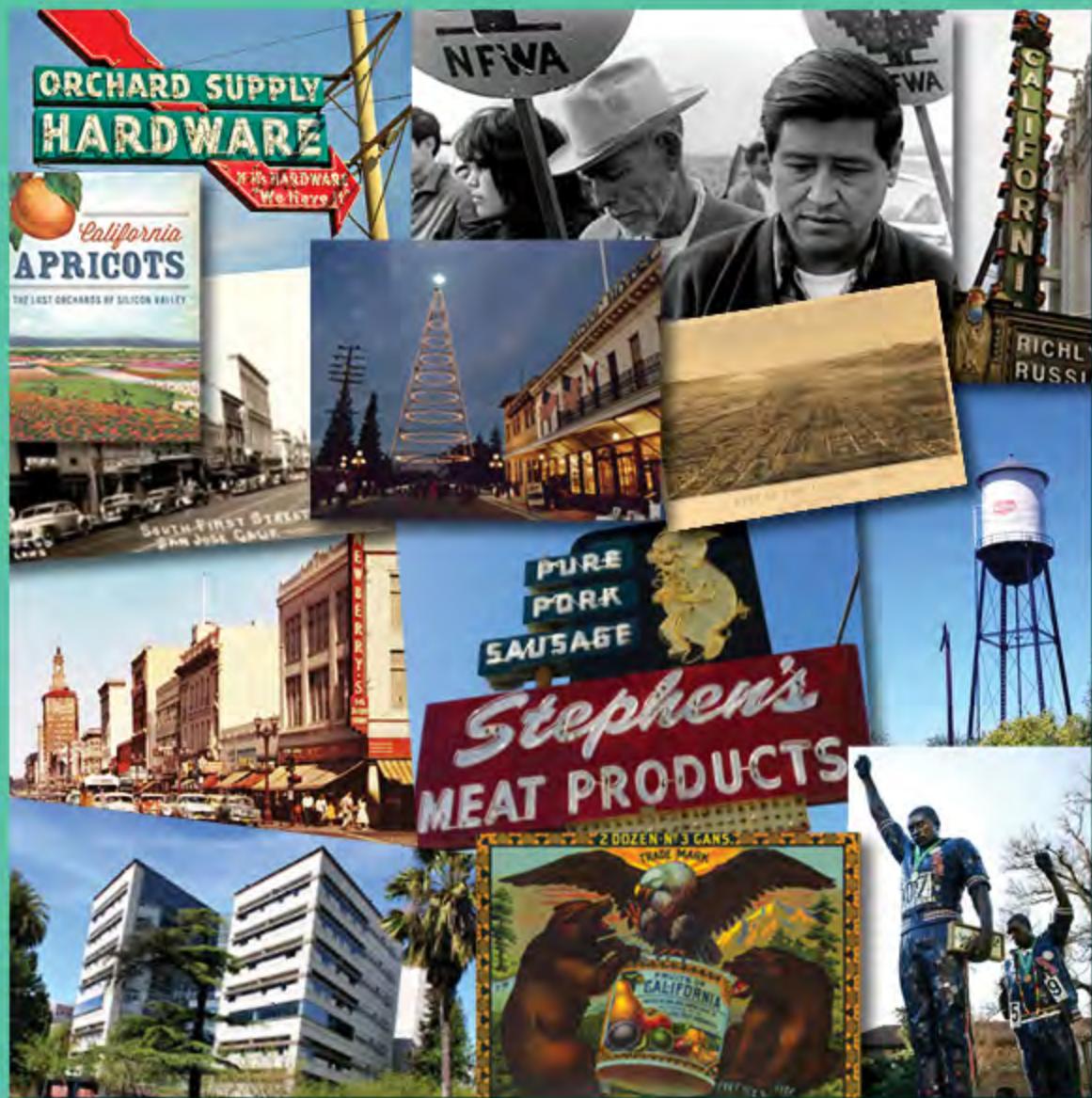


# My San José

Stories by Adult Learners



Partners in Reading  
Adult Literacy & ESL  
San José Public Library



# **My San José**

***Stories by Adult Learners***



**PARTNERS  
IN READING**  
San José Public Library

Adult Literacy & ESL  
2017

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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.



San José Public Library  
Foundation



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- The volunteers who are dedicated to helping the adults in this program stretch beyond what many of them thought possible. Volunteer tutors provide support but encourage independence. They guide learners and ask questions so that their stories can be easily understood. Your help has been invaluable.
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- The San José Public Library Foundation, which provides key funding to enable the library to offer programs and services to the San José community.
- California Library Literacy Services, which has provided financial and program support to libraries throughout California for 33 years. PAR has been the fortunate beneficiary of this annual funding so that we can offer valuable literacy services and resources to adults throughout San José.

Thank you from the Partners in Reading (PAR) staff for supporting this program, reading this book, and telling others about the great people who are benefitting from the services provided by this program and the San José Public Library.

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

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

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## **Business Donors**

- 4<sup>th</sup> Street Pizza
- Applebee's
- Aqui Cal-Mex
- Big 5 Sporting Goods
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- Chacho's Restaurant
- Children's Discovery Museum of San José
- Children's Musical Theater San José
- Costco Wholesale
- Emerald Hills Golfland
- Famous Dave's Bar-B-Q
- Flames Eatery & Bar
- Frankie, Johnnie & Luigi Too!
- Gilroy Gardens
- Happy Hollow Park & Zoo
- KPMG/KFFL
- Opera San José
- O'Reilly Auto Parts
- P. F. Chang's China Bistro
- Pizza My Heart
- Poor House Bistro
- Red Lobster
- San Francisco Giants
- San José Museum of Art
- Solar4America Ice
- Smashburger
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- SummerWinds Nursery
- Symphony Silicon Valley
- Tabard Theatre Company
- The Farmers Union
- The Fish Market
- The Old Spaghetti Factory
- The Old Wagon Saloon & Grill
- The Studio Climbing
- The Tech Museum
- Tomato Thyme
- Trader Joe's
- Walt Disney Family Museum



KFFL at the Partners in Reading 2016 Holiday Potluck giving new books to children

Audit and tax firm KPMG's outreach program, Family for Literacy (KFFL), has made a tremendous difference in our program this year. KFFL understands that strong reading skills are the basis for future success, and that one of the toughest roadblocks to children's literacy in low-income families is a lack of books. KFFL works tirelessly to get books into the hands of kids who need them the most. Since the program began in 2008, KFFL has given away more than 3 million books to children in need.

Partners in Reading's family literacy program, Together We Read (TWR), was fortunate to be chosen as a KFFL recipient. TWR sends new books to the children of our adult learners in an effort to share reading and build and enhance home libraries. In December, KFFL donated over 700 new books to TWR! And by allowing PAR staff to select each title, KFFL ensured that the books would be relevant and useful for our learners' children. KFFL volunteers also took the time to attend our PAR Holiday Potluck and personally hand out new books and gifts to the children.



Working with KFFL has been an honor and a pleasure. PAR would like to offer our most sincere thanks to this wonderful group, and would especially like to thank Jill and Perry Leslie and Kristen and Tim Zanni.

## Introduction

For many, writing is quite difficult. Staring at a blank page and getting started can be intimidating. Overcoming this problem, coming up with an idea, distilling it to its essence, and then expanding it as the body and conclusion of a story can seem insurmountable to many of us. How do you write that first sentence or two that will be the “umbrella” over the story? What facts must you gather, and how do you then add color for your reader?

Each year, Partners in Reading asks adults in the program to tackle this daunting and special task: write a short essay or story to be published in a book. Choosing a theme for the book is often tricky because we want to attract as many writers as possible. This year’s theme, *My San José*, was universal enough to attract a record 61 writers for this annual project. Adult learners really love San José. They like to go to its parks, enjoy its restaurants, explore new places in the city, have fun with family and friends at seasonal events, and relax in their favorite comfortable space in San José, wherever that might be. They especially like their libraries and the opportunities that each branch offers them to learn and grow.

We know that you will enjoy reading each of their stories. Read them for the pure heart they express, or use them as inspiration in tutoring sessions. As you read them, think about the energy and work that went into writing each of these stories. We thank all those who contributed to this effort. Enjoy this great book and find a window into all the great corners of San José. You'll be glad you did! Then go out and explore them for yourself.

*“ If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people. ”*

**- Chinese Proverb**

## **Program Highlights**

Partners in Reading (PAR) is privileged to have a diverse community of customers and to offer a large variety of program activities, ranging from adult and family literacy services to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and lifelong learning support such as Career Online High School and volunteer and adult learner support.

Twenty-nine years ago the California State Library, through California Library Literacy Services, began its support of PAR by means of a continuing grant to serve adults in San José who were unable to read and write at a high school level. The purpose has been to boost their basic literacy skills. With this grant, the San José Public Library has been able to continue serving these adults through PAR Adult Literacy and ESL programs with a dedicated staff and outstanding volunteer tutors.

### ***The Adult Literacy Program***

Without the one-to-one and small-group instruction provided by more than 4,000 volunteers over the years, we would not have been able to serve over 5,500 adults since the program began in 1989. Simply said, the cost to serve this many adults would have been prohibitive without volunteer tutors. Collectively, volunteers contributed 24,156 hours over a 12-month period, which is equivalent to 12 full-time employees. Their hourly value is worth \$26.34, according to the nonprofit coalition Independent Sector's assessment of the value of volunteer time in California. What a great value and a great service!

Each spring we throw a party to honor our many volunteers, who give so much to the PAR program and the community. This year's Tutor of the Year is Karren Andreasen, who not only supports our advanced ESL class but also leads a small group of students from that class so that they can have more English conversation time. As a result, they

gain more confidence and are better able to build on the information they have read and discussed during this world events class.

Also honored at the Volunteer Recognition Event was volunteer tutor Conal O'Rourke, who was recognized as this year's Ben Sherrod recipient, an award given to the person who "goes above and beyond." Conal spent many months with his learner researching how to navigate the process of obtaining permission for her husband to travel to the United States, and then the process of picking airline flights to help him get here. Without Conal's creative and tenacious assistance, this couple would not have been reunited. His learner's husband is settling in well to his new life here with his wife after many years of unexpected separation.

Every fall, when we release the book of essays by learners, we celebrate International Literacy Day and honor two learners who have shown great promise. Anthony Tiggs was honored as the Most Inspiring Learner because, while going through some personal challenges, he still devoted significant time to building his literacy and technology skills. He is very comfortable with his smart phone now, and can easily search on the Internet. Anthony also participated in a small group where he was able to inspire the other members because of his perseverance under difficult circumstances.

Gerardo Vazquez was named the Learner of the Year. Among many talents, he is an excellent juggler with his very full schedule. He has a full-time job as a minister, in which he mentors many community members, and he meets regularly with his tutor. He always writes a story for the PAR book, and while doing all that, he is also enrolled in the Library's Career Online High School diploma program. He hopes to earn his diploma and career certificate some time before this book is published. Great job, Gerardo!

### ***Computer Instruction***

PAR offers computer instruction in the King Library with trained volunteer instructors to help learners more fully participate in the busy life of Silicon Valley. Many of us use technology throughout the day without even thinking about it. For learners who struggle with basic reading and writing skills, learning to use technology can be fraught with anxiety. Buying a light rail ticket or checking messages on smart phones are just two examples of how important technology is in our society, and the PAR computer instructors help make these tasks a little less frightening. The Family Learning Center computer labs at the Hillview, Alum Rock, Tully, East Branch, Biblioteca Latinoamericana, Bascom, and Seven Trees branch libraries mirror the learning programs available at PAR's office in the King Library. Therefore, many adults throughout San José can take advantage of more locations where they can learn.

### ***ESL Classes***

For the last several years, PAR has offered ESL classes to help adults with minimal conversation skills develop their spoken English enough to qualify for PAR tutoring and move forward on the learning continuum. Learners have worked with two dynamic ESL teachers whose expertise and enthusiasm have benefitted their students greatly as they navigate the many challenges of learning English as an adult. Hats off to all the participants, and to Kathy St. John and Manuela Burge for bringing such a meaningful program to the Library!

### ***The High School Diploma Program***

The Library's Career Online High School pilot program, administered by PAR staff for San José adults, is funded by the San José Public Library, the California State Library, and the San José Public Library Foundation. This flexible program enables adults to take all their classes online. Adults who are very busy with family obligations and with work—often two jobs—spend 10 or more hours a week on their

studies. They usually study at home or at a library and have 24/7 access to their classes. They can transfer qualifying high school subject credits and can work at their own pace. After completing 36 classes, adults graduate with an accredited high school diploma and a career certificate. The library has awarded scholarships to 64 adults, and PAR is scheduled to hold a graduation ceremony in August 2017 to honor its first graduates. They have sacrificed a great deal to make learning a priority. We salute them!

### ***Honoring an Adult Literacy Pioneer***

During March, which was Women’s History Month, PAR and Read Santa Clara, the adult literacy program of the Santa Clara City Library, partnered to honor an amazing woman who is a pioneer in the field of adult literacy. Ruth Colvin founded Literacy Volunteers of America and co-founded ProLiteracy to help adults worldwide build literacy skills. She came to Santa Clara to speak about adult literacy and some of the amazing people she has met while building literacy programs here and across the globe since 1962. The event included a learner panel with adults from both Read Santa Clara and from PAR. Ruth has been inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame.



Ruth Colvin celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2016



Ruth Colvin speaking in Santa Clara, 2017

---

## San José Fun Facts



- Lick Observatory, on Mount Hamilton in the Diablo Range east of San José, is the world's first permanent mountaintop observatory.

- San José's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library is the largest public library west of the Mississippi and the first partnership between a city and a major university.



- Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph in San José is the oldest parish in California.

- San José was one of the oldest settlements in California, founded in 1777 as a farming community and an agricultural stronghold. The city is named after Saint Joseph.
- San José was the state capital from the 1840s to the 1850s, and it was a supply base for those prospecting for gold.
- San José has some of the best weather, with the sun popping out roughly 300 days every year.
- The San José Municipal Rose Garden has 4,000 rose bushes with 189 varieties.



- Alum Rock Park is the oldest municipal park in California.
- San José's Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum is the largest collection of Egyptian artifacts in the West.



- Many of the buildings in downtown San José cannot exceed 300 feet in height due to the proximity of the city's Mineta San José International Airport.



- Astronaut Steve Smith, who has traveled more than 16 million miles during four space flights, graduated from San José's Bret Harte Middle School and Leland High School in the 1970s.

- The Monopoly board in Guadalupe River Park is 30 square feet, making it the largest Monopoly board in the world.
- The people of San José speak 56 languages, and 40 percent are foreign born.



- San José is the site of the world's first radio broadcasting station, which was groundbreaking because listeners were able to tune in and listen to voices for the first time.

### ***Fun Fact Resources***

[www.sanjose.org/media/2114514/san-jose-at-a-glance.pdf](http://www.sanjose.org/media/2114514/san-jose-at-a-glance.pdf)

<http://www.movoto.com/guide/san-jose-ca/san-jose-facts/>

<http://www.sanjoseonline.us/guide/did-you-know/>

<http://www.ucolick.org/public/telescopes/36-inch.html>



*“ What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to a human soul. ”*

**- Joseph Addison**

---

## San José Is a Good Place

By Faalaa Achica

I live in East Palo Alto. I come to San José Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I come to the MLK Library. I meet with Julie on Monday. I meet with Donna on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Julie helps me learn to type on the computer. I am learning Word. I am learning to add. I am learning the 12 months of the year. I am learning the names of the colors. I like searching for VW vans on the computer.

Julie shows me music on the computer. I listen. I write the names of the songs. I buy the songs. Julie puts the songs on my iPod. She uses my iTunes card. No swear music. All good music. My favorite music is Heavy Metal and music from Tonga, Samoa and India.

I walk to Santa Clara Street from the library. I look on the ground for money. Sometimes I find money. Sometimes I go to the Walgreens store. I like going there. I buy toothpaste. I buy dog food. Sometimes I buy DVD movies.

*(continued)*



---

Faalaa is a dedicated PAR learner.





Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr. Library

I like waiting for the 522 bus. I like watching people walking around. Some people smoke. Some people sleep. I see a lot of homeless people.

There are a lot of good people in San José. I walk down the street. They smile at me. They say hello. They don't ask me for money. They don't ask me for anything. San José is a good place to look around.



*“ The secret in education lies in respecting the student. ”*  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

---

# I Love Christmas in the Park

*By Megnaga Aimru*

My favorite place in San José is Christmas in the Park downtown every winter. Christmas in the Park opens after Thanksgiving and stays open until January 6.

Christmas in the Park is beautiful! There is a really tall tree with lots of lights. People sit next to it and sing Christmas songs. There are lots of small trees with different decorations.

The rides are fun—more fun than Great America. There are about six rides. One is scary. It goes around the park. One goes up and down. They have a new ride just for little kids. It's a Michael Jackson ride.

The food is good at Christmas in the Park. They sell hotdogs, popcorn, and pizza. There are little shops in the park where you can buy things and take pictures with Santa.

I started going to Christmas in the Park eight years ago. I usually went with my dad and sisters on Thanksgiving Day, after we ate dinner. This year I went with Andrew, my



---

Megnaga wrote this story because she enjoys Christmas in the Park.



boyfriend, and my baby Jasmine. I will take her next year, too. Maybe she will take her picture with Santa Claus. After Christmas in the Park, we will take the train home.

Christmas in the Park is the best place in San José!



*“ I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework. ”*

*- Lily Tomlin*

---

## Family Fun at Hellyer Park

By Mary A.

Hellyer Park is one of my favorite parks. It was the first park I visited when I came from Mexico.

Every day my sister, my brother-in-law and their two daughters went to walk around the lake, and most of the time, we walked on the trails of the park.

We enjoy hearing the sounds of the birds, people walking or running and talking or listening to music.

We also like the noise of the trees, feeling the fresh air, and watching the animals: wild turkeys, porcupines, deer, and ducks.

My brother likes to play volleyball and football. We always make teams to compete.

Other times we celebrate birthdays, Mother's Day, Easter, Father's Day, etc. We cook at the park, barbecue different kinds of meats, rice, beans and salad. Also, we bring desserts, drinks and snacks.

*(continued)*

---

Mary lives in San José with her husband, mother, sister and her two nephews. Mary says she is happy to be part of the PAR program.



---

We celebrated Father's Day every single year for a long time, and we were very happy. My father always walked after eating and several of us went with him. My dad was always happy and he liked to tell us his stories and all his beautiful experiences and entertaining memories of his youth.

When we returned from walking, we cut the cake and ate desserts while we distributed gifts and opened them. We took pictures with all family and friends and then only my father and my mom; the next picture was my father with all his children and later my father with all his grandchildren. We always had a very happy and fun Father's Day.

We always arrive at the park early to set aside the place we like. We always choose the same place, and we are almost always the last ones to leave the park, because time passes very quickly and we want more time to be there all together.

---

Hellyer County  
Park, San José

My family and I always have fun at Hellyer Park.



---

## The Amazing City of San José

By *Claudia Alvarez*

San José is the place where I have been living for many years. Every day I have something new to do in this great city. One of my favorite places to visit is downtown San José. On Sunday mornings my family and I enjoy going to Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph. After church, we choose one of the many restaurants from different countries, but I prefer to eat at The Old Spaghetti Factory, which has Italian cuisine. Another famous place where I like to walk is San Pedro Square. It is a perfect spot for entertainment. I usually go to the Farmer's Market on sunny days to buy fresh fruit. Then, I enjoy my lunch time eating and watching the diversity of people who walk by. When the night comes I meet with some friends to listen to music and have fun. I really like living in San José because during the year the city has many events that I like to celebrate. Some are: Christmas in the Park, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks, and San José Music in the Park. I am happy to be a part of my community on the East Side of San José. I would like to continue exploring new things to enjoy in this wonderful city of San José.



---

Claudia wrote this story in memory of her dad, who loved living in this great city.

---

# Food of My Country in San José

By Carmen Arias



---

Carmen wrote this story to improve her English.



---

Tlayudas  
Oaxaqueñas

My favorite place in San José is a restaurant called Mezcal. I like the food. It is typical Oaxacan food.

I like a dish called tlayudas. This is a big tortilla full of black beans, different meats (pork, chicken, and beef), tomatoes, avocado, cabbage, cheese and salsa. It smells very good.

Someone comes to the table and makes fresh guacamole. It's made with avocados, jalapeño chiles, onions, and salt. It is yummy!

The food is Oaxacan food. My mother is from Oaxaca, and the food is especially good to me. The smells bring back good memories.

A specialty of Oaxaca is mole. Everyone uses a different recipe for mole but each recipe includes chocolate for special richness. The ingredients include a variety of different chiles, onions, garlic, raisins, almonds, cinnamon, cloves, black pepper and apples. Mezcal makes mole. It's similar to my mother's mole. My daughter and I recommend this restaurant.

---

It's located in downtown San José. My daughter and I enjoy walking in a park that is nearby, Cesar Chavez Park.

This place is my favorite restaurant. The people are very nice. I like talking to the people who work there. This place makes me feel good, and it's one of my favorite places in San José.



---

Mezcal - San José,  
Calif.



---

Mole de Oaxaca –  
special traditional  
black mole over  
chicken breast, with  
garden rice, and  
platanos maduros

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# My Journey in America

*By Silvia*

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Silvia feels blessed to be here and have her family together. She wanted to share their dreams and what they have achieved in the seven years they have lived here.

San José is special for me and my family because it's the place where we came to live for the first time in America—San José. It's the place where my husband and I make our dreams come true. For example, while here we wanted to build our own house in Mexico, to have a new car, and to have a house here in America. We like to travel and know other places, but when we get back home we feel like we don't want to change this place for the other one. Everybody says, "Finally we are home."

One of the things I like to enjoy with my family in San José is watching a movie all together while eating popcorn, candies, and having a conversation. After the movie, my daughters say, "It was so good, mom. We should do this more often." And everybody laughs and talks about the movie.

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Also, we like to go to the United Ice Cream store, but it's Mexican ice cream. I remember the same flavors from my country. We also like Mi Pueblo store. This store has everything inside, a lot of Mexican products, and you can hear music in Spanish, too.

These are some ways we enjoy life here in San José.



*“ Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace. ”*

**- Confucius**

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## My Best Job in San José

By Abraham B.



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Abraham wrote this story because he had a good time with all his customers.

When I moved from Washington, D.C., I started my hot dog stand. I had good advice from SJSU. I got help from all the people at SJSU and from my church. They gave me a parking space for my car and trailer. The first three months were very slow. Not many people bought hot dogs because they did not know my services. People told me to come at the same time every day and wear a clean shirt. I had very cool drinks to sell, so everybody came to my hot dog stand. I also had a radio at my hot dog stand. It was very good music for my customers. Everybody liked to listen to the music. People from other cities and from downtown came to eat, to drink, and to listen to the music. I was very happy with all the customers. I worked for a long time in downtown San José.

*“ What we learn with pleasure we never forget. ”*

**- Alfred Mercier**

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## My Workplace

*By Lorpu Boakai*

I love my job in San José. I take the light rail to my job.

I have many co-workers. They are very friendly. Our manager cares about us. My job is near the airport. My job is in a big building. There is a special room. It has a bathroom, living room and kitchen. We call it a suite.

We have free cookies every day. In the building the air is always scented.

There is always music playing. That is why I feel happy at work.



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Lorpu is from Liberia in West Africa. Since she joined PAR she has learned to use a computer. She wrote this story to show how much she has learned.



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## San José, Festival City

*By Vicky*



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Vicky has been a learner with PAR for four years. She has learned a lot by meeting with her tutor. This year Vicky also completed the Adult Learner Leadership Institute and then spoke at a literacy conference.

Oh! Yeah! San José! Every year in my town in December there is a festival.

We enjoy a lot of games, shooting games, and different traditional foods. For example: enchiladas, taquitos, flautas, pozole and buñuelos. We have fireworks, a parade, regional and traditional costumes, and car floats.

In the middle of downtown is the plaza where there are trees, flowers, music, benches, and a gazebo. People walk around the plaza and gazebo listening to the music, playing games, and eating dinner.

At 10:00 o'clock at night on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July there are more fireworks.

A hard-hatted man working near the SAP Pavilion told us about a beautiful carousel that once was in this park. The man, his name was Alfredo, described a hippopotamus, rabbit, pony, giraffe, lion and a deer. "One day the carousel was gone," sighed Alfredo.

"Why?" I asked him.

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“The city said it cost too much to run,” he said. “My children and I hope San José will bring back the carousel. Maybe we have more money now. And for Christmas! Ah! Maybe new decorations, trees, and extra food booths and lots more,” said Alfredo. We all agreed San José will grow even better. Perhaps more people should discuss bringing back the carousel and putting it in the middle of the town. I remember festivals when I was growing up in another country. The people in San José can enjoy the same kinds of festivals summer and winter.



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The Children's  
Carousel at  
Arena Green

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## Walking in Brooktree Park

*By Shirley Brooks*



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Shirley's health has improved a great deal. She says to pick a park, go to it, move, and exercise. Just keep moving!

My favorite park in San José is Brooktree Park. I love to walk in Brooktree Park. Laila introduced me to the park. I wear a jogging suit to exercise. My arthritis slows me down sometimes, but I still move.

I see beautiful flowers and children playing in the park. Sometimes I like to read a book after I exercise. I sometimes bring water to drink when I'm thirsty.

I enjoy going to the park.



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## Christmas in the Park

*By Tina Chagolla*

When my daughters were growing up, I used to take them to Christmas in the Park. Christmas in the Park is one of my favorite things about San José. The fun started when we planned the trip. We would ride the bus to Capitol, and then take the light rail to downtown San José. It was an adventure for my daughters. Once we were downtown we would walk to the park. They used to love seeing all the different lights that they had and hearing the Christmas songs that they played. When we got to the park, they loved to see the different exhibitions offered for the community. They had a Lima train which included a melting snowman, caroling mice, and elf woodcutters. People walked around looking at trees and lights, and listening to the musical entertainment. They also had a place where you could take pictures with Santa Claus.

After they had walked around the park and enjoyed all the different things that they had to see, they would ask if they could have some hot chocolate and pastries. We got them the hot chocolate and found a bench close by the music, and enjoyed that hot chocolate. When

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Tina wrote this story because she is practicing her writing.





they were done they would play around for a few minutes, and then we would walk back to the light rail station. While we were walking they would talk about all the things that they had seen. At the light rail station they would find something else to play around with. They loved to see out the window and find matching cars and colors. Then we had to take the bus home. Taking the bus home was another adventure because they always found something new to play with. I used to love to see my daughters happy. I am very happy that my San José has Christmas in the Park.



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## Island Man Loves the Big City

By Robert Daniel

I am from the tiny island of Dominica in the Caribbean. There are mountains, lakes, greenery and the water is clear blue. The people are laid back. They are on their own time and love to party. Every day they fish with nets and plant fruits and vegetables. San José is a great city too and has a lot to offer, like the high rises, nice cars, nice people, and it is fast paced. Levi's Stadium is large enough to hold all the people of Dominica. But I love my Cambrian neighborhood in San José. It feels a lot like Dominica because it has many things close by.

Schools were walking distance for my four children when they were little. The teachers were good, friendly and well liked. Restaurants like fast food, pizza, Indian and diners are all close by. All of the parks near my home are clean with beautiful trees. They remind me of Windsor Park in Dominica. The library for learning to read and write is also in walking distance. When the weather is good I can even walk to work.

*(continued)*



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Writing this story felt good to Robert because he is happy to share it with other people. It gives him more energy to write another story next year.

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I feel happy farming while planting fruits and vegetables in my own backyard in San José. It is like a little piece of home in Dominica where I was born. Even though I will visit Dominica, San José is my destination.



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Roseau, Dominica  
© Cycling man/Flickr

*“ Do you know the secret of the true scholar? In every man there is something wherein I may learn of him; and in that I am his pupil. ”*

**- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

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## My Complete Week in San José

By Consuelo Garcia

A typical week in San José includes my family, coworkers and friends.

On Mondays, I work at the San José Golf Club. Sometimes I eat my sushi lunch with my boss outside. We talk about our lives and our families.

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, my friend and I drive to downtown San José. We like to drink our cup of coffee outside the American Restaurant. We enjoy the fresh air and people watching. We see couples on the lighted street talking and smiling as they walk. There are parents sitting on a nearby park bench while their children play in the water fountain. Some people come to pick up dinner outside the restaurant to eat at home.

On Thursdays and Fridays, I have my English session at the West Valley Library. I made a new friend from Ethiopia. We talk about our traditions and our favorite food and hobbies. The children come to study but they play on the computer.

*(continued)*



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Consuelo has lived in San José for 14 years. She enjoys her life in San José because the people are friendly and her family lives here.



San José, West  
Valley Branch  
Library, Calif.

An old guy sits at the same table to read newspapers and then gets up to walk around to find more newspapers. The library is its own community in San José.

On the weekend in San José, my entire family and friends go to the Rose Garden and barbecue. The women play volleyball and the men and kids play soccer. We eat spicy chicken, homemade chorizo and green peppers and onions. We drink punch with fresh fruit.

Every week in San José I have a variety of things to do with my family, friends and coworkers. This makes my life in San José complete.

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San José Municipal  
Rose Garden



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## My San José Is Family

*By Anonymous Learner*

For as long as I can remember, my family and I have lived in the City of San José. We have been living on the south side of San José for about forty years. I also got married and raised three children in the city. My parents, five siblings, and their children live in San José, too. We have lots of good memories of family gatherings. Most of my life outside of work takes place around my family.

San José is known to be a safe and enjoyable city because of its parks, schools, beaches and nearby shopping centers. It's always been a safe place where I feel like I can go out for a walk at any time and be safe and feel lots of tranquility. Even though the city is very populated, there is lots of respect towards everyone. I hope that my family and I continue to have good memories in San José.

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San José is very important to this author. The people here are like a family.

*“ Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten. ”*

**- B. F. Skinner**

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## Living in San José

By FTG

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FTG wants to thank her wonderful tutor for all the help she gets. She says she is lucky to have this tutor who shares her talents with her.

San José is one of the most diverse cities in the United States. Silicon Valley has many high tech companies and manufacturing industries. For example, Apple, Facebook, Google, Intel and Tesla, just to name a few. Silicon Valley has great job opportunities, the reason why this area has many different ethnic groups with interesting cultural heritage from China, India, Japan, the Middle East, South Africa and Mexico.



It's also one of the best cities for higher education and raising a family. Every Saturday there are farmer's markets all around San José, with delicious fruit, vegetables, music and international cuisine that brings people together. On weekends I go hiking with my friends in the hills around San José. It's so beautiful to live in this area and everywhere we go people are riding bikes, playing ball in the parks—and don't forget the Earthquakes and the Sharks.

That's the reason I like to live in San José.

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## Why I Love My City of San José

By Rosemary Gonzales

I love the City of San José because I was born here. I have lived most of my life here in this city. I went to school here and have family and friends who live here. I also go to church and work here in the Bay Area.

One thing I love about San José is the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. The people who work at the PAR program are so nice and helpful. They have helped me fill out job search applications online. They have also encouraged me to continue reading more. I feel that I have improved in my reading a little bit. I can pronounce some big words now. I read every day. I love to read. I read my Bible and other books that I am interested in. Before I joined the PAR program I hated to read or even pick up a book. I wasn't interested and was frustrated because I wasn't a good reader. I was embarrassed in school to read out loud in class because I was afraid that my classmates would make fun of me. I found a special tool to help me in my reading. When I don't know how to pronounce a word I look it up in the dictionary in the computer.

*(continued)*



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Rosemary wrote this story to help her with her writing skills and grammar.

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I also enjoy the PAR program events and the people I meet at the events. I also love using their computer because I can stay as long as I want. There is no time limit if no one wants to use them. I wish PAR would have more CDs to use on the computer or have more learning programs to download on the computers.



*“ I have tutored for four years, and I receive as much from this experience as my students. There is a huge number of students waiting to have a tutor. Become a very valuable resource for eager students!! ”*

**- Toni Thunen**

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## My Point of View of East San José

*By Herman Haro*

There is much diversity in the East Side of San José that creates an exciting place to live and enjoy. Each neighborhood reflects its culture by the style of its homes and its picturesque landscape with long paths to the front door with forest-green low-cut grass. We also see it in festivals. One example is May Fifth. People drive around town with the Mexican flag and celebrate in parks. The parks are flat with forest-green grass, tall pine trees and cement tables and benches. In the summertime, there are a lot of children playing sports and having fun playing on the jungle gym, laughing and screaming. Each morning Chinese restaurants prepare food that can be smelled from miles away. I can see the people buying and enjoying the barbeque, teriyaki chicken and other tasty delicacies. This is why I enjoy living in San José.

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Herman wrote his story to give people an idea of what East San José is like.



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# Grant School Is My Home

*By Rocio Hernandez*

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Rocio wrote her story because Grant School is a support in the education of her kids.



Sometimes it is easy to feel comfortable with some places and people, and we adopt them as our own. My second home is in San José for two reasons: the first reason is my home in Mexico with my parents is far away. My second home is Grant School because I enjoy the people and children who attend the school. I started at school in 2006 when Angel, my son, attended the kindergarten. Now during the week, I walk with my daughter Valeria to the school in front of my house. She starts class at 8:00 a.m. in the morning and she is in the second grade. I like to participate at school with different programs. Once a month I go to Valeria's classroom to read a book and do activities about the book. One of the most memorable projects was to learn to make and decorate multiple piñatas. The children were happy and enjoyed our little time spent together.

At my second home the children learn new things every day. I feel comfortable at school because it is a safe place for them. I am accustomed to hearing the bell every morning

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and seeing the children run and stand in line ready to listen to instruction from the principal. They are excited to attend classes. I adopted the second home because my children spent a lot of time in the school. I try to get involved at the school to help and share my knowledge with the children. Now my children are creating memories of childhood, so that when they are adults they will remember the school as their home.



*“ Learning is not a spectator sport. ”*

- D. Blocher

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## I Love What I Do

*By Ana Maria Iniguez*



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Ana Maria wrote this story to share how she uses her time for her family, herself, at work, and to learn English. San José has many opportunities for learning. Age does not matter. It is never too late to start learning.

I have lived in East San José for 15 years with my family. I like it because everything I need is there, for example, a Mexican grocery store, a bakery, farm-fresh vegetables, malls and a Costco store.

My days start early in the morning, at 5:30 a.m. I start cooking for my husband and kids. Later, I go for a walk around Cunningham Park near my house. I enjoy the mild climate of my city, San José. I love to watch people who bring their dogs to walk at the park. Sometimes I see the rising sun shining through the trees. While passing under the trees I see many beautiful flowers. I love the smell of the roses.

I go back home and get my son ready for school. He studies at Mayer Elementary School, a 3-minute walk from my house. Then, I go for my English and computer class at Independence Adult Education Center. Two days a week I learn English with a tutor (PAR program) at East San José Carnegie Library.

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I drive to my work. I work as a sales representative at a furniture store. I love my work because I have many opportunities to help customers from different cultures and practice to improve my English.



## WEEKENDS!

Every Saturday, after my work I go out for dinner and watch a movie with my family. Sunday, in the morning we always go to the mass at Guadalupe Church in East San José. I like to listen to the choir, approximately 15 people sing. After the mass we go to the Denny's Restaurant for breakfast. They have a variety of delicious food.

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East San José  
Carnegie Branch  
Library

I feel lucky to be in San José.



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## Enjoying Life in My Second Hometown

By Tai Im Ju



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Tai wrote this story because she really enjoys her life in San José.

I'm living in San José with my precious family. It has been a little over a decade since I left my country and came to the U.S.

I didn't know the City of San José before I came here. But I had heard a lot about Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley is a major technology hub in California, which is leading science and technology around the world. I'm amazed and proud that I live in Silicon Valley. Google and Apple headquarters are in this area where I live, and there are many famous and big companies. I'm also proud that many of my family and friends are working there.

We look into the daily life of our family and how we use the technology of Silicon Valley. I can easily see Korean broadcasting live in real time on my iPad, and I can talk face to face with my family in Korea. When I go outside, I can see on the phone whether a stranger is visiting my house and also control my home situation. My children can do homework, study, read books and play games on their computers and iPads.

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The development of science and technology is closely related to convenience in our lives. It is even more surprising that Silicon Valley is the leading figure in this remarkable development.



In San José the weather is also very beautiful. Where I lived in my country, Korea has a different climate than here. Korea has four distinct seasons. It was very hot and cold in summer and winter. There was lots of rain and snow. I don't like too hot or cold weather, so I appreciate the beautiful weather in California and enjoy every day.

But not everything is good. Taxes and prices are expensive. My husband tells me it's the tax you pay for the nice weather. Good weather and being close to the sea, with great natural scenery, world famous Silicon Valley makes San José a great place to live. I am very lucky and happy to live in San José. San José is my second hometown.



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## Almaden Quicksilver County Park

*By Kay*



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Kay decided to put her story in the book because she wanted to share how beautiful Almaden Quicksilver Park is.

I'd like to introduce one of my favorite places to go in San José. It's a beautiful park where I usually walk every day for exercise. It is located in Almaden, which is in South San José and near our house. I can walk there with my close friends in the morning and start to warm up to climb the hill. While we are climbing, we can see a gorgeous view and smell fragrant wildflowers, as well as green trees. Sometimes, we meet deer, wild rabbits, wild boar, and a lot of birds. I love to see all the wild animals. If you live near Almaden, I highly recommend going to exercise or even just relaxing at this amazing place. Quicksilver Park has several trails, so you can just go and experience the wonderful and natural gifts that this park offers.



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# “Do You Know the Way to San José?”

By So-Ae Kilgore

It’s what I call “Home” now. It is so diverse. We have all kinds of foods here and cultures living in harmony.

What kind of food do you like? Mexican? Italian? Mediterranean? Vietnamese? Korean? Chinese? Japanese?

Japanese?

Yes. That is my favorite as well.

Japantown in San José is located in between Jackson St. and Fifth St. in the north part of downtown.

On one sunny afternoon, when cherry blossom season was approaching, I visited the place just to see the trees blooming. In that season the streets are covered by soft pink flower petals. When the wind is blowing, they are floating in the warm crisp air as though it is snowing in April. I reached up and caught some in my hand. It made me feel I was in “Wonderland,” just like Alice.

*(continued)*

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So-Ae was curious about San José when she went to a party in North Carolina and first heard the song, “Do You Know the Way to San José”?





I love walking downtown and stopping by the Tofu House to buy homemade-style tofu. The next place I like to visit is the famous desserts place known for its mochi. The ladies in the shop are quite lovely.

What is most unusual about these places is that when you walk into the place, because of the décor, time stops. Right there. Time compresses so hard that for one brief moment, it stops.

It is as if you are walking into a black and white film of the 1960s and live in it for the moment.

When Christmas time comes, I like to see the Children's Theater plays in the Montgomery Theater. Watching them playing a play during a festive season, I feel great joy in me.

Somehow, Christmas makes more sense when children are around; more cheerful. I appreciate the simple things during this season, like drinking Hickory Farms Christmas Blend coffee in the morning.

It's a beautiful Californian life, not to mention that I have great access to the surf, fishing, and mountains.

Truly blessed!!

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# The Great Cosmopolitan City

*By Seung Yong Lee*

I have been living in San José since December 2011 and I enjoy living in this city. San José is one of the most cultured cities in the United States. This city has many famous IT companies that became the leading high-tech industries in the world. In addition, San José has many good people with different cultures and it has lots of beautiful places. I enjoy living in San José.

First of all, San José has many parks and libraries. I usually visit these places on weekends with my family. When I would like to spend time on my own or need some fresh air, I choose to go to a park. For example, I often go to Calabazas Park. There are BMX (Bicycle Motocross) tracks, a rock to climb on, playgrounds, a basketball court, a tennis court, and a soccer field. This park has multiple play areas. On one side of the park, many young bike riders enjoy their freestyle acrobatic performances, or they like to race with their bikes. On another side of the park, lots of people picnic with their family and friends.

*(continued)*

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Seung Yong has been living in San José since December 2011 and enjoys living in this city.



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Sometimes when I am tired after walking, I go to the Calabazas Library, which is one of San José's library branches and is across from the park. In the library, I can read many kinds of books, magazines, and newspapers. I can also participate in different library programs, such as the PAR program. Through this program, I met a wonderful teacher who likes to teach English with such ardor. I always thank her deeply for her warm heart.

I think the city of San José is a vivid place, full of energy, passionate people, and potential to grow. I try to enjoy living in San José every day. That is why I like San José.

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Calabazas  
Branch Library



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## My Second Hometown

By Piyeh Liu

San José is a large city. It has many different kinds of markets, restaurants, parks, libraries, coffee shops, companies and sport facilities. My favorite place is the library because I can borrow books, movies, and music. The library supports everybody to learn and study. There are ESL, computer, citizenship and career classes. After attending them, they can help to reach a goal. I like to find a quiet space to read a book in the library. Also, I enjoyed some English classes to improve my skills. I am interested and appreciate being able to learn.

San José has many parks. When all the plants are in bloom in spring, it is a great place to walk and smell the fresh air. I love roses, so my favorite parks are the Municipal and Heritage Gardens. They are very clean, and when thousands of roses are in full bloom it is a beautiful place to take amazing photographs! My husband likes to take pictures with his camera. My daughter and I enjoy visiting them. Sometimes we have a picnic or read a book. It is just wonderful! This is what makes San José feel very special to me. My family likes to stay here because San José is my second hometown.



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Piyeh wrote this story because she likes living in San José. The libraries have improved her English skills and the parks make her very happy.

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## Exploring San José

*By Ana Olivia*



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Ana Olivia was born in Colombia and lived in New York for 16 years. She and her family moved to San José, where she has lived for one year.

I feel very happy in my new city, San José. I moved with my family from New York City in March of 2016. My family and I enjoy new places.

Every morning, when I make our breakfast, I see by the kitchen window a lot of people walking and running for exercise; this is different from my last city, New York; in New York everybody runs fast . . . but not for exercise. After breakfast I walk too. I like to walk around the Canoas School because they have beautiful Canoas Park. It has beautiful green grass, beautiful flowers, big trees and many different birds.

After walking I sometimes go to Sprouts grocery store for food that I will be cooking. I use my car to go and I take the Almaden Expressway. Almaden Expressway is good to get to roads, and it's easier to travel to different places. I can take CA 85, Capitol Expressway and more ways.

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Also I go with my daughters many weekends to get to know new places. We like a beautiful park, called the Japanese Friendship Garden, on Senter Road in San José, San José Municipal Rose Garden, Saratoga Creek Park, and we love the natural forest reserves called Big Basin Redwoods State Park on the way to Santa Cruz or Saratoga.

I'm learning a lot about San José and I hope to learn about more different and new places in San José.



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Japanese Friendship  
Garden San José  
© Kelsch  
Photography

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## San José Is a Great Place

*By Porfiria Lopez*



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Porfiria's family is happy living in San José because San José has everything they want.

When I first arrived in San José in 1998, everything seemed strange. The rules, people, stores, language, money, work and many other things were new. However, I slowly learned this new city where we decided to live.

My husband taught me how to use public transportation to get to work. Some coworkers told me many things about San José which help me survive here.

So right now I am happy. I feel safe and secure. I live near downtown on Seventh Street. I can find everything we need: doctors, a hospital and stores. I have a lot of choices. I've found friends, neighbors, schools, libraries and especially Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, where I take English, computer and math classes.

The library is located on San Fernando and Fourth Street. It has 9 floors and many resources that help people change their lives.

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And I have two children who are in school. The older one's name is Noel. He goes to Lincoln High School. The younger one is Yahir. He is in Hoover Middle School. Both schools are on Naglee Avenue at Naglee Park across from the Egyptian Museum. Near there you can find a coffee shop and the Rose Garden, which has many kinds and colors of roses and a water fountain. The scent is so nice, and the soft noise of the water makes it an amazing location. There I feel happy and relaxed and I can enjoy the time.

San José is a good place to live. It has everything I need. I love San José.



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Courtesy History  
San José/Del  
Carlo Studio  
– downtown San  
José, circa 1962.

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# Beautiful Silicon Valley

*By Maria Elena*

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Maria Elena wrote this story because she really enjoys living in San José.

San José is the most important place in my life because all my family lives here. My house is very close to the fairgrounds, where all of the events happen every weekend. I enjoy it because I can walk to the place and have fun with my family. I love to wake up in the morning and hear the birds singing. I usually get up and prepare breakfast for my kids. But on the weekends we go to our favorite place to eat breakfast, called El Rancho Steak.

I like to ride my bike with my kids to Cesar Chavez Park in the summer. I like to see families together and kids having fun getting wet with the splash pad. I also love the view when I go to the mountains, drive around, and see all kinds of flowers, trees, and different cultures. And it's so easy to catch any freeway that can take you to different places, like the ocean. I really enjoy the sounds of the waves and how peaceful the nature is.

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Also, I'm very happy that we have a public library that provides so many good things for kids and adults, like a literacy program, high school courses online, and entertainment for kids. I'm proud that when my mother brought us to the U.S.A., she chose to live in Silicon Valley.



Plaza de Cesar  
Chavez Park

*“ Once you have learned to ask questions – relevant and appropriate and substantial questions – you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know. ”*

**- Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner**

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# My Life in San José

*By Elleni Mekuria*

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Elleni wants to share how San José is comfortable for her.

San José is a good city for me to live in. It is a big and diverse city. There are huge populations of Mexican, Vietnamese, Chinese, Ethiopians, Indians, Japanese and more. Most of them have strong communities and they keep their own religions and cultures. There are a lot of cultural restaurants and cultural stores so newcomers can adapt to San José quickly.

I feel San José is my homeland because when I moved here I was so pleased to find an Ethiopian church. Religion is very important to me. At the church I meet lots of Ethiopians every Sunday. There are many services and activities at the church besides Sunday. Our community is big and our social lives are very good. We help each other; we celebrate the holidays together. Especially on our major holidays, we have big events at the church.

We keep our culture through religion. We wear cultural clothes when we go to church, to weddings and any of our community events. Also, we reflect our culture when we sing, share food and tell stories.

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San José is a very livable city for me. I have an enjoyable life in San José. I adapted to the environment fast. The climate and the location are very comfortable for me. It is a close drive to see the best places in the Bay Area. Every summer I go camping near San José. There are many wonderful camping places around San José but one I especially like is the Redwood camping place in Santa Cruz. It is a 35-minute drive from San José. The roadway is very enjoyable and the big tree branches cover the top of the road. Even in the daytime the road is dark. The smell of the trees is awesome. Also to hike over there is very pleasurable. Overall the camping place is very gorgeous and remarkable.

Since I started to live in San José, I found comfort with my social life, religion and environment.



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Fall Creek Trail,  
Henry Cowell  
Redwoods State  
Park, Felton, Calif.

© 2015 Michael  
Tavalin, Nature  
Photographer

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## My Precious Community and Family in San José

*By Sandra Mendoza Tavares*



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Sandra Mendoza Tavares is from Ocotlán, Jalisco, Mexico. For over 12 years, she has volunteered in many organizations in San José to share her Mexican culture with others. She loves her husband, three children, and extended family.

My city San José is the place where I feel at home. I live in East San José. I live in a neighborhood where César Chávez was a nonviolent activist. He organized reunions behind my home church, named Our Lady of Guadalupe. He is important to me because he represents the voices of my grandparents by defending their rights as braceros.

During the summer, I enjoy going to the park with my family, parents, brothers, sisters, and nephews. Throughout the year, I volunteer in many community activities like reading to toddlers, coaching soccer, teaching art, and participating in theater. I am very fortunate to have a family that supports me in giving my time to the community doing the things I love the most.

San José will always be my home because my family and I have created a strong community here.

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## The Way San José Saved My Life

By Frederick Mills

We have to go back about 40 years. That was when I started my career as a staff photographer for Lockheed Martin. It was a dark and dreary Friday evening, and I did not want to go home after work.

I had heard about a TGIF party at some of the local clubs in Milpitas. One club was called The Living Room and was located under the Highway 237 overpass. The place was jam-packed. Over in the corner, against a wall, I saw 10 of the coolest-looking guys. They were dressed in white shirts, burgundy jackets, and black pants. I had to find out who they were. I asked one man, who turned out to be the president, and he told me, “We are the Ambassadors. We’re a social club. We give parties and raise money for scholarships and underprivileged children.”

“How does one become an Ambassador?” I asked, intrigued.

“What skills do you have?” he replied.

*(continued)*



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Frederick wrote this story about 20 years of his exciting life in the South Bay.



I told him I was a photographer and asked if they needed one. It turns out they did. By the following Friday, I was an Ambassador, which is something every guy wanted to be. I discovered that being an Ambassador was just like being a movie star. I was a very shy person back then and had trouble talking to women. But I put on that burgundy jacket and, all of a sudden, I had no trouble at all.

Women would come up to me and give me their phone numbers. They practically begged me to call them. They'd ask me to take their pictures. Naturally, I did. I even took some pictures without any film in the camera. I was good. Some of them asked me to teach them photography. I did my best. This involved learning how to develop film, which is done in total darkness. And that's how I met my first wife.

Just to let you know, I had three wives and three girlfriends, though not at the same time. Almost. But all of those relationships started back in the 1970s and 80s when I was an Ambassador. I lived the kind of life that a lot of men would have loved to live. There was a song by the O'Jays. It was called "Livin' for the Weekend," and that's how I lived my life.

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I must have gone 20 or 30 years living for the weekend, and mostly what it taught me was that I needed to leave that life of drinkin' and chasing women.

So I moved to San José to change my life and slow down. Now my quality of life is so much better. No more living for the weekend. I may not have a wife or a girlfriend, but I'm happy. My San José is peaceful and quiet. And that's how San José saved my life.



*“ The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done. ”*

**- Jean Piaget**

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## San José Is a Great Place to Live

*By Toshiko*

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Toshiko had been looking for a nice neighborhood everywhere from Japan to Hawai'i and Los Angeles. After all her research she decided to live in San José.

I like living in San José. I especially like the climate. The breeze from the mountains makes me feel very comfortable. Sitting in my favorite chair by the window, I see outside every morning the trees, the birds flying, and the tall buildings in the distance. There is nothing that would ruin the nice view.

Japantown has a quiet atmosphere. I walk around in Japantown for exercise. Sometimes I stop by Roy's Café and have a drink. Then I visit Yu-Ai Kai Senior Center across the street from the café. On Sunday morning, I go to the Farmer's Market in Japantown. There are lots of colorful vegetables and fruits that are displayed on the tables, such as green bitter melon, red and yellow peppers, and deep purple eggplant, just like my paint palette. At the vegetable stand, I buy Asian bitter melons and Japanese eggplants that I cook with my mother's recipes. I go to the next stand to buy honey. There are several different names of honeys, wildflower, sage, etc. I have no idea which is the best honey. A honey seller suggested to me that wildflower is mildly sweet, so I buy a jar of

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mild honey for my tea. After that I walk to the bakery stand to buy focaccia for my lunch. The Farmer's Market is not big, but it's lots of fun.

San José is also very convenient for public transportation. By bus, I go to the library at least three times a week, and I read the Japanese books there. I also have been taking an English class at King Library for two years. Now I enjoy sending e-mail or text to my family and friends. With the pleasant climate, Farmer's Market, and the library, San José is a great place to live.

I appreciate my teacher for her patience.



Japantown San José,  
Silicon Valley

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## San José: My Home Away From Home

By Amina Mohammed

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Amina has been in the PAR program for many years, and this is the first year she has written a story. She is happy to share her story with the community.

My name is Amina. I am from Somalia, but now I live in San José. I like many things about San José. I like the people in this city. My best friend lives here. She is also from Somalia. We like to go many places in San José together, like shopping, walking in the mountains, or to Somali parties and weddings. I am happy that I have many Somali friends in San José. My favorite place in San José is the library. I like the library because I can study English there.

When I first moved to America, I came to San José. I like my life here because of the sunny weather and the nice people. Now, I don't want to live anywhere else. San José is my home.

*“ I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think.”*

- Socrates

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# The Heart of Silicon Valley Holds a Part of Mine

By Donaji Montes

San José is a worldwide innovative and technological hub with so much magic to offer.

San José has been the place I have lived the longest after my hometown: Mexico City. I have encountered amazing food: Thai, Indian, Vietnamese, Mexican, etc. The greatest treats here for dessert lovers like me are: Taro milk tea with boba (entering San Pedro Market Square to the left, in the Vietnamese place), the best yogurt toppings (Yopop in the Almaden Plaza), a great variety of Mochi ice creams (at Jimbo's in Japantown), and so forth.

Also, I have met great people: “adopted” parents, a whole family with sisters, nephews and nieces, close friends, professional mentors and colleagues. Additionally, I was able to be part of my religious community and accomplish an important milestone in my faith.

I continued my yoga practice and was able to do poses like crow, side crow, tripod, and hand stand (kudos to Almaden Yoga).

*(continued)*



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Donaji is Mexican and has lived in San José for four years. She wants to show why it is important to her.

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Most importantly, I met my boyfriend, who I've been with for two years. Also, I had the opportunity to work as a business consultant for technology companies, and I am chewing on the idea of starting my own company and becoming one more entrepreneur in this incredible ecosystem.

Believe me that I can talk (or write) non-stop (ask my tutor, hahahaha), but this is just a summary of what San José has brought to my heart.

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San Pedro Square Market, San José



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## San José, A Good Place to Live

*By Kathleen Nicolas*

I have always lived in San José. I love living in San José. People are friendly. I have many friends in San José. The weather is great most of the time. San José is close to other cities. There are many good restaurants and things to do.

One thing I like to do is the HOPE Day Program. I get to take cooking, photography, and flower arranging classes. I learn new things. I have fun at cooking class and we get to eat what we cook. Another thing I do with HOPE is to volunteer at Lincoln Glen Church. I have been doing that for eight years. Larry works there and he is silly and funny. He makes me laugh. Justine also works there. She is nice and I love talking to her.

On the weekends in San José, I can hang out with my friends, visit family, go to the movies, and play golf with my Dad. San José is a special place to live. San José is my home.



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Kathleen was born in San José. It is her favorite place.

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## A Magical Place Called My San José

*By Mayfe Nieto*



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Mayfe is originally from Ecuador. She wrote this story because she wanted to express the happiness that she feels living in San José.

Sometimes life takes you in many different directions and to many new places. Four years ago I came to San José for the first time and started a new beautiful life.

My name is Maria Nieto. I'm originally from Ecuador. Although I love where I came from, in my San José I met the real love of my life, my husband, and we married one year and a half ago.

My San José is a gift to me every day. I have the opportunity to enjoy different activities in my life. My day begins early in the morning, around 7:15, when I go to work. I am a crossing guard. This is a great job for me because I have the opportunity to help people and I can look at happy faces saying "Hello," "Good morning," "Thank you," "Have a good day." I feel excited doing my job.

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After work, I go to school. I am studying in an ESL program through Silicon Valley Adult Education. I want to improve my English because it is extremely important for the development of my new life in my San José. My ESL class is where I can share with different people from many countries, and I learn about other cultures.



Silicon Valley  
Adult Education

My husband and I have a good time when we go to Levi's and Avaya stadiums to watch football and soccer games, and the SAP Center is an excellent place to enjoy a concert. Having wonderful weather all year in my San José is such a pleasure.

We have delicious food. I have even found my favorite seafood dish that reminds me of my old home. In Ecuador we call it cangrejo. It is a crab dish.

My San José is gorgeous during Christmas time. The whole city is decorated with a lot of lights. It looks so joyous and the houses look like they are from a fairytale. This is MY SAN JOSÉ, A MAGICAL PLACE.

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## My New Life in San José

By *Veronica Orozco*



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Veronica wrote this story based on her own experience. This is her new life in San José, and she writes a story every year.

My San José is the place where I started my new life. I arrived here in 1996, when I was just married. I have three kids who all were born here in San José. My family and I have the good fortune to live in downtown San José. This allows us to enjoy our city at our whim during all the seasons of the year.

The singing of the birds tells me spring is here and it's time to garden. My children attend Horace Mann Elementary in our neighborhood. My husband and I belong to La Mesa Verde from Sacred Heart Community Center. My daughter Saray belongs to Garden to Table associated with San José State University. La Mesa Verde and Garden to Table have a community garden on the roof at Horace Mann School. City Hall provides the resources and permits to carry out this project. The best part of this activity is when we care for our plants, and we can contemplate the fine flight of the peregrine falcon who lives on top of City Hall.

I feel very happy when I see that all the vegetables are ready for the summer harvest. The vegetables give us the perfect ingredients

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for a rich Mexican sauce that we enjoy in our favorite park, Ryland Park. We love this park because it's very secure and clean. One of my favorite summer events is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks display. We gather on the outskirts of the Discovery Museum and revel in the music and the rain of colorful exploding lights that lead our spirits to heaven.

Every other week my husband and I visit the community garden. We feel the waves of cold wind. Our plants have finished their life process. The green colors of the plants are gone and turn yellow and brown, the colors of the autumn. In this time we celebrate the Day of the Dead, Halloween, and Thanksgiving. The Day of the Dead is one our traditions we bring from Mexico. We make Altar de Muertos with dry cornhusks that we gather from our community garden. We have many friends in





Guadalajara, Mexico's second largest city, is San José's newest sister city. (2014)  
© Dave Clingman

this school. They invite us to enjoy Halloween in the Naglee neighborhood. We like to visit this place because it is secure and fun.

Thanksgiving is not one of our traditions, but someone always gives me a turkey. We like to make tamales or pozole with our turkey.

The community garden is a victim of winter—everything is dead. All around it's cold, with the odor of burning wood in the air. The day after Thanksgiving we like to see the Christmas tree lighting in Cesar Chavez Park. We like to see the entire downtown decorated with Christmas ornaments. In the streets we can find delicious churros and caramel corn.

My family and I are blessed to live in My San José. I feel proud to say that I come from Guadalajara, the sister city to San José.

*“ The best way to predict your future is to create it. ”*

**- Abraham Lincoln**

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## Home Sweet Home

By Vane Palma

My city, San José, is a wonderful place to live. I feel very happy and safe here. My husband and I came here three years ago. On weekends or holidays we enjoy visiting parks. There are so many beautiful parks in San José. Sometimes we just take a walk together contemplating the flowers, animals, and lakes. I love to take pictures. Other times we have a barbecue and we invite our family and friends. We have fun playing games like soccer and volleyball.

My favorite place is the Japanese Garden inside Kelley Park. Once I saw a big gold fish in the lake. It was so beautiful. My husband and I were eating lunch on the grass when six squirrels came close to us for food. I had never seen so many squirrels before. It made us laugh. Also we like eating Vietnamese food, especially a rice noodle soup called pho. It tastes delicious. Sometimes we enjoy going to the movies.

*(continued)*



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Vane is very happy living in San José. She would like people to know about the interesting and beautiful places in San José.

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It's amazing to live in San José. I admire the public libraries; there are many branches in your neighborhood, you can go and use the books, computers and take free educational programs. I'm taking English classes in a program named PAR. I go twice a week and I have an excellent tutor. I'm grateful for this program, because in my country, El Salvador, there are no public libraries. I would like my whole family to live in San José, where it is safe, clean and beautiful.

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Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr. Library,  
San José



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# San José, City of Opportunity!

*By Su Pham*

San José has many things to do. I always find something fun to do on the weekend. I like to play golf at the Los Lagos Golf Course. It is a difficult course but I like the challenge. I also like to see the San José Sharks play hockey at the SAP Center. It has great food and the team plays very well. I love to go to the Tet Vietnamese New Year festival because it makes me think about my home in Vietnam.

I like to learn English at the San José Public Library on Bascom Avenue with my teacher. It helps me understand people I talk to every day. When I see my teacher, she reminds me of my mom. She makes me feel confident and supports me in learning English.

San José is also where I recently passed my U.S. citizenship test. San José means freedom, opportunity and a better life for my daughter and me. I look forward to new experiences in San José as an American citizen.

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San José is where Su learns English, and she wanted to write about it because it is a place where she has learned so much.



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Los Lagos Golf Course

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## My Italian Life in San José

By Stefania



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Stefania is a wife, the mom of four kids, and an Italian journalist. She likes walking in the wild, but best of all, she loves the sea.

My heart took me here. I arrived in San José two years ago to follow my husband in his job. Since I arrived here I have tried to find my hometown in San José. I'm Italian—nay, I'm Sicilian. I needed six months to understand that it would have been impossible to find my Sicilian land in San José. No sea close to my house, the food was completely different, the streets were too large, the city was too big, and many different languages.

Anyway, there was something in this big city that fascinated me. I can't say what . . . maybe the kindness of the people who tried to understand my bad English, or maybe the fact that time here seems to go slow like my hometown, or still the numerous parks or the green. I don't know if I will ever say "My San José," but I'm sure that I've never felt like a stranger in San José, even though I can't understand everything people say.

By the way, I continued to search for Italy, and I found it in a peaceful place where time seems to have stopped: History Park. Old buildings, old trains, the old electric light tower. I loved to walk between the streets of History Park.

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Everything was so perfect, as if I had dived into the past. I imagined the ladies with long and big skirts walking on the street, the horses and carriages. I also imagined the old cars, the first cars in the world, stopped at the oil service station to fill with gas and continue to run in the old city. The print shop, where you can still smell the ink. That place switched on my imagination, and I also found a piece of Italy. It was a big surprise for me when I saw the sign with the inscription Banca d'Italia (Bank of Italy). And it was an even bigger surprise to know that afterwards the Bank of Italy became the Bank of America. Often, when I say to other people that I'm Italian, they say, "Oh wow! I like Italy, pizza, lasagna, spaghetti," as if Italy is famous just for the food. Finding the sign "Bank of Italy" in History Park reminded me that Italy is not just food. So, History Park is a place I like to come back to every time I feel nostalgic about my homeland.



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The annual Italian Family Festa San José at the History Park, San José, 2016

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# My Historical San José

*By Darryl*

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San José reminds Darryl of his hometown, Watts, because of the rich history people walk by every day without noticing.

When I sat down to write about my San José, I thought about the rich history of San José.

I'm not a history buff, but I found out some fun facts and some surprising facts. Did you know that in the era of World War II, future mayor Norman Mineta was sent to an internment camp, as all Japanese U.S. citizens were required to by law?

I always wonder every time I go past this old building, why they built it. I found out what this building used to be: "The Bank of Italy building, built in 1926, is the oldest skyscraper in downtown San José and a landmark of the city and Silicon Valley alike" (Wikipedia San José).

Also, I never would have guessed that the Museum of Art was originally the San José Post Office:

"The museum's historic wing was originally designed by architect Willoughby J. Edbrooke and built as the San José Post Office in 1892, then served as the city's library from 1937 to

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1969. The building was then converted by the Fine Arts Gallery Association, reopening as the Civic Art Gallery. In 1972 the building was named a California Historical Landmark and in 1973 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The ‘New Wing,’ comprising the majority of the current exhibition space, opened in 1991” (Wikipedia San José).

After learning about these historical facts of my San José, I’m intrigued and must go out to explore these treasures that we walk by every day unseeing.



Bank of Italy  
Building, San José



San José Museum  
of Art (formerly the  
old San José  
Post Office)  
110 S. Market St,  
San José, Calif.

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# My Neighborhood in San José

By *Paco Reyes*

Paco wrote this story because what is important to him is to have everything his family needs to be close, and to have friendly people. He wants people to know that his neighborhood has all these items.



My neighborhood has all I need. Most of my neighbors are friendly. I like the people because they greet me and they are friendly when we have conversations. When my neighbor meets me in the parking lot, he asks me if I need anything. He'll say, "Let me know." That is comfortable, too.

We have a little park which has a playground where the kids play. The park is in the center of my neighborhood, so when the kids go out to play, that is when the parents start talking to each other. When we start a conversation we talk about work and family, and what our children are doing in school. When we start a conversation, that is the moment we get to know our neighbor.

The neighborhood grocery market is also close. When I walk into the market it is interesting to see all the produce, but the bright colors are a reminder of my country where I was born, because the American markets are painted just one color. Mexico is different. There are mixes of different colors in the store. Also, the sales are for Latino items.

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I also like the different smells when I walk into the store. They are using different spices when they prepare the food in the market's restaurant. Tamales, burritos and carnitas are all types of food from Mexico, and the smells make me want to go to the restaurant. Sometimes I see my neighbors enjoying the food in the restaurant.

One more important building in my neighborhood is the hospital, because in case of an emergency it is close to us. We can walk in. Just cross the street. It is not necessary to drive. The hospital has all the services we need: x-ray, laboratory, and pharmacy. All these items are important if someone in my family is sick.

Everything we need is close. We have friendly people, a food market, a park, a playground, and a hospital, but the most important, I think, is that my neighborhood is friendly. This is important, because this makes the neighborhood comfortable.



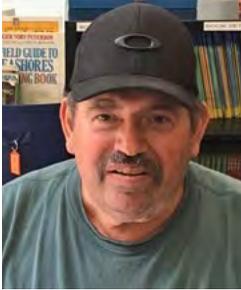
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**Welcome to San José Mural**, commissioned by the City of San José and the Delmas Neighborhood Association. Painted by John Dozier and Jeff Jacobson in 2012.

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## My Arrival in San José

By Edel Riano



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Edel was very happy coming to San José to see his relatives and the city where they live.

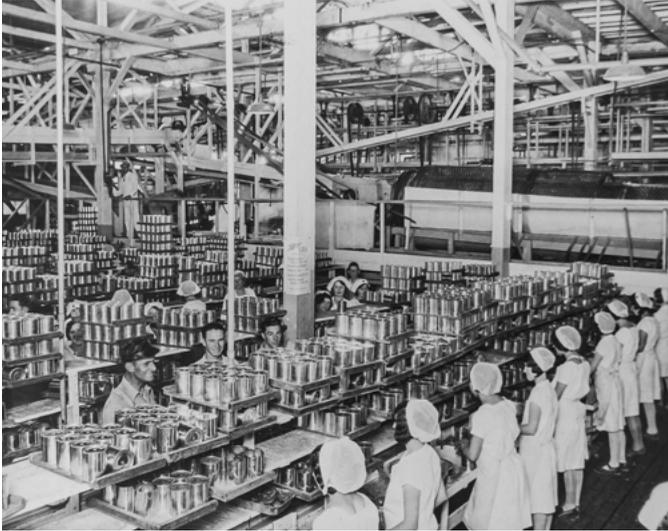
I had relatives living in San José, California. Sometimes I called them on the phone, and they always asked me why I did not come to San José to find out what it's like, because it was a very nice city. One day when I was working in the fields in Tucson, Arizona, the heat was too hot and I remembered my cousin and his invitation. In 1975 I arrived in San José.

I was surprised how beautiful it was, and it was quiet and in harmony. According to the census of the city, at the time the population was 449,779 people and the minimum pay for work was \$2.75 per hour. And for reasons of not having money I went to work in the fields picking strawberries by hand. There were a lot of strawberry fields in the Berryessa area. They paid me by the box—\$2.50 a box. I could only do 10 boxes a day.

What most impressed me was there were a lot of canneries, and they were always hiring people. They paid more than working in the fields. Also you didn't need experience or education. San José then was a lot less diverse

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than it is today. The fields and canneries have been replaced by homes, apartments, and office buildings. Despite all these changes, San José is still a pleasant place to live.



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© Silicon Valley  
Organization  
Archives

At its peak, the fruit processing industry in Santa Clara County had more than 30 canneries.

*“ I have been a PAR tutor for over 5 years. I highly recommend it! My first student, whom I worked with for 2 years, is now graduating from UC San Diego this May. My current student received a job promotion to supervisor after 25 years of working the same job. Both of these are thanks to PAR. You can be this kind of influence in another person’s life! Take the training and make a difference! ”*

**- Steve Hammond**

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## Thank You, San José!

*By Ida Joy Robinson*



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Ida wrote this story to convey her personal life struggles and triumphs.

My city, San José, is my favorite place to live. I relocated here from West Philadelphia in 1974. The goal was to continue and complete my education at a university level. While in college here, I studied hard and earned two degrees, an A.A. and a B.S.

In 2010 I moved into my own condo at The Villages. There you can see, smell, and touch beautiful flowers every day. Going to the parks at The Villages is always fun, as I watch my children and others swim or play tennis or softball.

Another exciting place for me to go is my church, Cathedral of Faith. At this church people are clapping, singing, dancing, playing instruments, and teaching the Bible. There is an assortment of cultural foods served at special events. While attending church for over 33 years, I became a chaplain, Bible guidance counselor, deliverance minister, and now ordained minister.

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Since living in San José, I have matured as a woman and developed professional and ministerial skills. This journey was not without some challenges; but looking back, I am glad that I overcame them. I would do it all again the same way if I had to, because I am a better person because of all these experiences.

Today I love being able to say, “Thank you, San José.” I have had many struggles here that have helped me become the successful, educated, and professional woman I am today.



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The Cathedral of Faith, San José, Calif.

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# San José and I Grew Up Together

*By Frank Santiago*

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Writing this story reminded Frank how he grew up in San José.



My family and I have lived in San José, California since 1957. We came from Puerto Rico. San José was about 10 square miles, if that. The boundaries were north to St. John Street, east to Jackson Street, south to Tully Road, and west to Bird Avenue. The outskirts of San José were all fruit orchards. All around the town it was beautiful. There were lots of cherry, plum, prune, and pear orchards and lots of vegetables as well. My family and I picked lots of fruit and vegetables. Us kids had fun doing so. The parents didn't think it was fun—it was WORK! My brother, my sister and I loved growing up in San José.

The town started growing when FMC came, as well as Ford and IBM. We had nine canneries. Downtown was where all the clothing stores, all the restaurants, theaters, and car lots were found. In 1970, Eastridge Mall opened. Most of the stores moved to the new mall. As a result, there wasn't much downtown for several years. Around 1975, the city built the Center for Performing Arts and the Convention Center. The big hotels, many banks, and the

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sports arena were built. There were a lot of jobs created. Around 1990, many computer companies started operating in San José. Then they started calling San José the capital of Silicon Valley.

Now we have three grandchildren and we all still live in San José. We're very happy here.



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Santa Clara County, Calif. early 1900s. View of the Santa Clara Valley fruit trees in bloom.

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## My City

By Angelica Serrato

Angelica wrote her story because she loves San José.



I love San José because it is the first place I moved to when I came from Mexico. I love San José because my daughters were born and raised here. I like my city because it's full of Mexican stores and has a lot of Mexican people. I have lived here for 20 years. When I visit other cities, I miss my city. I don't think that I could live somewhere else. I love the parks, the zoo and downtown. My family and I love San José.

*“ I have been a tutor with Partners in Reading for the past 12 years and am still going strong. There are lots of people out there who need our help and encouragement. Give it your consideration - I think you'll be happy that you did. ”*

**- Jim Barbeau**

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## My Dream City

By Parvin Shahpary

In 2012 my husband and I came to San José from Houston. We lived with our son. My son's house was small but very beautiful. There was a beautiful park near the house and I often went out for a walk. When I came here I was uncomfortable and was a little bit confused, because I didn't know anyone and anywhere, and I didn't speak English.

In 2013 we decided to move out of our son's house and decided to rent an apartment, located in the northwest of San José. After a few months I met a kind lady who helped me so much. She took me to the library and enrolled me in an adult school to learn English. Her name is Kannady. On the fourth of July in 2015, Kannady took my husband and me to the top of the hill near my house and we saw extremely beautiful fireworks from there.

*(continued)*



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Parvin wanted to explain where she lives. She likes San José because her children and many friends live here.

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Right now I like San José. I have many friends here, and I found an Iranian club in San José. We go there four days a week. There are a lot of classes, English, yoga, painting, and poetry. Sometimes we take a trip together. Last December we went to Las Vegas. We also went to Napa Valley and Half Moon Bay. We have seen many places together. I love San José and I'm so happy to be here now.

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Pars Equality Center. Pars' mission is to act as a catalyst for social, cultural and economic integration of Iranian-Americans, and of other Persian speaking communities into mainstream American society.



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## San José Is a Peaceful Place to Live

*By Elena Shirokova*

When I arrived in San José I realized many things were different from Russia. First of all we found that saving water was very important for the whole city. We never worried about water in my home city. It was hard at the beginning. We would have to use water carefully from now on.

On the weekend I like to go to the park with my son. Yury's and my favorite is San Tomas Park. We go there almost every weekend. I enjoy it when Yury plays with other children. He likes the playground, basketball courts and the big field. Yury is happy because his best friends live nearby. I like that people walk their dogs on a leash because it makes me feel safer. It is also nice that dog owners clean up after their dogs.

I also appreciate having somewhere quiet to go. I meet my tutor at the Bascom Branch Library and we use a study room there. This is peaceful and lovely. Christine and I have found other places to work at Cambrian and West Valley but Bascom is our favorite.

*(continued)*

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Elena's family moved from Russia to California in 2014. She would like to share her story with others.



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In the winter my family loves to go ice skating.  
My children always enjoy going to Sharks Ice.

I am glad that my kids will get a good education  
in California and they can be successful in their  
own lives. San José is a safe and friendly place  
for me and my family.

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San José Sharks  
Skating Rink



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## San José, Safe Homes Where Many Cultures Flourish

*By Lupe Sigala*

I like my neighborhood. It is quiet and people are friendly. Stores are close. My favorite bakery is on 13<sup>th</sup> Street. Their bread is always fresh. It is clean and their staff is always friendly. They always take care of their customers. During the daytime I take walks. It is safe and there are police patrolling; it makes me feel safe and comfortable. When I don't have a car we'll walk to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. There I can read books, do my homework, and meet my tutor. The staff there are friendly and helpful. They take care of me. Sometimes they even take me to the book I'm looking for.

My goal is to become a pastor. Now I am an assistant to the pastor and help in the work of the church. San José is multi-cultural. This helps me with my church work. So far I have worked with four different churches. My first was on King Road and had a Latino culture.

*(continued)*

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Lupe wants to thank San José and the San José Public Library for all the help they give her.



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Then I worked with a Japanese church on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and after that a Korean church in Campbell. Now I am with a Chinese and Filipino church in the Alum Rock area on Kirk Avenue. Living in San José gives great experiences with different cultures. As I continue to grow, who knows what San José has in store for me? I like San José and I'm happy my family is here.

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Ortiz Panaderia  
San José, Calif.



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## Learning to Love My New Home

By Rajinder Singh

Hello! My name is Rajinder! I came to San José from London, England, about 30 years ago. I felt very sad to leave England. I missed my family a lot. When I got to San José, I wanted to turn back home! I didn't know anybody. It took me a while to settle into this beautiful city.



I first lived with my uncle and his family on Monterey Road. After about a year, I started working for HOPE Services, which provides jobs for people with special needs. I was on a waiting list for the Kids Café at the Children's Discovery Museum downtown and soon got a job there. This museum is one of my favorite places in San José! Some of my favorite things to eat at the Kids Café are Mac and Cheese and Chicken Fingers!

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Rajinder wrote this story because he wanted to tell readers about the happiness he has found here in San José.

Another place I love to go is Oakridge Mall in South San José. I like to shop at Old Navy and Target. Sometimes my sister will take me to Game Stop. Another favorite place in San José is the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. I have worked with three different tutors in the Partners in Reading Program.

*(continued)*

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A very special time of year is when I get to go to camp with Hope Services. This is a camp for people with special needs like me. I sing karaoke, swim, and the food is really good.

Let me tell you about my last visit to camp. I arrived on Friday after work at Las Colinas. The weather was cold and windy on the first day, but the second day was bright and sunny. We played basketball, soccer and kickball. After a great dinner we just relaxed. The next day we had arts and crafts. We filled balloons with water and threw them at each other. The day ended with a fun game of musical chairs. On Sunday, my dad picked me up from camp. It is always good to get back home with my family.

Moving to San José has meant many things to me. The medical care here has been excellent. It has meant a great deal to be a part of Hope Services and be able to work and contribute to my community. I feel very grateful for the many services offered at the San José Public Library, and I look forward to using the library for many years to come. Thank you San José for offering me such an excellent quality of life!

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## San José: Where We Keep Persevering

*By Jacqueline Smith*

When we moved to San José it was the summer of 1974. I was a preteen coming from Texas. It was a shock. We spoke differently from other people. We had often said “Yes, ma’am” and “Yes, sir.” I used to take my children to the Alum Rock Library. I heard about a speaker. I was inspired. It was an eye opener for me. I had been using a mentor to reach for the stars, which led me to PAR. I will always remember going to exciting events and making lifetime friends.

My two nephews, Kyrie and Lamello, both like sports, especially basketball. I play two square with Goose and Von. I like to play with all the children, including my newest grandson, Rio. Ramblewood Park in San José is close to my home. I take my family there. Usually, we take a blanket, all kinds of food, frisbees and bubbles.

I have accomplished milestones that have made me thrive in San José. My networks make my life unique. My San José is very important because of my family and friends at the low-income self-help center, the African American Community Services Agency, Sacred Heart, and most of all, PAR.

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Jacqueline writes that she has a great time with family and close friends in the community of sunny San José, California.



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## San José Has Been My Home for a Long Time

*By Leo Smith*



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Leo wrote this story because he has been in San José for so many years, and the library has been good to his family. He plans to improve his reading and writing at the library, so he can read the Bible.

San José has been good to me and my family, and it is my home. We go to church. I can't do anything without God. He has blessed me to raise my own children. Since then my wife and I had the opportunity to take care of my two nephews. Clarence is 11 and Joseph just turned 10. We also have three grandchildren. Akailish is 8, Devahn just made 7, and the youngest is 8 months old. We often like going to the park, and they play basketball. We also like playing cards. I taught them Pitty-Pat, which is a matching game. As a family, we like to watch Space Jam and Sister, Sister. We like to watch movies on DVD and VHS, and listen to oldies music. Music makes us feel very happy about life of the past as well the present. We like to dance.

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## My New Home

By Yanting Smith

I grew up in Beijing, China, and moved to the Bay Area in late 1994. The first place I stayed was in Los Altos at my mother-in-law's house. I remember I needed to apply for phone service at the office in San José. But I was worried because several people told me that San José was not a safe place. The city had too many homeless people and more criminals.

Six years later my husband and I bought a house in West San José. I started an elderly residential care home. It is a tough job. I was working very hard and taking good care of my clients. The job also gave me a chance to get to know more about American culture. I still use a recipe for potato salad that I got from one of my clients. One day I was with them talking about American history. We were discussing who was the best president. One of my clients said, "Abraham Lincoln. I love him." I agreed.

After 15 years living in San José, my son graduated from Westmont High School. At his graduation, I was deeply grateful. Even today I can still feel the air and see the pictures: The football field full of family members and friends.

*(continued)*



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Yanting was born in China. After living in San José for 17 years, she feels that San José is her hometown.



The students wearing their graduation robes walking in with the Star Spangled Banner. I had tears in my eyes and my whole heart was full of joy!

More than one year ago I fortunately joined the Partners in Reading program. I am now fully aware, as an immigrant, how much more I need to improve my English. I have never felt this so strongly before. How could I ever wish to have a personal tutor (everyone knows how much that would cost), but the PAR program has made my wish come true! She sits next to me, points out my errors and shows me how to correct them. For example, before I joined PAR I would have said “Yesterday I working home” but now I know to say “Yesterday I was working at home.” PAR has already given me more self-assurance. I think I may be able to achieve my goal of completing my university education.

I am very grateful for everything that San José has given to me. Thanks San José! Thanks PAR program!

*“ I’ve been a tutor in the program for a year now. Best thing I ever signed up to do! As far as locations, it can be at any Library that you and your student choose to meet at. ”*

**– Marty Reinders**

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## Coyote Creek Trail

*By Andrew*

We have busy lives with work, school, kids, husband or wife. We go to the same places time after time. Or, the way I see it, we can get stuck in our own bubble of life. With that, how would we get to know our City of San José?

I have a good way to get out of our bubble. Turn off the TV, put the keys down, get the kids and grab your bikes. Yes, I did say your bikes. There is no way to get to know your city better than riding. But let me tell you, it is dangerous out on the road because there are so many bad drivers.

I recommend going to one of our many bike trails; they are much safer. The one I go on sometimes is the Coyote Creek Trail; it's the longest one. One way is 18+ miles, but it's fun. You can see a lot of different things. You see other bikers, runners, people walking. There are places on the trail you see a lot of trees, and other times you see just some trees. Sometimes you can see goats eating brush so there would not be a fire out there.

*(continued)*

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Andrew likes to ride bikes and play golf. He has been with PAR for eight years.



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The smell of jasmine and other smells—I don't know what they are, but they smell good. If you go later in the afternoon you will have to contend with the wind. So I would go in the morning. It will take some time, but you don't have to go to the end of the trail. But if you do, good for you. Hope to see you out there.

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View of Coyote Creek from the creek crossing north of Bailey Road



*“ I'm not sayin' I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will.”*

**- Tupac Shakur**

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## The City I Love

*By Maria Torrico*

I have lived in San José for almost 24 years. San José is the place I call home. I really enjoy the weather as well as Christmas in the Park and the library.

What I like most is all the seasons. I like the spring. It reminds me of back home: the flowers blooming, the plants, and trees sprouting leaves. I can plant my vegetable garden.

I love Christmas in the Park. I feel the enthusiasm. My family and I always go to the Park. I explain to my children the custom in Bolivia, where I came from, of people gathering for Christmas.

The most important part is the library. I like the architecture of the library. I enjoy walking around the busy streets of downtown San José along with the San José State University students.

For me, San José is special because all of my three children were born in this city. Along with living in San José I get to meet lots of warm and friendly people. My family plans to stay in San José for a long time.

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Maria was born in Bolivia. She is married and has three children.



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## What Language Do They Speak in San José, California?

*By Gerardo Vazquez*



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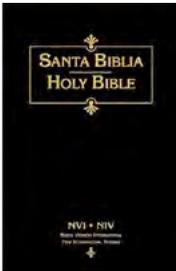
Gerardo says that we can learn a new language if we want to. If we want to improve our lives, it is better to have a second language. Also, Gerardo went to his hometown in Mexico to start a library because libraries are important to him.

On my third trip to San José, I lived in the Willow Glen area. In those days, I slept on the floor on the fourth floor of the building. I was very tired, and someone knocked on the door. It was two American men who I thought were from Comcast. They didn't speak Spanish and I didn't speak English. They brought a Spanish Bible. They pointed out John 3:16. They gave me a business card, and they left.

One day one of the men was walking in the parking lot and I said, "Hi." He said, "You want a burrito?" I replied, "Yes." He invited me to Bible study, but it was only in English. They also invited me to a church in Santa Cruz. I answered yes—maybe there would be more Latinos. I went there but to my surprise they were all Chinese. I felt frustrated because I didn't speak English or Chinese. Well, I made the decision to study English, but for many years I tried and quit many times. So, three years ago I came to Partners in Reading to learn to write and read in English.

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Today I work in downtown San José as a Spanish pastor in a Methodist Church, working with a Japanese pastor. Sometimes I preach in English and sometimes in Spanish. Now a Japanese church has invited me to preach in English, and they will translate it into Japanese. Recently during my Spanish service, one Chinese lady came to my service because she wants to learn Spanish.



Spanish/English Bible



Chinese/English Bible



Japanese New Testament

*“ There is no failure. Only feedback.”*

- Robert Allen

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## The Place I Love

*By Hung Ha Wat*

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Hung Ha likes cooking and reading interesting new books. She wrote this story because she wants to tell people San José is a very nice place.



I have happily lived in San José for ten years. It's my favorite place. My family and friends live very close to me. We have many parties together, such as birthday, cooking and New Year's parties. San José has a lot of delicious food, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, and Malaysian food. I like going to Japantown, King Library and downtown. Half Moon Bay and Monterey Bay are very close to San José. Sometimes I go there with my family on weekends to relax on the beach.

Weekends are the best in San José because there are so many things to do. I like going to the Rose Garden to look at roses, barbecue and enjoy the sun and fresh air with my husband. I like to sit on a bench and enjoy the blue sky and listen to the birds. Sometimes I go shopping with my friends, sit and chat at the coffee shop, and afterwards we go for movies and dinner. This is what makes San José feel special to me. My family and I will always stay in San José.

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# I Love My Home

By Jihui Wu

My name is Molly. I am small, but I'm a 13-year-old dog. I used to be a stray dog 10 years ago. I lived in the City of San José Animal Care Center, where I first met my mom, who volunteered there. She walked with me two times per week. She was so considerate. She taught me to be obedient. I was looking forward to seeing her. How I wished she could come to see me every day. One day, my mom drove me to a new home. My dad, three cats and one dog welcomed me. I became a new member in a big family.



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Jihui's San José is a loving home where animals and people are treated with love and kindness.

We lived together peacefully, played with each other every day. As I was getting to know everyone, I thought I was not only a real lucky dog but the others were lucky too. Micky, Missy, and Angel—the three cats—all came from San José Animal Care Center. They all were pregnant before Mom gave them a warm home. After they had babies, the babies were adopted, but nobody wanted to accept adults.

Mom kept them. Buddy, another dog, is 17 years old. He is blind and a little deaf. Sometimes I am naughty and eat his food or sleep in his bed. Mom always yells at me.

*(continued)*



She teaches me good habits and to be nice to others. I am clever, learning quickly. I know Mom likes me very much. I often go with her to a nursing home and hospital. I was very proud of being one of the pet-assisted therapy members to help people (patients) to be happier. I had been working until I was retired two years ago.

Now I'm getting old. Sometimes I am too lazy to walk outside. Mom always pushes me to exercise. I don't know why she has so much energy. You couldn't believe she is volunteering for the project at the King Library to tutor two students to study ESL. You may know one student was afraid to pet me before, but now we have become good friends. Do I have the magic to make her close to me? Do I have the magic to make her like me? No, it is not me! It is because my home is filled with love!

I love my home!

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## My Friend, S. José

By Viktor Yakauleu

My friend José was born in 1777. His full name is San José—the capital of Silicon Valley. It is the city where I live now. I met SJ in the beginning of 2015. Before that, I used to live in SF (San Francisco) for some time (two weeks). At first, it looked like a small provincial town, but later I realized that I was wrong.



In my life, I have traveled to about 35 countries and never used a car, because the best way to see every place is by walking. After three or four months I found that SJ is a good town for many reasons. First, the weather here is more stable compared to other cities like SF. At least it has the most sunny days in a year. I like it because in my country for six to seven months you can only see the cloudy gray sky.

Second, SJ is different. Some areas are like a village. Not many cars and beautiful vegetation. It is very good for relaxing. Some areas are modern with cinemas, museums, and theaters. Third, SJ has a convenient public transport system.

*(continued)*

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Viktor with his tutor Komal. He wrote this story to compare his hometown with San José, including the library systems. A program like PAR does not exist in Belarus.



San José in  
the winter.

Last but not least is its library system. I like to read and have my own library at home, but I also like to visit libraries. In Belarus, there are very large library systems but they work differently. The common thing of the two systems is they both have books, newspapers, and reading halls. For me SJ libraries are more convenient and effective. And I have never seen before a program like PAR, which is adapted for people of any age, any culture, and any prior education. Plus, the opportunity to study with a tutor makes PAR very significant for many who have immigrated to the U.S.A.

I hope you all get a chance to meet and enjoy the company of my friend—San José.

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Belarus in  
the winter.



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# My New Hometown

*By Rumiko*

I've lived in San José since December 2012, when my husband was transferred here. I couldn't speak English, I didn't know anything about San José and there was nobody I knew. My children were sad because they didn't want to leave their friends and schools. I was very worried about our new life.

The first time I drove around my new neighborhood, I thought it was very beautiful in the sunshine. I saw many trees, flowers and animals.

When we went to my children's schools, we were surprised they had huge grounds with many one-storied buildings, theaters, libraries and cafeterias. This was very different than Japanese schools.

The biggest change was the house we live in. We used to live in a small apartment in Japan. Now we live in a single house with a yard. My children are very happy that they can have their own rooms. In the yard, we have a barbeque. Also, the ground is covered with grass, which

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Moving to San José from Japan changed Rumiko's environment a lot. She wrote this essay to explain how her family settled in to their new hometown.



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© Our City Forest



© Bob Gunderson,  
San Francisco,  
California,  
August 2012

I'd longed for. There are many kinds of flowers, especially roses, and fruit trees. We can enjoy fresh oranges, lemons, apricots, persimmons and loquats. We see squirrels, hummingbirds and many other kinds of birds in my yard.

Four years have passed since we moved here. I've made many friends and have come to know many people, kind neighbors, and good tutors in PAR. I'm really reassured because they support my family. We enjoy our life in San José. It has become my hometown in the U.S.A.

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Persimmons and  
Sky, © Marie  
Cameron 2012



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## Many Opportunities in San José

By Nobuko Yatsuzuka

San José has a lot of good opportunities. I moved to San José from Ohio about a year ago. While I lived in Ohio, I was not able to have a lot of chances to meet people from other countries. Therefore, I didn't speak very much in English. But I continued to hope to make some friends from different nationalities. Then, I reached a turning point that I would move to San José with my husband and my son.

After I moved to San José, I tried to find opportunities where I could meet people of many nationalities and talk with them. I found a conversation club at the library and adult school. Finally, I was able to make some friends from the conversation club. Fortunately, they asked me, "Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?" Then, I was really happy. We talked a lot about our own countries' cultures, traditions, and each other's backgrounds. These days we talk about the day's events. It is so much fun.

*(continued)*

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Nobuko's stay in the U.S.A. will be limited. She wants to leave evidence that she has met with a nice and polite tutor and that she has learned English from her tutor.



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San José  
Educational Park  
Branch Library  
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Also my son was able to find nice places in San José. His favorite place is Happy Hollow Park and Zoo. When he visits there, he enjoys seeing animals, playing at the park, and riding amusement rides. It is a golden treat for him because he can enjoy three activities in one place. Also he likes to ride horses at Emma Prusch Farm Park. Riding horses is a good opportunity and good experience for him. In addition, my whole family likes to barbecue at Central Park. For shopping, I like 85 Bakery because it makes delicious soft and sweet breads. This is just my kind of bread. This makes me happy. I often go to Mitsuwa store to buy Japanese foods. After shopping there, I enjoy ramen at Santouka next to Mitsuwa. My whole family loves the good opportunities here in San José.

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Emma Prusch  
Farm Park



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## A Good Place to Call Home

*By Ling Yeung*

After I moved from Hong Kong to San José more than ten years ago, I realized that San José is a perfect place for our family to pursue our dream. First, the education system here is good for my children. In my hometown, starting from kindergarten, kids are forced to memorize lots of material and take a quiz every week. But here, kids learn from playing or doing hands-on projects instead. Unlike my hometown, kids here are more open-minded, which creates room for their imagination.

Secondly, San José has lots of job opportunities. My husband used to work by himself most of the time in Hong Kong. Even though it took him a while to fit into the team environment here, he enjoys it so much right now. He works in a high tech company with people from different places and perspectives. His company gives him opportunities to grow and build strong relationships with each other.

Thirdly, our lifestyle is totally different here. Hong Kong is a super crowded city. People overall live in a small apartment and lack

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Ling writes that it is a pleasure to publish her own writing after joining PAR for more than four months. She can't wait to share her joy with her tutor, Eileen.



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leisure space. Here, we live in a single house for a reasonable price. Public facilities (such as libraries, parks, sports fields and hiking places) are everywhere for our enjoyment.

In general, I love San José. It provides a better education system for my children, more job opportunities and good working environments for my husband, and a dream lifestyle for our family. We are less stressed and enjoy living here more.

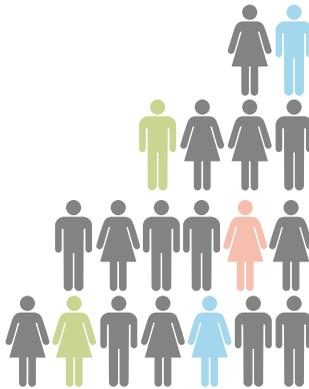
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Students in Hong Kong school



## 5 reasons to VOLUNTEER:

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



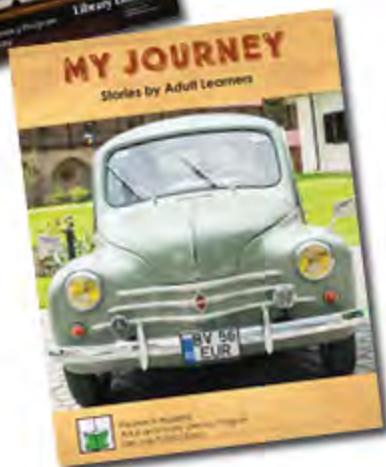
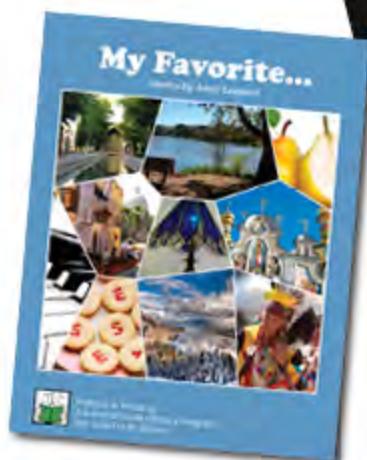
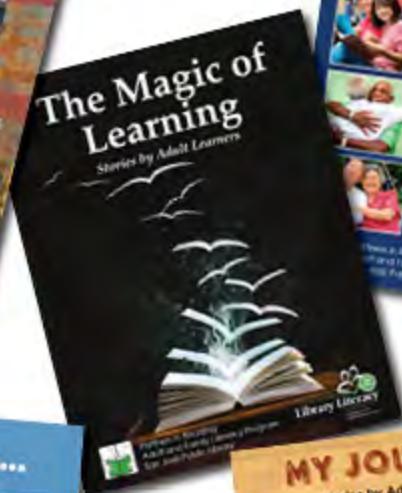
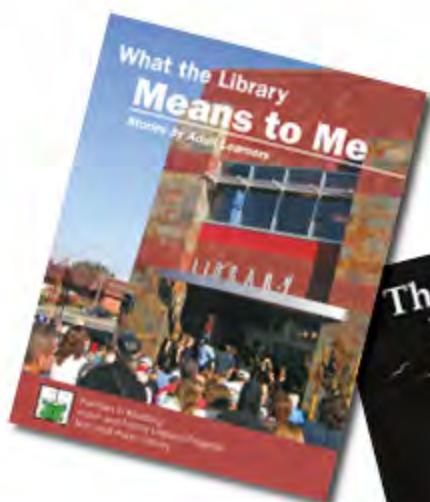
*“ As a member of the Library and Early Education Commission for San José, I would like to thank anyone that gets involved in this project. Partners in Reading does excellent work. ”*

**- Thaddeus Aid**



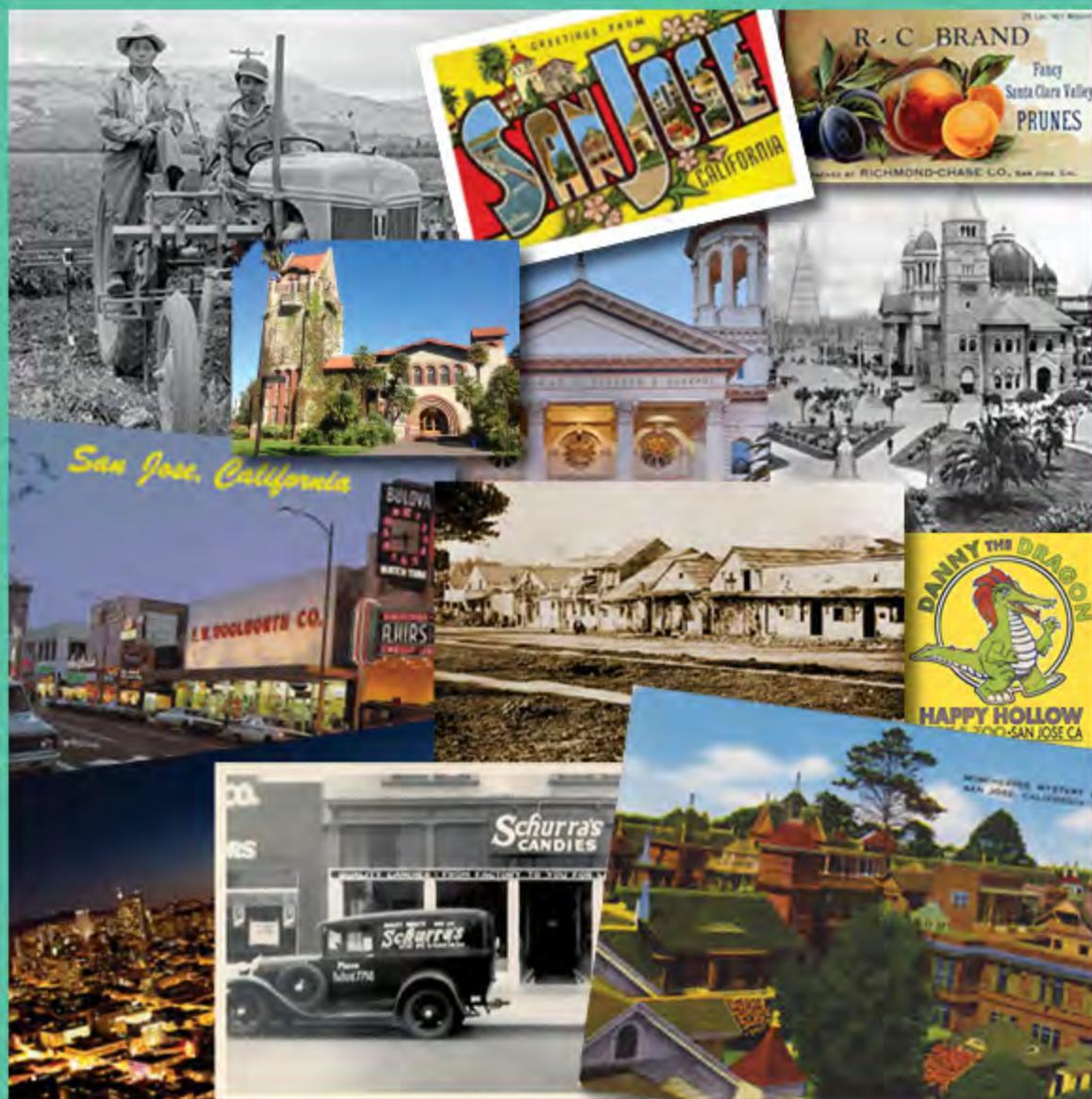
San José Public Library  
Partners in Reading Program

# Read On!



Get Involved:

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



Find out how to get involved with Partners in Reading as a donor, volunteer, or adult learner.

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