you’ll be hard pressed to choose just one favorite among all of this year’s stories.

It’s also difficult to choose just one favorite part of the publishing process. One favorite time is the release of the new book in September, for International Literacy Day, because that is when both first-time and veteran authors experience the joy of seeing their hard-won words between the covers of a book.

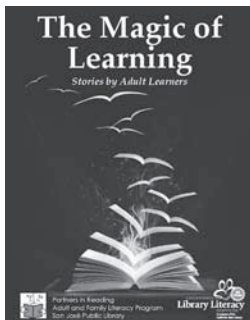
Another favorite time is actually writing a story. Learners might attend a workshop to begin writing, or they might begin by trying out their ideas with their tutors. Over time they move from brainstorming to putting their rough ideas down on paper. Then, together with their tutors, they refine, clean up, and rewrite until they have a finished story that they are proud to share with others because it is interesting and easy to understand.

Another favorite time is getting to read ALL the stories. So now it’s time to open up this book of great stories and enjoy!

Partners in Reading (PAR) Program Highlights for 2015

PAR changes lives every day. Volunteer tutors and instructors form the core of the instruction to build reading, writing, technology, listening, and speaking skills for adults in San José. PAR owes a big thanks to those who generously give their time to help others. Instruction happens informally in individual, small-group, and larger class settings. Following are some examples of the ways that the adult learners in PAR have been touched by this generous gift of time and talent.

In September 2014, PAR learners, tutors, authors, and members of the community came together to celebrate 25 years in San José. The Mayfair Community Center was transformed into a festive room with decorations that mirrored the cover of last year's book, *The Magic of Learning*. Longtime PAR volunteers Ellen Hill and Sue Rizzi skillfully created table decorations with the magical floating book so that attendees felt the magic in the room. Not only did PAR honor all those who participated over the prior 25 years, but the California State Library culminated a year of celebrations to commemorate 30 years of helping adults at more than 100 library-based programs all over the state, including Partners in Reading.



For the last few years PAR has offered ESL classes to all levels of learners for people who may not yet have enough English skills to work with a tutor on reading and writing. Instead they focus on building listening and speaking skills so that learners can transition into tutoring or adult education ESL classes in the future. The PAR ESL classes have been very popular. The learners who participate refer their friends regularly, which is another sign that the classes are valuable.

PAR is grateful for all its volunteers. In the last year, we were pleased to honor two volunteers in particular, Kathy Dart and Habib Moon. Kathy is the PAR Volunteer of the Year for 2015 because of her dedication to helping adults in the computer lab in the PAR office at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. Kathy is the contact person who matches volunteer instructors with adults who want to build technology skills. Some people work on resumes and job searching. Others learn to type or use literacy software. Still others learn how to use their cell phones or other devices. Not only was Kathy the PAR Volunteer of the Year, she also shared the Volunteer of the Year award with Nikita Takru of Evergreen Branch Library for the entire San José Public Library.

Habib Moon was presented with the 2015 Ben Sherrod Award, which is presented to a PAR volunteer who goes above and beyond to help learners. Habib assists learners in the computer lab, and he also tutors math. One of his learners, Maria, was confident after meeting regularly with Habib to take the math portion of the GED. Similarly, Tina graduated from high school after a series of long struggles mastering math concepts. Her next plan is to tackle some college classes.

For people who are just learning about PAR, we wanted to tell you about a learner and a tutor who represent the adults who come to PAR. In September 2013, Cecilia began tutoring an adult who had some severe reading and writing problems. After several consultations with staff, Cecilia and her learner began to really make the Wilson Reading System approach work. This program teaches learners techniques to break words apart, put sounds together to form words, and use a variety of senses and lots of repetition so as to accurately read unknown words, read faster for fluency and understanding, and write accurately. Cecilia and her learner have worked together for more than 330 hours. At her reassessment, the learner had advanced several grade levels. With Cecilia's patience and consistency, they were both astounded at the learner's progress and confidence.

A. typifies PAR learners. He works hard on his reading and writing as well as in other areas of his life. He is a veteran struggling with homelessness who began a job shortly after joining PAR. He is such a good worker that he quickly moved into a leadership role at an organization that serves homeless individuals. The organization helped him find housing. He has worked with several tutors throughout his time in PAR, but most of the time he has taken advantage of the computer lab. Sometimes he works with a lab instructor, but most of the time he works independently to learn how to search for information so he can make decisions. For example, he needed a car, so he learned how to find reasonably priced cars available in the area. He regularly sends emails, which helps him become more comfortable with computers and also helps him improve his writing.

Another highlight from PAR in the last year was the creation of tutor training videos, with a grant from the California State Library. Skillfully created by Kathy St. John and Amy Prevedel, learners and tutors from PAR and from Read Santa Clara starred in the videos, which will help new and experienced tutors learn some helpful techniques in areas ranging from how to navigate the first meeting to how to teach vocabulary. One of the greatest benefits of these videos is that, for new tutors who might be nervous about applying some of the lessons from their training, these videos bring tutoring sessions to life. Many programs throughout California and the U.S. are using these videos to complement their tutor training. They are available on the PAR YouTube channel at www.tinyurl.com/partutoringvideos. Check them out!

These are just a few examples of our favorite things that learners and tutors have accomplished in the last year. Please join us in honoring all of them for their hard work and dedication to improving literacy skills in San José.



*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will never
forget how you made them feel.”*

— **Maya Angelou**

I Like to Watch TV

By Faalaa Achica

I like to watch TV because it is fun. Sometimes I watch TV with my little nephews Jeremiah, three years old, and Nanu, five years old. We watch wrestling and cartoons. We watch TV in the evenings on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Sometimes my family goes some place. I watch TV on my own. I watch sci-fi scary movies. Spooky is good. The blood is fake. The head coming off is fake. The people are not dead.

I watch Spanish Channels 5 and 66 on Monday and Wednesday night. I watch basketball, baseball and soccer too. I watch these games on English channels too. I watch soccer only on Spanish Channel 66. The Warriors are my favorite basketball team.

I also watch Spanish action movies. I don't understand Spanish, but I like action movies.

I watch college sports on Saturday. I watch it in the afternoon on my own. I watch football on Sunday after I come home from church.



Faalaa is a good man. He is happy and likes to laugh. He has a beautiful smile. He really enjoys teasing his tutor.

I like to watch the news. I watch the 10 o'clock news. I find out what happened. I find out what Obama did.

I find out good weather or bad weather. I find out if the water overflows because it rained too much. Right now it is too cold in the morning. I work outside, so I need a raincoat if it is going to rain.

I watch TV every day.

“Try to learn something about everything and everything about something.”

— Thomas Huxley

Lucky!

By Megnaga Aimru

My favorite person is my boyfriend, Andrew Torres. We met at Cory School when I was 20. I was a shy girl to talk to him. He was so cute! His friends knew I liked him. He was with another girl. Later they broke up, and I found him on Facebook. We went out to Golfland and a movie. Andrew and I do a lot of stuff together. Sometimes we go out to dinner, sometimes we cook together at home: hamburger and spaghetti, salad. His favorite restaurant is Outback Steakhouse. Sometimes he barbecues chicken, steak and hot dogs. We go shopping together at Target. We clean the house together. When I'm off work he picks me up and we take the bus home together. We watch football games together. We like the same team, the Raiders. Andrew is a sweet guy. He cares about me when I'm sick. He's there for me when I'm sad. When I need to talk to him, he is there for me. He is the best boyfriend I ever met. I'm lucky to have Andrew in my life.



Megnaga wrote this story to tell about her favorite person.

I Like Learning!!!

By Abraham B.



Abraham attended the Adult Learner Leadership Institute in Sacramento last year. He gained a lot of confidence from that program. He wrote this essay to learn more English and so that he could tell his story.

I like to learn about the systems in our world at the school or library. A good book about a famous person is my favorite. Some examples that I like to read about are Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

If I understand the world I can get a good job. It will help me have a good life. I can use at my job and at home what I have learned in school. For example, I learned in school about measurements. This is important both at home and at school.

At school I have learned how to speak in interviews and explain what is important at the job. I can explain the details of each job to the people who interview me. Going to school has helped me feel confident in an interview because I am not afraid to speak to strangers. I have also learned how to be confident at the workshop I went to in Sacramento through PAR.

Learning new things is my favorite thing. I use what I learned from school or the library at work and at home. I can't wait to learn some more!

My Story About My Father

By Armando Bravo

My favorite person is my father. He is my favorite person because he would always give my brothers and me tips. He would also play with us and he never hit us. Since childhood, he also taught us that the example starts at home. I remember that we were poor, but my father always taught me to respect everybody. It did not matter if they were poor, rich, or had a different skin color. He always dreamed of seeing all of us graduate. I did not graduate, and that is why I joined Partners in Reading to learn English and show my children that you are never too old to learn. This was one of my father's favorite phrases, "Prepare yourself like you are going to live forever and live like you are going to die tomorrow." This is my favorite phrase to remember because it helps me to persevere and enjoy my family.



Armando wrote his story about his father because his father was a person who gave advice from his own personal experience. Armando admired and looked up to his father.

“Learning never exhausts the mind.”

— Leonardo da Vinci

A Letter to a Very Special Person

By Adriana Camacho



Adriana's husband is very special to her. He supports her in all her projects and is always ready when she needs him.

My husband Luis is very important to me. Because of this he is my favorite person. I love him because he is a good father. He loves our twin sons Brian and Chris and he wants the best for them. He always thinks of me and does things to make me happy. For example, he always asks me if I'm comfortable when we go to a restaurant, or when we travel.

Luis is very patient. Sometimes I make mistakes and he says "Don't worry." Sometimes the situations are very difficult, but he doesn't lose his calm! He isn't perfect but he is the head of the family. All the time we make decisions together, and we are thinking what is best for our family.

He is my balance in all my life, and I give thanks to God for putting him into my life. I'm so happy with him. I love him. He is very important in my life because he is my favorite person.

City Lights

By Daniel Cardenas

My favorite place is in San José's East Hills. When I think about this place, it brings me so much joy, to know there is a beautiful view of the whole valley's city lights. Looking south, west, north and east, this is where I can let my mind go, feel free, and dream of all my goals in life.

Let me take you on a ride up the miles on the mountain.

As I drive up the hill, I leave the city behind me. It's a wild ride. The air gets fresher and the houses start to disappear. As the road starts to wind uphill, I see more trees and open fields. I roll my windows down, as my favorite song plays on the car stereo. About five miles up the road is my favorite place to park. I pull over, get out, walk to the side of the hill and take a deep breath of the fresh air. I hear the crickets, frogs, and feel the wind on my face. I remember many good times here, and adventures.

As I look down, I can see how many cities and freeways are linked together, and how they light up the whole valley.

I hope one day you get to have this experience also in my favorite East Hills.



The amazing view of the city lights brings Daniel joy and gives him a place to relax and dream. Here he shares it with you.

Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., a True Filipino Hero

By E. Catabona

E. wrote her essay about Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. She likes him because he was a fine family man and a very productive and influential politician.

My favorite person is Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. He was born in 1917. He was a Filipino lawyer and politician who served as the president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986.

I like him because he was an exceptional human being and leader. He was a very good public speaker, and I used to enjoy listening to his political debates. He was an inspirational family man. He had three children with his wife Imelda R. Marcos. At present, Imelda and the children are important government officials in the Philippines.

When he was the President, the economy of the Philippines improved a lot. During Martial Law, the crime and violence was less because people were disciplined, and they followed the laws. If you were a law-abiding citizen, you didn't need to worry. He also distributed land from rich people, those who had "haciendas," and gave it to the poor. He declared Martial Law in 1972. He also declared the Land

Reform law so that farmers could pay off their farm land by installment. He also promoted irrigation laws, etc.

In 1989, after he passed away, his body was brought back from Hawaii but has not yet been buried in the Heroes Cemetery because it is still being debated whether he was a hero or not.

Personally, I believe that even though the Philippines has had four presidents after him, none of them is as inspiring and influential as he, and he is a true hero in my eyes.



Valencian Rice

By Rosa Chavarria



Rosa Chavarria is a 25-year resident of San José. She entertains friends and family at least twice a month and does a lot of cooking.

My favorite food is Arroz a la Valenciana. This is a traditional dish in Nicaragua, which we serve for special occasions. When I cook it in the United States, the rice is very popular because I bring it to my job when we have potlucks. Everybody from at least six different countries in the company likes it. When my son started elementary school, in the second grade we had activities and we had to bring a dish. I cooked Arroz a la Valenciana and the students and teachers ate it and said, “This is a delicious type of food!” My son’s American teacher asked me about the recipe. This dish has all the supplements that a dish should have. The ingredients are:

3 lbs. whole chicken	1 lb. white rice
1 lb. smoked link sausage	1/8 cup butter
2 tablespoons olive oil	1 white onion
1 red pepper	3 green onions
2 large tomatoes	6 oz. tomato paste
1/4 cup capers	8 1/2 oz. canned early peas

Directions:

Place the whole chicken in a pot. Pour enough water into the pot to barely cover the chicken.

Bring water to a boil, cover and cook at medium/low heat for about one hour. Turn the chicken over about halfway through to ensure even cooking. Keep an eye on it so that it will not dry out and burn.

De-bone the chicken, setting all the bones and skin aside in a bowl. Do not discard the broth from the chicken.

In a large frying pan, heat the butter and olive oil. Add the diced tomatoes, bell pepper strips, chopped onion and 1 teaspoon of salt. When the white onion looks transparent, add the tomato paste, capers and olive oil and stir. Add the sausage, the de-boned chicken meat and whatever broth you have left.

Continue to stir over medium/low heat until the mixture becomes almost dry. Now add the cooked rice a little at a time while stirring. Finally, add the early peas and stir gently to blend them.



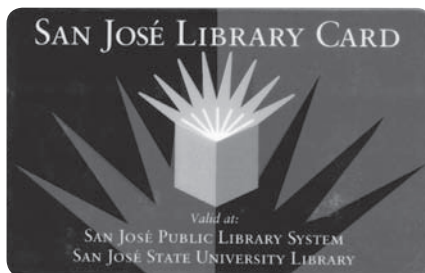
J. B.

By Iye Conteh

Iye wrote this story because Jim and his wife have been very kind and helpful to her over the years that she has been a learner.

My favorite person is my tutor. His name is Jim Barbeau, and we started learning together on June 16, 2008, nearly seven years ago. (Jim says it seems like 70.) But we share a joy in laughing—he tells me that my gift to him has been lots more gray hair.

Since our first meeting so long ago, I have earned my license in hairdressing, studied for and passed my U. S. citizenship test in 2010, voted in my first presidential election in 2012, gotten my first library card, written three stories for the annual PAR book and read many books out loud while Jim took notes on the words I mispronounced or did not understand the meaning of. This has helped to improve my vocabulary.



Sometimes I would feel tired and stressed during our meetings because of money issues—my husband lost his job in 2011 and was out of work for four years. We lost our family health insurance and had to rely on food stamps when shopping. Jim was always there to discuss these challenges with me and offered encouragement and ideas that helped me see the positive side of things, not just the negative. He also saw humor in things that I missed, and it helped me inside when we laughed together.

My husband recently started a new job and things have started to improve for me and my family. My son, who is on a college scholarship, just completed his freshman year with a 4.2 grade point average in Computer Science, and my daughter will be a senior in high school starting next year. She wants to become a doctor. I will always be thankful for Jim's help and support over the past seven years. He has been a tutor, a friend, and a favorite.

“A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.”

— Colin Powell

Pianos

By Tony Del Alto



Tony wrote this story because he wanted to be involved and to share his experience with pianos.

I used to work for a popular piano company near Santana Row in San José, California. This company has three locations in the Bay Area. The locations are in San Francisco, San Mateo and San José. They all have a beautiful piano show room.

The show room was one of my favorite places because when my work was slow and there were no pianos to be delivered, the owner would sometimes teach us how to play the piano. This is why I'm so interested and willing to learn more—so that one day I can play the piano like an expert or a professional, or something close to it.

I started working as a piano driver for about six months. We delivered pianos from the North Bay to the South Bay and as far as Reno, Nevada.

The owner asked me if I was willing to accept a job opening for a piano mover. I accepted the job opening.

In the training provided to me, I learned the following things:

1. How to build a piano and how each part is important.
2. How to break down an eight-foot grand piano and why each part fits perfectly into its proper place. Building and putting them back into proper place wasn't an easy task.

After two months of training, I got promoted to a piano mover. As we know the piano instrument is made in small, midsize, and uprights, and large grand pianos are very heavy. Each piano move is very challenging, and not everyone can do this job.



Unfortunately, after a year, when moving a piano, I got hurt on the job. After this incident occurred, my doctors ordered me not to lift pianos and this was the end of my piano career, but it didn't put an end to my interest.

“You must do the things you think you cannot do.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt

Home Away From Home

By Dalila Del Cid



Dalila decided to write about her work because she has been there for a very long time. She feels comfortable because she spends most of her time there.

My favorite place is my work. There are many reasons for this. First, it is a big beautiful house with a big garden. The people are very nice. They treat me like family. Sometimes we cook together. I learned how to make Jewish desserts for Passover. One of my favorites is chocolate covered matzos. We make a huge dinner, because for them it is a very important holiday, when they only eat certain kinds of food. There is a swimming pool, and in the summer my kids go there to swim. I also play with their dog. The dog is like a stuffed animal. When I take him for a walk in the street, people ask me what breed he is, and I feel very proud of myself when I talk to people around my workplace, because they are so friendly and very nice. This work is so rewarding, because I have so much fun there, and on top of that I get paid.

The Traveling Book

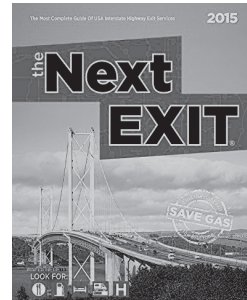
By Norman E. Derkovits, Jr.

I like to travel in my mind. I love reading my favorite book, *The Next Exit*. It tells me everything about traveling. It tells me names of hotels, how much they cost, where gas stations are, about theme parks and resorts, and where they are and how much they cost.

I like to read *The Next Exit* in the morning and in the evening, when I'm sitting on my favorite chair in the living room. I can sit for a few hours and read. I enjoy every minute!

I like to read about interstate freeways, from north to south and east to west. I enjoy reading about different cities, like San Antonio and Houston. They are both on I 10.

I have been reading *The Next Exit* for about 20 years. I buy a new book every year. Sometimes the names of gas stations and hotels change. Sometimes they put in new streets, on ramps, and exit ramps. Some interstates are toll highways. Most of these are on the East Coast. All the toll highways have rest stops with restaurants.



Norman likes to ride the bus. He likes to travel all over the Bay Area.

In March 2014 I started coming to the library to learn how to use the computer and type. After I began to learn how to type, Ellen showed me Google Maps. Then I brought *The Next Exit* with me to the library. Now I can see the interstates, the scenery, and the different cities as if I were actually driving. Now I enjoy reading *The Next Exit* even more. I can travel in my mind at home, and at the library I can travel using Google Maps and see everything!



*“The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”*

— Dr. Seuss

My Children Are Precious

By Anonymous

My three children are precious to me. When they were small children they were well behaved. Sometimes I miss them being small, but I am happy to see them grow up!

My oldest son is very independent. He likes to do things for himself. He doesn't like to use bad language or talk about anyone. He is easygoing and polite to others. He works full time.

My middle child is now more independent. He does things on his own and is venturing out. He likes to have a routine. He has a good heart. This is his first year at De Anza College as a full-time student.

My youngest, a girl, is outgoing. She is very opinionated and outspoken. She is independent and likes to do things her way. She has a good sense of humor. She is a freshman in high school and just joined the cheer team for next year.

Each child is different, but they are growing into good people. I am proud of my children.

Since this author has been meeting with her tutor, her tutor has given her the confidence to write stories for the PAR books.

Freedom of Speech

By FTG

FTG writes that our freedoms are what drive us forward in life and call us to better things.



Freedom is greatness in many ways!

In my country I used to think it was only suppression of freedom for women. I never got an opportunity to speak my mind. It was only for the elite men. Women had no freedom at all. I would hide behind men all the time. The consequences for speaking out were a reprimand and punishment. They never questioned whether I could be right.

Luckily times are changing, and hopefully this generation will have more opportunities and will be able to choose what they want. For example, to marry for love instead of an arranged marriage, which is the fear for many girls, who are separated at a young age from their families. This is the number-one reason for suicide among the girls who defy suppression of freedom.

Today I am an immigrant in America and I realize that freedom is a right, not a privilege. I can say anything I desire, I can give my opinion of what I think or how I feel as a woman. For me freedom is the ability to do what I choose with my life, being accepted in so many ways with my talents and strong desires to achieve my goals.

“The most important freedom is being an American citizen. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 1948



My Mother

By Ramon Gonzalez



Ramon wrote this story because he remembers his mother all the time.

I love my mother. She was very special. She did a lot of things for me.

My mother got up early every day. She cooked breakfast for all of us. She prepared lunch for us to carry to the farm. She never got tired of cooking for us. My mother worked very hard all day. She didn't have anybody to help her. We didn't have any consideration for her. Probably I was too young to understand how much she needed our help.

I remember how happy we were. Before I went to sleep my mother would tell me, "Come to me. I have a story to tell you." Sometimes I fell asleep before she finished the story.

She liked to go to church every Sunday. She taught us to respect people.

When I turned eight years old, my parents decided to go to another town, probably for a better life. Everyone moved with them except me. I told them I liked my village and my friends, and they accepted that. After two or three months I started to cry. I still cry thinking about her. I can never forget her.

She knew how much I love her, and I know how much she loved me.

I miss her very much.



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My Painted House

By Rocio Hernandez

Rocio is from Puebla, Mexico. She moved to California in 2006.



Puebla, Mexico

My favorite place is my painted house in Puebla, Mexico. It has a beautiful yard. Once, my husband and I decided to paint the walls the color of peach and the doors and windows orange. My son said, “How pretty the house is painted!”

I enjoy staying in my house very much. In the morning my husband uses the hose to water the plants. When my husband waters the plants, I love the smell of the earth. I look at the roses of different colors and prune the fruit trees. I love looking at my children when they play on the swing that my husband put in the big tree. When my parents visited us, our favorite place was the yard. We sat and enjoyed the beautiful afternoon. At night my sister and nephews also visited us. My husband made a fire in the yard. The children sat around the fire and roasted marshmallows. It is fun to see happy children.

In my painted house we have celebrated birthdays, baptisms, and the first communion of my son. Every year we wait impatiently for our vacation to go to Puebla, Mexico to visit our family and have a good time in my painted house.

Comfort From the Los Gatos Creek Trail

By Tai Ju

My favorite place is the Los Gatos Creek Trail. The first time my friend took me there, it was a wonderful experience. I like to exercise. It is special at that place because I can hike and talk with my friends.

It takes about two hours to hike the trail. When I am finished, I go to the Los Gatos Coffee Roasting Company and enjoy the famous American coffee. After drinking coffee, I look around the small shops in downtown. These times are very happy for me.

Sometimes, I go to the Los Gatos Creek Trail with my family. My two boys play and throw pebbles or find worms and bugs.

In summer, the blackberry vines have lots of fruit along the trail. Last summer, I picked blackberries with my children, and I made blackberry wine. It was a special experience.

This place is good for enjoying leisure time. There are many reasons to call it my favorite place.

Tai came from Korea 10 years ago. She has two children who are in kindergarten and third grade.



John's Fun Things

By John Judge



John wrote his story because it would be interesting to see it written in a book. It's fun to think about his favorite things.

One of my favorite things is the Nook Tablet because I like to read. I started reading *Tangled*, which is about a girl named Rapunzel, who is locked away in a tower. The story is good because it is funny.

My favorite place is Disneyland because the rides are fun. It is located in LA. I like Splash Mountain because I get wet. I want to go to the new Star Tours because the new one is probably even better than the old one. I like to shop for people at Disneyland. I buy souvenirs to give to them.

My favorite person is named Joseph Vo. I enjoy myself because I'm happy with him. We like movies and video games. We play Dance Dance Revolution games. I met him at work.

My favorite food is pepperoni pizza. I get my pizza at Mountain Mike's Pizza and also I work there. They make the best pizza.

My favorite song is “DJ Satomi Waves” because I like that song to dance with my friends.



I want to buy a brand new DJ CD mixer where I put music on to dance with my friends. I really want to get that DJ CD machine mix from Amazon. It’s called Marathon Flight Road Case.



The Joy of Classical Music

By Kyunghee Kang

Kyunghee has two children, John and Claire. They play flute and piano. She found herself becoming more engrossed in classical music through their playing. She wrote this essay in the hope that more people will enjoy classical music.



I believe that there are two images of heaven in this secular world. Those are babies and music. I like music very much. There are many kinds of music, not only classical music, but also popular music like jazz, R&B, country, hip-hop, rock 'n' roll, and heavy metal, etc. Classical music especially inspires me a lot.

When I was young, I preferred popular music to classical music. I thought classical music was boring. I couldn't understand why people like classical music. However, as I get older, I like to listen to classical music more and more. It gives me sheer bliss. I think it's because of the steadfast emotion of music. Looking back on my younger years, I was too young to understand the depth and meaning of life. I believe that the better we understand our lives, the better we enjoy classical music, because classical music holds the heart and soul of life.

We can enjoy classical music with various genres via many different instruments, even the human voice. There are a lot of classical

music genres. To get a better understanding of classical music, let's briefly see the genres. Classical music could be divided chronologically into Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Modern.

I like Romantic era music very much because piano is my favorite instrument. There are many beautiful piano pieces, for instance, by Chopin, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Debussy. Chopin and Liszt were contemporaries, but they have very different music styles. Chopin's pieces are very emotional and still. His works are like moonlight in the fall. He was literally the god of piano. In contrast, Liszt's pieces are full of splendor. As we hear his music, we might remember a brilliant light of fire. Playing his piano works needs a lot of skill, so people who play his pieces are often frustrated. I recommend listening to Chopin's "Nocturne, Op. 9 No. 1" and Liszt's "La Campanella." These are two of the composers' excellent pieces. We can see their differences for sure and experience the joy of classical music.

Music has become a part of my life. Classical music especially comforts me when I'm tired. I hope more people enjoy classical music, so they will also have consolation and enjoy their lives like me.



Isfahan, Iran

By S. K.

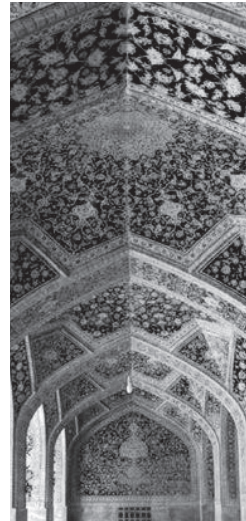
S. K. is Iranian and likes to go to cities where historical monuments reveal and reinforce her culture.

There are many cities around the world I like to go to. One of them is Isfahan, a big city in Iran. Isfahan was the capital for a while when Safavian was in power, even though it is located in a semi-arid area. It is green in part. Isfahan is very great for tourists because of its spectacular parks, historical monuments, certain handcrafts, and sweets.

First of all, Isfahan is very interesting with a lot of character through its historical monuments. For example, Ali Qapu, an ancient palace, is an eight-story building. It is very marvelous due to its unique structure, enameled ceiling on the fourth floor, and an excellent musical echo on the sixth floor. Another example, Chahar Bagh, a plaza, not only is the center of a big market, but it is also a carriage road. It is very exciting for children, and even adults, to ride in a carriage on the plaza. Also, Monar Jonban, two separated columns, are wonderful because once somebody shakes one column at the top, the other one shakes. Its function is similar to a diapason (a tuning fork).

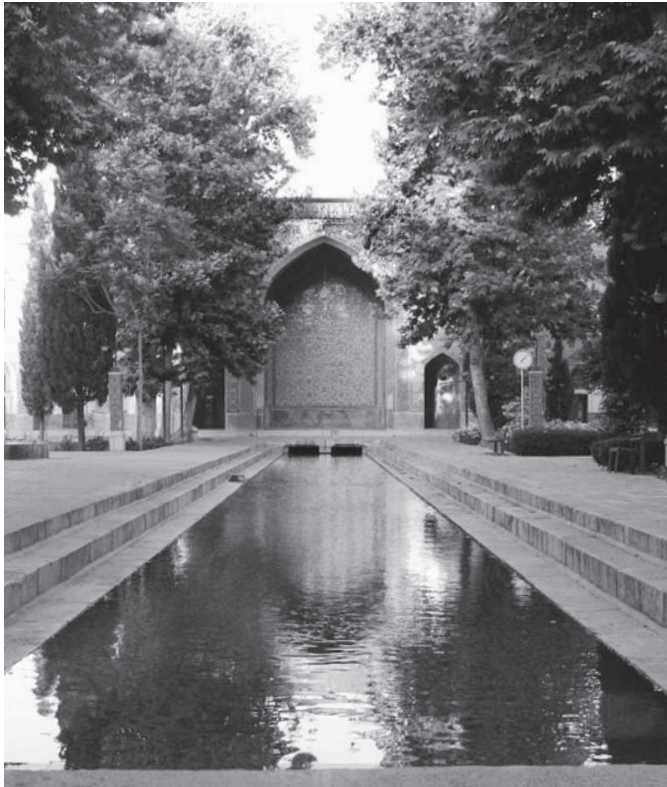
In addition, Isfahan attracts many tourists as a result of its nice park, pleasant weather, and a beautiful view at the park that results from the Zayandeh Rood River running through it. Furthermore, there are a lot of tall trees in the park that give good shade for visitors. I enjoy taking a nap under the trees. Moreover, I can sit at the river and put my feet in the water without any dirt because the bottom is paved like stairs in the river.

Finally, there are many reasons why Isfahan is known all over the world. The first reason is its handicrafts, including fretted wood and carvings on metal like copper. Fretted wood is composed of tiny pieces of wood attached to one another with glue. This art is used on jewelry boxes, chess plates, and clock frames. They are gorgeous. In addition, many masters can change a valueless metal into a precious masterpiece because they capably carve metal plates. Also, Gaz, a delicious sweet, is produced in Isfahan. It is made of sugar, gaz-angebin, rose water, and honey. We often purchase them as souvenirs.



Imam mosque in Isfahan
Iran

In summary, it is a fantastic trip when I visit Isfahan because I can see historical monuments, refresh my brain and relax at the park, and finally buy handcrafts and sweets as souvenirs for my family and friends. I plan to take several trips to Isfahan in my lifetime.



Madrasah-ye Chahar Bagh
or Madar-e Shah (the
King's Mother).

The Mind Is a Mystery

By So-Ae Kilgore

If someone were to approach me one day asking what is my favorite thing, I would say it is the mind—my mind, other people’s minds. I suppose I would say my favorite thing is talking about people’s ideas, how they see things and how their minds work.

I have a question for you.

What does a pear taste like to you?

I don’t know what a pear tastes like to you.

For me, sweet, juicy, grainy like an end-of-pecan taste.

Fortunately enough, I grew up with a friend who is what I call “a free thinker, eccentric, or a maverick.” She always brings me to realize it is not the same for everyone, and brings me back to the awareness that we all think differently.

Where do they come from, then—the ideas created and that we tend to follow in our minds? Created by whom? Or what?



So-Ae was born and raised in the east part of the Republic of Korea called Dongdaemun (also known as East Gate). She lived in North Carolina for a long time. She moved to California and enjoys the sunny climate.



We see a world through our own instead of another person's perspective; rarely do we see the world as it is.

It's not a surprise that since we're social creatures of habit in this world, we're molded and groomed by what we see, hear, and speak, from our parents, friends, and teachers. They have influenced and shaped our minds for good, or not.

When people challenge other people's ideas of how we should be, it takes them a long time to get over their idea that their way is the only way, or that there is more than one way to understand life's complexities and contradictions.

It always amazes me how other people instinctively don't like some people, even though the person has never done anything to them. We are aware of the interaction of snobbish forces all around us in a small way, though it is usually hidden from us. People have perceptions! Some people are quite

unaffected by it because they are their own person and happy with their money in the bank and good looks. So their personality is completely well integrated so that they have no worries at all. So they can see everything with a sort of detached view. They see and deeply understand the way that people struggle to free themselves from their own perception and discover their ability to absorb complexity.

Amazingly, there are some people who think that they don't make a single mistake, that they are infallible. They simply don't take time to stop and look around.

If they are content in such ways, believe in the way that they see the world, as they are, not as it is, we have to wonder if they feel a sense of waste in any way.

You see now why the human mind interests me so much?

How fascinating it is.

It's a mystery.

“I never learn anything talking. I only learn things when I ask questions.”

— Lou Holtz

My Favorite Place—Kiev

By Natasha Kotko



Natasha wrote this story about Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, because she thinks many people will be interested in finding out more information about this city in the center of Europe.

I was born and spent my younger years in western Ukraine. When I finished primary school I traveled to the capital city of Kiev and started to study at the University of Food Technology. I liked Kiev from the very start.

Kiev is a large city (over 3 million people) built on the Dnieper River. It is a very green town, having many gardens and parks. Thousands of people go to the Botanic Garden every spring to enjoy the beautiful blossoming of the lilacs. Hydropark is a large park in central Kiev; it has a variety of trees and bushes, restaurants, and bars. This park is located on the Dnieper River and has a very large beach with sunbathing and swimming.

Kiev has many theaters—Lesi Ukrainki, Ivana Franka, Bravo, etc. It is an amazing thing to watch actresses and actors perform in different scenes in front of you. The most famous place in Kiev is Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, also known as the Kiev Monastery of the Caves.

The word lavra is used to describe high-ranking monasteries for monks of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This is a historic Orthodox Christian Monastery that many tourists like to visit. There are many churches and monuments in Kiev.

Kiev is a very beautiful city with friendly people. I lived in this city for 17 years before I came to the United States. I hope, in the near future, to travel back to Ukraine to enjoy my favorite city, Kiev.



Kievo-Pecherskaya
Lavra, also known as
the Kiev Monastery
of the Caves

El Camino Real

By Joan Kwak

Joan likes many things about El Camino Real in Santa Clara. It is her favorite place.

Everybody has a favorite place. The favorite place gives happiness and joy. My favorite place in Santa Clara is El Camino Real. I love El Camino Real because many Korean shops are there.

First, some of my favorite places are Korean markets and restaurants. When Koreans came to the U.S. 40 years ago, they didn't eat Korean food. They missed Korean food so much. In recent times, Korean markets have many kinds of Korean food. I usually go to Korean markets once a week. I always prepare Korean food: a main dish and many side dishes. Even though Korean food is delicious, Korean food is so



complicated. For that reason, when I suddenly want to eat special Korean food, I try to go to a Korean restaurant. Also, I sometimes go to meet with my friends at Korean restaurants.

Second, one of my favorite places is a Korean bakery on El Camino Real. There they sell coffee, tea, drinks and breads. Korean bread is so delicious and not too sweet. Korean cakes are so beautiful and soft. Often when I meet my friends after eating, we eat a dessert at a Korean bakery. Some people of other nationalities eat a sandwich for lunch. When summer comes, I can order Korean fruit ice sherbet. It is so cool and delicious. I like Korean bakeries.



Third, one of my favorite places is the Korean Sauna on El Camino Real. I like to enjoy Korean saunas. There is a hot tub and a cold tub. There are steam and dry hot temperature rooms and a salt room. Saunas make the blood circulate in the body. For example, after I stay in a hot temperature room, I take a cool shower and I stay in a cold tub for a few minutes. Then I put on sauna clothes, and then after I stay in a salt hot temperature room, I stay in a cold



room for a few minutes. If I am hungry during a sauna, I order Korean food in the Korean restaurant within the sauna. I like Korean saunas.

My favorite place in Santa Clara is El Camino Real. I love El Camino Real because many Korean shops are there. Korean markets, bakeries, and saunas are my favorite places. My favorite place gives me happiness and joy. Thanks to this, I have a hometown feeling even though I don't go to Korea.

“Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves—and be free.”

— Cesar Chavez

My Favorite Hobby

By Anna Laver

I want to write about my favorite hobby. I've always liked table lamps with stained-glass lampshades. They give any interior an original and finished look. A lampshade made of colored glass becomes a functional decoration for any room. It's an attribute for people who appreciate beauty and comfort.

About ten years ago (while living in Israel) I decided to learn how to make stained-glass lampshades. I attended classes in which the methods for creating such items were taught. I bought all the necessary equipment (soldering iron, glass cutter and grinder, colored glass, foil tape, lead, foil, etc.) and commenced with production. I found this very exciting and interesting. The lampshades that I initially created turned out so well that I gave some to my friends for their birthdays. My gifts were well received.

Later I learned how to make stained-glass flower vases, candlelight lamps, jewelry boxes, and frames for pictures and mirrors. Stained-glass creations are interesting and versatile.

Anna Laver was born in Ukraine. She later lived in Israel for twenty years. She has lived in San José for the last seven years with her daughter, her son-in-law, and her two grandchildren.



They look wonderful. In my opinion, table lampshades and other items made of colored glass are stylish additions to any room.

After I moved to the United States (seven years ago) I stopped making the colored glass items. I am now trying to find time to resume my favorite hobby of working with and creating colored glass items.



My Favorite Thing Is Electronics!

By Chiu-Ping Lee

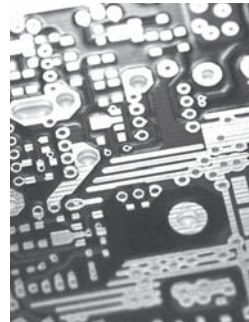
When I was a teenager my home was very poor, so when I was fifteen years old I worked during the day and at night I took high school education classes.

At that time, 1973, electronics was an “emerging industry.” Someone told me, “Working with electricity is very dangerous!” But I needed money to improve my life so I wasn’t afraid. I just went to the interview and got the job.

Year by year I noticed I loved my work . . . I got paid for something I love to do. When I am very involved in my work it’s not just a job to me, it’s more than that.

Can you believe I have so much passion for circuit boards?

Chiu-Ping no longer has this job, but she still feels pride in the work.



A Loving Smell

By Young S. Lee



Young wrote this story about her favorite thing—baking. She also wrote this essay because of her good childhood memories of baking with her dad.

I enjoy desserts and I also love baking them. It's one of my favorite hobbies. When I make dessert, it smells delicious. When I spend time baking I get very tired, but I imagine when I give my desserts to people they will enjoy them and be happy, so I'm happy too.

I have a good memory about baking. When I was young, my dad took me to a bakery shop in Seoul. Then when I was in the fourth grade I started to make simple cookies and apple pie. I really wanted a few cookie cutters, but they were not easy to find thirty-eight years ago in Korea.

One day my dad brought me to the baking tool wholesale market in Seoul. We went to a few stores, but they didn't sell individual cookie cutters. They were only sold in big packages. My dad told one store owner, "My daughter wants just a few cookie cutters." Luckily, the owner sold a few shapes. I was very happy and I enjoyed making cookies over and over again. My dad passed away a long time ago, but I still have the cookie cutters.

I have a few specialties because my husband is a picky eater. He judges the taste and tells me, so if it's not good I change the ingredients and practice until the flavor satisfies him.



I have my own secret recipes. This means I don't give ingredients to anybody, because my husband has a plan. After retirement he wants to open a restaurant, so at that time we will use my secret recipes. Another reason is that when I use my unique recipes, people who eat what I bake feel special. They know I put loving effort into Biscotti, Pecan Pie, Lemon Tart, French Macaroons, and Madeleines.



Spring Is a Party

By Porfiria Lopez



Porfiria loves spring. She feels happy, energetic, and warm. She enjoys spring with her family. It is a nice time to exercise.

My favorite season is spring. The leaves and flowers sprout in spring. Spring arrives on March 20th and ends on June 20th.

Spring is green trees, flowers, birds, bees, squirrels, butterflies, hummingbirds, beautiful gardens, land, blue sky, any kind of wild flowers, new animals like a puppy and newborn lambs.

A wonderful bright start with sun, blue sky. I love that season.

Big trees with great shadows. Birds singing in the trees and squirrels running over them. Bees buzzing and hummingbirds flying over the flowers.

The day is longer and we can play in the park with the family. Family would visit different places, for example, mountains, beaches, rivers, lakes and snow. The forest is a good place where we could take a rest or walk, play with our friends and family. You could go fishing at the lake, catch some fish, and have a good meal.

In the mountains, you can go hiking, skiing, and play in the snow. If you like flowers you could pick them. It's so pretty you could take pictures or paint.

If you like boating you can take a sail boat, canoe or a kayak; or a picnic is a good time to celebrate with family and play soccer and volleyball.

You could swim, collect shells, take a sunbath in the sand and make a sandcastle and play in the water. I love spring because it's an amazing season.



Fishing at Quarry Lake, Fremont

My Best Room in the House

By Josefina Martinez



Josefina wrote about her living room because her family spends a lot of time there together.

My favorite room in my house is the living room. The living room is special because my family and I are there most of the time. I watch TV with my daughters in the living room. Sometimes we put blankets and pillows on the floor to watch a movie at night.

In the living room I sit down with my daughters to do their homework. There is a wide table with enough room on it to hold papers, books, notebooks, pencils, crayons and all the materials that we need to do homework. There is a small fluffy brown couch that is very comfortable. I like to sit down on it and read to my youngest daughter, Liliana, who is learning to read. This couch is the perfect size for Liliana and me. When we are reading she feels very close to me and I can have all of her attention.

Sometimes when we have pizza we like to eat it in the living room while my girls Mariana and Liliana are talking with my husband and me about their day.

In the living room there is a large window that allows the sun to come in and lights up the whole apartment. It helps me to save electricity. There was a huge tree by the window that blew down on a windy day in December. I miss that tree, but I have discovered that now I can see the sky and how special the nights are because I can see the moon and the stars through the window.

I think the best room in my apartment is the living room, because I have nice memories with my husband and my daughters there. We can watch TV, do homework, read and even celebrate our birthdays all together.



Something Special

By Frederick Mills



Frederick wrote this story because it means something special to him.

I am Frederick Mills, the owner of the Mills family foster home. This home is for boys with special needs between the ages of 12 and 18.

One of my boys is the physical age of 17, but his mental age is about four years. My boy is autistic and completely nonverbal. We have been together four years now and have found our own way of communicating. When I don't understand what he wants, he will take me by the hand and show me. I took a look at his background only to find out that he had been in seven foster homes before he came to me, and he came to me at age 13.

Children with special needs are the hardest to place in a foster home. I am one of the few foster homes in the county that will take children that are seriously challenged. In reviewing the foster kids' backgrounds, I found that there are more than 26,000 at-risk children in California. "At risk" simply means children who are not living in their homes with Mom and Dad.

I became intrigued with foster care years ago when I met a young man who was in the system. I had heard so much about how bad foster children were and how different the world painted them. But in reality, these boys are no different than anyone else. I found that all they need is love and understanding. Granted, some of them need more love and understanding than others.



“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

— Muhammad Ali

BFF Veronica: My Favorite Friend

By Eugenia



Eugenia wrote this story because PAR asked her to write a story to be published in its annual book.

I like to remember when I met my friend Veronica. I was working at Fresh Choice when I saw her the first time. She looked shy, but she smiled at me. After a few days, we talked about our lives. She is from Mexico too, but from a different city. She likes music bands. I like cumbia music. We go out to many different places and we enjoy the same things.

Yesterday, I went to Veronica's house. She invited me to eat a tuna sandwich. We talked a lot and she gave me good advice for my life. She is someone I can trust.

She makes me feel warm when we talk. That's why I feel lucky to have such a good friend.

My Sister “La Güera”

By Isabel

My sister and I were so close we were like twins. I was born in Mexico on June 3, 1974. My sister, “La Güera,” was born one year later on June 4, 1975. I missed the first year in elementary school because I had surgery on my eye, so we both started school together. We were in the same class in elementary, middle, and high school. We even went to college together at Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. We were both good at shorthand and typing, but she was better. When I found a job, she came to work with me as my secretary.

I came to the U.S in 1995 and she followed in 2000. I was so happy when she came here because I really missed her. The reason she is my favorite is because she was a wonderful person, she was friendly, she helped others, and she made me laugh. We liked to go to different places like Tahoe together. We even worked together when she came to the U.S.!



Isabel wrote this story in memory of her sister “La Güera,” who died three years ago. They were close, almost like twins, and Isabel has her sister on her mind every day.

My sister had a baby boy in 2008. His name is Sebastian. When he was two years old she decided to go to Mexico because she had not seen our parents for nine years. She was in Mexico for two years. La Güera had a good time with my family. We have nine sisters and one brother. In May, 2012 she decided to come here, but I disagreed because she didn't have legal papers. She tried a dangerous way with bad people. They left her in the desert for many days. When we found her on August 31, 2012, she was not alive.

She was my twin and I still miss her every day.
MY FAVORITE PERSON IS AND FOREVER WILL
BE MY SISTER "LA GÜERA"!

The World's Fastest Human Is “The Flash”

By Gordon C. Nelson

My favorite superhero is “The Flash”. When he was in the Police lab, Barry Allen, a scientist, was working with the Police Department on a stormy day. Lightning hit the lab’s skylight (which also hit Barry Allen) in Centro City. Barry woke up as “The Flash”, in Skylab.



Barry learned that he is faster than anyone. He can run faster than light. He moves so fast that nobody can shoot to kill him. Skylab was built to contain supercriminals. The lab does lots of testing. “The Flash” did lots of running on a special treadmill, for his speed—a regular treadmill would blow up at his speed!

Gordon has been a learner with Partners in Reading for many years. He likes to write stories for the book each year.

Another one of the lab’s scientists made a costume in red and yellow and put a “lightning symbol” on its chest. When a supercriminal does something wrong, like shooting lightning bolts at good people and at the police, “The Flash” listens to messages from Skylab from an ear transmitter on what to do to capture them.



Barry Allen became “The Flash”. He cares so much for people, so this is how he uses his powers. Once, a supercriminal hit him and he passed out, but he woke up quickly and went after him! “The Flash” completes his missions successfully, almost always.

I wish “The Flash” were a real crime fighter, because there are a lot of crimes to solve.

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

—Walt Disney

The Best Mom Ever

By Vivian Nguyen

My favorite person is my mom. She is the best mom in the world. She always cares for me and encourages me when I become sad. For example, a month ago, I had the hardest time ever in my life. I told her about it and she gave me some good advice on what to do. She always tells me to try my best and to not give up when things get hard. She taught me to always be honest because lying hurts you later on.

She is the most important person in my life. She is always on my side whenever I need her. She helps me take care of my kids when I am busy. She is not only my mom but she is also my best friend. I can tell her everything. There are no secrets between us.

I am thankful to have her in my life. I am so blessed to be her daughter. Thank you, Mom, for being my mom.

Vivian is the mother of three sons. She enjoys cooking and shopping in her free time.

My Best Friend, Taylor Clancy

By Kathleen Nicolas



Kathleen loves to play golf with her dad. She wrote this story for her best friend, Taylor.

My best friend is Taylor. We met in kindergarten. I love hanging out with my friend Taylor. We like to make birthday cakes together and play the bouquet toss. That is fun. We enjoy eating macaroni and cheese, ice cream, and watching movies. When we were little we loved to go out to Chili's together. Now, we have fun watching *Frozen*, the movie, together. When we were little, we went swimming. Taylor always stayed overnight. We had a great time. I love hanging out with her. She is funny. Taylor always makes me laugh when we make funny noises. We used to play basketball and dress-up together when we were younger. We also enjoyed dancing together. When Taylor and I took a dance class together, it was fun. She came to my dance recitals when I was little. I felt happy when Taylor came to see me perform in the Moscow Ballet. Taylor really surprised me and came to my graduation at the Campbell Community Center.

Taylor has always been a nice friend to me. Now, she goes to school at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. She sends me text messages and emails from school. We're going to do FaceTime together. When she comes home in the summer we're going to hang out together. I'm so excited to see my best friend Taylor again this summer. I miss her very much.



Campbell Community Center

My Family

By Veronica Orozco



Veronica wrote this story because she wanted people reading the book to have a fun time. She likes to express her ideas and opinions.

My favorite thing is to spend time with my family out of town. My husband and I have three kids, two teenagers and a little girl. Everyone in my family has different personalities, but each of us has a strong character and we like to defend our own ideas. We are all in transition. My husband and I don't have energy for a lot of excitement, but our teenagers do. With my little girl everything is okay because she just loves.

When we plan a trip we always debate because each one wants to enjoy their own experience. I love our discussions. I give a lot of attention to each person's opinion and feelings. I like to discover how each family member becomes a responsible, good and strong person. I like to spend time with my family together and see how each one responds in different situations. We like to plan trips depending on the time of the year.

I like to take vacations with my family in Reno. We like to stay at the Boom Town Hotel. My husband and I find a hotel that has activities

for young people and has a pool. In summer I like to go camping with my family. The kids cook for themselves, and my husband and I cook together and take our own time for talking about everything and nothing. We have a lot of time to relax. In winter I like to visit Lake Tahoe to touch, to see and feel the snow. We like to slide and enjoy the snow together.

When we are together out of town, our spirits change and we are good to each other and everybody has fun. On a trip we discover a different person inside of each one of us. Yes, we live together, but when we are out of town we are best friends. We help and protect each other. When I spend time with my family away from our home I feel very proud of each one of them, because I see all the fruits of my efforts. This is the best time and the best thing that I like to do. I like to spend time with my family out of town.

Lake Tahoe,
Emerald Bay



Brain Teaser

By Darryl R.

Learning how to read has opened new and exciting worlds of knowledge for Darryl, such as psychology, which were closed to him before.



My favorite thing is the science of psychology, the study of the human mind, the emotions, and the way we think and act. That's why one of my favorite TV shows is called The Brain Game, which airs on the Discovery Channel. The Brain Game is about psychology. It shows how people react to everyday situations and also tells why they act that way!

In one episode in Las Vegas, they displayed a sign that said, "The Line Starts Here." I thought no one would stand in line for no apparent reason, but I was wrong. After placing an actor at the head of the line, some people got in line, perhaps expecting something for free, or imagining they would be the first to have a latest best thing. However, nothing was promised to this line. After an hour they had a security guard lead the line in a crazy obstacle course that they happily followed. When they found out that it was an experiment, they were shocked and embarrassed!

They had been tantalized and overcome with curiosity, hoping to get their prize, which existed only in their imaginations! This goes to show the power of psychology and how it can influence us in doing things we would not normally do; it can affect our judgment!

Fascinating!!

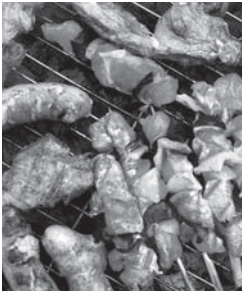


*Monkey See
Monkey Do -
Brain Games
Season 3*
<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/tv/brain-games/monkey-see-monkey-do>

Summer With the Family

By Francisco R.

Francisco wrote this story because life is beautiful with family. He hopes all people reading his story will understand how important family and the summer season are for him.



My favorite time of year is summer because it's warm for outside activities, like playing soccer with my son and running. The sun is shining and warm. I can smell flowers and grass. My family is happy, too, because the weather allows more time to do things.

After soccer, my family has a BBQ, and they smell the delicious food when my wife is cooking. But most important is when we sit down to eat food together. That is the importance of summer.

I'm happy in this season because I can play, have a BBQ, and do many things outside. My family is always happy, because we are together and enjoying the life given to us in this beautiful season each year for fun.

Hércules

By Luis

I have a large dog named Hércules. Hércules is my favorite animal. His color is black and yellow. My dog lives with my father in Michoacán, México. He has been with my father for one year. He eats beef and dog food and drinks water. He likes to shower and run in the street. My dog plays games with my cat in my dad's house.

Hércules is the name of my dog because I watched a movie about a street animal. My father likes my dog. My mother does not like Hércules because she has to clean the patio. My father has a small dog named Juan.

I watch Hércules with my father on Skype. He is happy with my family. My dog is happy with my dad. Hércules is my favorite animal because he is a fast and big dog.

Luis has two children, Aarón and Aaden. His kids play with cards and toys. They eat strawberries and drink milk.



My Favorite Park

By Edel Riano



Edel Riano has been coming to William Street Park since he moved to San José 29 years ago. He feels relaxed and lets his thoughts fly free with nobody to distract him.



My favorite park is a small park located at E. William Street and 16th Street in San José, California. For years this park has been my favorite park because it always is empty. I can lie in the shade of the tree and let my thoughts fly free without anybody bothering me. I can hear the birds singing around me and relax from the stress of my daily problems. A few feet away I pass a stream of water—not too deep, but deep enough to cover my feet with water. I enjoy walking back and forward and feeling cold water on my feet. I enjoy being by myself. Also, water is a part of life for these small fish and insects, and looking at these beautiful creatures has no price.

I do not know why people do not come to this park. Maybe it's because the park is too small or has no games for kids to play. Whatever the reason, these people will not come to the park. For me it is good to be by myself. I can sit at any table I want and choose the tree with the most shade and relax to concentrate without distractions. To my friends and people who are looking for a quiet park where birds are singing and behind the old big trees is the sound of water in the creek, please come to William Street Park.

Native American Powwow

By Janeen Robbins

My favorite event is the Native American Powwow at Stanford. The powwow is held for three days on Mother's Day Weekend.

The Grand Entry starts at 11:00 a.m. each day. All tribes dance in, carrying state and American flags. They ask all guests to stand up to show respect for the flags. After the Grand Entry, dance contests start. The announcer calls out the dancers by age group. The groups are elders, young men, teenage women, and tots. The best dancer in each group wins money.

There are lots of food stands to choose from at the powwow. My favorite food is the fry bread taco. I walk around and look at the stands selling lots of jewelry and beautiful things for your house. This year, I bought purses for my mom and my boyfriend's mom for Mother's Day. I also bought myself some earrings.

I look forward to going to the powwow every year. It's my favorite event.



Janeen's tutor says that Janeen is an enthusiastic learner.



Beans, the Best Food

By Sandra Ruiz

Sandra is from a small town where she grew up with beans. She loved to see how their field produced this wonderful plant. She wishes she could be there and enjoy the work she used to do there.

Beans have been with me all my life. My family cultivates them. I know many things about them. I used to go to the field with my parents. It is wonderful to see how one small seed germinates and produces this amazing food. I love everything about beans. They are an excellent food, and their taste is amazing. Writing about them makes my mouth water. They are easy to cook. I can cook and eat them in different ways. The best beans are the tender ones. Their taste is unique because we get them from the field. We pick them when they are almost ready. The plant is yellow, and we take the seeds from each vine. They do not take too much time to be ready to cook.

Cooking beans is easy. I boil them in water and salt. When they are freshly cooked their smell is fantastic. I cook them once or twice a week and keep them in the refrigerator. If they are cooked, it is easy to prepare them with different foods. I make different dishes. It is fantastic how easily and quickly I cook them. I combine them with most everything: vegetables, meats, cheese and tortillas. It is

enjoyable to eat beans in all these ways. Their taste is indescribable. Their flavor is unique. They can have different textures depending on the way you cook them while not changing their taste. Their incomparable smell invites me to eat them. I can tell that they are the best food. It is a pleasure to eat them. When I eat them my body feels great. I know when I eat beans I give my body the healthiest food. My mother used to say that I was a very good poor person. This is because the beans in my town were free! I grew up with beans, and I am very proud of it.



Never Too Late to Learn to Read!

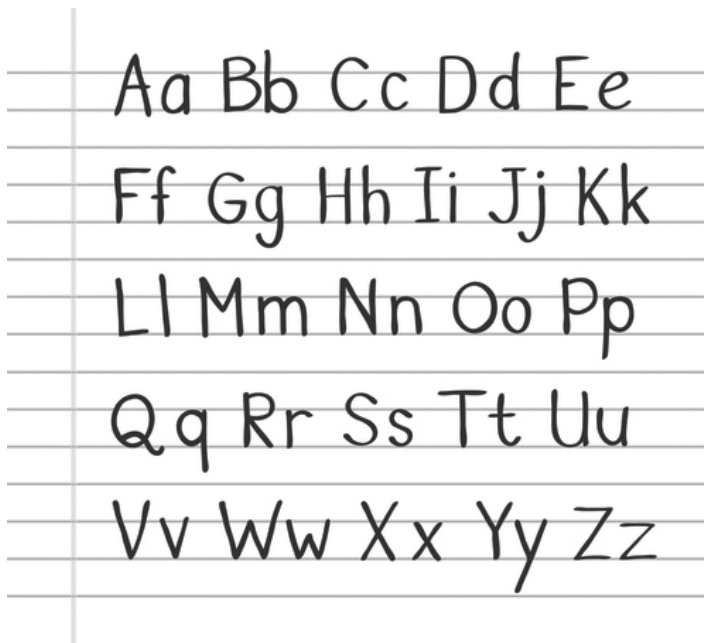
By Frank Santiago

Frank came to the U. S. from Puerto Rico when he was seven and couldn't speak or read English.

My favorite person is my tutor. My tutor has done something that nobody has ever done for me. That includes family, friends, or at school.

I came from Puerto Rico in 1957. I was seven years old and had never gone to school. When I came to San José, I only spoke Spanish. They put me in the second grade but the teacher didn't speak Spanish. There was a Mexican boy who spoke English and Spanish. The teacher would use him for an interpreter. I don't know if you can imagine what I was going through. I was very confused. By the sixth grade, I was starting to get a handle on it. When I graduated from the sixth, they skipped me to the eighth grade, not because I was smart but because of my age. I tried to keep going but it was too embarrassing. Although I could speak English, I couldn't read or write. I never let family, friends, or people at work know that. At work, when I had to take a test, I would smash my right hand or break my fingers, so I could take the test orally. I did that a lot of times. Nobody knew my problem.

When I met Meta Karmin, I knew she was different. I didn't feel embarrassed with her. I told her what I have been through. She started me with the alphabet and sounds of letters. Today, I can fill out an application and do my checkbook. I enjoy reading the newspaper and can write a letter. It's never too late! I wish I had met Meta 58 years ago. My life would have been so much easier and better. In life we play the cards we are dealt, with no regrets.



I Love Sunday

By Angelica Serrato

Angelica is married and has three girls. The PAR program is wonderful because it helps her speak, read, and write English for her life.

My favorite day is Sunday because it is a day for my family. My husband does not work and my kids do not go to school. Sometimes we go to the movies. My children get to decide which one to see. When the movie is finished, we all go shopping. My husband is grumpy while shopping. After shopping, my husband and I barbeque for our whole family. Sometimes after dinner we go to the park. I enjoy Sundays.



The Japanese Friendship Gardens park in San José

My Favorite Person Is My Husband

By Manju Shahi

My husband, Mr. David Fuller, is a good and kind human being. He is always thinking of others' happiness more than himself. He enjoys serving needy people, animals, and plants too. If somebody hurts him or is jealous, he keeps silent and helps, no matter what happened in the past. He is open to any race, sex, caste, group, citizen, and religion. He keeps a positive attitude in every circumstance and believes in the truth.

He was born in 1951 in India as the fourth son of a Christian. In 1983 he came to Nepal as a tourist and taught English. He did not like compulsory prayer in the schools, but he had to do this for his job.

David used to teach me about teaching methods, child psychology, international events, and extra-curricular activities. He is a very good, understanding, and loving person. In 1985 we were married in a temple. We have a daughter who is studying dental surgery in Nepal. In 1996 David and I established Seto Bangala High School, which provides free



Manju is a PAR learner and a volunteer at the King Library in the Children's Room. She and her husband founded the Seto Bangala High School in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is 58 years old.



Children of Kathmandu,
Nepal

[www.heybrian.com/
travels/nepal/children](http://www.heybrian.com/travels/nepal/children)

education to lower-middle-class children. Due to very tight budgets there is always a financial crisis. Besides administration and teaching, sometimes he cleaned the restroom. Now he is volunteering as the principal.

He is very gentle and enjoys reading the newspaper, watching comedies, children's programs, and TV. He respects all religions and cultures. He cares about human beings. He never makes any decisions at home or at school without me. He encourages everyone to lead a better life. The credit goes to him for everything. For 32 years he has been contributing to the children of Kathmandu. He has the potential to earn a name and fame, but he loves the simple lifestyle and is happy to see others' progress. Thus he deserves to be my favorite person in the world. I love him as a good husband and respect him as a perfect teacher from all my heart forever.

“Nothing is impossible for a willing heart.”

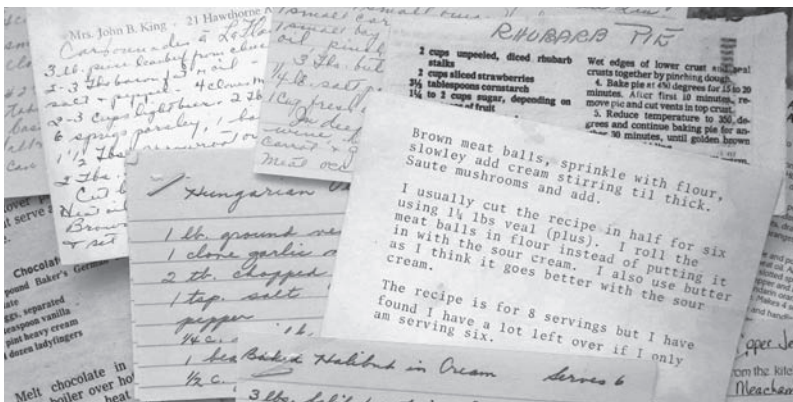
— David Fuller

A Kind and Sweet Grandmother

By Darlene Slaughter

My favorite person is my grandmother, even though she is no longer with us. Her name is Ollie Holly. She had the most beautiful skin and soft salt and pepper hair. The love we had for each other was unconditional. I know I was her favorite grandchild, and we spent a lot of time together. I would go over and spend the night at her house. We went to church together and sat in her favorite spot. When we went shopping, she walked so fast she left me in the dust. Every time I went to her house, she had something good cooking, which smelled delicious. When it was my birthday, she always had something for me. She died a long time ago, and I still miss her. She will always be my favorite person in the world.

Darlene chose to write about her grandmother because she was a very special person. Most of all she loves her tutor, Nancy Adrian.



I Enjoy Writing Acrostics in a Poem

By Jacqueline Smith



Jacqueline has been married 28 years. She and her husband have two grandchildren. They are currently raising two nephews.

Favorite

F is for **f**amily, **f**riends, and **f**antastic words that make a **f**oundation strong

A is for **a**ppreciating self

V is we have a **v**ision and keep going forward

O **o**ther simple acts of kindness

R is for **r**eaching all the nations and lives

I is the **i**llustrators who make simple pictures

T is for **t**alented **P**eople

Angels on earth

Ready, reliable, resourceful, and respectful of life

E We **e**njoy our favorite things in the world that make us happy

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

— Benjamin Franklin

The New Champ

By Andrew

For years I have been looking for the best BBQ ribs I could find. I have a method. I would go to different BBQ places and order a full rack of ribs. I had three criteria: taste, portion size, and fall-off-the-bone tender.

For years Armadillo Willy's had the best ribs, until I went to Texas Roadhouse. My wife and I went there. Mind you, this was the first time either of us had been there. As we walked in there, there were some things that caught our eyes. On the left was the meat display with the steaks, from 8 oz. to the big 32 oz. one. On top of the meat display was a spot where the dinner rolls were placed before they went out. What makes their dinner rolls so good is the cinnamon butter. I could almost just eat the rolls and butter and call it a day.

To me the crown jewel is the slow-cooked ribs. I got a full rack and my wife got a half rack of ribs. We both got two sides, chili beans and Caesar salad. When the ribs got to us I looked at them and said "We might have a new champ." Remember my three criteria? 1) Taste:

Andrew has been in PAR for seven years. He was encouraged to write a story for the PAR book.

a nice smoky meaty taste, and on the back end the tangy taste of the BBQ sauce. 2) Portion size: a lot of ribs, more than other BBQ places. 3) The last was fall-off-the-bone. By far the most tender ribs I have ever had. I tried to eat the ribs and the bone popped out of it. I tried it again, same thing. After that I had a plate with the juicy, smoky, tender meat. It was the first time I had ribs using a fork instead of my hands.

We have a new champ in the ribs challenge. My wife and I go there a few times a year. They have steak, chicken, and other things, but the ribs are the one thing we both get time after time. This is why Texas Roadhouse is the best BBQ ribs I've had. But I'm always looking out for a place to become the new champ.



Reading the NewsPAPER

By TK

Reading a newspaper is very important—in the past and now.

When I was in elementary school in Japan, I had homework during the summer break in which students had to transcribe an article from a newspaper every day. I asked my mother to compile the daily newspapers so that I could do homework one time before the end of summer. Three days before the end of the summer break, I was greatly upset and despondent when my mother informed me that she had not kept the newspapers at all—I was only able to transcribe three articles for this homework!

Now we can read news and find any past articles on the web. I feel envious of the students in modern times. However, I still prefer a newsPAPER. Just turn over the pages; various kinds of articles are visible. These articles help me to explore personal interests. On the other hand, the news on the web is layered and categorized, so the reader needs to dive into each layer to see what articles are

TK has been living in the U. S. for four years. He has been studying English writing and reading with Elva, who is his partner in this program. They enjoy reading and talking about articles in newspapers. It is TK's favorite way to study English now.

there. The layout on the newspaper makes me scan what is going on in society. I can see intuitively what is happening and important in the world.

I have not subscribed to an English newspaper since I came here. It is still difficult for me to read. I recently started to subscribe to the *Wall Street Journal* due to the recommendation from my friends.

One is a technology researcher. When he has a lunch or a dinner with his business partners and friends, their conversation may include a wide variety of fields, such as economics, politics, society and sports, etc. Those topics are not directly related to his research field. However, sometimes those topics provide unexpected opportunities and ideas.



Another friend is imposing a challenge upon himself by choosing a daily news article to interpret, and then he writes his opinion about the article. He is confident that by challenging himself in this way, his English writing and reading abilities will improve.

Unlike information on the web that is rapidly flowing in front of my eyes, the newsPAPER opens the page widely and provides me various information in a short time. Ideas, opportunities, and knowledge will arise from the page.

It is my intention to keep my subscription to explore various fields as much as possible, and to choose one article and summarize it every day! I am convinced that the newsPAPER is my favorite information tool.



Fruits and Vegetables in San José

By Maria Torrico



Maria is from Bolivia. She has been in America for 22 years. She is married and has three children. She loves living in San José.

My favorite place to live is in San José. It reminds me of growing up in Bolivia. I can find fruits and vegetables all year round. I like to have a fruit dessert like my grandma gave when I was little. We always had a fruit salad after we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner. My favorite fruits are papaya and chirimoya. My mom's house had many different kinds of fruit trees.

I remember when my grandma was making salad I was standing up watching, because she always offered me tomatoes to eat. I love vegetables, too. I like beets, carrots, cauliflower, and cabbage. I love San José, California. I can eat vegetables and fruits all year round.

*“When the dog bites
When the bee stings
When I’m feeling sad
I simply remember my favorite things
And then I don’t feel so bad”*

— Oscar Hammerstein II

A Legend in the Making

By Richard Truchetta

From all of the different music that has been around over the years, Ronnie James Dio has always been my favorite singer. His style and music have always been different from the others.

I was eighteen years old, listening to Black Sabbath (the band), the Heaven and Hell album. It caught my attention. The music being sung was totally different from the original singer. Ronnie's writing technique was different. He was fascinated by the medieval times, with everything that had to do with rainbows and dragons and knights of the Round Table. He had a great imagination for the music he produced and lyrics he wrote.

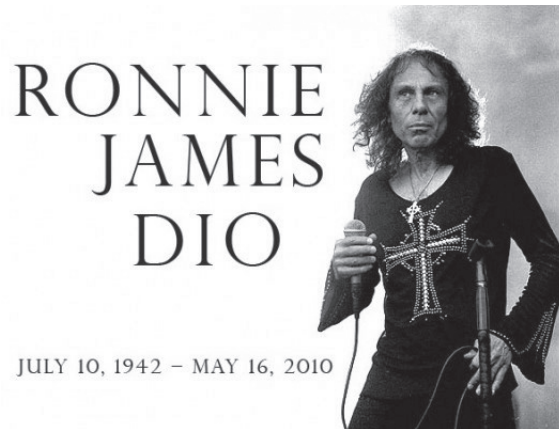
Believe it or not, Ronnie was a real down-to-earth person. He always made time for his fans. I talked to him a few times while getting his autograph and while I was at a concert at the Shoreline Amphitheatre. I had a beer

Ronnie James Dio has always been Richard's favorite singer. Knowing him and enjoying his music was a life-changing experience for him.



with him back stage with members from other bands. He recalled my father's sickness and I told him he'd passed on. He dedicated a song to me at the same concert.

In 2010, at the age of 67, Ronnie James Dio passed away of stomach cancer. It was a life-changing experience for me because I knew him. He was a legend, a singer, a one-of-a-kind person. It's been five years since his death, and music hasn't been the same without him. Long live Dio! His music lives on.



Civil Rights Starts at Home

By Gerardo Vazquez

My passion is civil rights. When I was 12 years old, my father gave me money to take my little brothers to the barbershop to get haircuts. On the way, my brothers and I stopped to play in the sand. When I got to the barbershop, I couldn't find the money my father gave me, so we returned home. My father was very mad and he didn't trust me. He started to hit me very hard to give the money back to him. He told my mother to take my clothes off to find the money. She did. I felt humiliated. I was in shock. My father sent my older brother with me to find the money, but I couldn't find it so we returned home. They didn't give me dinner that night. This is my personal experience with injustice. This is why civil rights has become my passion.

I feel many children or other people suffer the same or worse. I made the decision to work on preventing these kinds of injustices. In my home country, I started a Christian association to help my community. For seven years, I have



Gerardo wrote his story to teach people that the cycle of violence starts at home, but we can work to change it.

built the organization in Mexico. I started with 10 people, and now we have 300 people, including children, coming together to learn and help the community.

In San José, I work for the neighborhood. Now, I am a member of the San José First United Methodist Church. It is a multi-ethnic organization in downtown San José. They have many programs to help people: a food bank, ESL classes, and furniture donation services. Then, I connected this church to my organization in Atotonilco el Alto Jalisco, Mexico, to help children in education, religion, sports, music, and English to improve their lives. The name of my organization is CRISTO VIVE.

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Hiking With My Best Friend

By Dorothee Witham

At 5:30 a.m., Christine, my friend the mountain climber, waits for me at the crossroads.

She is hopping up and down with impatience. We prepare to climb Mont Ténibre, a 10,000-foot peak in Mercantour Park, France. I hadn't hiked for two years. I wonder how these two days will go.

It is 7:00 a.m. We stop at Saint-Etienne-de-Tinée Village. The villagers crowd into the bakery. The bread comes out of the oven. It is crusty. We enjoy the aroma of the yeasty flour. We savor our croissants at a table outside a café within sight of the mountains. The sun rises.

We set out toward the refuge of Rabuons. It is located 4,700 feet above the village, on the flank of the mountain, on a bank of a large lake. The slope is steep. The trail meanders through undergrowth. The forest's scents fill our nostrils.



Dorothee wrote this story because she wanted to prove to her tutor and to herself that she could write a short story in English.



Christine, 5'10" tall, 100 pounds, goes up and down like a spirited kid. She talks. I wheeze heavily. She talks. I suffer, but I hide my pain and climb up, up, up . . . I am so happy to be here on the mountain again.

Four and a half hours later, we finally reach the refuge of Rabuons. I am exhausted. I lie down in the meadow with my arms stretched out to the sides. The meadow is green, thick, and full of blossoms. The lake sparkles. Above the refuge, I can make out the Mont Ténibre Cross shining in the sun, while the clouds have flowed into the valley below. It was worth it!

Christine, still fresh, says, "What about a turn around the lake? One hour walking, no more!"



Why I Love Rancho San Antonio

By Rumiko Yamane

My favorite place is Rancho San Antonio. It is a huge open space preserve with many good hiking trails. I have walked there with my friends every Monday morning for the last two years.

The reason why I like going there is for its beautiful nature. I like nature. Walking in nature is healing to me. I can see not only squirrels and birds, but also deer, wild turkeys and other wildlife. Once, to my surprise, I even saw a coyote and a big snake. Also, there is a trail that goes by a farm where I can see goats, sheep, pigs, cows, and chickens, too.

We walk to the Vista Point and then back, which is about a 6-mile-long round trip. The trail climbs through chaparral, grassland, and oak woodland. It is a little hard for me because it has a steep grade. I sometimes get short of breath. From the Vista Point, I can look over the city and the sea far away. It is an amazing view. We always have a rest while looking at the landscape.

Rumiko came from Japan with her husband and two children. She enjoys studying English with her PAR tutor. She likes walking and sewing.

I like nature because I was raised in a town with rich nature, and Rancho San Antonio reminds me of my home town. There, I am able to fully enjoy nature and be refreshed with my friends once a week. It gives my week a good start.



RANCHO SAN ANTONIO OPEN SPACE PRESERVE
www.redwoodhikes.com/Skyline/RSA.html

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.”

— Pablo Picasso

