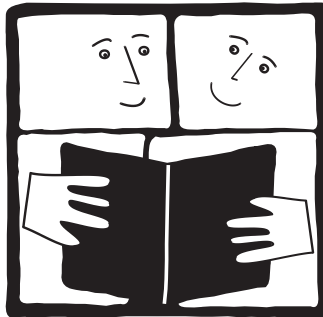


# **My Best Friend**

***Stories From the San José Public Library***

**PARTNERS IN READING**



San José Public Library

Adult Literacy Program  
2013

# ***My Best Friend Production Team***

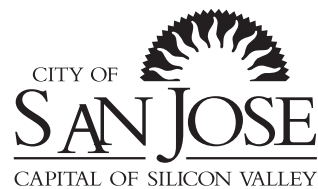
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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the San José Public Library, the City of San José, or any other funders of the Partners in Reading program.

No official endorsement by these agencies should be inferred.



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- **Victoria Scott**, who edits the book each year and works hard to make the stories easy to read while maintaining the authors' words.
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- **The San José Public Library Foundation**, which supports ways to ensure community awareness and support for PAR's services.
- **California Library Literacy Services through the California State Library**, which fund PAR and the state's library literacy programs, and promote adult literacy throughout California.

# Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support

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- Target



## Introduction

It started with a writing workshop. A lot of adult learners came and many tutors did too. Many of them had never met before, but they worked together that night to begin their journey writing about *My Best Friend*, the 2013 book of learner writings. MaryLee McNeal led the workshop as she does each year, guiding PAR learners to creatively share their thoughts and clearly express their stories in writing. By the end of the workshop, participants had a very good start on becoming authors.

Over the next few weeks as PAR learners worked on their stories, they realized that writing is a step-by-step process. It doesn't happen all at once. It takes time to think about the story and decide on just the right topic, then write that first sentence. Then read it and reread it. Add more information and give details that build on the first sentence. Enhance the story. Share how it looks and feels. Then it's time to write an ending. And all those steps are only the first draft. Keep rereading and rewriting and change those things that don't sound quite right. Make it clearer. Add some excitement. Rewrite again, and then finally it's a final draft. It's a lot of work, but with the help of the tutors, PAR learners proudly create great stories to submit to PAR. Those stories make up the book you hold.

We hope you are touched by the stories and appreciate each author's contribution. Enjoy the writers who have opened a window into their lives. Find out about their countries, their families, and what inspires them. Get to know their best friends.

Adult learners and tutors can use *My Best Friend* in many ways. Read the stories just for fun and enjoyment. Use the

book to learn about another period in time and another place. Study the way others write, and improve your own writing. Learn more about grammar and vocabulary. Most importantly, use the book to inspire you to author your own stories.

PAR learner books are released each year on International Literacy Day with a celebration to mark the event. We chose this day because people around the world are recognizing that literacy is important for better health, better jobs, stronger communities, and closer families. Thank you for joining us in recognizing the importance of literacy by reading the 2013 learner book of writings, *My Best Friend*. Please share it with others and read it again and again.

Through the contributions of many volunteers and the financial support of key funders and individuals, PAR continues to fulfill its mission and expand its reach. There are many more adults who need our services however. You can help by contributing to PAR. Please use the remittance envelope in this book, or go online to [www.sjpl.org/par](http://www.sjpl.org/par) and click on the “Donate” Button. Thank you.

*“Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It’s not something you learn in school. But if you haven’t learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven’t learned anything.”*

— Muhammad Ali

---

## Partners in Reading

*by Abraham Beyene*

My best friend is the Partners in Reading program. I was looking for an English class and a friend told me that Martin Luther King Library had a good program. After I met Ellen, she gave me my tutor, Debra. I was more and more happy. I told them that I didn't have much education, but they said that was okay.



My tutor showed me easy ways to read and use the computer. She helped me find good books for learning English grammar.

Last April my wife and I were going on vacation to Israel. My tutor got a book for me. It had Hebrew and English. When I wanted to say "Hi" to people, I would say "Shalom." When I needed to buy something at the store, I could look up the words and know what to say so people could understand me. After two weeks I could understand people. We had a very good time there.

In conclusion, now I am happy because I know more English. I can practice reading and writing every week with my tutor.

---

## My Niece Rita

by Faalaa Achica



---

Faalaa is a happy man. He comes to PAR to learn to read. He now knows the alphabet by heart. He can read over 180 words and can read some full sentences in some books by himself. He is happy that he has made so much progress.

Rita is my niece. Rita is my best friend. I live with Rita, her husband and four kids; three boys and one girl. Some Saturdays Rita takes me to watch a rugby game. Her husband plays rugby on the Bulldogs at a school in Palo Alto. Sometimes we go to eat at a restaurant after the game.

Rita and her husband cook food for the little kids and me. I like chicken and spareribs best. When I come home from work Rita says, "Hi Faalaa." I say, "Hi." Rita says, "How was your day?" I say, "Good day today."

Rita tells me to go feed the dog. I feed the dog. I give him food and water to drink. The dog jumps up on me. The dog is a big dog, a Rottweiler. Every night I watch TV on the couch. I fall asleep in the living room. Rita tells me go sleep in my room.

Rita is my good friend.

---

# I Love My Best Friend

by *Megnaga Aimru*

My best friend's name is Michelle Austin. I met her January 31, 2011 in a math class. On a break, we were talking about guys, and I was telling her about someone I like. That's how we became friends. We go to the malls and watch movies together.

Our favorite stores are Papaya and Forever 21. Sometimes we go to her house to watch TV and talk about things. Sometimes she teaches me how to cook. She cooks enchiladas because that is my favorite. For Christmas, we made tamales and we stayed up until 3 a.m. making the tamales!

If I have a problem, I talk to her about it. She listens to me and tells me what to do. Sometimes we argue, but we talk about it, and we are still friends. She is not just my best friend, she is like my sister.



---

Megnaga is a shy girl. She loves to go to school to learn new things. She goes to San José City College.

---

## Very Quiet and Friendly

by Emebet Akalewold

---

Emebet wrote this story because her instructor asked her to write about her best friend. She knew it would help her improve her writing skills.



My best friend is Elizabeth E. She is from Ethiopia. She is about my age. She's married. Her husband is also from Ethiopia. They have been married for ten years. They live in their own house in downtown San José.

She was my roommate from 2003 to 2005. We lived in an apartment in San José. We had separate rooms, but we cooked together and ate together. Elizabeth is a very nice person. She's very quiet and friendly. She never argued or yelled at me.

She was on vacation last September and October. She went to Ethiopia to visit her family. Her family is in Ethiopia. She brought me a traditional dress and scarf that made me happy.

I see her almost every day because we work together. We work at Saratoga Subacute Children's Hospital. We work as nursing assistants. We go to the same church also.

Her birthday is on September 2. I'll give her perfume for her birthday.

---

## An Ocean of Friendship

by Martha Arambula

My best friend's name is Teresa. She lives in Mexico and we talk by phone once in a while. We are close friends because we know everything about each other. We are far apart, but she sometimes comes to visit me. Our friendship is like an immense ocean. I miss my friend a lot, and the road which separates us is long.

Teresa and I enjoy talking over the phone and reminiscing about good things we've done together in the past. I miss walking with her at the park and going shopping. Teresa and I like to catch up when we talk together. Teresa always gives me good advice. Our friendship is better because we use new technology and we can see each other through Skype.



---

Martha wrote this story about her friend because she always remembers her. Martha has good memories about her and wants people to learn about why she is a good friend.



Mazatlan, Mexico © March 17, 2012 Dancing Chef Mellisa  
[theoriginalsalsaandsalsa.files.wordpress.com/](http://theoriginalsalsaandsalsa.files.wordpress.com/)

---

## She Saw My First Step

by Johana Arizmendi



---

Johana wrote her story because she wanted to express her feelings about her mother.

Every person in this world has a best friend, but no one has one like I do. It's hard for me to describe my best friend because I don't have the words to tell all she has done for me. I once looked up at the sky and asked myself why God gave me the best person in the world even when I felt I was undeserving.

My best friend has been next to me for twenty years. She saw my first step. She heard my first word. Her hands dried my first tears. She was with me when I enjoyed my first triumph. She tried to fix my first broken heart. She resolved my first mistake and helped me not to make many more. No matter what, she is always there for me.

*“A friend may be waiting behind a stranger's face.”*

— Maya Angelou, *Letter to My Daughter*



---

My best friend is a wise person. She listens, doesn't judge me, and has a good answer to any question. I love her with my whole heart and will always trust her. She never wants to see me sad and has said that "big girls don't cry." Day by day, I learn to smile and be as strong as my best friend even when life doesn't treat us fairly.



Now I know why God gave me this person to be my best friend. He knew I was going to need the hand of a superlative person like her. I am so thankful to God because He chose my mother to be my best friend.



---

## My Best Friend Is My Tutor Gail

by Genet A.

---

Genet likes to read out loud to her daughter. That is the most important thing she has learned, but there is so much more.

She is a very good listener. She listens to me about everything. Gail and I met three years ago. She is very polite and generous, too.

When I have a problem with my spelling or my life, she is the one to talk to because she is a good listener and good advisor.

It didn't take long for Gail and me to become friends. We became friends right away. She bought a gift for my daughter's birthday and Christmas. She introduced me to her family like I am part of her family, too.

One day Gail and her husband took us to dinner at a nice restaurant and treated us. But that's not enough. They also took us to a live ballet. My daughter and I had never been to a ballet before.

*“Everyone has a gift for something, even if it is the gift of being a good friend.”*

— Marian Anderson

---

I am so impressed by my best friend. She thinks about my daughter and me. She teaches me how to teach my daughter how to read books, and how to put her in my lap for stories.

From my best friend Gail I learn about so many things. She is a good mother, a good wife, and a good friend. I am so happy to have her as a friend, and she feels like family.

Thank you for being my friend, and thank you for everything. Thank you, Partners in Reading, for bringing Gail into my life and for everything.



Nutnaree Pipit-Suksun and Jeremy Kovitch, *Méditation* from *Thaïs* - Ballet San José.  
© 2013 Photo by Robert Shomler.

---

## In Memory of My Best Friend Rosemary Domingues

by *Juanita Avila*



---

Juanita Avila is a dedicated learner who wants to earn her GED. She works the graveyard shift but still makes time during the day to study.

Rosemary and I met at work in 1989. On her first day, she was sitting by herself in the cafeteria. When I went up to her and started talking, she looked up at me and said, "I pick my friends, not just anyone can be my friend." After a few months of hanging out together, she told me one day, "You are officially my friend."

Rosemary had a good sense of humor. One day, we went to the movies and when the movie was over she said, "Let's sneak into the next movie." I was really scared to do it. She said, "Don't you ever do anything impulsive?" So we did it. We always tried to be there for each other through thick and thin times. When I was hospitalized, she was there every day making sure that I was fine.

---

After that Rosemary moved to Delano, CA. Then it was my turn. She had back surgery. I went to Delano to take care of her and help her 85-year-old mother as well. Rosemary later came to San José to visit me. We would sit for hours telling each other our joys and sorrows. As the years went by Rosemary needed back surgery again. The day after her surgery, her sister called to notify me that Rosemary had passed away. I could not believe it, but I could not do anything but cry. I can never find a friend like her again.



---

## My Companion Always

by *Sonia B.*



---

Sonia is from Nicaragua. She has been in PAR for four years. She loves this program because she is learning English. She has an excellent tutor, Mr. Brian Badenoch.

Mayra and I became friends in high school in Nicaragua, my country. One day my boyfriend wanted to go to the beach. Because my mother didn't like the idea, I asked Mayra to go on a double date. After that, she was my companion always, everywhere. We had a good time.

She found a job outside of my city, and she talked with her boss. I was hired. We had new jobs and a new apartment. We were independent, so far from home, free of our families. We started our new life.

In 1979, my country had a civil war, and we suffered together through that terrible time. We survived the war, but we lost our jobs. I couldn't go home because they destroyed the bridges. We decided to go to Mayra's home. I lived there for three months. Her mother had 10 children and me. Mayra was the oldest. Her mother hid the food, and one night she woke me up and showed me where her mother hid the food. Of course, we ate more than the other children.

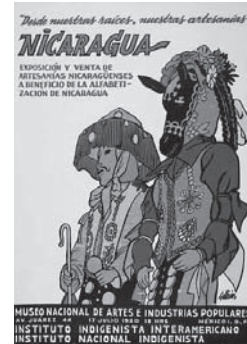
---

I returned home. I found a job, and I talked with my boss. Mayra got a job. We were together again. She lived with my family because to be independent was expensive and so hard. We learned how hard freedom is.

I got married, and I moved to the United States. We wrote letters for many years. She moved to Miami. I asked her to move to California, but she loves Miami.

We talk on the telephone, and communicate by Facebook and email every week. Two years ago she came to my home for my birthday. Then we went to Las Vegas to celebrate. Last year I went to Miami for her birthday, but a hurricane surprised us. We stayed in Mayra's home for three days. We talked about politics, medicine, religion, and music. We ate "Lechon," a Cuban dish, every day.

We tell each other our secrets. We have had a lot of fun through the ages. I love my other friends, but Mayra is my angel.



---

OMAC Collections  
Alberto Beltran, artist  
1980  
Paper Screen Print  
23.25 in HIGH x  
16.5 in WIDE  
© 2013 Oakland  
Museum of California

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## All the Qualities of a Best Friend

by Queenie Buenaluz



---

Queenie wrote this story because she wanted to write about her best friend.

My name is Queenie Buenaluz. I am 19 years old. I am a Filipina and I moved to the United States when I was 15 years old. I am nice, friendly, and hard-working. I am a good friend because I am an understanding person. My friends talk to me about their problems. When I have a problem I talk to my family and sometimes to my friends.

My best friend is Lupita Gonzalez. She is from Mexico. She is 23 years old and she is a citizen of the United States. She is my manager at McDonald's. She is still going to school and she lives with her aunt. She is studying at West Valley College. I believe that she cares about me. She tells me to finish high school and get my diploma. She talks to me about her love life. I trust Lupita more than my other friends because she really cares about me and the others just want to hang out and not be serious.



---

Lupita and I eat out, play volleyball, and watch movies. Lupita is tall and skinny. Her hair is curly and long. She is such a good example for me. She is an independent person. She is nice and always willing to help. She has all the qualities of a best friend.

Sometimes I make mistakes at work and she corrects me. She gives me advice. She makes me mad but I realize that she is trying to help me. When I am with my best friend I feel happy and comfortable. She is a good model for me. She tells me to stay in school and not to stay out late at night. She tells me to listen to my parents. My other friends just want to hang out.



---

Rush Hour,  
Mexico City, Mexico

---

## Carlos

by Daniel Cardenas



---

Daniel hopes to get better at reading and writing for his future and for his career.

My best friend is Carlos. We met up at a party that my sister's dad threw. He was helping my sister set it up. Then we started talking and we found out that we had been at the same school. We also liked the same cars and like working on them.

I asked him if he could help me out with a transmission problem that I was having, and he said, "Yeah." He also needed help with a project. We just started going to drag races and hanging out at car shows. We had fun making jokes about people's cars. I could always depend on him.

Even though he's not around, my girlfriend and I always go drop off flowers at his mom's house and hang out with her. I'm really lucky to have a friend like Carlos.



©2007 Rich Sieve

---

## We Always Had Good Communication

by Rosa Chavarria

My best friend is Saira Wildmar. I have known her for a long time. We started studying together in the sixth grade in my country. We did our homework most of the time together; we got good grades and we did fun things, always together. Her father died and her mother was very sick and passed away. So she couldn't graduate from high school in her last year because her family wasn't able to support her. But her aunt lived in the United States and brought Saira to live with her. I didn't see her for eight years.

My sister had the opportunity to come to the United States and she asked me if I wanted to come with her. I didn't finish my studies and I got married, but I still didn't have children. I asked my husband if he wanted to come with us to the United States, and he said yes. When Saira knew that I was coming, she called me and picked me up with her husband in Los Angeles. I was surprised when I saw her pregnant with her first baby. She got married to an American man. They have a beautiful house in Santa Clarita, near Los Angeles. They have two sons.

---

Rosa wrote this story because she shared school and funny things with her friend when they were little girls.





Rooftop view of  
Granada with Lake  
Nicaragua in the  
background  
© 2010 John Crane.  
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Her family is very nice. We always had good communication by phone. For a few years she owned a small store, and had to close it due to the fact that she got robbed three times.

When I went to Los Angeles, we went sight-seeing. The last time we visited Universal Studios. Her sons and my children are very friendly. On February 9, 2013, it was my daughter Nathalia's Quinceañera; we celebrated it very big with our friends and family. They came from Los Angeles, and the next day we went to San Francisco. We ate at a Nicaraguan restaurant because her husband loves our food. Her husband plans to retire in Nicaragua and buy a house in our nice colonial city, Granada. My friend Saira never thought of going back to live again in Nicaragua but now she has realized that she does want to go back.

My husband and I have the same idea of going back to Nicaragua once we retire. We want to enjoy our beautiful country and spend more time with our family. Saira and I are thinking of spending the rest of our lives united with our family.

---

## We Still Keep in Touch

by Jongwoo Choi

My best friend is Jungbong Kwon. I met him at Kwangwoon University in Seoul, Korea. We had the same major: electricity. After class, we usually met at the library, and we shared many things with each other, such as our future, view of politics, relationships, and much more. He had a literary talent, and I was good at mathematics. We helped each other with things that we were good at. He was fun to be with, and I enjoyed his company.

We also applied for ROTC together. Although we served in different troops, we performed our missions well as officers for 28 months. After we retired from military service, we went to work for different companies. He joined a pharmaceutical company, and I started working at a construction company as an electrical engineer. However, we have kept in touch with each other to this day.



---

Jongwoo always wants to remember his best friend and keep their companionship forever.

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In addition, he introduced my wife to me. My wife was a friend of his girlfriend, and we shared good times together. Jungbong immigrated to the U.S. seven years ago, and I came to the U.S. five years ago. What a coincidence! Now he lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is located about 2,500 miles east from San José, California, which is where I currently live. Even though I'm unable to see him frequently, we still keep in touch. He is still my best friend.

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Kwangwoon  
University  
Seoul, Korea



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## My Faraway Friend

*by Iye Conteh*

My best friend lives in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Her name is Christiana Queen.

I met her in Tonga Field Independent School in 1970. We were just starting the first grade. We sat at the same table together and played with one another at recess. That was the beginning of our long friendship. After fifth grade, she moved to another school in Tonga Field but we still saw one another in the busy marketplace and at combined school functions.

In the sixth grade I stopped going to school. My daddy said it was not important for a girl to go. I missed seeing Christiana, but we still got together during the summer when school was out. But then she left our town to attend high school in the city of Bo, about 120 miles away. There was no telephone for me to use so we sent short letters to keep in touch. I started to work in my daddy's business doing odd jobs. I also visited her at her high school a few times—it was a two-hour bus ride from my house to where she stayed. By now, we were more than friends, we were like sisters.

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Iye wants the world to know it is good to remember your friends, no matter where they are. If you can't see them, it is fun to think about them.



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Girls Education  
in Sierra Leone,  
West Africa: Going  
the Extra Mile  
© 2013 Helen  
Blakesley.

After graduating, she returned to Tonga and I enjoyed her high school diploma celebration like it was my own. Soon after, she got married and had her first child, Isata, one year later. In two more years, Christiana applied to nursing school in Freetown and she was accepted. Meanwhile, I became engaged and I invited Christiana to be maid of honor at my wedding in 1992. Shortly afterward, the war began in Sierra Leone and the rebels entered our city. There was fighting and shooting and many people died. Others were captured and had their hands chopped off with machetes. Christiana's family and mine did not see one another during this time because we were hiding from the rebels, but I was told that she was safe.

In 1995, my husband and I moved to the United States—this was the last time I saw my friend. But because of technology, we are now able to speak on our cell phones almost every week. She has been a nurse in Freetown for 20 years and her daughter, Isata, is now married. My hope is that some day in the future we will meet again in person and laugh and cry at our memories.



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## Claudia and Me

*by Irma Contreras*

When I was in fifth grade, I met a girl named Claudia. She was very cheerful and sociable. We started a good relationship. Almost every day in the afternoon we had good times. We went to the plaza, or we played football, or we just talked. My family loved my friend Claudia, and her family loved me.



When we were children, we said that when we grew up and got married and had families we would still be friends. But often our lives take different paths than we plan.

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Claudia is Irma's best friend. They shared many good times when they were growing up.

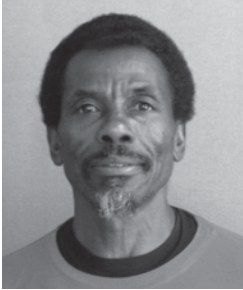
I came to the United States eight years ago, and Claudia is still in Mexico. We don't talk often but she is still my best friend. Now I am married and I have three children. Claudia got married about two years ago, and she doesn't have children.

Last September Claudia came to visit her husband, who lives in Los Angeles. When she was in Los Angeles, we talked almost every day. And last November my family and I went to Los Angeles to see her. We were so happy to have a reunion after so many years.

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## He Taught Me Never to Quit

by Robert Jeff Coulter



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Robert's goals are to improve his reading and to get his GED.

I have been friends with Master Ernie Reyes for 33 years. We met at West Coast Karate in 1980. One thing we have in common is our passion for martial arts. He has taught me to have a burning desire and never to quit. Last year we went to Las Vegas for the super show, which demos martial arts from all over the world. He is a really good friend. He was there for me when my mom and sister passed away. He has always had faith in me.

He trusts me and I trust him too. He will always be my best friend for life.

*“A good writer possesses not only his own spirit but also the spirit of his friends.”*

— Friedrich Nietzsche

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## Building a Chicken Coop

by E. R. Dias

I met my best friend, Andy, when I was fourteen years old. My brother invited him to visit my family for the festivities of the Virgin of Guadalupe in my village. Andy is a Caucasian, 6'2" tall, a slim guy who is kind and cares for other people. He spent the weekend with us. The first night he noticed that the chickens were sleeping inside the house. My mom was suffering with chronic asthma, and having the birds sleeping inside was not good for her health. He came up with the idea of building a chicken coop. A month later he came back, and he brought all the materials and with my brother's help, they built it in one weekend. We were very happy and the chickens were too.

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E. R. grew up in a small village with no education past the third grade. She always dreamed of having her own family and being able to send her kids to school. Her best friend Andy helped make her dreams come true!



Himalayan Institute  
Energy Farming Program,  
Mexico ©2012 - JohnD



I was very impressed with that detail. I thought it was interesting that a guest from another country would care for my mom's health. After a few visits, I knew that Andy is honest. He always tells the truth in a kind way. He is smart and dependable, hard-working, creative, and he makes the best use of money. His family tells stories about how he started to save his earnings from his yard work on weekends since he was a little kid. When I think about how I met Andy, I can't help voice out: who would have thought he was going to be my best friend forever, my husband of thirty-five years, and the loving father of my wonderful five children? Without a doubt I'm very blessed to have such a great friend.



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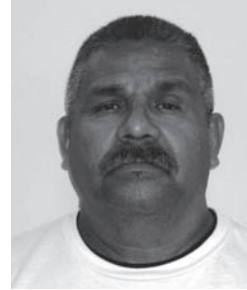
## Many Friends

by Art Dominguez

In my journey that I'm in now, I have run into many best friends. Some are old and some are new. How can we choose just one friend when we know we have so many who help us in our journey of life?

But I can say one thing, Partners in Reading is one of my best friends that I have run into. It has opened up a new beginning in my life. It has put special people like tutors in my life, and friends that are just around PAR who help you out. PAR has helped me to expand my mind more, so that I can read books and understand them. When I started at PAR, my reading level was very low, and so was my self-esteem. I feel comfortable now that I can read the newspaper, applications, and even read to my daughter.

As a result of the computer skills I've learned at PAR and at Sacred Heart—another of my best friends—I do applications and send resumes on line! From here, I go on with my journey with the help of my best friends.



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Art wrote this story so he could talk about his friends.

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## Remembering My Childhood

by Angel Escamilla



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Angel hunts and fishes every chance he gets.

George and I have been best friends since childhood. We grew up in a very small village called Aguililla, in Michoacán in Mexico. Our village was surrounded by many beautiful places of nature. It has volcanic areas, rivers, lakes, forests, farms, and orchards. Our parents were also very close friends and great farmers of rice, beans, vegetables, corn, and wheat. George and I truly enjoyed the farm too. It was like our playground. We were so happy to be there to help our parents.

Our day started early in the mornings to help milk the cows and feed the goats, pigs, horses, and chickens. Our parents were always busy preparing silos, barns, and land for their crops in the spring. We also helped clean the silos, barns, and chicken coops, and collected eggs and harvested.

One very hot day in the summer I asked George if he would like to go hunting and horseback riding in the mountains. I knew that he was going to agree, but since we

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were young we had to ask our parents for permission. We were very excited to hear they allowed us to go because for us it was a very dangerous adventure. Quickly we prepared ourselves with some tortillas, salt, bullets, and our guns. We couldn't wait to spend our weekend in the forest hunting for wild chickens, pigs, deer, and much more. As we went deeper into the forest we saw some big spiders, rattlesnakes, raccoons, and wolves. We also heard some bears and lions. We really enjoyed our weekend in that frightening forest. While we were roasting some chicken and deer meat, I looked at George. He had a big smile and said he hoped we could do it again soon. I said maybe next time we could go fishing and swimming in the lake.



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Popocatepetl  
Volcano. AP News  
April 19, 2012

Soon after, we fished for halibut, salmon, snapper, and catfish. Once again we had another unforgettable weekend. For us it was a pleasure to continue hiking those mountains and exploring the volcanic areas. As we went closer, the volcanoes threw some rocks. We looked at each other and said, "Finally we get to complete our dream of being able to take pictures of these amazing volcanoes." When I go back to visit we always look at those pictures.

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## More Valuable Than a Diamond

by *Araceli Figueroa*

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Araceli was born in Jalisco, Mexico, and came to this country thirteen years ago. She has been part of this wonderful program for more than five years and is blessed to have Jim and Gail Myers as her tutors because they help her kids as well. They are part of her family and are the best second grandparents her kids can have.

There is an old saying, “He who finds a real friend finds a diamond,” but I think that is not true, because a real friend is a lot more valuable. I have good friends who I really enjoy talking and hanging out with. My mom and my sisters have a special place in my heart, and I know they are my friends no matter what.

But I consider myself very fortunate to have found my very best friend. Even though sometimes (well, mostly all the time) he doesn’t agree with me, I know he is there for me and he loves me. He is my husband, Alex. Like all couples we have our differences, but we always go over them. We have done everything together since we met. We have two kids (even a dog), but I know when they get older they will leave, and once again we are going to be only me and my best friend.

Dancers in traditional outfits perform during the fourth Jalisco is Culture festival at Liberacion Square in Guadalajara.  
© 2012 Reuters Photo





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## I Love Her With All My Heart

by Alvin James Fore

My sister Shelley, who I love with all my heart, is my best friend. She was there for me when I needed her help with anything. For example, she would help me with my bills and doctors' appointments. She was there when I needed a place to stay. When I had surgery, she and her family helped me get better by making sure I was okay. Shelley helped me with my meds. Special occasions like Christmas and Thanksgiving I spent with Shelley's family in Antioch. Shelley liked to cook and bake with her daughter and niece, things like turkey and pumpkin pie. I wish I could tell you more about my sister Shelley, who died on February 11, 2013. I miss her very much.



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Alvin wrote this story because he wanted to tell about his sister, Shelley.



© 2013 ClivesPies

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## Friends Forever

by Maarnet Gebremariam



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Maarnet wrote that friendship is important to her, and it makes her very happy. A good friend has to be a positive thinker, but most importantly, a good friend is like a mirror to your soul.

I met Haimanot on the first day of spring semester, 2010. She is from my country, Ethiopia. I was sitting in the first row and she was sitting in the back row. After our class finished, I started to collect my things. When I looked at Haimanot in the back row, she smiled at me, and I smiled back at her. In that special moment, I wished she was my sister-in-law!

Beginning with the second day of class, Haimanot and I started sitting together, and we soon became friends. One day I asked her where she worked, and she told me. I asked if there were any day shift openings there. I was working night shift, and it was hard to go right to school after work. She promised to tell me if she heard anything. Two weeks later Haimanot brought me an application. Within a week I was hired.

Haimanot and I became close friends. We work, take breaks, and eat together. We laugh together, but we also talk about our lives and how we will change our lives for

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the better. Our co-workers are jealous of us! We hang out on our days off, and when we do have the same day off, we don't take overtime that day unless we work together.

Haimanot is a good person, and I trust her. She makes me feel safe, no matter where we are. She takes very good care of the people she loves. Most importantly, she loves her family, which is one of the reasons why I love her. I don't have words to describe how strong she is. She is a very special friend to me. I hope that Haimanot and I will be best friends forever and ever.



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Blue Nile Falls,  
Ethiopia



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## A Breath of Fresh Air

by *F. T. G.*

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F. T. G. wrote this story because friendship is very important to her. Her best friend has a warm personality and is very honest.

My best friend is Ashley Abdul. We met three years ago at a yoga class. It is difficult to find a true friend and I am very lucky to have found her. There are many reasons why Ashley is my best friend. She is respectful, intelligent, and honest.

Ashley and I have so much in common even though both of us come from totally different backgrounds. We like to go shopping and to the movies. We enjoy outdoor activities and joined a hiking group. We invite other friends over to join us in cooking and eating our different styles of native dishes.

Ashley is so much fun to be with. Her great sense of humor makes me forget the bad moments of the day. She's like a breath of fresh air, especially when we decided to buy a car. Can you believe two single women going to a car dealer? We did our

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research on what car we wanted, the price we were willing to pay, and how to get the best financial package. It was the biggest “WOW DAY,” each driving away with a car.

Ashley is my best friend because she adapts in any situation, she keeps me entertained in whatever we do or wherever we go. It is wonderful to have such an organized and competent loving friend. I never believed I would meet someone so special at a yoga class.



*“Don’t walk behind me; I may not lead. Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.”*

— Albert Camus

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## My Beloved Friend

by Rosa Gonzalez



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Rosa is from San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, Mexico, but now she lives in San José, California, with her husband Pedro and her two kids, Sonia and Dylan.

I have had many good friends throughout my life, but my best friend is the one who most stood by me. I love my best friend. She has been with me in good and bad times. My best friend is my mom.

My mom is my best friend because she is adorable and no one understands me like she does. I feel her love when I talk with her. My mom taught me that you only get one chance in life.

The last time I saw her was two years ago. My mom has been my companion in the best moments of my life. She always gives me the best tips. She is far, but we always call each other. If we could spend a day together we would go to San Francisco and stay there all day because she is in love with San Francisco.

My best friend is lovely, intelligent, happy, fancy, emotional, protective, brave, and a hard worker. My mom lives in San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, Mexico, in a very hot place. I feel I need her every day. I don't know what I would do without my best friend.

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## School Was Our Passion and Joy

by Fouzia Hashemi

I have been coming to the Edenvale Library for two years now. My goal was to learn how to read and write in the English language. I have always loved school, ever since I was a young girl in Afghanistan. In those times, girls of all ages would go to school. I always loved to learn new things and read new books. Spending time with friends at school is a very beautiful memory for me.

My best friend was a girl named Deana. We would walk to school every day and help each other with our homework. School was our passion and our joy, but it was cut short when the Soviets invaded. It was not safe for me and my family in Afghanistan. We had to leave school and leave our country. I eventually came to America, but my friend Deana was stuck in Afghanistan. She always wanted to leave and continue to learn and better herself, but she was unable to.



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Fouzia wrote this story because she wanted to talk about her friend.

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I am very sad I could not help my friend come to America. I did not know English. I was unable to help. I knew that I had to learn. The library has given me a wonderful tutor. I meet with her Tuesday and Thursday for two hours. She has always taught me to never quit and to try again. She has pushed me to get my citizenship as well as learn the language, learn to read and write.

Deana is now married with three kids and is taking care of a sick husband. I wish that one day I can bring Deana here so both of us can once again go to school and learn.

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Afghan schoolgirls listen to their teacher as they sit in a classroom in a Turkish-Afghan school in Herat December 12, 2009. Photo: Morteza Nikoubaz/Reuters





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## What a Friend Means

*by Adrian H.*

It's so easy to talk about your best friend when you have thousands of things to say about him.

Thanks to him I have learned what a friend means and the meaning of helping without waiting for a payback. He is and has always been there not only for me, but for everyone else. It doesn't matter what kind of favor you ask him to do. He will always have the time to help you. He has a way of seeing life like there are no problems, and if there is one, he finds the solution right away. I met him when I was starting my new job. He did a good job training me because I had no idea how to use the cleaning machines. He gave me a lot of support and shared his knowledge with me.

Rogelio Orozco is the person who has always been there for me. So, I will always be there for him.

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Adrian was born in Mexico. He had to leave school due to his economic situation. Now he has a nice family and recently started his own company. His goal is to become a successful businessman.

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## Seeing the Good

by Debbie Hodge



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Debbie wrote her story because when she felt like a nobody, her best friend made her feel like somebody. She's Debbie's best friend no matter what.

My best friend is Donna. I met Donna when my family moved to San José. She has been my best friend since we were 19 years old. I met her at Prayer Garden Church. We've known each other for 41 years.

When I first came to town, I was shy and didn't feel good about myself because I had pimples. Her skin always looked so nice. She helped me see that everyone has something they don't like about themselves. Sometimes we just have to cover up some of our faults. She showed me her own problems. She also had pimples – she let me see them once she washed off her makeup.

*“I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light.”*

— Helen Keller

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Donna was so positive. She loved me and helped me to see the good in myself. Then I started to see it, too. Because of her I could see the good in my life and feel good about myself.

Donna is like a sister to me. We like to shop, do makeup, and go to listen to Gospel music. I can call her any time. One time when I was getting very down, I needed to spend some time away from my family, and I went to spend time with Donna. After we had time to talk and pray together, I felt much better.

I can't imagine going through life without her. I feel like she's my best friend forever.



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Prayer Garden-  
Church of San José  
©cesarcambay  
June 24, 2011

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## We Share Our Vision

*by So-Ae Kilgore*

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

Perhaps more than anyone I know, Jennifer cares about her religion. She is a deeply religious person, a God-fearing, God-praying, and God-trusting woman. She believes implicitly in a “Supreme Power” in this universe. She relies on Him when she faces difficulty with her only son, Grayson.

Since she is a single mom, she sometimes is concerned over a missing father figure in Grayson’s life. Before the Chicago Cubs season begins, she rearranges her schedule so she goes to ball games with him more often. In school, she gets calls every now and then regarding Grayson’s behavior, and when they recommended medication, she got so upset, saying, “He is a boy, with a short-attention span disorder. Don’t they need to learn how to handle that kind of behavior?” Instead, she arranged an appointment with a child psychologist.

She said, “The truth is, whatever you can’t talk about is already out of control in your life—problems with your finances, kids, thoughts,

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secrets, habits, or anything else. But you know what? As long as I have a relationship with God and love Him supremely, with support and encouragement of people in my church group, my accountability partners, I am in good hands. That is why memorizing scripture is absolutely essential to win over temptation or any difficulty, day in, and day out.”

I discovered that we have this in common—the same insight or interest, or even taste, which others do not share openly. Our typical expression for an opening conversation would be like, “What? You too? I thought I was the only one.” I am glad that we see the same truth, care about the same truth, whether unique treasure (or burden). We share our vision. She is my best friend.



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*Hands of Friendship*  
Collage on Glass  
© 2004 Studio Tau

*“The best mirror is an old friend.”*

— George Herbert

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# Unforgettable

by *Natasha Kotko*

Natasha is from Ukraine. She arrived in the U.S. five months ago. She wrote this story because she has a best friend and she wants to share this information with other people.



My best friend, Olya, is from Ukraine. We met when we started studying accounting at the University of Food Technologies. We studied at the university for five years. We had many unforgettable events when we studied together. After our university years we have remained in touch for seventeen years, maintaining our friendship to the present time.

Olya is a very cheerful and positive girl with a great sense of humor. Together we liked to go into a park, a cinema, a theatre, and go on the river Dnipro, a very large river in Kiev. Twice we had our vacation at the Black Sea together. Olya likes cooking and goes to barbecues.

Now she works as an accountant general in a trade company. Olya is married and has a daughter. Her daughter is named Arina and is two years old. Arina looks like her mother.

Olya lives in Kiev with her husband, daughter, and mother-in-law. After I arrived in the U.S. we kept up our friendship. We communicate via e-mail and speak on Skype twice or three times a week. I miss my best friend and hope to see her soon!!!

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## Books Are My Best Friends

by Chiu-Ping

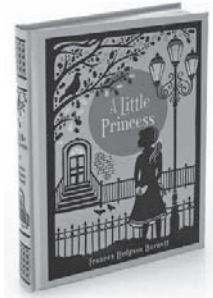
When I was youthful, my first book was my best friend. I still remember that the book's name was *The Little Princess*.

Originally, I just read for fun. But afterward the heroine's spirit touched my heart, because even when she was hungry she still shared her food with someone. I wondered how she could do this thing. That made me love to read more and start meeting my friends.

As I kept reading other books, I noticed every writer depends on their own experience, their thoughts, and their background, and that writing was a good way to let someone know how to get away from trouble or share their happiness and join, too.

I can't describe how many solutions I get from books. When I'm sad, I read funny or humorous books to release bad feelings. Also, when I'm happy, I read special books to study and update my skills. That can make me always fresh at my work and my life.

So that's why my best friends for sure are books. How can I live without my best friends?



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Chiu-Ping is a person who likes to daydream. She wrote this story because blank days plus writing will transform the canvas. She tries to have a lot of fun and is interested so she can enjoy her days.

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## Big Ears

by K. L.

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K. L. appreciates her tutor, Jessica Hyde, and Partners in Reading.



My family got a puppy when I was nineteen. That puppy was my best friend for twelve years. Her name was Nyo Ma. She had brown hair, big ears, and light-brown eyes. She was 2 feet tall as an adult. She came to my home two days before I left for college. Five months later I went back home and I went straight up the stairs. My father was worried and thought she had already bitten me, but she hadn't bitten me. Usually, when she saw a stranger, she bit them.

Nyo Ma was intelligent. My friend's younger brother always came to my house and hit Nyo Ma's head with a tin pencil box, and then went to school. Whenever she was angry, her eyes turned green. One day, when my puppy had grown up, she heard the boy's voice in the street. I saw her eyes turn green and she ran out to him.

Nyo Ma was a very good guard dog. One night at midnight, a thief came into my home from the backyard. Nyo Ma barked and bit his leg. The thief ran out, dripping blood. My family has had many pets, but I remember her qualities: she was the smartest, the most protective, the most loyal—almost human.



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## My Classmate Lily

by S. L.

My best friend is Lily. She is from Myanmar. She has black eyes, yellow skin, curly black hair, and is medium height. She is smart, is a pretty lady, and has a good mind and a pure heart. We have known each other for a long time. I met her in elementary school. She was my best friend. Why?

First, we studied together in our childhood at elementary school. After school, we played baseball. I remember if I didn't know some of the English questions, grammar, or vocabulary, she helped me. I enjoyed studying English with her. So I became a good student and got an A on the final test. I helped her with math.

Second, we studied in middle school. One day, I had a problem in class because my classmate caused a problem for me. She said her sweater was wet with oil. She said the oil was from my lunch box. She was a poor girl, so she wanted to get some money from me for her sweater. At the time, I was a fifth-grade student, and I didn't have any money to give her. If I didn't give money to her, she said she would report

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S.L. hopes to visit her friend next year in Myanmar.



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to our teacher that I had damaged her sweater. I told my friend about this problem. How did I solve this problem? My friend helped me explain this to our teacher. As a result, I didn't have to pay money for this girl's sweater.

Finally, I really appreciated Lily and her friends. I feel lucky my best friend was very helpful with my education, and personally in my life. I'm sincerely thankful to my best friend.

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Myanmar (Burma)



*“I don't feel very much like Pooh today,” said Pooh.*

*“There there,” said Piglet. “I'll bring you tea and honey until you do.”*

**— A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh***

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## She Would Encourage Me

by Fitzroy Leslie

My best friend is my mother. Because I'm the last one of her children, she would spoil me and give me first preference of everything. On Sunday she would cook traditional Jamaican food, such as rice and peas, jerk chicken, fried chicken, or oxtail stew, with her choice of fruit juice. When she made carrot juice I would say, "Mom, you know I don't drink carrot juice," and she would say, "OK, I'm going to send your sister to the shop. What would you like?"

She moved to the U.S. in 1995, to the Bronx, New York. I really really missed her, especially when she laughed. But we talked as often as we could. Then, fourteen years after she moved, I moved to the U.S. too, but I am in California. Now we talk two times per day.

Sometimes I needed something spelled and was scared to ask someone, scared someone would laugh in my face. That could be so embarrassing. So that's why I only turned to my two best friends, who are my mom and my wife, until I ran into the dream of my life. Partners in Reading turned me around.



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Fitzroy wrote this story because he wanted to talk about his best friend.

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Now I Skype with Mom and she says, “Son, I’m so proud of you because I notice you don’t call me any more for spelling words. Now you are using the computer to Skype with me.” She has said, “Thanks to Partners in Reading. They helped you to read and even to get your driver’s license and citizenship. Good job.”

Now I Skype or FaceTime with my mom so she can see my little “Boo.” His name is Kieran and he is ten months old. She loves to watch him grow.

My mom is my best friend because she would encourage me to work hard at all of my goals such as my reading. When I called her to spell a word, she wouldn’t just spell that word, she would say, “Okay, let’s sound it out.” And I would sound it out.

She said, “You see, son, you just need to push yourself and you will get it. You can do it. I believe in you. You are very smart. Anything you put your mind to can become real.”

*“Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life.”*

—Mark Twain

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## Silvia

by Porfiria Lopez

My best friend's name is Silvia. When I was eighteen I met her in my country. She invited me to school parties and Christmas parties. We enjoyed getting together. When she needed help in her garden to cut the fruit, I helped her. She called me when she had a special birthday party, to help cook a lot of food for her family. She is a wonderful person because we spoke together, walked around the town, and we traveled to different locations and beaches. I miss her because I left Mexico a long time ago. I hope I will see her soon.

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Porfiria is a homemaker. She has two children, ages 13 and 8.



Flag of Mexico

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## I Admire Her Very Much

by Marisol L.



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Marisol wrote this story about her friend Leticia Sandoval because Leticia motivates her.

My best friend is Mrs. Leticia Sandoval. I admire her very much. You can learn a lot from great people. I have known her for a short time. She is a great person. She is very friendly with everyone. She is there to listen to you and help you. She is very attentive to other people. That is the reason that she is my best friend.

I have always said that it is not too late to learn. Age does not matter. What is important is to learn. I want to prove to myself that I can learn. I can teach my children the important thing is to study and show more interest in school so that they can become someone important in life. Thanks to Partners in Reading for the opportunity to improve my literacy skills.

*“True friends are like diamonds – bright, beautiful, valuable, and always in style.”*

— Nicole Richie

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## How I Met My Best Friend

by Doug Medeiros

I lived on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street for about five years; then my family moved to 26<sup>th</sup> Street because my parents bought a house. That's when I met my best friend. He was a special person, kind, giving, and respectable. Just like me! What more can you ask for when you have a best friend like that? He was the best friend that I ever had because he was like the brother that I never had. We did everything together.

We both like playing football, swimming, war games, and skateboarding. We used to like to play football on the streets with our friends. I can never forget this one winter day. It was so cold outside, our fingers felt numb, but we just kept on playing, until we threw a long pass to our friend Eddie. After that, the game was over because all I can remember was him trying to catch this hard football with ice cold hands. It must have stung him pretty good, because all I could see was Eddie jumping up and down, flapping his hands in the air

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Doug wrote this story because it helps him write more, so he can start writing a book about his life.



Playing Football, circa 1939 (Harold Corsini/George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film/© Estate of Harold Corsini)

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and running to find a water hose to cool down his hands. I know it must have hurt him a lot because I could see tears running down his face. That was the last time Eddie ran for a long pass on a cold winter morning.



During the summer time, we would walk down two blocks to the high school to go swimming. They opened the swimming pool from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. We would swim all day and have a great time. They had relay races there for the different age groups. We won ribbons for placing in the races.

Another thing we used to do was to play war games with our other friends, and it was crazy and fun! My best friend had a big backyard, with three big walnut trees and one old shack. We would pick the walnuts off the trees and use them for our ammo. Then we would run as fast as we could to our hiding spot. When we were running to our hiding spot we could see and hear the walnuts coming by just like bullets whistling in front of our faces. I even tackled my best friend to keep him from getting hit.

But the favorite thing we both really liked was watching movies. In the summertime,



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we'd go downtown to the movies. When we went to the movies, it only cost 25¢. Imagine that! We bought popcorn, ice cream, and candy, and then we opened the door to go inside to our seats. It was dark and we couldn't see where we were going. We had to feel our way. Our eyes adjusted to the small, white reflective lights that dotted the aisles. The floor was so sticky that people could hear us as we fumbled to our seats. When the movie was over we would go back home and then we would pretend we were the actors and play the scenes we liked.



On the weekends, I used to sleep over at his house and watch TV. In fact, we'd stay up late and watch Creature Feature, Night Gallery, and Alfred Hitchcock. In the morning his mother would cook breakfast for us while we watched our favorite cartoons, Batman, Speed Racer, and Ultraman.

I have not seen my best friend for years. The last time I saw him was when we both went to the movies over 20 years ago. I will never find another best friend like the one I had when I was a young boy growing up in San José. It's difficult to find a best friend like Ralph.

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## Sunny, My Best Friend Forever

by *Elleni Mekuria*



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Elleni has lived in America for 20 years and has been friends with Sunny for 33 years. This story is to honor that friendship.

My best friend is Sunny. We met each other in middle school in my home country, Ethiopia. In the classroom she was good at Amharic and I was good at math. We decided to study together and help each other. After a while we became close friends.

High school included different tracks. I was interested in accounting, secretarial, and management. Sunny was interested in electrical, metal work, wood work, and auto mechanics.

Since Sunny was my best friend, I followed her and took the classes she chose. During the last two years of high school we were required to choose a major and we decided to become electricians. After graduation we both found jobs in different cities but we met each other every month. During our monthly visits we went to the theater, dinner, movies, and shopping.

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In 1993, when I was preparing to move to the U.S., Sunny gave me great advice. She told me that living in America was not as easy as we think. You might not get a job with your profession so you have to take any job you can. There is no easy job in America.

Her advice was helpful to me. She was correct. It would have been hard for me to get a job without her advice because I thought life in America was easy for everyone. I found out it wasn't. I took nursing assistant classes for three months. I got my certificate and started work at a nursing home. This led my husband and me to start a home care business.

After all these years, Sunny and I are still best friends. She lives in Oakland, and every morning we talk on the phone. We celebrate many occasions together. I really love her. She will be my best friend forever.

*“Writing is a job, a talent, but it’s also the place to go in your head. It is the imaginary friend you drink your tea with in the afternoon.”*

— Ann Patchett, *Truth and Beauty*

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## My Greatest Love Affair

by Fred Mills



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Fred notes that names have been changed in his story to protect the innocent.

My best friend is my ex-girlfriend, Yolanda. I met Yolanda when she was 38 and I was 63. It was love at first sight. Yolanda was five feet tall, 110 pounds, with long black hair down to her shoulders. She was a beautiful lady, but with a few bad habits.

Yolanda was a wine-drinking, pot-smoking, high school dropout with no bank account. I signed her onto one of mine, taught her how to write a check and balance the account. I convinced her to stop smoking. After that, we were together for five years. Life was great. We joined a church and she became a member of the choir. With her beautiful voice, she sang a lot of solos. I, on the other hand, was an usher.

Our good times came to an end when I started thinking about the difference in our ages. Twenty-five years is a lot, so I broke up with her. I told her to find a younger man. Reluctantly, she did. But this man was no

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good and he treated her badly. She began calling me to ask my advice. I told her to get rid of him. She listened and she did just that. After that, we talked more and more, as we realized we still loved each other. But we knew we couldn't be together as lovers because of the age difference. So, this great love affair turned into a great friendship.

*“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”*

— Oprah Winfrey

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## My Best Friend, “Cookie”

by Gordon C. Nelson



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Gordon wrote this story to tell about his dog.

In the early 1980s I was living with my sister Christine in the Berryessa area of San José. I was divorced from my first wife. I don't know how Christine got our dog, which she got as a puppy. Cookie weighed about 25 pounds, and she was a pug dog. Pug dogs are short-haired, with a curly tail like a pig. My sister Christine named her Cookie.

Cookie sensed I was hurting (because of my divorce), and she comforted me the best way she could.

I used to have a lot of fun with this dog. I used to chase her around the house, and then she would chase me! Sometimes we would wrestle on the floor—it seems that animals love me. Even my wife's first cat, Precious, saw me and she would run and hide, but after she got used to me, she wouldn't leave me alone!

Animals have a brilliant way – they comfort people.

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## I Have Shared My Life With Her

by *Mina Park*

My best friend is Semi Kang. As soon as I entered high school, I met her in class. She was sitting next to me, and she was the first one I talked to in high school. We knew soon we would be each other's best friend because we communicated well and understood each other.

As time went by, we became best friends. When we got out of school, we did homework together. On weekends, we went to the library and studied together. One day, she started to wear contact lenses instead of her glasses. We realized we looked alike. When we were out together, many people asked us "Are you twins?" These questions made us happy and brought us closer and closer together.

After graduating from high school, we entered different colleges, but we met very often and discussed the future. After getting jobs, we discussed love. After having boyfriends, we discussed marriage. After getting married, we discussed babies. After having babies, we discussed how we would raise our kids well. She has been my best friend for 25 years. I have shared all my life with her. I'll keep doing this until death separates us.

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Mina is from Korea. She has been here for eight months. She misses her best friend, Semi, who is in Korea.



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Songdo Skyline  
-Incheon, Korea.  
<http://blog.garan.com/bmilslife>  
Photo by Go Ong Hwan © B-Mil™ All rights reserved.

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## She Knew How I Felt and I Knew What She was Feeling

by Sunny

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Sunny loves her friend and will always miss her.

Sophie has been my best friend since we were 16 years old. I met her in high school. The first day of school, she sat next to me. We always had lunch together with a few more friends. Her smile was beautiful and everyone loved it.

I remember spending a lot of time with Sophie every summer and winter vacation. We both loved classic books and music, and we had a lot of fun together. I liked classic music but she liked pop music at that time. She loved to go to pop concerts, and I went to the concerts with her. I loved math but she loved social studies. We both loved art as well.



Every Friday, we went to the snack bar to eat spicy rice cakes and noodles. One day, her father died of stomach cancer. He had been hospitalized for six months, and I visited him every weekend. When her father died, I cried a lot, but Sophie did not cry at all. She told me to stop crying for him, but after



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the funeral, Sophie cried a lot. I couldn't say anything to her. Even though I did not say anything, she knew how I felt and I knew what she was feeling. I still remember that time.

After we graduated from high school, we went to different universities. However, we met every month. Since we were 23 years old, we have been living in different countries. We only can see each other every year or less than that, but I can visit via KAKAOTALK every week.

I know what she likes, and she knows what I like. When I visited Korea last summer, she flew to visit me in Seoul from Jeju Island to see me every Saturday. Before I left Korea, she gave me red ginseng. "Don't be sick. Take care of your health," she said.

I said, "Sophie, when you marry, visit San Francisco for your honeymoon." As she is my best friend, sometimes she gives me advice, too. She sends me good stories and I send her some Bible verses.

I'm so thankful to God that I have a friend like Sophie. Some day, I really want to see her wedding and her children. I always miss her.



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Poster - Korean Cultural Night at San Francisco State

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## This Is How Our Friendship Works

by Juana

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Juana's best friend is special.

My best friend is Ines. She is my best friend because she is always there when I want somebody to speak with about important things. I have known her for 26 years. In all this time I have known her she has been nice to me, and I have so many ways to explain how good a person she is. We have known each other ever since we were little girls.

When she needs someone to speak with her, I'm always there for her.

We go to the park, and we go to parties with our family and friends. We go to church together, and we speak on the phone now. We did a lot of things in the past. Now she invites me to her parties, and I invite her when I do something special for my family. We talk about good things in our family and about bad things. When she needs my help, I'm always there for her. This is how our friendship works.

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## A Lot of Beer Fell Off the Truck

by Leonel Pineda

Antonio and I went to school together when I was five years old. Our school was on my father's ranch in Mexico. Antonio always helped me on the ranch by taking the cows to drink water. He was always helping me.

I liked Antonio because he was always smiling. Antonio never came late. When I told him that the cows need to drink water at one o'clock, he would always be there.

One time my horse fell down. I felt angry because my friend was smiling a lot. This was the first time in fifteen years that my friend and I were angry.

My friend Antonio liked to help me because he liked the food my mother cooked. Sometimes Antonio did not have enough food. My dad worked in California and sent money for food.

One time Antonio and I drove the horses into the mountains. Then I saw a big truck that had fallen down the mountain. I told Antonio to come and help me. He came to the truck.



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Antonio is still  
Leonel's best friend.



I told Antonio the driver is fine because he is walking up the mountain to the road. I told Antonio that a lot of beer fell off the truck. This was a beer truck. Antonio and I were happy because this was the first time we ever drank beer. I told Antonio to come help me dig a hole and put four beer boxes in the hole. Then I told Antonio to always take the cows to drink water and to dig a big hole and take one box of beer out to drink. I have two more friends, so when they helped me take the cows to drink water, I was not happy.

Antonio and I came to the United States together in 1985. Antonio flew to Washington State and I stayed in California. This was the first time Antonio and I were separated.

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Veracruz, Mexico  
© 2012 Jason  
Batansky



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## An Amazing Friend

*by Corina Rath*

My best friend's name is Jesus. Through all my good or bad circumstances, He is always there for me and helps me get through all things. Jesus knows how much I also need a physical touch like a hug or a slap. He put an amazing person in my life, so my other best friend's name is Margaret. We have been best friends for about eight years.

Let me tell you a little about her. She loves God with all her heart and is an amazing single mother of four grown adults. Margaret is honest, fun to be around, dependable and not judgmental. We have a lot of similarities. We hang out a lot and talk about everything, and most of the time it's about our adult kids. We cry, we laugh, and most of all we have an amazing time together.

When the subject came up for PAR to write about "My Best Friend," it brought me back to a horrific incident in my life. On August 16, 2011, I received a phone call that would change my life forever. It was a call about my daughter.

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Corina was inspired by the topic and she feels it is great to acknowledge her best friend.

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No one else was home when I received that call. I called Margaret to tell her about what happened, and I remember even yelling at her that day over the phone. Before I realized it, she was at my door. When I opened the door she put her arm around me and wouldn't let me go; she even called some of my friends because she knew I would need all the support I could get. She never left my side, and is still there for me no matter what time of day it is.

As I was writing this, I remembered I had yelled at Margaret but never apologized to her. I called her up to apologize for yelling at her that day. She said, "Corina, I don't remember you yelling at me." All I could do when I was talking to her was cry, and again she was there for me. That's what friends do—forgive and forget. See, I told you she is amazing! Thank you, Jesus, for putting her in my life.



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## **I Am Very Fortunate Because I Found a Good Friend**

*by Mayela Razo*

I met my best friend nine years ago. Her name is Silvia. She is Mexican, like me. She was my neighbor. She also was the first friend I made here in the U.S. When I asked her about her life, because I wanted to get to know her, she told me about problems she had faced here in this country. She was very worried about her child, who was two years old, and he was very sick. She looked distressed because of her son's illness and I felt I must do something to help her. I took care of her son sometimes when she worked. Her son is now healthy and he is a very good friend of my kids. We go to many places together like a family and we enjoy it a lot. We go to the movies, to the park, etc.

I think she and I became good friends because she is very loyal and she is the nicest person I know. I always admired her because she became a very strong woman who works very hard to support and help her family and friends. She always gives more than she receives. I have learned a lot of things from her. The most important thing she has taught me is how to be a better friend.



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Mayela wrote about her friendship with Silvia because she always wanted to recognize how important Silvia is to her and to say thanks for being her closest friend.

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## My Clique

by Darryl

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Darryl chose to write this story because it brought back funny memories from his past.

Nobody is more special than my clique: they are all number one in my book.

I'm an extrovert, very outgoing. People in my clique are extroverted. They love being around people and acting crazy.

When I lived in LA as a teenager, my clique and I went to a party on the UCLA campus where we caused a big ruckus, to put it mildly. We met a group of beautiful girls and we all stayed together at the party. We were dancing the night away when nature called. Joanna and I went out to the bathrooms. They let Joanna back in, but not me. They were letting the girls back in but not the boys. I was upset, but looking around I saw some football players and other guys who were also very upset. Being the motivational speaker that I am, I convinced them to bum-rush the door.



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As we were running in one side, people were running out the other side because they were afraid something bad was going to happen. When we got inside, the gymnasium was empty, so we ran out with everyone else to blend in with the crowd. There were over a thousand people now partying in the parking lot. I was invited to join several fraternities due to my powers of persuasion.



When I met up with my friends, they asked me, “Darryl! Did you have something to do with this?” I smiled and pleaded the Fifth.

My clique and I still get together and act a little crazy, but we’re tame and domesticated now.

Nobody else in the world is more special than my clique, except my WIFE!!!!



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## A Special Smile

by Francisco Reyes

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Francisco wrote this story because he has beautiful moments with his wife, and he is recording that she is his best friend. This story is dedicated to the best friend he has, and for everybody who shares their idea of friendship for this book.

My wife is my best friend. I met her twelve years ago, when she was visiting her cousin. I liked her because she was a beautiful young woman with big expressive eyes, and her smile was something special.

My wife is still very important for me. I especially like her cheerful thoughts and her empathy for other people. She also gave me two very beautiful children. She likes us to do different activities together as a family. We dance, eat, and talk together. Our dream is that we will continue our lives as friends with the beautiful family that we have.



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## A Strong Impression

by Edel Riano

Sometimes I have found myself in a situation I can't see my way out of clearly. When that happens, my friends help guide me to resolve the situation. Those friends have left a strong impression on my life. I call these friends my best friends; they are the friends I will never forget.



Javier is a good example. I met him in elementary school because we were in the same classroom. He was a fast learner and I was a slow learner. He helped me become a better student. We also made a good team during soccer games. We were close friends for six years, until Javier moved away. I was sad when he left. He made a strong impression on my life.

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Edel wrote this story because Javier was a very close friend. Javier made a strong impression on his life.

When I came to the United States, I felt alone until I met Luz. She worked in the cotton fields with me. She taught me the best way to pick cotton. She told me that I should go to school at night to learn English. I lost touch with her when she married and moved away. Without her help life would have been much harder for me.

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## The Beginning of a Friendship

by Janeen R.



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Janeen wrote this story so all the learners can read about her friend.



My best friend is Roosevelt Washington, who is my boyfriend.

I've known Roosevelt for about eleven years. I met him when we were renting rooms in the same house. I asked him if he could give me a ride to the store. Of course he said yes. When we got back, he asked me to go to the movies with him. He took me out to eat before the movie. Three months later we started renting a room together.

We used to cook together, but now we take turns because our kitchen is too small. He loves to barbecue best. We walk the dog together, sometimes at midnight. We play video games together. We watch football games together. We like the same team, the 49ers.

Roosevelt always seems to be there when I need a friend. I feel happy and safe when we are together. It's always good to have a close friend beside you. We are still going strong after eleven years.

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## “Really—No Kidding!”

by Letty S.

My best friend is Veronica. She is my neighbor. I have known her since 1998. She is helpful, loyal, and I know that I can count on her always. She and her family consider me part of them. I feel blessed that I know her.

When I met her, we started talking and discovered that we were born in the same city, and we even knew the same people. They were in the same Aztec Dance Group where she took part too, and it is where we started saying, “Really—no kidding.”

We go to the same Catholic Church, and we both take ESL classes. Sometimes I take care of her children when she has emergencies. We enjoy birthday parties and special occasions like Christmas. I am lucky to have her as a friend. She told me that she is lucky to have me as a friend, too.



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Letty wrote this story about her friend Veronica, as a way to thank her for her friendship. She also gives special thanks to PAR volunteer Gretchen, who helped with this story.

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## Halfway Down, We Fell Off

by *Frank Santiago*

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Frank was born in Puerto Rico and moved to San José when he was seven. He didn't speak any English but was put in second grade. When they moved him from sixth to eighth grade and he still couldn't read or write, he quit school.

I want to tell about my best friend, Richard. I met him in an auto plant where we both worked. We got hired the same day. Richard sat behind me in orientation. I tried to talk to him, but it looked like he didn't like me. To top it off, we ended up in the same department. One day the foreman tried to get Rich fired by saying Rich didn't check ten cars. Instead, they were going to suspend him for one month.

I went to my boss and told him that it wasn't true. Rich was a great worker. I saw him check all the cars. The foreman just didn't like Rich. After I talked to my boss, they decided not to suspend him. Rich found out that I was the one who talked to our boss.

After that, we became best friends. I baptized one of his daughters and he baptized my son. Our families became close. We went horseback riding and camping together. One day we went

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to the snow. I suggested to Rich that we sled down the hill. He said, “No, I ain’t going down that hill.” I said “Chicken.” He said, ‘OK, let’s go.” Rich is a big man, 300 plus pounds. He got in front of the sled and I got in the back. Halfway down, we fell off. Rich landed on top of me, knocking the wind out of me. He kept sliding into a tree and cracked his head open. Rich got some stitches and was OK. We still remained friends, but due to a job-related move, we lost contact. I miss him.



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Gallery

*“We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over.”*

— Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

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## Frances Ann Odoms: Best Friend Ever, With Joy, Wisdom, and Humor

by Jackie Smith



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Jackie enjoys using the latest on the computer with Microsoft Word.

We met at the family outreach services when my children were young, six years old and eight.

One day seventeen years back, we had a gathering of women and children early in the morning, to sing songs. It was a day to remember, when so many families renewed their relationship with God. We had all day from morning to lunch. On the stage the people were sharing their lives and testimony and songs. Some of them were from Victory Outreach. They used pictures to make learning easier—the wordless Bible was there on the big board—we sang and sang, and others accepted salvation.

A few of the ladies renewed their life with the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was a special counselor for all the children, so we all had time to share with one another. At that time in my life, we prayed for one another, the children in small groups, and all of us in one room. The older children learned about peer pressure and abstinence. Ms. Fran and I stayed in contact. We exchanged phone numbers, and we stayed in touch throughout the year. I also went to set up tables for evangelism, with little tract books in all kinds of languages. At that time I was curious about the scriptures,



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I was intrigued. I also had the opportunity to go to workshops on early childhood learning. We had grown through the many years.

We have done some ministry for young children, sharing the gospel through songs and sharing the word of the Holy Bible and playing games. Sister Fran is one of the kind people who keeps on going, glowing for the Lord, just like a pearl.

Several years back, when I began to put my thoughts on paper and just write, it was very hard, but I kept putting in effort and doing my best. I had trouble with my spelling, but that did not stop me. I also put in hours on the computer. I invited Ms. Fran and her husband at the time I was receiving a literacy award. I was speechless and surprised at the same time because it had been so long since we had seen each other. I also went to the Oakland campus of Laney College, where there was a large conference that included learners from other cities. There were workshops and our family learned together with other families.

I dedicate this page of happiness to all the readers, and to Frances Ann Odoms and her late husband Munson, who was a man of God. For a few years Ms. Fran had the opportunity to be my tutor. She is my angel, and this makes her special in my life for all her kind acts of talent and the gifts she brings to the table of happiness.



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Ice Angel -  
One of six  
sculptures on the  
ice sculpture trail in  
Halifax, U.K. 2009

sandinyoureye © 2009  
Jamie Wardley

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## To My Wonderful Wife

by *Leo Smith*



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Leo wrote this story with and for his wife Jackie. He is glad to have a page in the book.

She is a hard worker and always there for me. I want to do all I can for her. She is a good friend and likes to help people. She has been after me to start getting tutoring from Partners in Reading again.

When my son Jasper was little, I tried using the computer. I want to say thank you to her for showing me and helping when I did not want to open my mind to do it.

I like the work we do together in the kitchen—cooking one of my best hamburgers with everything on it, and a touch of mayonnaise and a few onions, and to top it off, real lemonade. I also like working outside in the yard with her, because I get to have sunlight to go to.

She never gives up on me. We have been married for 25 years and we have two grandchildren, a girl named Akailish, four years old, and her brother Devhan, just turned three years old.

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## A Great Combination

by Andrew S.

My best friend is my wife. I met her at church seventeen years ago. She is my best friend because I can talk to her about anything. We have been through a lot, but she has been there throughout the good times and the bad. We both like watching the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). We both like football; she is a Dallas Cowboys fan and I'm a Chicago Bears fan, so during the football season we have a friendly bet when our teams play against each other. She likes to travel to new places. So do I. She is my best friend and my wife, so that is a great combination.

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Andrew and his wife have been married for fourteen years.

*“I’ve heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason  
Bringing something we must learn  
And we are led to those who help us most to grow  
If we let them and we help them in return.”*

— Stephen Schwartz

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## We Always Help Each Other

by Almaz



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Almaz is from Ethiopia. She came to the U.S. in 1993. She is married and has four children. She works as a caregiver, caring for elderly people. She has been in PAR for over a year.

Zenet is my best friend. She has been my friend for thirteen years. When we met, my husband and her husband were friends. Her husband went to Ethiopia, married her, and brought her to the U.S. Since she has come here we have become friends.

Zenet has kids and I have kids. Her kids and my kids are friends and they all like each other very much. Her kids and my kids enjoy sleepovers and have a good time playing together. We are always helping each other, especially when I need help picking my children up from school. Whenever I ask her to pick up my kids, she says O.K., and when she asks me, I say O.K.

Zenet is very nice and respectful, and she is very smart. When she comes to my house she helps me wash dishes and we have a lot of fun together. We have gone on vacation to a lot of places. We went to Las Vegas, Seattle, Disneyland, Sacramento, and Oregon.

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We have made plans for future visits to our country, Ethiopia, to meet relatives, as we came from the same area. We are good friends because we help each other and give each other good advice for our kids. Zenet is like my sister – I am comfortable with her and I can talk to her about anything. I am happy to be her friend.



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Ethiopian Ladies -  
Photo courtesy of  
Hiro008 ©2011

*“Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.”*

— A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

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## I Feel Comfortable With Mary

by Asfaha Tewolde

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Asfaha has lived for a long time in San José. He has two children. He has one son and one daughter.



My best friend is my tutor. Her name is Mary. I met Mary at the Vineland Library in San José four years ago. Every Monday and Thursday we meet from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. The time goes fast.

I feel comfortable with Mary. She is a nice woman. Mary has a good personality. I am glad I have a good tutor. At first my accent was hard for Mary to understand. But after time Mary can understand me.

Mary and I sometimes talk about Africa. Mary is very interested and she always has two maps of Africa with her. Mary is learning about my country. The name is Eritrea.

When I came to the U. S., I had never voted for president. I talked to Mary about how to vote for president. Mary helped me. I voted for President Obama.

I am happy with Mary. I would like to continue with my best friend, Mary.

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## Beautiful Inside and Out

by *Maria Torrico*

I met my friend, Gemma, in high school in the ninth grade, in Bolivia. She was tall and beautiful and was nice inside.

I went to her house for help with school subjects. She always helped me, especially with literature, my weak subject. When I did not pass the test, she prepared me for the next test. What I liked about her was she sat with me at her dining room table. She read to me and explained how to understand.

She came to my house, too, and she liked the fruit trees, especially the avocado tree. She ate avocados with bread and tea. I learned to eat it, too. Also, I learned to prepare a salad with red onions, tomatoes, and avocados. She liked to come to my house.

We enjoyed doing things together. I've not forgotten the moments we had and I learned from her. She will always be in my heart. We are friends forever.

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Maria came from Bolivia 20 years ago. She is married and has three children.



Avocado tree

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## Salt and Pepper

by Felicia Vasquez

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Felicia wrote this story because her family is very funny.



My best friend is my sister. Her name is Monica. She's trustworthy. She's very outgoing. She's very fun to be around. She has blue eyes and blonde hair. My dad says she is the salt and I'm the pepper. He also calls us peanut butter and jelly, because we're always together.

She likes to try new food, even though she is skeptical about it. I was surprised when she tried lengua. Lengua is cow tongue.

One day my sister and I were in the car. She noticed her pants were ripped. She decided to put her butt in my other sister's face. I thought it was very funny, and we couldn't stop laughing. I'm very grateful to have an amazing sister like her in my life. And that's why she's my best friend.



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## Honest and Caring

by *Lucy Velasquez*

My best friend is one of my three sisters. Her name is Antonieta, but I've been calling her Tony since she was a baby. I remember playing with her when we were little kids. We enjoyed each other's company going to school together and doing chores at home. Through the years we have become close sisters and friends. She is a very honest and caring person. We talk twice a day, since she lives in Los Angeles. Tony is always there to listen to any problems. We bicker at each other like normal sisters. We visit each other every six months and catch up on things about family and our childhood. We take time to go on vacations back to our home country to visit other family members and reminisce about our old neighborhood. She is my sister and my good friend, Tony. I love her.

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Lucy enjoys PAR and finds it very helpful. She wanted to share her story about her best friend because she is thankful to have a good sister who is her best friend.



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## He Was My Interpreter

by Armando Vences



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Armando wrote this story because he wants his wife and children to know that he is learning. He wants them to be proud of him.

My best friend is Rejino Flores. We have known each other for six years. I met Rejino at work in landscaping. Sometimes we worked together and sometimes we had different jobs. He speaks English very well, and he was my interpreter. As we became better friends, he would invite me to his house for dinner or I would invite him. He is a good cook, and we would make chicken mole.

Now we meet most Sundays. We go to Emma Prusch Park, located at King and Story Road, to play with our kids. We go fishing on some Saturdays with some other friends. Our families are now close friends and we will be friends forever.



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## He Is My Life

by Maria Villalpando

Ignacio is my best friend. A best friend is reliable and someone you can be honest with and expect honesty in return. In addition to being honest and reliable, Ignacio is my life. We met 23 years ago, during a difficult time in my life. However, after we met my life improved significantly. He helped me learn to read and write in Spanish and English. He became my confidant, my husband, and the father of my children. I am very thankful that he is my best friend, and very happy that I am married to him.

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Maria is the mother of four children and is happily married. She is very determined to improve her Spanish and English reading, writing, and comprehension.

*“Friends should be like books, few, but hand-selected.”*  
— C.J. Langenhoven

