

# Good Food, Good Memories

**PARTNERS IN READING**



San José Public Library

Adult Literacy Program

2010

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“When I started the program I couldn’t make a grocery list or read a cook book. I couldn’t read street signs, maps or a newspaper. When I went to the grocery store I couldn’t read what was on the label. I bought based on what things looked like. Now I can get on this computer, and that has opened new worlds to me. I now read. – D. H.”

# Partners in Reading

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“As a tutor in this program, I am watching my learner struggle to learn the basics needed to read. She works so hard and we both celebrate every hurdle we cross. Just seeing her face light up when she reads a level two story in the Wilson program reading book is a thrill for me. She is beginning to believe that she will be able to read a “real” book soon.  
– D. S.”

# Introduction

This book is the result of hard work by adult learners and tutors. For some, writing is easy. If writing is easy for you, congratulations! For others, writing is not so easy. It can be hard to think of an idea and then to put that idea into words. You will find 67 stories from PAR learners who wanted to put their ideas on paper. We know you will enjoy reading their words.

This book has three parts. The first part is stories about food and celebration. It is called *Good Food, Good Memories*. These writers shared their stories of a special moment when people came together to celebrate an important event with food. One person wrote about a special anniversary celebration and what each food represented. Many people wrote about how they learned to cook with their mothers, and how they made traditional foods from their countries. You will almost smell and taste the food as you read their stories. Some people included their recipe or described how to make the food, so you may want to go straight to the kitchen and start cooking.

The second part of the book is stories from the Writing Challenge. The topic was *What drives you bananas?* Learners wrote about things that frustrated them. You will read about what happens when people park their cars in the wrong place or don't supervise their kids in a store. Each story shares an annoying event. We hope that writing these things down helped each writer laugh at the situation and feel a little less frustrated.

The third part of the book describes things that PAR has done in the last year. It includes an award the program received, new programs that have started, and, most importantly, the achievements of PAR learners and tutors, which are what make this program strong.

Enjoy the book, and thank you to each person who wrote a story. You don't have to know the right spelling, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary to write a story. You just need to have an idea and write it down. Continue sharing these wonderful ideas. We are happy to publish these stories so that others can also read and enjoy them.

The editors of this book left the authors' words the way they were written, but corrected grammar and spelling as needed.

# I Love to Eat

by Anonymous

The best memories that I have of food are on Lent. I love that time of year. My mom would make me the best chile rellenos stuffed with cheese. As soon as I walked in the house I could smell them. That is one of my best memories of food. Sometimes I would feel bad because it would take me a couple of minutes to eat a few and it would take my mom half a day to make them. They were the best chile rellenos I ever had.



This learner is married and has one son. She loves PAR and thinks it is the best program she has ever found. She says that her tutor is the best.

“My wish is to learn words so I can drive and be a citizen. – F. H.”

# Ghameh Stew

by Farah Azizi



Farah is a wife and mother of two sons. Her goal is to help them achieve in school in preparation for college. Her confidence in using English has increased during her year and a half of working with PAR, and she is thankful for the program.

Every year in Iran at the same time of year, many families make special dishes to share with people. That day all relatives come to help each other prepare the food and cook in the backyard. We talk, laugh, take pictures, and have fun while the food gets ready. No matter what we make, the important thing is that the food is delicious and that wonderful smells fill the whole neighborhood.



When the food gets ready, we put it in small containers and bring them to neighbors. We also bring them to people who are homeless.

I like to make Ghameh stew with white rice. First we fry onion in oil until it gets golden and then we add lamb cubes.



When the meat gets brown we add yellow split beans. Later we add tomato paste, salt, pepper, and herbs. Then we pour on chicken broth and let it cook. We have very tiny fried potatoes to put on the top of the stew, and now it's time to serve it.

# My Wonderful Mother

by Anonymous

My good memories are when my mom invites us over to her house. There are four brothers and one sister. They are all married and all have children. We all enjoy spending time with each other and with our parents.

When we are walking to the door we can smell the food, and I see my mother at the stove making tortillas by hand with a big smile. Then she says, "I really enjoy seeing all my children grown up and all my grandchildren." We will tell her to stop making tortillas, that there is enough for everyone, but she says she loves making tortillas for us. Mom says that it is a blessing that we all continue to get together.



This learner is married and has three children. She says, "I am so happy I found PAR because it is giving me the opportunity to do better in life. I want to thank my wonderful tutor. Before I never would have been able to write this story without the help of PAR."

# My Favorite Food

by Emelia Gomez

My favorite food is enchiladas. My mom made the best flour enchiladas because everything was made from scratch. She taught me and my sister how to make them. We made them from scratch because we did not have much money. The sauce was the hardest to make. It took me and my sister years to learn to make it like my mom did.



My mom passed away three years ago, so now we can't just call her and say, "Hi, Mom. How do you make the sauce for enchiladas?" The first time my sister Carmen and I tried to make the sauce, it came out all thick and lumpy. We laughed so much. We had to make some new sauce, and from that experience we found out you need not put in so much flour. So now Carmen doesn't have to call and say, "Stay on the phone while I make the sauce."

# Hot Dogs

by Thomas Valdivia

Hot dogs are tasty.

I buy them at the A's game.

I went to the A's game on Opening Day.  
They lost.

I went with my dad to the A's game. We sat  
in the second row.

There was a pole in front of us so we couldn't  
really see.

I also eat hot dogs at work, at Dollar Tree.

They are awesome.



Thomas is 22 years old. He likes ice hockey and baseball. He works at Dollar Tree. He has a nephew who is his godson. He graduated from the Post Senior Program at Yerba Buena High School. and is attending Foothill College in the summer and fall of 2010.



# Going Back to the Good Old Days

by Juanita Avila



Juanita has been in Partners in Reading for one year. She has learned a lot and hopes to keep on learning. She would like to thank the Partners in Reading Program for giving her the opportunity to improve her reading and spelling.

I must have been around eight or nine years old, but I can still remember my mother's cooking. I also remember thinking that my mother was some kind of wonder woman. My mother had so many children and still had time to cook and clean.

I can see it now, coming home from school and seeing my mother at the kitchen table rolling out the **masa**, making big round **tortillas**. One on the hot **comal**, with a big air bubble ready to pop! Some on the table wrapped in the **servilleta**, keeping warm. Sometimes we would fight over who was going to pop the bubble.



My brothers, sisters, and I would take one **tortilla** from the **servilleta** and spread the **mantequilla** on it. We rolled it up like a skinny taco and the **mantequilla** would melt. It was so good! I remember the **mantequilla** running down my wrist and I would lick it off. That's how good it was!

I also remember the **papitas en mole** that my mother made from scratch. The ingredients were **ajo, harina, aceite, chiles, papitas,** and **sal.**

She would first cook the **papitas** halfway, then slice them into circles. Then she would cook the **chiles**, and when the **chiles** were cooked she would blend them with **ajo** and **sal.** Then she would use a funnel to remove the **chile** sauce from the skin and seeds. After that she would fry some **harina** in a little **aceite** and stir the **harina** until it became brown. Once the **harina** became brown she would add the **chile sauce** and keep stirring until it became nice and thick.

Then she would add the **papitas** and let it come to boil.

**Papitas en mole** and homemade **tortillas de harina.** The best!

Oh—I almost forgot: like my mother used to say, “Not even the President is eating what I’m going to eat right now.”

**ajo** – garlic



**aceite** – oil

**en** – in

**chiles** – chilies



**comal** – grill

**harina** – flour



**papitas** – potatoes

**mantequilla** – butter

**masa** – dough



**mole** – sauce

**sal** – salt

“I will continue to volunteer for Partners in Reading because every time I help my heart swells and I always feel rewarded. – M. E.”

# DeAnna Is a Good Cook

by Faalaa Fua

I like to eat good food. DeAnna cooks every day. She makes food and puts it in the icebox for me. When I get home, it is already ready.

I eat at home in the morning. I like to eat pancakes, scrambled eggs, and bacon. And I like to drink coffee, lots of coffee with sugar and cream.



For a snack, sometimes I eat bananas or apples.

My favorite foods for dinner are spareribs, rice, white potatoes, and salad. In my salad, I like lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, salad dressing, and salt.



Every Sunday I walk to church. When I come home, DeAnna cooks breakfast. She makes waffles, scrambled eggs, and coffee. DeAnna is a good cook.



Faalaa was born in Western Samoa. He moved with his family to Hawaii and then to California. He currently lives in San José.

# Birria

by Ramiro Enriquez

Birria is made for any occasion. It does not need any special event. How I make this kind of food:

First step: Get good goat meat.

Second step: Make a marinade sauce with all of the following ingredients: California chiles, garlic, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, oregano, cumin, bay leaves, vinegar, and salt.

Third step: Put the chiles on the stove with some water and add low heat for eight to ten minutes, then blend it all together.

Fourth step: Put the marinade sauce over each piece of meat, leave it for three hours before putting it in a fire pit. This kind of pit is made in the ground three feet deep and four feet long. Start a fire two hours before putting in the goat meat. Then, put a sheet of agave leaves over

the fire. Next, put the goat meat on the leaves, then cover with agave leaves. Finally, cover with a lid and dirt, and leave there for three hours.

Fifth step: Now it is ready to eat. Serve a plate to each person with some birria. You can combine it with some rice or beans.

I like it a lot.



“I couldn’t help my daughter with her homework, but now thanks to PAR I can help her with her schoolwork.  
– M. S.”

# A Special Easter Food From Ethiopia

by Yakob Ghebreselassie



Yakob is from Eritrea. He speaks Tigrinya and Amharic, and now he is studying English.

One of my favorite memories from when I was young is when my mom made us, on Easter eve, a special meal—Ga’at.

It was early in the morning, after we came home from church, because we had to fast before that. The whole family, we would sit together. I have four sisters and three brothers and my mom and my dad. We would eat together at one table in the living room. We made the chairs like a circle, then my mom, she would bring the ga’at and put it on the table. Before we would start to eat, we would pray together. Then we would start eating.

The food was made by my mom. It tastes so good how she made it. She would use flour, hot water, salt, and butter. The butter was special. It was flavored with cumin, saffron, and onions. She cooked it for half an hour. Then when she was done, on top she put the butter, ground red pepper, and yogurt.

The ga'at is kind of hot and cold when you eat it. You can eat it with your hand, but it will be hot. It is better to use a spoon. Here's how you eat it: first you take some ga'at; then you dig in at the middle where the butter and red pepper are mixed together. Then you dip it in some yogurt to cool it. When you eat the ga'at, it tastes very spicy, but the butter and yogurt balance the flavor.

Every year when Easter day comes, we have been fasting for more than 50 days, eating only vegetarian foods, so we cannot wait to eat our mom's ga'at that she made for us. We don't even care about the other foods.

This special food is shared with the whole family, and my cousins. They come from different places and they stay together with us. Easter day is one of our big holidays for my whole family and whole country. That is why I call it my special memory day.

# Good Memories From Hometown Barbecue

by Angel Escamilla



Angel is a native Mexican. He has lived in the U.S. for 40 years. He is attending Metro Adult Ed and is getting his high school diploma. He is also in PAR to improve his literacy skills so he can attend college in the future.

When I first came to the United States of America from Michoacan, Mexico, I arrived in San José, California. My first nightmare was the language. I was like a disabled person. I wasn't able to be myself because I couldn't speak English. People couldn't know me because I couldn't communicate and was confronting the American culture and gradually adjusting with difficulty to the new adopted country. During these hard times, it helped to remember the good times I had back home, especially when I thought about Mom and Dad's barbecue that was so tender and had the greatest smell in the world.



I don't really know how Mom prepared that beef for the barbecue. All I am remembering is it took my mom three hours to cook it before serving, and in the meantime my older brothers, sisters, and I all helped by picking some fresh vegetables and fruit from the

farm to wash and cut up  
to make salads to  
accompany the delicious  
barbecue and the best-  
tasting Spanish rice. After  
we all had dinner and  
helped each other pick up all the dirty dishes  
and wash them off for Mom to put away, then  
we would all go out to the backyard and play  
basketball, including Mom and Dad.



Soon I will become more social with the  
American culture and be part of this great  
community. When I was able to see this  
reality and was beginning to ask people to  
help me learn the language, I found many  
patient people to help me leave behind all the  
difficult times and think ahead to my future,  
to take advantage of what this great country  
has to offer.

Now here I have a beautiful family, a son and  
daughter, and I also have my own house.  
Through the years I have accomplished some  
of my American dreams which I originally  
came here for long ago. Now this is where I  
call my hometown, even though I am still  
missing Mom and Dad's cooking. These are  
some memories I always will keep through  
my life.

# An Interesting Deal

by Lisha Ke



Lisha recently came from China and lives with her mom and her uncle. Her favorite things are dancing and sleeping. She and her mom joined PAR together. She has met with tutors Gail and Matt. They meet together as a group of four people.

This story is about a five-year-old girl with long hair.

Her grandpa wanted her to get a haircut because she couldn't take care of it. Then they made a deal. If the girl agreed to have her hair cut, her grandpa would cook her favorite food. I am that girl and I had my hair cut. I liked the meal so much that my grandpa cooked it for me every time I visited him. I miss the food that my grandpa cooked.



The first thing I asked for from my grandpa was pork ribs. They were swimming in a sticky, deep brown sauce. When my hands got covered with the sauce, I would lick my fingers. If my grandpa caught me, he would criticize my behavior with a smile. But if I finished licking my fingers without being caught, I felt like I was winning a game.



The second thing I asked for was sweet taro paste. The taro root was mashed by my grandpa until it was very thick. Its color was a shade of purple that is unlike anything else. It was so delicious that I finished it every time except once. I took the leftovers home in a plastic bag and hid them. Because I didn't want to share them with any others, I snuck out at midnight and finished the taro paste all by myself.

Every day I think about the food my grandpa cooked for me because I miss it very much. But I miss my grandpa much more than the food.

The third thing I asked for was spring rolls. They were always golden like the rice paddy fields in autumn. Their shape was perfectly round and neither too big nor too small. They were the perfect size. If you saw them, you would know that my grandpa made them carefully and full of love in his heart.



# The Adrian Special

by Adrian Gonzalez

Hi, my name is Adrian. I wanted to write my story about the types of food I like, and how to prepare them.

First I will discuss how I learned to cook, the type of cuisine I prepare, and how I was able to improvise and come up with some dishes that are really quite unique. To conclude, I will share a sample recipe and describe how to prepare and cook it.

My hometown is Mexico City, so naturally I am quite fond of Mexican cuisine. My mother is a great cook. Growing up, I often helped her prepare the family meals. Later, I began to cook on my own, and experiment with different food combinations. In this way I was able to come up with a lot of creative dishes.

For example, one of my more original dishes is what I call the "Adrian Special." It often happened that there were only a few things in the refrigerator, so I would have to make do with whatever odds and ends were at hand to make a dish. The Adrian Special was just such a concoction.

One afternoon, my brother Alejandro and I were very hungry. There were only a few items in the refrigerator, and we could not agree on what to cook. So I told him to just relax and go sit and watch the game—I would do the cooking. I put my creative mind to work, and from a little turkey, mushrooms, and spinach, we both had a feast.

Here is how to prepare the Adrian Special with rice:

- 1½ tbsp butter
- 6 slices cooked turkey
- ½ onion
- 1½ cup mushrooms
- 2 pinches salt
- 3 bunches spinach
- ½ tsp garlic seasoning

Cut turkey into strips. Fry in butter until lightly browned. Slice onion and add to browned turkey. Cook until onion is clear. Add mushrooms and garlic seasoning. Cook for 5 minutes. Add spinach and cook for 3 more minutes.

For the rice:

- 3 tbsp butter
- 4 cups cooked rice
- ½ onion, chopped
- ½ clove garlic, chopped
- 4 tomatoes, cubed
- 2 pinches salt
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup cooked peas



Mix onion, garlic, and tomatoes into a salsa. Fry rice in butter until lightly browned. Add salsa. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Add salt, carrots, green pepper,

and peas. Add 1 cup of water and simmer 25-30 minutes.

Serve the Adrian Special with your favorite bread and a glass of wine. This dish may be prepared any time day or night, on the weekend, or mid-week. It is suitable for serving guests or just with your family.

Oh, and most important . . . Bon appetit!  
Enjoy!

# An Unforgettable Barbecue

by Maka Malin

In Somalia we have no hassle or worry about what we are eating. In Somalia, all food and animal products are fresh organic, grown in natural circumstances. In the United States we have to pay attention to what we are eating, whether it is organic or inorganic. If you want to eat organic food you will have to spend time and more money, versus non-organic food that costs less money. Non-organic food is healthier than inorganic food.

Maka has been in the PAR program since October 2009.



As a family we do not have enough time to get organic food most of the time, but in April 2010 we had a barbecue that I will never forget. My husband suggested we should have an organic young goat (kid). I went to a Halal market in Santa Clara. I bought three pounds of kid meat. It was an unforgettable barbecue.

# Sweet Dumplings for Special Occasions

by Helen Liao



Helen has been a PAR learner since October, 2009. She works with autistic children. She enjoys cooking, gardening, and reading books to her children.

My favorite food is Tong Yuen, a delightful sweet dessert from my Canton Province in China. In English, it is described as sweet dumplings served in syrup. The dumplings are made from sweet rice flour that is kneaded into golf-ball-sized dough. Each ball of dough is then stuffed with sweet filling and boiled in water until cooked.



Tong Yuen is only served on special occasions such as New Year's, the Moon Festival, weddings, and birthdays. For each occasion, Tong Yuen represents a special meaning and is prepared with a different filling. For New Year's, Tong Yuen is normally prepared using crystal rock sugar for the filling, to symbolize family union and harmony. During the Moon Festival, Tong Yuen is served with sesame filling, which symbolizes abundance and wealth for generations to come. For weddings, prunes are used as the filling to represent best wishes for fertility and the ability to produce many children.

As a tradition, we all need to learn the process of making Tong Yuen growing up, in order to carry on the culture. In my memory, it was always such an exciting moment when I was able to join in the kitchen for the preparation process. The joy of mingling with the adults to hear their tale-telling and gossiping was one of my many long-lasting memories during these events. Today, I continue this tradition and hopefully will be able to pass it on to the next generation.

“PAR makes communication easier.  
Thanks to PAR, I now have a  
professional résumé. – Y. Z.”

# The Chinese Lunar New Year

by Mei Lin



My favorite food was prepared by my mother for the Chinese Lunar New Year. The Chinese Lunar New Year is similar to Thanksgiving in the USA, because the family members will get together and see each other at least once a year.



At the Chinese Lunar New Year, my two brothers and two sisters and I would bring our families back to my mother's home in Taiwan; we call it 围炉 (Wei-Lu) and/or 团圆 (Tuan-Yuan.) My mother would prepare a lot of foods to fill the whole round table.

The main dish is called "Fire Pot." It is a pot with a chimney that has charcoal at the bottom. It contains broth with napa cabbage or daigon with meatballs or fishballs, mushrooms, tofu, shrimp, crab, tempura, etc.



My mother would prepare a dish of whole fish. The fish symbolizes abundance; the sound of **yue** (fish) means “more than enough.” She also would prepare fried taro, and meatballs. In Taiwan, we have **chun-juan** (spring rolls) that are not fired; they taste completely different and are three times the size of the ones in the USA.



We would have **tang-yuan** (made with glutinous rice) for dessert; **pong-gam** (tangerines) and oranges are always served for New Year’s, too. Oranges and tangerines are symbols of happiness and sweet relationships. After dinner, we would give my mother the “Red Envelope” (lucky money), which my mother had given to us when we were children.



I miss the taste and the smells of fried taro. I always tried to help to make it with my mother, to make sure my favorite dish would be on the table every year. I would pound the taro to make taro balls. When my mother put the taro balls into the oil pot, they would sizzle, and then the delicious smell would fill the whole house. Mmm, mmm—I will never forget the taste of the special foods made by my mother. I miss my mother's cooking!

Since my mother passed away five years ago, we no longer get together at her home like before, but I still visit my brothers' and sisters' families at Chinese Lunar New Year. I really miss my mother so, so, so much!!!

# Helping at the Food Bank

by John M. Oliveri



December 12, 1997 is when I started to volunteer at the Second Harvest Food Bank. The food bank collects food for people in need. I stack newspapers, and fold bags, and play music. I enjoy being with the people. I have been there 13 years and I hope to be there a long time.



John is 42, and sings in a band called "The King And Us," which plays Elvis and oldies songs.

“I hope to reach my goal to be able to read a book on my own. – E. P.”

# A Christmas Feast You Can Smell a Mile Away

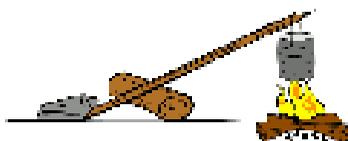
by Khin "Kate" Mawi



Khin says, "I have one brother and two sisters and my parents, six people in my family. I like to knit, sing, and play the guitar. I joined PAR 3 months ago. I go to Metro Adult Ed and I want to become a nurse."

My favorite day is Christmas Day because every year on Christmas I enjoy the food. I have fun caroling. My church group goes to each house and we walk singing on the street, and the family in the house gives what they have to give. We carry the food in baskets on our backs and we kill a pig.

I skin the pig, cut it into pieces, and the teenagers help with cutting the onions, ginger, and garlic! The smell is so strong we get teary eyes. We mash them all together in a huge mortar and pestle. The men mix everything together with their hands and put it in a big pan balanced on three rocks.



We cook it on the big wood fire outside for a half hour. We add pieces of mustard

greens and potatoes. They cook for 1 hour over the fire, and 1 more hour over the fire, and 1 more hour over the coals. We cook the pork bones for a long time to make a soup. We add collards and cabbage leaves.

We chop up the organs and add a lot of spices. The smell is so strong you can smell it over a 1-mile area!

During the service, the smell is very strong! It makes us hungry. The women cook a lot of rice. We eat these dishes all at the same time. This is a special Burmese Chin food that we make every year on Christmas. Everyone eats so much their stomachs hurt!

“Adult learners have overcome embarrassment, low self-esteem and self-doubt by taking the courageous step to walk through the door and ask for help. – S. R.”

# When I Made Money for the School

by Lourdes Partida



I remember when my daughter Liliana started the fifth grade. The whole school prepared something to sell at the school. The teachers told the students in the class, "Don't forget to tell your parents."

Lourdes loves to cook. She has been in the PAR program for one year, and she doesn't want to stop. She has discovered that every day is an opportunity to learn something new.

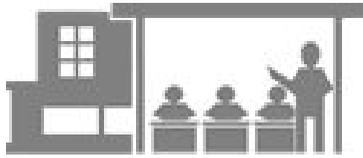
When Liliana came home she told me, "Mommy!! You have to cook for the whole school. I know you make good menudo."

I responded to her, "What? For the whole school?"

"Come on Mommy, it's only two hundred and twenty-eight people."

The next day, Liliana and I bought the groceries and I started to make the menudo at 9:30 p.m. I continued to prepare around four hours. So at 7 a.m. the day of the festival, the menudo was ready and I was very happy.

Liliana called her aunts to remind them to go. The festival started at 8 a.m. and ended



at 3 p.m. When I put the pot on the table, people lined up really fast. In two hours the menudo was finished. My menudo was number one. I made \$300 for the school to donate for computers. Two days later the principal had a conference with me. She wanted me to make the menudo for the next year. Many people called me “the menudo person,” but I didn’t mind. I understood the money was for the school programs.

“I can read signs now. – R. M.”

# A Restaurant That's Just Like Home

by Phyllis Perakis



Phyllis likes to spend time with her kids. They help her cook and set the table.

My parents own a restaurant. Dad is the head chef and tastes all the sauces before they go out. He loves cooking. Mom is the hostess and bartender, and supervises the wait staff. My brother and I grew up in the restaurant.

At the restaurant, it is very busy and there is no time to clean until they are done cooking. Dad's specialties are



soup, and Greek-style lamb chops. The lamb chops are grilled and served with steamed vegetables and rice pilaf, and decorated with parsley.

When my brother and I were teenagers, Mom went to Greece to visit because her dad passed away. Dad was cooking pasta at home, and it smelled very good. Dad cooks fast, then cleans up later. Oil spilled on the counter. My brother and I said, "Dad! This isn't the restaurant! It's our home! Don't be so messy." We helped him clean up, then we sat down to eat. It tasted as good as it smelled.

We were happy to see Mom when she came back home. She was gone for about a month. Mom is a good cook, too, and she learned a lot from my dad. Her specialties are Greek chicken with potatoes and Boureki, a casserole made with ricotta cheese, sliced potatoes and zucchini, spiced with mint.

As a teenager, I helped Mom out in the kitchen. I would fix the salad, get the bread and vegetables ready, and set the table. When I work at the restaurant now, I serve food, work the cash register, and tend bar. When I serve, I fix salads, get bread ready, and set the tables when the busboy is not there.



My parents' customers feel welcome at the restaurant. They say they feel like they are part of the family. They feel good when they go home.

# My Mother's XMAS Tradition

by Earlene Chapman

Earlene wrote this story in honor of her mother and all that she did to bring joy to those around her. Earlene has been an active participant in PAR for three years.



My favorite memory at XMAS time was the wonderful cake that my mother would bake just for me. My mother loved to cook. She was the best

cook in our town. It was a tradition in our home at XMAS time to have OUR special cake baked for us by OUR mother.

My favorite cake was JELLY LAYER that my mother would mix. She would start by stirring all the ingredients together and putting them in a baking pan. That was my favorite time, because I got to taste the mix before it went into the oven. Once the cake began to bake, the sweet smell would fill the room and I would stare at the oven in anticipation. When she took the cake out of the oven, the fantastic aroma made me want to take a hot piece and eat it.

The next and last step was applying the apple jelly to the cake, but this was the toughest time for me because the aroma was taking over my mind. Just writing and thinking about that Jelly Layer Cake, I can almost taste that first slice, and it brings back many wonderful memories of my mother and how special she made me feel. OH, that Jelly Layer Cake!!!



“The PAR program helps people who have a hard time reading and writing. This program has helped a lot of people make their lives better by opening doors that were closed before. – A. S.”

# African Bread and Red Wine

by Asfaha Tewelde

I like African food. The restaurant that I go to is Mudai. The Mudai restaurant is in downtown San Jose, on San Carlos Street. I go with my brother, Ben. The food is spicy. The bread is white. It is called engera. The bread is shaped in a big circle. With the bread we eat a green salad with tomatoes. We like to drink red wine with our meal.



I like African food. It is the same food of my country, Eritrea, Africa.

# Baking Memories

by Janeen Robbins



I remember making homemade pumpkin pie and carrot cake with my sister and mom for Thanksgiving.

We made the pumpkin pie first. We put pumpkin, sugar, eggs, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg in a bowl and mixed them. Then we poured the mix into four or five pie shells. They made the house smell good when they were baking.



Janeen lives in San José and works for the County Office of Education with special needs children. She lives with her boyfriend, a dog and an iguana. She enjoys walking her dog after work and on weekends.

We started making the carrot cake when the last pies were baking. I shredded the carrots and mixed all the ingredients together. After baking the cake, we let it cool down. We used Philadelphia Cream Cheese to frost the cake. The pie and cake were both so delicious everyone had a piece of both for dessert.

# A Delicious Journey

by Sal Fuentes



Sal is happily married to his wife Maritza and the proud father of 7-month-old little Sal. In his spare time Sal likes to ride dirt bikes.

I had known Maritza for about a year. I was hesitant to ask her if we could accompany her parents on the trip to the State of Nayarit in Mexico to visit their family. I approached Maritza's father and shared with him my idea that his daughter and I would like to join with him and his wife on their vacation. He immediately said "Yes," as if he was waiting for me to ask.

A week later we were on our way to Mexico, a 22 hour drive. Little did I know how much fun this was going to be. The fun started as the road trip began. We spoke of what we would do and of the areas we would visit. One in particular stuck in my mind and that was the beach, for two reasons: first, because I love beaches, and second, because of what we were going to eat. They spoke of how they would catch the fish and cook them on the spot.



I was dreading the fact that I would have to eat fish, because at an early age I had had a bad experience with fish.

We finally arrived at our destination. On the following day, lo and behold, we were at the beach. It was a sweet and sour feeling for me.



Sweet because we were at the beach and it was Mother Nature at her best. Sour because I had to eat the dreadful fresh fish! As I took the first bite, I felt like a party was going on in my mouth! The texture and taste of the fish were delightful. That experience opened up my horizons in the food world. Ever since then, I have been open to trying exotic foods.

That was one of the many magical moments that I experienced with my wife Maritza. We hope to make many more with our wonderful son, little Sal.

# Family Reunions

by Jackie Smith



Jackie dedicates this page to her parents, Maxine and John Dumas, who have been married 52 years. Her Aunt Pauline and Uncle Ellsworth Walker have been happily married for 65 years. They are very wise and are great examples to their loved ones.

There are so many of my favorite memories from Texas, as well as good old California. So many choices. The best choice is the family reunions. They have the best memories that I will never forget: lots of games to play and dancing going on. I can just hear the music of the eighties.



My favorite food dishes of the past are old fashioned gumbo and skillet hot cornbread. The main dish is chicken, red potatoes, and rice. Dessert is bread pudding served with ice cream. The fondest memories are when our families share their main dishes which each one has brought together. As



we share our conversations and laughter, hopes and dreams; we sit at several large tables. Everyone has a place to be comfortable, and we give thanks to GOD!! When my grandmother was living, she would lead the praying.

We also had the best barbecue baby back ribs. My relatives and a few close friends were there, with lots of love, sharing and meeting cousins. The music of the late eighties was playing—the best of all. We took a lot of pictures. We have a panorama, which is long, the shape of a rectangle, with everybody in it from the eldest to the youngest.



We usually have it every five years, but we don't just have to wait; we can plan to visit each other when it is the best time and place.

“This program is important to me because it is helping me acquire special tools that I use in my job or where I need them. – M. A.”

# My Brother's Block Party

by Leo Smith



Leo's family is from Oklahoma. He and his wife have been married for 23 years, and they believe that God brought them together.

The block party took place in Compton, CA. My wife and I visited her sister-in-law. This was her first time to meet in-laws. She drove us right to their house. This was our first road trip. Cleo, my brother, his wife Anne, and their six children were so happy we made it, with the help of my sister Sarah. They talked all night, and we shared our memories. When we were little boys we laughed a lot. I played cards, dominoes.



The next day was the block party. We woke up and started light house cleaning, each and every room. Soon all was done. We put out all the tables, chairs, and table cloths. Every neighbor came. They did their part, sharing their hospitality, as we all wanted everybody to gather around to say their piece. My brother is a leader in his community. The whole family was active and a close-knit family.



There were 150 people there, I think. The kinds of food were banana pudding and rice pudding, different types of salads, barbecue with different kinds of meats, and all types of bread.



There were all kinds of music. The games were checkers, cards, pool, and dominoes.

All the people enjoyed the food. I danced, ate, talked, and had a good time.

Noon until evening was so nice. The weather was so warm all night, until nine thirty. We had a good time. I really appreciated my brother for throwing the party in Compton, CA. The food was really good and I had a good time.

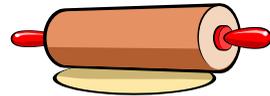
# My Favorite Food

by Araceli Figueroa

Araceli was born in Mexico. She is the youngest of seven sisters and one brother. She is married and has two kids, Alexis, 9, and Areli, 5.

The smell of handmade tortillas every morning was part of my life when I was little. I remember how the same smell filled my little town.

Tortillas are part of being Latino here in this country, but back in Mexico they are the most important part of our diet. My mom, like all women, started her day behind the “horno” making tortillas. I loved to eat the tortillas just after they were cooked, still hot and smoking and very soft. I loved to eat them with honey and a glass of cow’s milk or with cheese and salsa.



I learned how to make tortillas when I was still a kid. My mom taught me. Now I can find tortillas in every grocery store, but I will never forget my mom’s handmade tortillas.

# Better Than KFC

by Nyunt

During Chinese New Year's in my country, when I was a child, I was very happy. My parents cooked a lot of food. I miss my parents' crispy chicken with chili sauce. My parents taught me how to



make chicken and homemade chili sauce. It has fresh boneless chicken thighs and breasts, and you cut two-inch pieces. After this, you mix wine, salt, ginger, flour, and

eggs together. Next, you dip the chicken in the mixture and fry. Then, you make the chili sauce with ground fresh chili, garlic, salt, sugar, and lime juice, and mix together.

Everybody likes crispy chicken with chili sauce. It smells good. It tastes good: sweet, crispy, and hot. So every Chinese New Year's, we fry a lot of chicken. My family often cooks and eats this food at home. My sisters and I love to make this chicken and chili sauce together.



# The Tamarind Tree

by Sokna Sar



When I was 13 years old, I went to a tamarind tree with my brother and my cousin to pick some fruit. Other kids said that under the tamarind tree was a crazy dog. I didn't believe those kids, so I went to the tamarind



tree to pick some fruit. When I got to the tamarind tree, I saw a man drying his rice next to it. As he was drying his rice, he saw a dog coming to eat his

rice. He used a stick to scare the dog away. When I saw the dog running to the tamarind tree, I thought it was the crazy dog that the kids had told me about. I didn't know the dog was running away from the man. I thought the crazy dog was coming to bite us.

My brother and my cousin ran away from the dog. I didn't run away because there were a lot of trees in that area. I stayed under the tree with a rock in my hand. The man saw me under the tree. He came to get me from the tree and saw that I was afraid of the dog. I told him about the crazy dog. He laughed at me and told me he was scaring the dog away from the rice. I felt relieved. I went home and told my brother and my cousin they had run away from nothing. There was no crazy dog. Now, every time I eat a tamarind, I think about this story and laugh about it.

“When I joined PAR I couldn't read or write. Now I can read books and newspapers and write letters to friends. Just recently, I went to the DMV to renew my driver's license and for the first time in my life I took a written test. Also, when I go to the doctor, now I can fill out the forms by myself. – F. M.”

# Pho

by Cindy Vu

The delicious food that my family likes best is pho. It is a kind of beef noodle, which was created and cooked by the Vietnamese.

My family eats pho once a week, always on weekends. To prepare to cook pho, I need to go to the supermarket to buy many things one day ahead. These items are beef bones, beef, meatballs, ginger, yellow onions, special spice powder, green onions, cilantro, mint, hoisin sauce, hot sauce, and rice noodles.



Pho preparation takes about three hours. At first, I boil the beef bones and rinse them. Then, I boil them again in a bigger pot. I must scoop all the dirty bubbles out of the pot until the surface is clear. Second, I broil ginger and yellow onion for about 30 minutes in a small oven. After that, I drop them into the big pot with a bag of special spice flavor (there are 2 bags in a small orange box available at any

Asian supermarket). At that time, I season the beef stew with salt and sugar, and turn the stove to medium heat. Then, I prepare other things by cutting green and yellow onions and cilantro into small pieces and cutting meatballs in half.

Ten minutes before eating, I first boil some water in a different pot to cook the rice noodles in, and then I put some slices of beef and some meatballs on the noodles, and sprinkle some green and yellow onions and cilantro on top. Finally, I pour the beef soup into the pho bowls. The color of the soup is clear, and the smell is very good.



All members of my family sit at the dining table and wait for pho. I cook one bowl of pho for each person. We have pepper, lemon, chili, mint, and mung bean sprouts on the table, exactly like in a restaurant.

We eat pho at home because we love pho, enjoy the time together, and save a lot of our money this way. Eating pho at home is much cheaper and more convenient than eating out. My family has a beautiful time every weekend. We are very happy.

# Party Plan

by Lai-Fong Vo



Lai-Fong has been in PAR for three years. She likes the program very much because her tutor, Sue, helps her learn more challenging and useful English. Lai-Fong likes to cook and to meet friends to visit.

Last year my friend Alice called me and said, "I need your help." I said, "OK, what is it?" Alice said that she wanted to have a party for her parents' 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Because I know how to cook, she asked me to prepare the meal for about 20 people. Alice said, "I give you permission to make whatever you want and I will be your assistant."



The next day I called Alice and told her my idea. She was excited about my plan, and so

this is what I made. The meal was a buffet and had three parts. First there was homemade fruit juice, cocktails, and appetizers. I made chicken salad, paper rolls, fried won tons, and pot stickers.

There were nine main-dish choices because nine means “long,” and so a long life together. There was crispy duck, ginger chicken, walnut shrimp, roast pork, steamed fish, pepper beef, steamed vegetables, curry chicken, and fried rice. Last was a special Chinese dessert whose name means “a hundred years together.”

Next morning Alice told me about her plans. This is what she did. She set up two round tables together, like two people together, and a long serving table at the wall. The guests signed their names on a large, decorated poster hanging on the wall above the table. The long serving table was decorated like a path with paper footprints down the middle. The footprints signified the couple walking together through life. The dessert was placed on two hearts at the end of the table. Two hands formed a bowl that held flowers and gifts. Each guest received a gift box with a heart-shaped chocolate inside. Alice’s parents handed them out after the meal.



Before dinner, Alice made a speech to thank her parents and congratulate them.

When the party was over, Alice's parents helped us clean up. Everybody liked the party and the food. Even now they talk about the wonderful time they had and have a warm memory about the party.



“Now that I’m attending PAR I feel more confident. I registered to vote and am learning to use the computer keyboard. I have a gmail address and I read and write more. I feel I’ve taken the first step to kick out the walls of the box I was in and open my sight to a bigger world. – L. V.”

# My Favorite Food

by Nassreen Zarea



My favorite food is airmeh sabzi. It tastes good. It tastes like garlic and lemon. It's green because it has many green vegetables in it. Sabzi means "green vegetables" in Persian. My favorite part is the dried lime. I put the airmeh sabzi on rice. One time I ate pizza with airmeh sabzi on it at a restaurant.



I have loved airmeh sabzi since I was a baby. My favorite food is airmeh sabzi.

Nassreen enjoys many activities, such as Special Olympics, Magic Makers, bowling, cooking, Around the Town Club, College of Adaptive Arts, dance, and piano. She loves the many activities of her adult day program, Silicon Valley Diversified Network.

# I Love Hamburgers

by Darryl Redfield

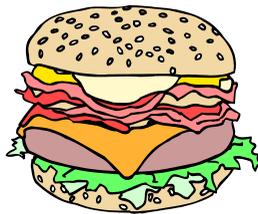
Darryl is proud to be co-captain for Relay for Life at his place of employment. He enjoys coming to PAR, especially writing stories and his thoughts, and reading exciting stories and articles.

My perfect comfort food is homemade hamburgers. Every time when I was sick, or injured, or feeling down-and-out growing up, I craved my mother's homemade hamburgers.



The day before sixth grade started, I was out in the neighborhood playing street football. Just when I was about to score a touchdown, I was tackled by James and landed on my collarbone and broke it.

On the first day of class, while Ms. Campbell was taking attendance, I was daydreaming about my mother's homemade hamburgers. By Math time, I could smell them.



I thought someone had brought their lunch to class, but it was only 9 o'clock: English time, time for spelling. Ms. Campbell asked me to come to the chalkboard to spell the word "student," but I spelled "hamburgers." It was only 11 o'clock.

I could see my mother making them—a whole pound of ground beef with seasoning salt and black pepper, sizzling in the pan.

Lunchtime in the cafeteria; we were having pizza (also one of my favorite foods that I can eat every day of the week), but the craving for my mother’s homemade hamburgers was worse than that of a pregnant woman. I could taste them, hamburger patties placed between two ordinary pieces of Wonder Bread with mustard spread between them. Thinking about them helped to keep the pain under control. But it was only 12 o’clock, and the craving for my mother’s homemade hamburgers was overwhelming me at this time.

I came up with a scheme to go home. I went up to Tammy, the most comely girl in school. We hadn’t seen each other all summer long. She didn’t know about my shoulder, so I pulled her hair and she hit my shoulder. I cried like a newborn baby. I was sent home by the school nurse.

My mom asked me, “What would make you feel better?” I simply replied, “Hamburgers.”



# Good Tamales

by Maria Torrico

Maria was born in Bolivia and came to California in 1991. She and her husband Ed have three children: Vaneza, 16, Bryant, 13, and Elizabeth, 1 year. She enjoys cooking tamales and other food from Bolivia.

I remember my family back in Bolivia. For carnavales we had special foods. My mom cooked a puchero, barbecue lamb, and humitas de queso (cheese tamales). We also had fruit from the farm—peaches and pomegranates. The food I liked most was tamales. I liked the smell of corn. The taste was delicious. We ate around the table. Everyone enjoyed the tamales.



## Cheese Tamales

- 10 ears of corn
- 1 lb of cheese
- 1 cup of oil
- ½ cup of sugar
- 1 Tbsp of salt (or to taste)
- 4 eggs

First we cut the ears of corn at both ends to have the husks. Wash the corncobs, grate the corn off the cob, and grind coarsely in the blender or food processor. Put the ground corn in the bowl, add the hot oil, mix rapidly, and add the sugar, salt, and eggs. If you see the corn is too moist, add some corn meal.

Take two husks, and put in two spoons of prepared corn. Put cheese in the corn, fold all the edges to the center, and tie with the string from the husk. Put 4 or 5 cups of water in a pot and boil. Put all the tamales in the pot of boiling water. Cover the tamales with leftover husks and put the lid on the pot. Turn the temperature to simmer and cook for 1 hour. Take out the pot. You can eat the tamales hot or cold.

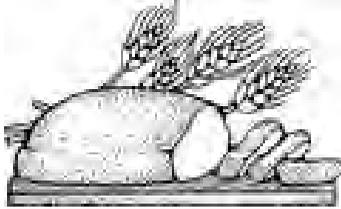
I make the tamales when corn is in season. My family enjoys them any time.



# Special Holiday Bread

by Emebet Akalewold

Emebet is from Ethiopia and lives in San Jose with her sister-in-law and cousin. The rest of her family is in Ethiopia. She works at a children's hospital as a nursing assistant. Her PAR tutor can tell that her English has improved since she started the PAR program.



For holidays I make a special bread from wheat flour.

I make the bread the night before the

holiday. My grandma taught me how to make the bread. So when I make it, I remember my grandma. On the day of the holiday, I call my sister-in-law and my cousin. I make traditional coffee and then serve it to everyone. Everyone likes my bread.

“PAR has really helped me grow in the teaching field. I know I will be able to take the knowledge I have learned at PAR and bring it to the children I will be helping shape. – A. W.”

## Introduction to the Writing Challenge

The Partners in Reading second annual Writing Challenge asked learners to write a short story to answer the question “What drives you bananas?”

Many people were interested in this question and turned in stories. Some of the stories are funny. Some are a little sad. Some of the stories are about relationships with people. Others are about how to communicate with a big organization, while other learners wrote about learning the customs of this country.

Each story was put in one of four categories: Dictated, Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. Then our judges, Eloise Stiglitz, formerly with San José State University, and Sheila Himmel, freelance writer and author, read each story and evaluated them.

The winners selected were:

Dictated: Richard Truchetta

Beginning: Emelia Gomez

Intermediate: Debbie Hodge

Advanced: Zahra Ghafourifar and Farah Azizi

PAR wishes to thank each of the 33 authors who wrote a story. We hope you had fun, and that you will continue to write many more stories both now and in the future.

“The library has helped me realize that education is important. It was the first place that would help me after 15 years of trying elsewhere. The library has had an impact on me to develop better communication with my friends, family and employers. – M. J.”

# The Time I Went Bananas

by Farah Azizi



When I was a teenager my dream was to come to the United States to live and study. But this dream took a very long time to come true. After nine years I heard from immigration. I had to go to Turkey. Walking down the street from the hotel to the U.S. Embassy, I could hear my heart beating. My hands were cold like ice.



Farah is a home care giver who lives with her husband and two sons. Her hobbies are reading books and listening to the radio. Farah started working with her PAR tutor in February, 2009.



Finally it was my turn to interview with the consul. She was very serious. After looking at all my documents and asking me a lot of questions, she looked at my passport. Then she stamped my blue visa. I couldn't believe it! I jumped up. I wanted to kiss her but there was a window between us. Really, I was crazy. I had never had this good feeling of going bananas before. Maybe this good news came late because I wasn't a teenager anymore. But better late than never.



# Cereal Drives Me Bananas

by Zahra Ghafourifar



Few things drive me more bananas than the cereal aisle at the grocery store. The last time I was shopping for cereal, I must have looked through a zillion boxes, bags, tins, and bins. Today, you can find anything from grains, fruits, nuts, chocolates, marshmallows, and even toys in your cereal.

As if that's not enough, everything comes roasted, toasted, baked, puffed, cut, sliced, diced, ground, rolled, clustered, and of course raw. How about sugars, fats, carbs, salt, pepper, or spices? But wait, what type of sugar? Forgive me for not caring whether my Cheerios are sweetened with canned juice, cane sugar, cane syrup, white sugar, brown sugar, maple syrup, honey, or frosted rat poison.

For crying out loud, when did we go from simple oatmeal and corn flakes to Cocoa Puffs and Lucky Charms? Just writing about this drives me bananas.



# Humming Drove Me Bananas

by Debbie Hodge



When I was at church I usually liked to sit in the same place every week. There was a lady who always sat behind me.

The pastor was teaching, and when he started to speak about something that she did not like what he was saying, she started to hum. To me she was humming very loud, and that drove me bananas!



This went on for quite a long time. It was the same thing every week!

I would go to hear the pastor teaching, not to hear her hum. I could not concentrate on what the pastor was teaching about.

How did I solve this problem that was driving me bananas? I just moved to the other side of the church. And now I can enjoy the Word!



Debbie likes PAR because she can read her Bible now. She reads recipes and goes grocery shopping with new reading skills. Her husband and children are very supportive of her. They see a lot of improvement in her reading and writing.

# Writer's Block

by Emelia Gomez



These are some of the things that totally drive me bananas: when I go to write and can't think of anything to say. I know what I really want to say but can't think what I was going to write. I think I get so nervous and then I forget what I was going to write, and I have so many ideas but when I go to write them then I forget what I'm going to write down. Sometimes I have to turn the TV or music off and get a magazine or dictionary to get some ideas to write down.

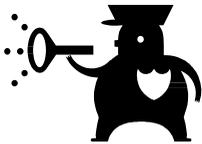


If this drives you bananas too, maybe you can try also to look at a book or the dictionary to get some ideas too. And do not look at TV because that will distract you very much.



# Profanity and Parking Violations

by Richard Truchetta



My job drives me bananas. I work at the mall as a security officer. The customers I deal with vary.

Some are nice and know that I have a job to do, and some are just rude and nasty. They constantly show disrespect to me as well as my co-workers. They disregard rules and regulations of the mall. They walk around and act like they own the place.

Richard's reading and writing are improving. He is working on his goals. Music is his passion. He wrote this story because customers don't treat security officers with respect.

When I approach them or put a parking violation on their vehicle they get really mad, to the point they are using profanity, yelling at me for doing my job. I get a lot of pleasure seeing a tow truck jacking up the rude, disrespectful, nasty customer's vehicle and taking it away. When other customers hear about cars being towed, they know they cannot get away with anything on my watch. They want to drive me bananas. I will drive their pockets bananas.



# A Rooster

by Vicky Nguyen

In February 1976, my new year (lunar year) was coming, so I decided to go to the supermarket to buy some food to celebrate my new year.

I went to the supermarket, straight to the meat station to buy a chicken. I told the man there,

"I want to buy a chicken please." The man there showed me some chicken but not the kind I wanted. So he asked me, "What kind of chicken you want, mama?" I looked at him and said, "A chicken man, like you please." The man turned around, looked at me, and raised his voice, "A chicken

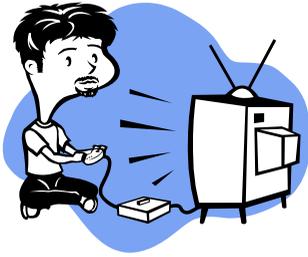


man like me. I am not a chicken man." I hurried to tell him, "No, no. I did not mean like that, I want a chicken with a comb of a cock, sir." Now he understood what kind of chicken I wanted. He was laughing a lot and told me that was a rooster.

Now I know the male chicken is called A ROOSTER.

# I Go Bananas Over Bananas

by Faalaa Fua



My little nephew Da'miyah makes too much noise at night, so I can't sleep. He plays wrestling computer games all night. He

runs around and makes noise. My niece Michelle tells Da'miyah, "Your uncle wants to rest. Go sleep. Everybody go in your room and sleep." Then I sleep good.

Every time I see bananas, I go crazy. My niece Lees eats all the bananas. I ask her to leave bananas. Rita, my other niece, goes and gets some more bananas, and I eat bananas.



Faalaa likes to work, watch TV and movies, and ride his bicycle. He is also a really good artist. His dream is to have a 1971 VW bus with everything in it and a driver's license.

# Shopping and Soccer

by Araceli Figueroa

Araceli was born in Mexico and now lives in her own home in San José with her husband Alex, son Alexis (8), daughter Areli (5), and a dog. On weekends they enjoy doing things as a family like visiting parks, the zoo, and the Monterey Aquarium. When she has free time she loves to read, write, and go shopping.

Like all women, I love to go shopping, and here are some things that drive me bananas.



I have two kids and always ask them to go to the bathroom before leaving for the store, and they say "No, I don't feel like it." So we leave, and just in the

middle of the store they need to go potty . . . URGENTLY . . . and I have to run like crazy to look for a restroom.

The second thing in the shopping center is when you've spent hours looking for a pair of shoes, and when you finally find the perfect ones, guess what? THEY DON'T HAVE YOUR SIZE!!!





But the biggest thing in my almost perfect life that drives me bananas—and all kinds of fruit—is my husband’s obsession with football, soccer. He plays soccer, he watches soccer on TV, he listens to soccer. Unfortunately, he doesn’t eat soccer, so I have to cook for him. If there were a soccer soup recipe, he would be happy.

“The library encourages people to read books and develops their hobbies and interests. The library has helped me adjust to living well in another country. – C. K.”

# Too Much Yard

by Juanita Avila



Juanita's grand kids get a big kick out of it when they give her a spelling test and she gets all the words right.

What drives me bananas? Too much yard! Having such a big backyard and not having enough time to maintain

or enjoy it. I have all the potential it takes, I just do not have enough time to maintain it.



I have lots of fruit trees, a persimmon tree, peach tree, guava tree, nectarine tree, and orange, lime, and grapefruit trees. On the right side of the fence there is only dirt. That is where I plant my chiles and tomatoes every summer. To the left side of the fence I have roses and cactus.



I really enjoy doing yard work and attending my plants. I have to cut the grass and clean the yard at least twice a month to keep it looking nice.

What drives me bananas is that it is so much work and I don't get to enjoy it as much as I would like to.

Wouldn't it drive you bananas?

# Quirks

by Nataliya Dineva

Era is my friend who eats only healthy meals. I enjoy doing things with Era but I don't like eating with her, because she does not agree with my choice of food.



I like meat and sweets, especially chocolate and cake. Era would have fits and insist that I don't eat any of those foods because they are not healthy. It drives me mad every time.

I am Max's nanny. I work for Lyla, Max's mother. Lyla gave me a GPS as a present, but she does not want me to use it when I am driving with Max. She said the GPS is unsafe to use. The irony is that she uses a GPS when driving with Max. What a hypocrite!



We all have quirks. Some quirks can really drive a person bananas if you allow them to. Lighten up; life is too short!



Nataliya is from Bulgaria. She has been studying with PAR since 2008. Her tutor, Doris, has helped her learn to read and write better. Her language skills have improved a lot and she is very thankful to the library and her tutor.

# I Don't Want to Be a Chia Pet

by David Cornejo



My hair drives me bananas, and it's been that way since junior high school, when I was fourteen. I used to wear a hat all of the time. I stopped wearing hats when I was in high school, and that's when I started to get haircuts on a regular basis. My hair grew so fast it drove my parents bananas too. They were the ones I would ask for money to get my hair cut.

When we didn't have money for my haircuts, I would go without a haircut for two to three weeks. That may not be a long time for others, but my hair seems to grow overnight.

By the time I would finally get a haircut, my hair would look so crazy that my friends nicknamed me "Bobble Head."





As the years went on, my hair continued to drive me bananas. Now that I'm an adult, I thought I wouldn't need to get haircuts weekly.

The only reason I get haircuts now is because of my girlfriend. When my hair is not trimmed, she calls me a chia pet and then she sings the song, "Cha cha cha chiaaa!!!"

"I used to ask people to translate my letters. Now I'm trying to read by myself and to understand what I read.  
- Anonymous"

# “Smoking Bananas”

by Maria Torres Gafford



Maria has been in this program for almost three years. This program is making her literacy life easier and her personal life independent. Through her writing and reading she is improving her English understanding and speaking. She wants to thank everyone who makes this program possible.

When I see a smoker, I cannot help myself to think of how annoying the cigarette smoke is for me, and how unhealthy smoking is for them. I also think of how I



realized that the cigarette smoke is annoying. When I was a teenager, I used to hear my oldest sister complain about how annoying the cigarette smoke smell was for her. She had to attend a vocational school in Puebla. As Puebla is located 13 km from Cholula, our town, she had to get on the local buses. During her round trips, a couple of passengers would smoke their cigarettes and she would smell and breathe the annoying smoke. Then she would arrive home with her complaints.

I often told myself, “My sister is very particular.” But little by little the cigarette smoke started to bother me as well. At that time (1980), only Mexican hospitals would have signs saying “No Smoking.”

Outside the hospitals, however, there were not any signs. In fact, there were not any smoking regulations. When I left México (2003), the restaurants started to have smoking areas and non-smoking areas, but there were not any physical walls to stop the pollution from the smoking area from going into the non-smoking area.

When I arrived in San José in (2003), I loved to know that California has a non-smoking law. I also found out that the law is enforced. However, soon I was disappointed.

As smoking is prohibited inside all kinds of buildings and business facilities, the individuals who wish to smoke may do so outside the buildings or businesses. As my husband and I live in downtown San José and we do not use a car, we love to walk and enjoy getting on public transportation. So always when we do this, we have to breathe the secondhand smoke.



Furthermore, when I breathe the secondhand smoke, I get really angry. I am angry for two reasons that really “drive me bananas.” First, I told myself the smokers and I are going to die, probably of cancer or emphysema as my *Kids Discover*, volume 16, issue 2, reported the dangers of smoking AND secondhand smoke. “If there is one thing you do to take care of your lungs, don’t smoke. Not even once. Not ever. And stay away from secondhand smoke. Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including:

**AMMONIA**, used in floor cleaners

**ARSENIC**, used as a rat poison

**BUTANE**, lighter fluid

**CADMIUM**, used in batteries

**CARBON MONOXIDE**, found in the exhaust from cars

**FORMALDEHYDE**, used to preserve body tissue

**HYDROGEN CYANIDE**, used as a poison in gas chambers

**METHANE**, part of rocket fuel

**NICOTINE**, a deadly poison”

Secondhand smoke also drives me bananas because I think about how the smokers are damaging my health. When I think about that damage, I get extremely annoyed and stressed, which causes my liver to produce more bile. So, it's not only my lungs that are damaged by secondhand smoke but also my liver.



**SMOKERS, PLEASE, KEEP YOUR SMOKE TO YOURSELVES!**

“The library has a lot of valuable resources for me and for my children to use and to learn from. My children have a chance to interact with other people to improve our literacy.

- H. L.”

# Wasting Water

by Virginia Olivo

Virginia has been with the PAR program for over six years. She grew up in downtown San Jose. She is a devoted grandmother and aunt to Jacob and Adrian. Virginia enjoys her tutor, Julia, greatly.



Many things drive me bananas. At the top of the list would be people washing dishes, wiping down counters, and brushing their teeth while the whole time the water is running.

It is very wasteful in two respects. Firstly, it wastes valuable water, and secondly, it's costly. I've seen, on Oprah, the process of taking sewer water and making it into drinking water. We need to conserve, use it wisely and sparingly.



People say, "Water, it doesn't cost that much," but to me, if you're wasting a dollar, then it's a waste. It seems like I am nit-picky, but when I wash my school bus in the driveway at times I am being wasteful myself. At least I am watering the grass.



I don't go to Earth Day. I'm not like that. I think it's just the waste of energy that affects me. Why waste energy if you don't have to?

“People that read with no problem will not understand, but life is hard for ones that can't read. I am one of them. I have been in PAR for two years. My reading and writing is getting better. – Anonymous”

# My Mother Never Drives Me Crazy

by Yakob Ghebreselassie



First I have to say thank you to my teacher, Professor Julie Sparks, and for my tutor community: thank you for giving us this chance.



Yakob is from Eritrea. He has 4 sisters and 4 brothers and his mom and dad. He started playing soccer when he was 6. Now he is coaching a team of Ethiopian and Eritrean men. He would like to coach soccer full time. He speaks Tigrinya and Amharic, and now he is studying English.



Today I'm talking about my mother. She is a very strong woman, and I'm really admiring of her. I can say she is my angel, not only my mom, because of what she did for us when our life was very rough.

She made us stand on our feet, she made us believe in ourselves, she made us be strong. That's why I'm writing this letter about how much I really appreciate her.

Thank you, Mom.

By the way, my mom knows how to make delicious food. If you want her to cook for you, let me know and I will ask for you.

Thank you for listening to me.

# Friendship

by Ferewoini Gebreslassie



One of the things that drive me crazy (bananas) is friendship. Friendships come with a lot of benefits and involve time, too. Most of the time people take advantage of relationships. Sometimes it is really difficult to maintain a relationship. I try my best to be the best possible friend, but that doesn't work as much.

I have the ability to accept a friend for who they are and not expect them to be who I want them to be. I don't like to be involved in someone's business. I value and cherish my friendships. I have an amazing life. I think life is too precious to worry about unnecessary stuff. All friendship comes with a lot of benefits, but sometimes friendship can be heart breaking and much more. It drives me crazy when it comes to friendship.



Ferewoini was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She moved to Kenya and then came with her brother to the United States in 2001. She was happy to come to San José to meet her extended family. She is a proud American citizen because this country gives her a good opportunity to look and reach for her dreams!

# Second Thoughts and Permission Codes

by Helena Nguyen



Helena is studying with PAR to help her children. She wants to help them with their homework.

I had a bad feeling that today was not going to be a good day.

I was right, the events that followed drove me bananas.

I drove halfway and suddenly . . . drove back home to lock the door.

Then I went to the Administration Office at Evergreen Valley College . . . permission code.

After spending half an hour looking . . . the receptionist told me to go back to the Administration Office . . . permission codes.

I kept going back and forth between . . .



# I Need More Power of Persuasion

by Young Hwan Kim

I have two daughters who have different personalities. The older daughter likes to play outside with her friends and read romantic novels like "New Moon." The younger daughter likes to play alone, solving math problems, playing piano, and playing online games. I do not know why my kids have different personalities.



I want my kids to grow up having a healthy body and mind. When my wife and I prepared to travel for a relaxing time, our older daughter was very excited, but our younger daughter was so sad because she likes to stay at home with the computer. I tried to persuade the younger kid with my wife, but it was not easy for us to persuade her. At this time, I was angry with myself because I did not have any skills and wisdom I could use to persuade well when one of my family had a different opinion.

# It Is Costco's Fault That I Yelled at My Children

by Eunju Jang



Eunju was born in Korea. She majored in International Trading in college. She has been living in San José since 2001 with her husband and their three lovely children. When her family gathers around the table to eat, she feels really happy.

Last December, my husband promised to buy me a round breakfast table from Ethan Allen. It is one of the most popular brands of furniture for Koreans in the Bay Area. That furniture is very expensive; the price is 1,000 dollars more than Costco, excluding chairs. But I love the elegance, style, and color.



One day my husband said to me, "Costco has a round table." He wanted to spend less money. So I went to see it at Costco. When

I saw the round table, it was good, but the color was dark cherry. My family has five people, but the set has four chairs.

This year my resolution is saving money. That was what I promised my husband. Even though I was disappointed, I agreed to buy it from Costco.



When I came back home, the family room was very messy. Books and clothes were scattered everywhere. I yelled to my children to clean up the room.

As soon as I screamed, I regretted it. But I couldn't say "Sorry" to my children. I felt very uncomfortable, sad, and guilty. I had yelled because I was disappointed about the table.

Costco's low price made me decide not to buy from Ethan Allen. That's what drives me bananas.

# I Am Crazy About Chocolate

by Hyunjung Kim

Hyunjung is originally from Korea and is now living in San José with her husband. She is a fine artist and a jewelry designer. She loves to travel and explore new things, keeping her values in life – to live, love, and laugh.

When I have chocolate, I feel like I am lying down on a soft flowery bed, and it melts in my mouth sweetly. Chocolate is very soft and smooth. It makes me have sweet feelings in my entire body and mind. It also brings me into a heavenly dream. I especially love to have the taste of a slowly melting soft brown chocolate. While I am having chocolate, I am very happy and it makes me smile. Whenever I am under a lot of stress, I eat chocolate. It makes me feel relaxed, and I even forget about why I have stress. Sometimes I eat chocolate instead of a meal.



However, it makes me have serious acne and belly fat. I try to stop eating chocolate even though it is very difficult for me. How can I give up chocolate? I try not to think about the

sweetest and delightful chocolate, but my hands shake and I think about chocolate more than before. I decided to treat chocolate like a present and give it to myself when I do a good thing.

How can I forget about chocolate?! I have to vouch to myself that I am a chocoholic.

“Having a learner tell you that they received a raise at work because of this program, seeing the expression on their face when they tell you that they have read their first book, voted for the first time or finally are able to read highway signs, make the results of volunteering worth everything  
– R.B.”

# Childish Parents

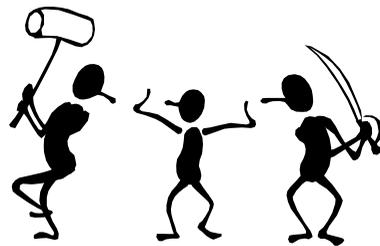
by Nyunt



My name is Nyunt. I work at a local retail store. I do a lot of work in my store and I clean the floor every day, aisle by aisle. Some customers' children drive me bananas because first, some

customers bring their children and they play and open items in the store, then they take the items anywhere. Some parents don't teach their children how to behave in a store. Also, some parents will shop nearby and send their children to my store. Some parents don't like when we complain about their children.

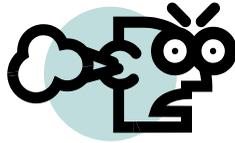
For example, some customers bring their children and their children go to the toy section. They play, open and make a



mess with our merchandise. They bring items anywhere. Some parents play with their kids,

like throwing a ball around or fighting with plastic or foam swords. They don't teach their children. When we see this, we tell their parents but they don't like it.

In conclusion, this drives me bananas! I think some parents need to teach their children how to behave. We always work hard and are busy.



Some customers complain about the store being messy. The boss gets mad. We are working under stress. Customers should be more considerate.

“A high school diploma no longer guarantees a job. My worries are that I am not going to be able to meet my career objectives. Partners in Reading has been able to help me do what I have done so far. – F. G.”

# These Things Make Me Crazy

by Arefa Omar-Hamed



Sometimes the team at work doesn't communicate together. When I communicate with the team I feel comfortable. My team makes me feel happy and I am comfortable with them when we communicate. When we don't communicate I don't enjoy the work.

I like the people that tell the truth, the story. I like the people who are very honest. I have a friend who is very honest with me. She is never lying to me. Every time I talk to her she is very serious. She is trying to help me, and sometimes I ask for her help.

I also like it when I talk to my brother. He is always worrying about me. Sometimes when I haven't talked to him I feel uncomfortable because I haven't talked to him yet. He tells me the truth about everything.





English makes me crazy when I don't speak it very well. I want to speak English very well so I can change my life, get a good job and communicate with the people. It is hard to make friends because I don't speak perfectly. But I try. I do my best.

“The library and Partners in Reading have had a great impact on me by helping me develop my confidence and communicate better with family, friends, and customers. It's a great help in passing the citizenship exam. – Anonymous”

# Slow Eater

by Helen Liao



Helen is a mother of two lovely daughters. She enjoys the PAR program. She wants to improve her reading and writing skills so she can help her children in school.

I have two lovely daughters, Mabel and Corina. Mabel is three years old and Corina is thirteen months old. Both of them are adorable and well behaved. They love to play with me and their father. We are very close together. Wherever I go, they want to come along. Whatever I do, they want to copy me.

Mabel is a very calm child. She can sit and color or draw for a long time. I am very pleased with her patience and her ability to stay focused. However, in some instances, her patience sometimes drives me bananas. For example, during mealtime, it takes her forever to swallow her food. Therefore, her meals usually last two to three hours, which leaves her very little time between the meal and naptime to do other things. Since she has no time to play between her meal and her nap, she gets grouchy.





I tried to encourage her to eat faster by cooking her favorite foods, but it made no difference. People advised me that I should not worry and

let her be hungry. She will then have a better appetite and eat quicker. I tried it out for one week but it was no use with her. I also tried to tempt her to finish the meal fast so she could play a game on the computer. This temptation worked exactly one time. Her bad eating habit really drives me bananas.

Then one day out of the blue, while I was busy cooking and Mabel was supposed to be eating at the table, I caught her eating and playing a computer game at the same time instead and she did finish her meal within minutes. AHA! That is the trick. My girl is good at multitasking.

# What Drives Me Bananas?

by Balbir Singh



Balbir is from India and came to the U.S. in 1980. She completed the 3rd grade in India and has been working with PAR for over 1½ years. She is an extremely motivated learner. She has four children and three grandchildren. She hopes to speak, read and write English well, so that one day she can teach others and help her grandchildren as well.

This is a question that can be best answered with one word—messy. It drives me crazy when I clean my house from top to bottom and in less than an hour my children make it into a disaster area.



When my children were young, I was working full time. They had two dogs and a cat. They all used to run around in dirty water where we lived.

When they would come home from school, they would leave their backpacks in the middle of the living room, their shoes a little bit farther. One would be in the hallway and another probably somewhere else in the house. After they ate their snacks they would go outside to take the dogs into the ditch and get wet and dirty.



Dirty clothes and feet and wet animals would come back in the house. Everywhere in the house they went, they left a trail of dirty feet. That used to drive me nuts.

No matter how many times I told them that when you use something, you should put it back in its proper place, it seemed as though nothing ever made it all the way back to its place.

I learned to live with my children, their pets, and the world around being messy. But today, I couldn't be happier to say that I am very proud of them.



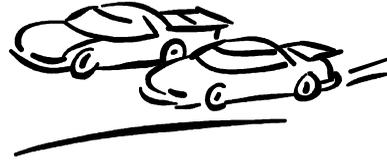
They got their education, they have good jobs, and they are all leading very happy and healthy lives. They did drive me bananas, but it was worth it.

# Dangerous Drivers

by Hadas T.

Hadas joined the program to improve her English. She started in 2008.

One day I was driving Highway 17. Then two cars came behind me. When they crossed the line, I thought they were racing, they looked like that. When they cross without signaling, they may make an accident. Careless drivers make me go bananas.



People who drive too slowly make me angry too.

Another thing about drivers, some drivers: when I drive the highway, I am supposed to drive only 65 mph. But some drivers push me to drive faster by honking their horns at me. That makes me nervous. People honking too much on the highway could cause an accident.

# Bananas

by Darryl Redfield



Cancer drives me bananas because it keeps taking away my friends.

Darryl always likes a challenge. He enjoys writing for the Writing Challenge.

I work on an oncology floor and I meet lots of people who have cancer. Some are famous, some not, but who cares. Most all become friends.

One thing that really drives me bananas is when I learn of a death. Immediately, my mind goes into a different mode. I think of consoling words to say to the family, but yet I'm crying on the inside.



Another thing that drives me bananas is when a friend dies alone, because I would've loved to have been by there by their side.

But yet, I keep coming back for more because I love taking care of my friends.

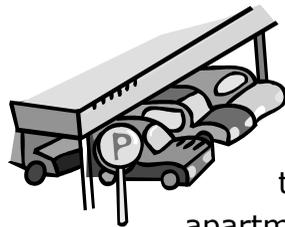
# Losing My Parking Spot

by Minh Thy



Minh Thy is a hard-working wife and mother. She hopes people will treat each other right after they read her story.

Last week, I went home after a long day at work. It was raining heavily and windy, so it took me one hour to get home.



I thought I could relax. Unfortunately, someone parked in my parking spot. I had to park far away from my apartment and hope this is a guest's car. They will leave very soon!

After I checked three times, the car was still there. I had to work early in the morning, so I wanted to move my car and saw a parking permit, which meant the driver was a resident. It made me angry.



I always treat people the way that I want to be treated, so I hope everybody will treat me the same way.

# My Ten-Year-Old Grandson's Nagging

by Martha Aldama

My grandson drives me crazy when he is hungry and when he doesn't leave me alone.



He does not have patience at all. When I am preparing dinner, he asks me to make only his favorite food. He likes chicken tacos, macaroni and cheese, and mashed potatoes. As I am cooking, I can hear him say, "I am hungry. I want to eat now!"



Martha likes to work with kids so she can help them improve their skills.



He wants attention from me all the time. He follows me wherever I go. He likes to come with me when I go for a walk, but he likes to go his own way.

He likes to come to the library with me all the time. He checks out too many items. I get confused about when the different items are due.



When I come home feeling tired, he makes a milkshake for me. He drives me crazy, but I love him very much.

# All Sorts of Things Can Make People Laugh

by Jackie Smith



Jackie says, "This page is dedicated to and in honor of my great-grandmother Maxine L. Dumas. We just have to keep on loving and believing in each other through it all. She has had 12 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. We love you. She has one sister left, Elees, and her late sister Georgia. All the sisters had great grandchildren as of 2009."

Well, little sister Clanesa wanted to spend time with me, and lil bro heard that! "I want to come!" Nevertheless, we thought it over, and said, "Come with me!" Bro was so happy and ran down the hall. Ness made a U-turn. Then we went out in the neighborhood sightseeing.

We also were glad to see ornaments on all kinds of plants and trees that make you want to laugh as if you were right there. All kinds of ornaments that looked real. Some things in the trees were E-shaped on the branches.



The same day however, we needed to go do the shopping. It really pays to make a list ahead of time so you do not go bananas. If you don't, on the one hand, you end up with too many things. That makes you laugh at yourself. That makes you go bananas. On the other hand, you do not plan too wisely if, like me, you have to bring your granddaughter

and three more children to the store. First you think, “How in the world can I travel with four little people—Clanessa, Clarence Jr., Joseph, and Akallish?”



That Saturday evening on the way home from the store, my two little nephews somehow opened the Kool-Aid package. Somehow all three children needed services and six pairs of clothing and three hairdos to fix—Akallish, Joseph, and Clarence Jr. That was an unforgettable day of going bananas, and we had lots of laughter.



Somehow, there was red Kool-Aid on the car seats, on their mouths, hands, their clothing—what’s next? Shoes and socks. Even the baby had a little taste on her tongue. That’s “going bananas.” We love to live it, love to learn it. . .

# I Hate Taking Tests!

by Chiao-Ling Wang

Chiao-Ling has taught Chinese for 20 years. She says, "I love learning and studying new things. I'm starting my third year with PAR and this is my second PAR essay."

I hate taking tests, because that drives me bananas!

One year, I took an accounting class at De Anza College. It was an unforgettable experience! This was my first time attending an official class, as a student in America.

When I got my first test paper, my face flushed red all over; my body was trembling and my fingers were frozen!

Looking around, I noticed all the other (much younger) students were writing rapidly. "Calm down! Calm down!" my heart continued to shout. After ten minutes, I just started to write. I understood I would not have enough time to finish the test if I did not start soon.

Finally, I returned my test paper in to the teacher. My score was 91! My goodness! Unbelievable?

However, I still hate taking tests, because that still drives me bananas!



# Noise at Home

by Rose Mosi

The children at home drive me bananas. They make too much noise. They don't want to eat. They watch TV too much after school. These things make me crazy.



Rose is from Cameroon in Africa and lives with one of her daughters in San José. She never went to school in Cameroon. The language she spoke in Cameroon is not written. Rose works hard and is very motivated to learn to read English.



The children run and play around the house. They chase each other. They yell at each other. They make my head ache.

The children like to eat junk food, not regular food. After school they only want to eat junk food.

Instead of watching TV after school, I would like them to take a nap and do their homework. They will do their homework, but they don't want to take a nap.

I will try my best to improve them. They won't drive me bananas anymore. I love them.

# Carpool Fool?

by Bona Yi

A man in a black uniform was following me on a shiny motorcycle. I was aware of it in the rear mirror of the car. He passed and looked at me and inside my car. Then, he gave me a hand signal, "Pull your car over to the side!" It was on Monday at 8:50 a.m. at Montague Expressway, coming from McCarthy Boulevard going just one block southbound. I was by myself in the carpool lane while the electronic sign said, "Exit OK". I was exiting. However, I got the traffic violation ticket for \$275. Wait a second! I did not even have a chance to glance, at my brand new driver license. But I had to pay the fine. That drove me bananas. Later on after some time, I could not help being nervous whenever I saw a shiny motorcycle. That drove me double, triple bananas again.

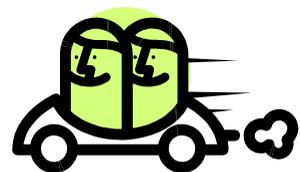


I SHOULD have clearly explained my situation in English. But I did not say anything. I could not. All of



a sudden, I was anxious about my three-year-old boy who was waiting for me, home alone, watching "Sesame Street". I worried needlessly. What if it is revealed that my little boy is home alone? I have heard it is illegal to leave a child under thirteen home alone. What if they took my boy away from me? As the proverb says, "He that has a great nose thinks everyone is speaking of it". My boy was not an issue at all. I don't know why I was paralyzed. It drove me bananas. I did not need to worry that the policeman would know about my boy. I simply needed to say, "I am exiting and passed the driving exam two days ago, still waiting for my brand new California driver license as a brand new immigrant." That unforgettable fine happened on my very first lawful driving day.

Do you know what "carpool" is? I did not. I wish I had not passed the exam without knowing it. What a foolish innocent driver I was! Carpool fool!



# Cutting in Line

by Camille Wu



I was waiting in line at the bank for almost 20 minutes. Finally I was the next one, then all of sudden, a woman came from nowhere and decided to go to the window that I

was supposed to go to. I was totally shocked but did not do anything.

I was taking a long flight and since my seat was by the window, I decided not to go to the bathroom during the flight. Finally the airplane landed. I ran to the bathroom, and there were a lot of people already waiting in line. I waited just like everyone else. Finally it was my turn, and there was a woman who decided to walk past the people waiting in line to use the bathroom. Oh my, I could not believe it. Didn't she see a lot of people were waiting?

This time I did not tolerate it. I walked to her to confront her that she needed to wait in line. I know it is crazy, but it drives me bananas when people cut in line.

# Slow as Molasses

by Earlene Chapman

Earlene wrote this story in honor of her mother and all that she did to bring joy to those around her. Earlene has been an active participant in PAR for three years.

One thing that drives me crazy is the voice answering system, or as I like to call it, the machine that only asks questions for me to give answers and never understands what I am saying. It really frustrates me because I speak very clearly but the silly machine says, "I am sorry, can you repeat your answer again?" She will ask me three times before I am finally transferred to a real person. But sometimes the real person is just as bad as the machine.



Another thing that drives me nuts is standing in line at the post office. I am going to mail a small package and I am looking at the cashiers, thinking, "There are three people there. I will be served soon." But just before I get to the window, the cashier puts up a sign "Next window please," and there are only two people open. And boy, are they slow as molasses!!

“All of my learning challenges are solved, including reading, writing, grammar, computer skills, Photoshop editing, and using Microsoft PowerPoint. Learning is a lifelong journey. One day my American dream will come true! – C-L. W.”

## Partners in Reading Is on the Move

The 2009–2010 year was active for Partners in Reading (PAR). The program grew in size as PAR served more learners and trained more tutors. It has also expanded the instructional programs that are offered to include English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. In addition, PAR began a job training project through the *Work Wise* grant. Also, small groups and classes increased to supplement individual tutoring.

Here are some of the highlights from this past year.

- Began an ESL program for adult second language learners.
- Served 336 adult learners with adult literacy and ESL instruction.
- Awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to implement *Work Wise: Improving Job Performance and Proficiency job training program*.
- Awarded a grant from the California State Library to develop a workplace curriculum for tutors based on the *Work Wise* project.
- Expanded partnerships to provide instruction at East Side Union Adult Education program, San José State University, and Rocketship Si Se Puede School.
- Recipient of the 2009 Pride of San José Award for Innovation from the City of San José.

PAR is on the move thanks to the support and encouragement of many. They include the San José Public Library, the City of San José, the California State Library, and the adult learners, tutors, and volunteers who contribute to its growth. A special recognition goes to PAR staff, who work hard to make all of this happen.

You're all the best!

## Partners in Reading Trains Employees at Work

Partners in Reading (PAR) began a new project this year, called *Work Wise: Improving Job Performance and Proficiency*, which is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor. The purpose of the project is to help employees improve their reading, writing, and English as well as their job skills. PAR will offer training classes to employees at their work site.

PAR staff will go to the work site to assess the types of job tasks employees perform. They will also interview the employees and employers to find out what skills they want to be taught. Once PAR staff have this information, they will write plans for instruction customized just for those employees.

A PAR teacher will offer classes twice a week for six months. Tutors will assist the teacher with instruction. Computers will be available for practice and skill development.

The instructional plans created during the project for teachers and tutors will be shared with other adult literacy programs in California. They can use this information to help their adult learners improve job skills as well as reading, writing, and English.

## Tutors Making a Big Difference

Tutors are the backbone of Partners in Reading (PAR). They enable PAR to reach its mission to help adults improve their literacy skills and live life more fully. They unselfishly share their time, their knowledge, and their wisdom with their adult learners. They support success and celebrate the progress each adult makes. It's through their efforts that learners build more confidence and become more self-assured.

There is a special relationship that develops between an adult learner and tutor. They share stories and get to know what is important in each other's lives. A trust and belief in one another develops that makes progress possible. Personal goals are reached, such as the thrill of reading a book or writing out holiday cards for the first time. Reaching small goals such as completing a job application can add up to achieving the large goal of securing a job. Life moves forward.

All this is possible because of the generosity and caring of PAR tutors.

Thank you for making a BIG difference in the lives of learners and staff.

## Small Steps Lead to Big Successes

Why do adults choose PAR? Most people want to read and write better. But what does that mean? It is the chance to read to their kids and help them with their homework. They can get a job or do their jobs better. They can become a citizen or vote. Maybe they need help getting a driver license. Each of these examples is a way for participants to measure success. Here are just a few examples of the difference that PAR has made in the lives of adult learners in the past year as reported by the participants.

- 94 people reported that they improved their writing skills by writing a story for this book, writing a letter, or taking a phone message
- 29 people became more involved in their community by passing the citizenship test, voting, or volunteering
- 111 learned computer skills, either learning the keyboard, searching on the Internet or sending emails
- 131 adults reported better reading skills so they could read aloud in church, complete a book on their own or figure out where to go on a map.

Most importantly, 100% of the PAR learners became more independent and self-assured in the things they do each day. They stand a little taller and gain confidence, which is so important to leading happy and fulfilling lives. PAR learners work hard every day and over time achieve remarkable results.

“The San José Public Library has made a difference in my life. I can look for books that I want and search for information. My family always wants to come to the library to read books. – M. T.”

## New Words

Here are words that are found in this book. This list of words may be new or difficult to read or spell. The words may also be used a lot. After each word, there is a short definition. After the definition, there is a short sentence. The number at the end is the page where the story that uses this word in the book. Read these words and they will help you understand the stories.

### **accident, 96**

An unexpected event that usually breaks something or hurts someone—The car accident was very bad and closed the road for two hours.

### **accompany, 38**

Go with—Usually parents **accompany** their young children when they come to the library.

### **aisle, 88**

A passage between two rows—The **aisle** on the bus was very small.

### **anniversary, 50**

A celebration on the date of a special event—Sixty people came to the **anniversary** party for their mother and father.

### **appreciate, 80**

To be grateful for something—I **appreciate** living in the Bay Area because the weather is good.

**aroma, 34**

Smell—The **aroma** from the kitchen made me very hungry.

**barbecue, 56**

A cookout—At the **barbecue**, they ate corn, grilled vegetables, and hot dogs.

**blessing, 3**

Something that is a gift, that you are happy about—It is a **blessing** to have the family eat together.

**brand, 84**

A product from a company—Costco often sells cheaper **brands** of food and clothing than smaller companies.

**cafeteria, 55**

A room where food is served and people eat—The school **cafeteria** has very good food.

**caroling, 28**

Singing happy songs, especially at Christmas—The group went **caroling** in front of the houses on the street with the Christmas decorations.

**cashier, 107**

The person who collects your money at a store or restaurant—The **cashier** makes change with smaller bills and coins.

**cigarette, 74**

Tobacco rolled in paper for smoking—Smoking a **cigarette** can be bad for your health.

**communicate, 90**

To speak or write—It is important to **communicate** clearly so that others can understand you.

**conference, 31**

A meeting—Each parent is supposed to go to a teacher **conference** at school each year.

**conserve, 78**

Use less—I try to **conserve** water by taking shorter showers and **conserve** energy by turning off my lights and my heat.

**constantly, 65**

All the time—Children and adults **constantly** learn new things.

**cuisine, 18**

A type of food—In San José you can eat a lot of Mexican **cuisine**.

**cumin, 10**

A seed used in cooking—**Cumin** seeds are used a lot in Indian food.

**customer, 89**

The **customer** was happy with the excellent **customer** service at the store.

**daughter, 83**

A girl related to one or both parents—His **daughter** looks a lot more like her mother than like him.

**delicious, 15**

Something that tastes really good—The baker made a **delicious** cake.

**education, 95**

Schooling, instruction—It is never too late to get a good **education**.

**everybody, 98**

All people—In San José, **everybody** likes the library.

**experience, 4**

Something that you do or that happens to you—I burned myself and learned from that **experience** never to touch a hot stove.

**favorite, 16**

The one you like best—My **favorite** food is vegetables.

**February, 66**

The second month—In **February** we celebrate Valentine’s Day and Black History Month.

**finally, 102**

At last—**Finally**, after waiting a long time, the Partners in Reading book has been printed.

**forever, 92**

A really long time—Sometimes traffic in San José takes **forever** when there is an accident.

**friends, 91**

A person whom you like, and who likes you—Everyone needs a good **friend**.

**from scratch, 4**

From the beginning—She made cookies **from scratch** instead of from a mix in a box.

**ginger, 51**

A spice from a root—**Ginger** is used in a lot of Asian foods.

**gradually, 14**

Slowly, in small steps—He **gradually** got better at reading and writing.

**grocery store, 44**

A market or a place to buy food—I shop at a small **grocery store** near where I live.

**hospitality, 42**

Being welcoming—We appreciated the **hospitality** at the party because we felt at home.

**immigration, 61**

The department where you go to get permission to move to a new country—The **immigration** process to come to the United States has many steps.

**ingredients, 7**

Part of a recipe—The recipe has six **ingredients** in it.

**Lent, 1**

A time in the Catholic church in the spring before Easter—The family had celebrated for the beginning of **Lent**.

**library, 99**

A place where you can study, borrow books, and have a tutor—San José has 19 **libraries**.

**maintain, 70**

To take care of—She has a big yard, and it takes a lot of time each week to **maintain** it so that it looks nice.

**nephew, 67**

Son of a sister or brother — My **nephew** looks just like my brother.

**nervous, 64**

Anxious or agitated—He feels **nervous** when he tries something new.

**noise, 103**

A sound, usually loud—When her family gets together, there is always a lot of **noise** because there are so many people.

**organic, 21**

Produced without chemical fertilizers or pesticides—  
You can buy **organic** fruits and vegetables at a  
farmers' market.

**paralyzed, 105**

Unable to move—The woman was **paralyzed** by fear  
and didn't move.

**pastor, 63**

A priest or minister in charge of a church or  
congregation—The **pastor** talked for 22 minutes on  
Sunday morning.

**people, 96**

More than one person—Many **people** will read this  
book and learn more about the adult learners of  
Partners in Reading.

**precious, 81**

Something that is very valuable—The **precious** doll  
was worth a lot of money.

**quirk, 71**

A strange or unusual behavior—He has a lot of strange  
**quirks**.

**recipe, 18**

A list of foods and steps to prepare food—I found a  
good **recipe** for a fruit salad in a cook book.

**regular, 72**

At a set time—I keep a **regular** schedule so I am always on time.

**relaxed, 86**

Comfortable, loose, at ease—I **relaxed** on the couch after dinner.

**restaurant, 32**

A place to buy food and eat a meal—I eat at a **restaurant** one time a week.

**sauce, 45**

Something to put on top of food, usually liquid—I like to put **sauce** on fish and chicken.

**scrambled, 9**

Mix together—I eat **scrambled** eggs for breakfast every week.

**similar, 24**

Almost the same—The two sisters look **similar**, with long hair and brown eyes.

**spicy, 36**

A hot flavor—The peppers made the food very **spicy**.

**suddenly, 82**

All at once, without warning—The sky was blue, but then **suddenly** it turned gray and black, and then it rained very hard.

**symbolize, 22**

To represent—The colors red, white, and blue on the American flag **symbolize** freedom.

**tamarind, 46**

A tropical tree with seeds that can be made into juice—She ordered a **tamarind** drink at the restaurant.

**tasty, 5**

Having a good flavor—The salad was very **tasty**.

**taught, 44**

Past of teach, to instruct—Yesterday she **taught** a class.

**temperature, 57**

The amount of heat—The girl was sick so her mother took her **temperature**.

**unforgettable, 102**

Something that will always be remembered—Our trip to Washington, D. C. was **unforgettable** because we saw the White House and the Lincoln Memorial.

**vegetables, 51**

Plants that you can eat—It is usually good to eat a lot of fruits and **vegetables** every day.

**vegetarian, 13**

Without meat—Many vegetarians eat a lot of fruit, vegetables, grains, and nuts for a balanced diet.

**volunteer, 27**

To do a job for free; to give your time—Partners in Reading tutors **volunteer** for 3 hours per week at the library.