

What the Library Means to Me

PARTNERS IN READING



San José Public Library

Adult Literacy Program

2012

What the Library Means to Me

Production Team

- Production Coordinator: Ellen Loebel
- Editors: Victoria Scott and Ellen Loebel
- Layout and Design: Doris Lok
- Writing Workshop: MaryLee McNeal

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



Contents

Acknowledgments..... vii

Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support..... viii

Introduction..... ix

Learners' Stories

Abraham Beyene

Library and Church 1

Faalaa Achica

I Want to be Able to Read Books..... 2

Megnaga Aimru

A Joyful Place 3

Robert Byers

Learning to Read 4

What's in My Heart..... 5

Maria E. Cabrera

My Friend and Neighbor, the Library..... 6

Robert Daniel

Library 7

Angel Escamilla

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library..... 8

Sylvia Garcia

From Frustrating to Friendly..... 10

Maarnet Gebremariam	
My First Plan Was to Find a Library.....	12
FTG	
A Soul-Searching Place	14
Millie Gomez	
What I Like Most About My Library.....	17
Fouzia Hashemi	
Learning About America.....	19
Rina Herrera	
Opportunities for Everyone	20
Rodney J.	
Another Chance to be Educated	22
K. L.	
I Love the Library	24
Maka Malin	
A Warehouse of Knowledge	25
Steve	
My Success With the Library.....	27
Douglas Medeiros	
A Different World	29
Shigeko M.	
A Treasure Box and an Oasis.....	30
Debbie Hodge	
A Book on Anything You Want to Learn.....	33

Rose Mosi	
Grandma’s House	34
Gordon C. Nelson	
It Is Fun!	36
Bach Mai	
A Big Place Filled With My Favorite Things—Books!	38
Sarah G. Portales	
Opening the Glass Door	40
Carol	
My Heart Home	42
Margie Ramirez	
Things I Never Thought Were Possible	44
Darryl	
Falling in Love With the Library	45
Francisco Reyes	
Cartoons, Finance Books, and More	49
Edel Riano	
Help and Advice, Free of Charge	50
Melody Sek	
All the Things the Library Does for Us	52
Asfaha Tewolde	
The Library Helps Me Every Day	54
Maria Torrico	
The Library is My Future	55

Lucia Velasquez
Opportunities to Learn in Different Ways..... 56

Maria T. Villalpando
The Library Changed My Life 57

My Vu
Everything in the Library is Good 59

Program Highlights60

Acknowledgments

Partners in Reading (PAR) would like to thank everyone who made this book possible:

- The PAR authors, who write such great stories.
- MaryLee McNeal, who leads the workshop to get the book started. She makes the writing process much easier with her step-by-step process.
- Victoria Scott, who edits the PAR book each year, **carefully “dots the i’s and crosses the t’s.”**
- Doris Lok, who does the book design and layout, and each year patiently makes the book look so good.
- The San José Public Library and the City of San José, which offer support to PAR staff and volunteers. They truly support adult, family, and workplace literacy efforts in San José.
- The San José Public Library Foundation, which is always looking for new ways to make sure that the community knows about and supports PAR.
- The California State Library Literacy Services program that helps make sure people and organizations throughout California know about the literacy challenges faced by many adults.

Partners in Reading Appreciates Your Continued Support

2012 Funders

- City of San José, San José Public Library
- California State Library, Library Services and Technology Act
- San José Public Library Foundation
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- U.S. Department of Labor

Donors

- The American Foundation for Charitable Support
- Microsoft
- Check Point Software Technologies
- Structural Integrity Associates
- Judith Georges and Dennis D. Kauffman
- Jay and Pat Murray
- James B. and Monique Schutte
- Campbell United Methodist Women
- **Thomas O'Brien, Uncle Tommy's Ice Cream Catering**
- Susan Yost
- Friends of Santa Teresa Library
- Brian Badenoch and Sarah-Ann Bishop
- Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Blockie, Jr.
- Joanie Rhine
- Jean Lee
- Jean Shimoguchi
- Rebecca Elliot
- Linda Salcido
- Jean Bussy Knofler

Introduction

We at Partners in Reading (PAR) salute the 35 authors **who wrote stories for this year's book, *What the Library Means to Me***. You show us how much you love libraries and the many happy memories that they have provided. Through the book, we now know the special place that the San José Public Library holds for you.

The adults in the program chose to write about the many ways the library has affected them. Some wrote about why they like their libraries. Others wrote about how the library is a place where they can be quiet, reflect, meet friends, learn, and participate in interesting programs. Most of the stories describe what a very special learning place the library is.

To all of you who wrote a story, we say thank you for sharing your ideas. Your story will be used by others to learn more, to practice reading, and to get to know you and your experiences. After reading your stories, we know other adult learners will be inspired to write their own stories. We hope that the next time you come to the library you will remember the hard work you put in to writing your story and becoming an author. You started with an idea, then you may have developed it more at the writing workshop. Next, you and your tutor worked on getting your story just right. You wrote and then you rewrote, and maybe you wrote a third and fourth draft. And there it was, your perfect story. Not only are you a published writer, you are also a teacher for all the PAR

learners who will read the book and get better at reading and writing. Congratulate yourself for a job well done!

To the tutors, you are also an essential part of the writing process. After the idea comes the discussion and the planning. Next comes writing and rewriting. Your guidance as a tutor and a writing coach is paramount to your learner becoming a PAR author. We cannot thank you enough for making this process work!

The City of San José and the San José Public Library support and encourage the many aspects of PAR, including workplace, adult, and family literacy tutoring. With support from the City and the Library, PAR also offers ESL classes, computer instruction, and other ways to innovate and help as many people as possible in San José. This backing makes it possible to provide the wide range of activities that PAR offers on behalf of the Library.

To the reader, enjoy the journey each author shares. We look forward to including more learner stories next year.

Library and Church

by Abraham Beyene

My name is Abraham Beyene. When I go to the library with my family, I am so happy to read books. Also when I go to church I feel good. I do my homework with my tutor. I can print stories or history and do email. I answer questions and learn grammar and spelling. I see many interesting books that I will read in the future. I enjoy feeling safe in the library and I enjoy going there.



Abraham wrote this story because he comes to the library every week.

Did you know?

Libraries have more locations than McDonald's does.

- American Library Association

I Want to be Able to Read Books

by Faalaa Achica



My name is Faalaa. I come to the library to get help to learn to read. I learned a lot from my first tutor, who died suddenly.

I like coming to PAR. I like learning to read, but sometimes it is hard. My second tutor, Donna, asks me so many questions.

Faalaa wrote the story to be happy. He will see his story in the book and show it to his family and friends, and they will be happy. Faalaa is a happy man. He goes to work during the week and goes to church on Sunday.

I come to the library three days a week to work with Donna. I also have a new tutor, Kevin, who helps me work on the computer. I meet with him two days a week.

I want to be able to read books. I like sports. I like basketball and football. I want to read for a fishing license too. I like to go fishing.

I am glad that I can come to the library to learn to read. I could not learn to read without the PAR program.

A Joyful Place

by Megnaga Aimru

The library is a joyful place for me. I check out books to read to little kids. I read to my three-year-old **nephew and to my friend's** baby. When I first started reading to my nephew, he just tried to close the book, but now he listens to the book and then he tells me the whole story. He likes counting books, too. He can count to ten now.

Megnaga is friendly but shy. She loves shopping.

The library is a quiet place to study. I do my homework for my child care class and study for math tests.

I meet my friends at the library. I meet people on the computer, too. I also use the computer at the library to look for jobs on the Internet. I applied for a job at Ross on the computer. Sometimes I check my email too.

When it's raining outside, it's fun to hang out at the library. I like to look for new books and check out movies to watch at home. I wish the library was open on the weekend, too.

Learning to Read

by Robert Byers



I hung out at bowling alleys, not at the library. I always wanted to read. My brother and sister learned to read, and I wanted to learn, too. I pretended I could read. I learned some reading on the streets from signs, but **the school wouldn't teach me. They didn't** have special programs when I was a kid.

Robert is a famous poet who wanted to read and write so that he would not have to depend on other people and he could better himself.

I quit school, and I worked hard all my life, **that's the truth. I didn't go to the library until** I started this program. Then I started learning to read a little bit better. My philosophy is that it is a whole new world when you give someone a book or use the computer. As long as you try, who knows what you can be? You have to believe in yourself.

“Being a tutor has been more rewarding than I ever imagined. When I signed up for Tutor Training, I thought, ‘I’ll do this for six months.’ It’s now been almost THREE years!! ”

– Joanie Rhine

What's in My Heart

by Robert Byers

I write what's in my heart
Because I don't know where else to start
When it comes to learning how to read.

It's not easy to put it into words,
You just have to know, I always wanted to
learn to read.

People may look at you and say you're not
very smart,
But learning is the way to go.

The library is a place to read a book,
Or see a computer to find interesting things.

That's what the library is about;
It's learning for all ages.

My Friend and Neighbor, the Library

by Maria E. Cabrera

Maria wrote this story because she is thankful to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library for supporting her.

I have a good friend who helps me when I want to know something. For example, when my daughter asks me about her sexuality, I come to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, and I read many books, and I choose some books to read with my daughter. My best neighbor is the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, which helps me on every occasion, and is still helping me to learn how to read and write in English with the program PAR.

I'm fortunate to have a library in my neighborhood.

Did you know?

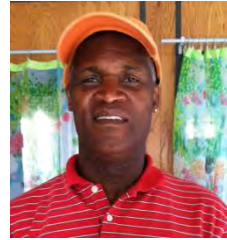
Most overdue library book: A book borrowed by Colonel Robert Walpole in 1867 from Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge was returned 288 years later when someone found it!

- Guinness Book of World Records

Library

by Robert Daniel

The library means a lot to me. It makes me **know a lot of words I didn't know. And I** thank the library for that. And thanks to my tutor, Michelle, for having a lot of patience with me. I recognize a lot more words when I go to the store now.



Robert likes to do landscaping and he likes to fish.

“Tutoring with Partners in Reading has been a rewarding experience because it has given me the skills and abilities to help another person reach her goals and work to her full potential. More than that, PAR has been life-changing for me because my learner has shown me the definition of perseverance through her commitment to her own education. She never stops asking questions, and she sees every interaction in her life as an opportunity to learn something new.”

– Amanda Liles

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

by Angel Escamilla



Angel would like to thank the PAR team for being so much help to him. Since he enrolled in the program, he has improved his reading and writing skills.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library came to be one of my favorite places since one of my night class teachers told me about the Partners in Reading program. She set me up for orientation day and asked me to come meet with one of the counselors in the library. About two years ago, when this first happened, I **didn't have any idea about what the orientation** could be like. I truly was afraid and I worried so much about it.

I had no clue, but I knew it could be very important for me. So I decided to come meet with my counselor, and she has been a great help. She explained how important it is for people to have a safe place like the library, to check out books, read magazines, and get to use the network/computer lab.



I am so glad to be one of the Partners in Reading learners. The PAR team has helped me

so much since I first enrolled in the program.

When I first got here, I didn't even know how to turn on a computer or put a letter together. Now, with the help of PAR tutors, I can read, write, and send emails easily. With the help of the library and the PAR program, I have been able to improve my English and computer skills. This is why now the library means so much to me.

From Frustrating to Friendly

by Sylvia Garcia

Sylvia has lived in San José, California, all her life. She is married to Raymond and is the mother of a daughter and twin boys. She came to PAR to improve her reading and writing skills.

The first time I went to the library was in elementary school. I remember it was exciting.

When I went by myself it was overwhelming and

I didn't understand the system. Using the card catalog to look up the location of the books and not finding the book was frustrating. I didn't ask for help from the librarian. It was not a comfortable place for me. The library seemed big and I seemed very small. I really never learned how to use the library and enjoy it.



As time has gone by, I enjoy going. I did not realize there is so much to learn from going to the library. In my early school years, I started noticing I was struggling in reading and writing. I was embarrassed. I would wiggle out of uncomfortable situations. I was ashamed **and didn't have confidence. I didn't want to** fail. When my kids were younger I could read to them, no problem. When they got older

they noticed I was pronouncing the words wrong. At work I knew I was going to need help in writing and putting my thoughts together. Emails force me to write more at work and in my personal life. I wanted help and to be successful. I was tired of feeling this way. I wanted to change and make a **difference in my life. I didn't want to feel** shame and embarrassment and to hide.

One day I decided to take action. I went online **and searched for "San Jose Reading Help," and that's how I found PAR (Partners in Reading)** at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of San José, California. I started coming to the library again when I started with PAR. PAR has been a great resource. A one-on-one tutor was important to me. PAR helped me to find a tutor. My tutor helps and believes in me and builds self-confidence to succeed in my spelling, writing, and pronouncing my **syllables. It's a blessing to have my tutor in** my life. I know if I continue working with my tutor I will believe in myself. The library is a **comfortable place to come. It's** a friendly and safe place and there is beautiful artwork. If it was not for the library and PAR, I wouldn't have found my wonderful friend, my tutor. PAR and the library are a blessing.

My First Plan Was to Find a Library

by Maarnet Gebremariam

The library is a place that Maarnet has always loved. She wrote this story because she loves to share her experience with the PAR program, a very special place in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

I remember my first experience in a library. My friend Kidsan and I went to our elementary school library in Mekelle, Ethiopia. We were in sixth grade. The librarian told us in a hard voice, **“Don’t talk, don’t eat. Just study or read.”** Kidsan and I looked at each other and burst out laughing! I fell in love with the library at that minute. It was an exciting place. I began to learn how to use the library for studying, reading, and making new friends. My college library was also a good place to be because I could study and borrow books from it.

When I came to San José, my first plan was to find a library. My husband found the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, where I got a library card, and I borrowed a book of fiction. After a while I found the Rose Garden Library, which is near my apartment. I used the computer lab and wrote email to my family. My husband heard about the PAR program at King Library and I applied. I got a personal tutor who is honest, understanding, and helpful.



The PAR program gives a priceless education that is completely free. I have learned a lot of things, such as spelling, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. Now I have confidence wherever I go. I am even taking ESL classes at San José City College! I love the library so much. The library is a place of knowledge, but it's **not** just about books. The library is about people helping people, and making friends.

“The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you.”

– B. B. King

A Soul-Searching Place

by FTG

FTG would like to continue the program to be a better writer and reader so she can join the book club. She would like to have more time to use the library more.

Let me tell you what the library means to me. **It's a sacred, peaceful, and soul-searching** place. My favorite sections are the biographies about famous or infamous people and how they live or lived their lives. I am frequently using self-improvement, relaxation, and exercise books for my health, and cook books because I enjoy learning the different styles of nutritional cooking.

Since I started PAR I am learning more about all the useful and special programs there are, such as computer labs, book clubs, ESL books, and most of all the tutoring that I enjoy once a week in a room set up for group teaching or individual studies with my tutor. Because of this it makes me feel more comfortable than at **home, Starbucks, or the park. It's incredible** the amount of help they offer to students of all **ages. It's a great place to meet people, too.**

My first experience of a library was at the British Council in Ethiopia. It was small and beautiful; however, we stood in line for two to three hours to get inside. There was no variety available, only study books. We could choose one book to take home.

What an amazing and huge surprise it was when I stepped inside the San José Library. What a blessing it is to have access to all those wonderful books, movies, CDs, and audio books. I was and always am overwhelmed with the choice, the opportunity, and freedom of how many items I can borrow to take home.

I will spend hours in the quiet surroundings reading anything I want to read, and **then ...** there comes that voice over the **intercom that tells me it's almost closing time** and the next few days this library will be closed. Where will I go if all our wonderful libraries close their doors forever because of **all the cutbacks? Back to the British Council's library in Ethiopia? I can't imagine what my life would be without the library and all the wonderful people who work and volunteer there.**

Did you know?

Two out of three Americans own library cards and use them.

- American Library Association

What I Like Most About My Library

by Millie Gomez

What I like most about the library are all the books they have for us to read and look at.

When I'm in the library it makes me feel peaceful, because it is so quiet there, and you can enjoy reading a book without being interrupted.

When I go to the library, the area I like going to is Partners in Reading, because I work on the computer, doing tests about my verbs **and I'm learning at the same time. Most of** all learning about computers, and it is very hard too, but I'm enjoying it.

Millie has been with PAR for three **years. She can't** believe **she's** been here so long. She is having fun.



When I first went to the library I didn't know how to read. I could not spell or write. I would not even pick up a book, because I could not read. If they are baby words to you, they were very hard words for me. But I feel very proud of myself now. And thanks to my tutor, Joanie Rhine—she helped me to get where I **am. That's why I just love my tutor. Thank** you Joanie, for everything.

This is why I just love my library. I hope you can understand why I wrote this story. And thank you to everyone who helped me.

“Ever since I was a little girl, the library has been a place for exploring. To walk into a library is to give myself the chance to be entertained, enlightened, surprised, confirmed or corrected. My life is richer because of them.”

– Susan Yost

Learning About America

by Fouzia Hashemi

I am happy to go to Edenvale Library. I go to my library two times a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I go for two hours. I can walk to the library. I am happy going there because I study reading, writing, and English. We have a study room. We can get silly and not bother others. No one bothers us. I practice pronunciation of new words. We read. I learn to pay attention and answer questions about the story. I am learning how to tap to spell words. Now I can read some books.

Fouzia wants to share what she has learned.

I wanted to become an American citizen. I read books about our presidents. I learned about America, the flag, our government. I read books with CDs. It was good to hear the words. My teacher helped me study for the citizenship test. It was very hard. Some of the words **were really big and I didn't understand.** **She made me practice doing things I didn't** think I could do, but I did them. I passed! I am very happy.

Opportunities for Everyone

by Rina Herrera



Rina is grateful for all the help that the library gives her. She wishes to thank all the staff.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library has been and will continue to be a great help to me and lots of other people, both children and adults. I have received a huge amount of help from the program, PAR. They have given me an English tutor who has given me much support, as well as doing this for lots of other people with different first languages who want to read and write English better.

The PAR program also offers computer classes which I have taken a couple of times. I want to use a computer just like the rest of my family does.

At the King Library, I also discovered the helpful program Smart Start, that opened a door for me to learn about early child development and that helped me open my own child care provider business at home.

There is a Children's Exploration Room where my granddaughters go to read and discover different activities that the library provides.

I have visited this library so often that I noticed that there is so much support for students, alumni, people with special needs, children, and homeless people. There are also many different ethnicities that show up to have meetings and reunions at the library. I am proud that I have a place like the King Library to come to, and that there are so many opportunities to succeed for people who need them, and who look forward to the better things in life.



First of all, I appreciate and thank the volunteers who make everything possible for our dreams, and secondly the staff who work in every department in the library.

Another Chance to be Educated

by Rodney J.

Rodney is working with his tutor to improve his reading and writing skills. He wants to get all he can out of PAR.

In my short experience, the library has challenged me to see, think, and give more of myself to myself and others. **I'm very** thankful to PAR and my tutor, Brett, who helps me so much. They have allowed me another chance to be educated beyond my past setbacks. Each word I learn opens a door to a greater hope to my understanding, which has no limit, and I like it more and more all the time.



Reading, writing, and learning new words is **powerful, and as we know, "Knowledge is power."** I have missed out on so many opportunities because of my limitations with reading and writing, but **I'm moving forward** now to not take this chance lightly or for granted.

This library experience is in its beginning **stages for me, but I'm determined to follow** through and stick it out to help myself, my future, my family, my fellow neighbors and neighborhood. My education is very important to me today. I am committed to grow and **learn so much more. Bottom line, I can't** change my past but I can, I will, and I must take advantage of PAR and my tutor here at the public library to be a more productive citizen by giving my best and making this a **part of my legacy. Because as we all know, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."**

Did you know?

Benjamin Franklin started the first library in the United States in 1731.

- American Library Association

I Love the Library

by K. L.

K. L. has been a learner with PAR for more than 4 years.

I went to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San José for the first time in 2009. I saw a beautiful, nice, clean and new building. It had a lot of books, newspapers, and movies (old- and new-fashioned) on DVD for all ages. I was amazed that they had different international materials. The library had information about everything for everyone. Also, the librarians were nice, helpful, and tolerant. They were not scary or intimidating.

Now I go to the King Library every week with my tutor, Jessica. I think that face-to-face tutoring is more effective than other ESL classes. We are working on vocabulary, reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar.

My goal is to improve my skills and to get a better job. I also want to gain job certificates. I am glad that I found the library because I want to learn more English and obtain a lot of knowledge.

A Warehouse of Knowledge

by Maka Malin

I go to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at least twice a week. The library is a place for everybody no matter the age.



You can visit and stay as long as you want to study or to use the materials.

The library is very useful to search and receive information about anything you want because you have free access to the Internet.

Maka is married and has one son. She lives in San José, California. She goes to adult school in Santa Clara.

When I am in the library I feel relaxed and I enjoy the peaceful and quiet atmosphere.

My favorite place in the library is the Partners in Reading center. The staff working for the literacy program are very kind and **knowledgeable. I use the literacy program's** materials to improve my reading and writing skills.

I started going to the library a few months ago and I still continue to do so because I believe that I am improving. I am very lucky and fortunate to have this opportunity. The library is very important to me and it means the world to me.

Libraries are the sources and warehouses of knowledge, a great place for social interaction, and a wonderful place for everyone to have the opportunity of free education.

“Helping someone gain a potentially productive life by learning to read, and having your children witness that relationship between a learner and tutor, is beyond rich and deep. It is powerful and moving, and crosses many spectrums of this life — independent confidence, family relationships, community ties, and ultimately making a difference in this world one word at a time.”

– Barbara Suit

My Success With the Library

by Steve

I moved to Stockton, California, from Cambodia in 2002. In 2004 I started looking for a job in San José. I got lucky. I got hired for a job in a custodian position for San José State University in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Library.



Steve wrote this story because he wanted to join the writing project.

My work schedule was from 10:30 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. I used to stay in San José with a roommate and I drove home to Stockton on the weekends. By that time I was already interested in studying more English to make me get better in English, and communication. I always thought in my mind **when I had the chance I'd go into Partners in Reading.**

In early 2011 I moved to San José. By September 2011 I finally got the day shift and I work from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays. My wish came true.

Now I am able to get to PAR to learn more English, improve my reading, writing, spelling, listening and learning in the computer lab after my day shift.

In addition I can bring my child to enjoy the library. Also sometimes I can borrow all kinds of books, DVDs, movies, etc.



After I study with PAR for awhile I'll become different from before I came to PAR. Now I'll be able to speak, write, listen, and understand more easily. PAR is making me AWESOME!

I really appreciate PAR.

A Different World

by Douglas Medeiros

The library is like a different world. They have a variety of books to read for everyone. I like to read mystery, horror, Stephen King novels, and true crime stories. They are interesting and grab my attention. They have computers, and I would like to learn how to use them. I would like to send an email to Aimee, my former tutor, and my boss. I would also like to search for information on the Internet.

The outside world is a rushed and busy place. When people come to the library, they appear **to be calm and relaxed. Whatever they're reading, it is for pleasure. The library is a great place for learning and relaxing. I can't** imagine my world without a library.

Douglas has put two other stories in the PAR books in the past. This is his third one. He enjoys writing. The more he writes the more confident he becomes, especially with spelling and reading.

“When I was young, we couldn't afford much. But my library card was my key to the world.”

– John Goodman

A Treasure Box and an Oasis

by Shigeko M.

Shigeko is from Japan and wants to improve her English. She likes to visit the library and enjoys it.

I go to the library almost every other day of the week. For me, the library is like my treasure box and my oasis for me.

A lot of interesting things are packed into the library.



There are not only a variety of books, magazines, CDs, and DVDs but also many activities, exhibitions, and services. And they are not only for adults but also kids—even for toddlers. And they have many events for visitors, from babies to adults. My **grandchildren enjoyed several children’s** activities like craft class, toddler story time,

and Lego® time when they visited here in the United States from my home country. I also enjoy many activity programs and exhibitions such as craft class or ESL conversation class.

My most precious and favorite time is working with my Partners in Reading program tutor, since she teaches me how to read English words and understand the contents of documents. She even explains the **background of them because I don't know the** historical and social meaning of words and phrases. She also corrects my little articles.

Staying in the calm and spacious and peaceful atmosphere, I can enjoy these opportunities. Since I am not yet accustomed to this society, I have a lot of questions. Whenever I have some questions, I can ask my reading partner tutor without any hesitation, and she always understands my question and answers me warmly, even though my questions are not easy to understand, rather some expressions are weird expressions in English.

Such a comfortable space, the library is thought of as just a treasure box and an oasis for not only me but also my whole family.



“Reading makes all other learning possible. We have to get books into our children’s hands early and often. At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better. It’s an enormous force for good.”

– President Barack Obama

A Book on Anything You Want to Learn

by Debbie Hodge

The library is a place to go and read books. You can find a book on anything you would like to know about. I have four children. When they were in school we took them to the library. You can use the computer and look up so many things. One of the things I like most about our library is the Adult Learners and Tutors program. The Adult Learners and Tutors program helps people like me learn how to read.



Debbie wrote her story because she feels the library is so important. There are so many books, and you can find anything that you want to learn **about. It's a place to relax, too.**

“A library card is the start of a lifelong adventure.”

– *Lilian Jackson Braun*

Grandma's House

by Rose Mosi

Rose is from Cameroon in Africa. She lives in San José with one of her daughters. Her first language is an English dialect.

My name is Rose Mosi and I came from Cameroon. Cameroon is in West Africa. When I was in Cameroon I didn't go to school. Instead I stayed home and took care of my brothers and sisters. My mother used to make pots with clay. She cooked our food in the clay pots. Our house was made from bamboo and clay. The floor was made with oil and clay. It was hard and shiny. This was Grandma's first house.



When I got to San José, I wanted to learn to read and write. I tried adult school, but the level was too high. The teacher gave me a number to call the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. They gave me a tutor. This was my first time to go to a library. Since then I have been coming to the library twice a week.

I look forward to coming to the library. It is a quiet place to study. I love that there are **many books to read. There are children's** books and story books. I love to read and write. The library has given me an opportunity to learn.

I have two anecdotes about the library. When I first checked out a book, I did not understand that I had to return it. When I took it back I had to pay a 23 dollar fine.

My second anecdote explains the title of my story. My son-in-law often drives me to the library. My three-year-old grandson sometimes comes with us in the car. One time **when we got to the library he said, "This is Grandma's house."** My grandson is now a little older and he knows that "Grandma's house" really is the Pearl Avenue Branch Library.



It Is Fun!

by Gordon C. Nelson

Gordon enjoys meeting with his tutor at the library to improve his reading and writing.

I walked into the main library in downtown San José, and asked one of the employees if they could help me with my reading, spelling, and writing. They told me about the Partners in Reading program. They have a lot of good stuff like books, movies, and computers.

For a long time, my wife and I did not have a television. However, my wife



was able to rent movies from the library, which we really enjoyed.

In the beginning, I did a lot of reading on the computer—**it's easier to read on the computer.** When I did visit, I liked to be with the Lord in **"quiet time,"** that way I have fellowship with Him.

The parties that PAR gives have food and entertainment—it is fun! I never had fun, because I **didn't know how to have fun.**

I got a better job, with a Christian family-owned shoe company that I like; the people are friendly and easy to work with. I think that the PAR program has a lot to do with it.

It would be a big loss for all of the learners if they closed the program.

“As a child I was awed by the enormous mural in my Richmond Hill, New York Library. It was a WPA Federal Arts Project painted inside the beautiful yellow-brick Carnegie library. The children’s area was a bright, welcoming place. As an adult I continued to visit the library and came across this saying: ‘If you can read, you can do anything.’ My belief in that quotation is one reason I volunteer at Partners in Reading.”

– Sue Rizzi

A Big Place Filled With My Favorite Things—Books!

by Bach Mai

Bach Mai was born in Vietnam. She has been here 16 years. She wrote this story because she wanted to learn how to write.

The library is another place I call home. It is very helpful and a great place to study, relax, and read.



I usually go to the library to do my homework because I like a quiet environment for studying.

Sometimes, I have bad days. I go there to relax and read a book, and I really feel better.

I have enjoyed the family library not just to visit to choose the books or DVDs but also to meet with my tutor, Bobby. He helps me a lot with writing, reading, and pronunciation.

The first time I went to the library, I could see many lights and shelves everywhere. There are a lot of CDs, DVDs for many languages such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and other languages. A big place filled with my favorite things—books! When I want to learn anything about any subject, there are many materials available.

I've been going to the library since last year and I still get excited every time I step inside. I feel comfortable, relaxed, and happy. It is a warm place with the right temperature, not too cold and not too hot. It entices me to gain more knowledge and confidence. A place of reverence for my mind. My library means the world to me. I love the library.

Opening the Glass Door

by Sarah G. Portales



Sarah thought it would be fun to write for the book.

The library to me is like looking through a glass door (like the one at the entrance to King Library). I can see through to the other side and I have to open the door and walk through it. Getting there is exciting, **powerful, and educational. I've just barely opened the glass door, with my tutor Lise's help, and I am trying to walk through it—the beginning of a wonderful journey.**

It's ironic that about 38 years ago I was a student at Silver Creek High in line for my first working permit, waiting to be assigned my first job. I was placed at a day care center. One of my responsibilities was taking a group of children from the day-care center to the library—the Carnegie Branch Library at Santa Clara and 23rd Street, one of the first libraries in San José, which is now an historical landmark.

I remember walking to the big white square building, which seemed huge at that time, but looking at it now it is tiny compared to our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of today!

The children and I would walk down stairs to a teacher sitting on a small stool in the middle of the room. We would sit in a circle on the floor and listen to story time. I just loved to hear all the stories. I was mesmerized. I think I enjoyed story time more than the children! I **don't remember** ever having story time at home when I was growing up because my father always worked two jobs and my mother was sick.

As a mother I made sure my son, David, was **enrolled in the library's summer reading** program. He was encouraged to read a lot of books so he could get the exciting prizes at the end. Now, at 15½, he likes to read and he reads better than I do, thanks to the reading programs.

I have been an advocate and supporter of my working crew also, encouraging them to enroll in the PAR program. I am very proud that they have all improved in English, reading, and writing skills.

Now I am enrolled in the PAR program, looking through the glass, opening the door, and trying to walk through to the other side.

My Heart Home

by Carol

Carol is an international student. She spends plenty of time in the King Library because she wants to have perfect English as soon as possible. Her teachers working in the King Library and the reading program help her a lot.

My library is my real home in America. After moving to this great country two years ago, I spend most leisure time in the library, where it is not cold, is not hot, and there are no noisy neighbors. I feel calm and relaxed and I have a sense of well-being. The library is my heart home. I live in downtown San José now. Every weekend and holiday you can easily find me in



the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. I study here, attend interesting activities here, and make friends here.

I prefer to study in the King Library. I always sit on the third floor, close to a big window through which I can overlook the beautiful campus of San José State University.

Reading in the library, I can focus on my books because there are not too many things to distract me. Therefore, I can do my homework efficiently.

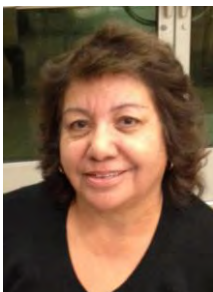
I appreciate all kinds of opportunities in the King Library. They are useful and interesting. I started this reading program a half year ago. My tutor, Barbara, teaches me pronunciation and writing. I am so glad I joined this wonderful program and met my excellent tutor. Also, I attend the English Conversation Club on Saturday afternoons. My teacher, Benjamin, is very professional. He chooses some very valuable topics and organizes our classes very well. I like these programs very much.

And last, the most important thing is that I can make friends in the library. My tutor, Barbara, is my first native speaker friend in San José. Not only do I improve my English, also I learn American culture from her.

I like the King Library so much, which helps me improve English and understand American culture better. It is my favorite place and my soul home in America.

Things I Never Thought Were Possible

by Margie Ramirez



Margie is a mother of five children with nine grand-children and 10 great grand-children.

The library means learning things I never thought were possible. I read about diabetes. Now I understand my own diabetes better and I take better care of myself. There are interesting books in the library to read.

My PAR tutor taught me how to get a library card, check out books, and there is a study room and CDs. I like to study in the library because it is quiet. And you can think. There is a lot to learn in the library. Now that I know all **this I feel very good about myself. I'm glad to** have the library to learn these new things.



Falling in Love With the Library

by Darryl

Clearly, one of the happiest places on earth in my childhood was the Watts Branch Library.

I was raised in LA. In the summertime in the **1970's, my friends and I hung out at the Watts YWCA.** They provided free trips for low-income families. One trip I remember the most was to the Watts Branch Library. It had a reading corner



and a craft hour. Still today, I sometimes do the crafts with my daughters. Another trip was to Disneyland. I was looking forward to going to Disneyland; it would be my first time there. On the bus I was anticipating having a lot of FUN. I was planning to ride all day, especially **Disneyland's new ride, Space Mountain,** salivating at the thought of it. I was having the time of my life, riding different rides while

Back then the ticket price for Disneyland was \$50.00. The Watts Library was priceless and FREE, and gave lifelong memories. **That's why I** wrote my story.

working my way to Space Mountain. When I got to the front of the line and the ticket agent asked for the E-ticket, my world came to a crashing end: I had lost my ticket book! I had to endure watching everyone else having fun; for me it was an endless day of torture. I wished I was back at the Watts Library working on my crafts, where I could have fun all day without needing a ticket book.

Many moons later, in the early 2000s in San José, I made up my mind to get serious about learning to read. I started to look around for my local library because I remembered all the fun I had there at the Watts Branch Library. I called the King Library when it was on West San Carlos Street. It was scary to ask for help. I was



new to San José and wanted to move up in the workplace. I knew I needed to read better.

The hardest part was getting started. I had their number for a while before I called them. That was **one of the best things I'd ever done. If I had to do it all over again, I would call immediately!** The orientation, when I met with the director of Partners in Reading, was not that scary. She told me I would start with the basic level to make sure that I got it, and I would advance at my own pace. She asked me what type of tutor I would like. She explained **the tutor I would choose should be a person I'd be comfortable with.** They could be older or younger, male or female, or the same age I was. My first tutor was about my age and my second tutor just a little older, but she doesn't seem as old as she is.

Due to having two great tutors, this year I finished reading my first novel, *Of Mice and Men*, then a



second short novel, *The Pearl*, both by John Steinbeck. Now, I'm working on *Misery*, a full-length novel by Stephen King.

Sometimes my wife and daughters come with me to the library. They go over to the **children's library while I'm in tutoring.** They also love attending Families for Literacy, and the girls enjoy all the books they get there and playing on the computers.

The library started out being one of the **happiest places on earth for me, and now it's one of my family's happiest places on earth, too!**



Cartoons, Finance Books, and More

by Francisco Reyes

I come to the library because I use the books to read to my children. How do I find a book? First, I check the signs to find the right section for my book. My children like cartoon **books, so they go to the children's section and** look at the books in there. I like to read any book, but I especially think finance books have interesting items. I like coming to the library, because many people in my family use the library.

Francisco has been in the program for almost three years.

The Internet is also important in the library, because it is faster. Before, I had Internet in my home. It was slow, so when I can use the Internet in the library I can download all the programs I want. I get good information on the websites for finding a new job. Also, I read books on the Internet. That is beneficial for all people who use the library.



Help and Advice, Free of Charge

by Edel Riano



Edel wrote this story because he wants to get experience writing.

The first time I went to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, I was amazed to see what a beautiful place it is, with so many floor levels. There were many extraordinary resources such as books, CDs, DVDs, and many computers. Little by little I began exploring all the services that the library has to offer, for example, being able to speak to a lawyer for some legal advice, free of charge. Also you can talk to a social worker; if you have a question, they can guide you to the right path. The atmosphere of this library is very comforting because you always feel calm and safe; also the people who work at the library are very kind and help you if you need them.



What caught my attention most was the Partners in Reading program because my ability to write English was very poor. I enrolled in this wonderful program. They assigned me a tutor to help me with my reading and writing. My **tutor's name is**



Sandra Kemper. She is a fantastic tutor. She always corrects my errors, and thanks to her I have progressed a lot in my education. I also use the computer lab. When I started using the computer I knew nothing about computers. Now I have learned many different programs. Without Partners in Reading I would have never learned so much.

All the Things the Library Does for Us

by Melody Sek



The library is important to me and my family. I want everyone to see all the things the library does for us.

The library is very important for me and my family. First of all, I work at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and so does my husband. San José State University is a good employer. There are good benefits for everyone, and we are happy to work here. These jobs allow us to make our living, own a home, and raise our children.

Second, I am from Cambodia and I now live in this new country. So it was hard for me to start a new life because of language. But the library has a lot of different ways that can help people to learn ESL, so I joined PAR to learn English with a tutor, and they provided **materials to work with as well. I'm thankful to** PAR and my tutor, Susan Yost. They work hard to help everyone learn to read and write English. I have been with PAR for about a year and I watch my English progressing!

Third, I always take my children to check out **children’s books from the neighborhood** library, Hillview Library. My husband and I want them to be fluent in English, but we also want them to love their roots. My children attend the Cambodian language classes at Hillview every Saturday.

So I have much appreciation for everything that the library does. My family and I thank you very much.



The Library Helps Me Every Day

by Asfaha Tewolde

Asfaha was in Saudi Arabia for six years. Then he came to the USA in 1986. He was not able to finish his education in his country, Eritrea. He is glad he found PAR. He is very happy with PAR and the library.

I go to the library every day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. I especially like to go to the Vineland and Pearl Avenue Libraries. Most of the time I look at the international news. I read the newspaper and use the computer. Sometimes I look for books that I can read.

I like to continue my program with my tutor, Mary. I am always happy with her. I ask my friend, Mary, for books that have questions and answers. I like to read *News for You* on the computer with Mary. It helps me, and for me it is good. I hope to continue with my teacher.



Ellen, Catherine, and Teresa from Partners in Reading have helped me from the beginning. I want to thank you. I will never forget your help.

The Library is My Future

by Maria Torrico

I came from Bolivia. We had just one library in the downtown of the city, Cochabamba. Everybody who needed the library had to go **downtown. Most of the books I couldn't** borrow. I could read the book in the library or make a copy.

Maria is married and has two daughters and one son.

When I came to San José, the library was my savior. I was happy because I could check out a book for reading. I could renew, too. Later I found the PAR Program. They accepted me. I was anxious to read books in English. I got a tutor.



Later, Deborah gave me a tour of the **children's library. I learned which books are** good for different ages. There are flyers telling what books children need to read. The librarians are very helpful to me.

For me, the library is my future. I can find everything I want.

Opportunities to Learn in Different Ways

by Lucia Velasquez



Lucia, who is from Guatemala, is in the medical field. It is important to speak correctly to communicate. She likes to read and to help people.

The library is a wonderful place to further your education. There are a lot of materials, such as many books, videos, maps, computer programs, and opportunities to learn in different ways. For example, I have been taking advantage of the material and help offered to improve my English and math.

I have to say thanks for all the programs the library offers and to the beautiful volunteers **who've been giving their time to help people like me.**

I've been participating in the PAR program for a year and it has been helping me a lot.

The library means a lot of help, opportunities for people who want to educate themselves, or simply to become a volunteer to make a difference.

The Library Changed My Life

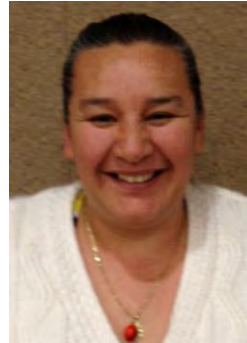
by Maria T. Villalpando

The library is a place of opportunity. It has provided me with the chance to improve my English, and reach my goals.

Every week, I meet my friend, Juli, at the library for Partners in Reading. When I come to the library with Juli, I learn new things. I take the things that I learn, and I read short stories in English and Spanish for myself.

The more I read, the more I understand; the more I understand, the more my life changes for the better. I am a different person now than I used to be. I am less stressed and I enjoy life more. I still value hard work, but I also value play.

I also come to the library for classes that help me reach my goals. Someday, I hope to be a teacher. To help me get closer to that goal, I take classes for childhood education and CPR at the library. An added benefit of these classes is that they will help me when I have grandchildren. Since my children are still teenagers, **hopefully that won't be anytime soon!**



Maria is the mother of four children. She has been married for almost 24 years. She loves her family very much.

I know that the library is the reason for these changes in my life. If I had never come to the library for Partners in Reading, I believe I would still be the person I used to be.

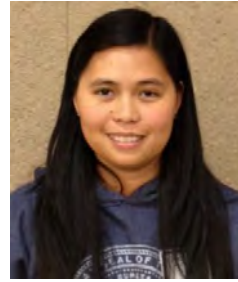
The opportunities the library provides are very important to me, and I am very thankful for them.



Everything in the Library is Good

by My Vu

I never went to the library before. But I began to go to the library when I came to America. At the library there are a lot of books. I can read books for kids, books for cooking, books for computers, music, movies. And they have a program for people (like me) to learn English, Spanish, computer, and cooking. I think everything in the library is good for me and everybody. **Right now, I'm still going to the library, and I think I will keep going to the library.**



My is 30 years old. She likes food and travel.



Program Highlights

2012 Top Innovator, San José Public Library, Partners in Reading

Partners in Reading had a banner year of recognition and awards! The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) selected San José Public Library (SJPL), Partners in Reading (PAR) program as the 2012 ULC Top Innovator in the category of Education, Literacy and Lifelong Learning. PAR was selected for the **Work Wise** program from nearly 200 entries in 10 categories.

For the past two years, PAR has designed and refined **Work Wise**. It is a vocational ESL and literacy training program that improves the job performance of workers in San José. Training is delivered at the work sites and tailored to the needs of the employee and the job requirements. Through a combination of classroom instruction and individual tutoring, participants improve their English skills and increase their proficiency on the job.

PAR is proud and honored to receive this recognition from ULC, which represents large urban and suburban libraries in North America. In announcing the awards, ULC President and CEO Susan Benton said the winning programs demonstrate the remarkable work that **occurs in libraries every day**. "We congratulate the winners for their innovation, creativity, and commitment to meeting the changing needs of the communities they serve," stated Benton.

2012 Adult Education Award for Collaborative Services

PAR was awarded the 2012 Adult Education Collaborative Services Award by the California Council for Adult Education Mid-Peninsula Chapter for its work with Campbell Adult and Community Education (CACE).

CACE and PAR collaborate by supporting each other's programs with complementary services. CACE promotes PAR and refers learners who need individual literacy instruction to the PAR program. These referrals supplement the classroom instruction they receive at CACE. These learners are then assessed and matched with PAR tutors. Recently CACE staff and volunteers **participated in PAR's tutor training** so they can provide direct tutoring. In addition, PAR staff serve on the CACE Advisory Council.

Plans for the future include continued collaboration and possibly new programming efforts. CACE is planning to offer basic skill classes at PAR for the adult learners who would like to supplement their individual tutoring. Learners who participate in both classes and individual tutoring often accelerate their learning.

PAR is grateful to have the opportunity to collaborate with CACE and is honored to have received this award.

Together We Read Family Literacy

What better way to promote literacy and success in school than through families? Did you know that parents, grandparents, and **guardians are the most influential people in a child's learning?**

For that reason PAR launched the *Together We Read* family literacy program. The intent is to help adults, who are influential **in children's lives, understand what they can do and how** important they are in developing literacy among children.

Together We Read helps families realize that their support helps ensure school success and success in life.

Through *Together We Read*, adults learn practical ways to support literacy at home from the time their children are born through 13 years of age. Six times a year families receive new **children's books to share together and tips** that help increase literacy in fun ways. Parents discover games that engage the whole family, and receive resources that answer many parenting questions. For example, they may want ideas on how to get their child to sleep at night, ways to stop bullying, or ideas about how to set a schedule for their child. PAR sends these materials to the tutor, so together the learner and tutor review the books, read the tips, and explore the resource information.

Together We Read supports families participating in PAR and creates greater possibilities.

Technology Skills Abound

The computer lab is hopping and adult learners are closing the technology gap, thanks to the encouragement of tutors and the efforts of Julie Cullen and the volunteer team providing computer instruction. **It's** critical that PAR learners develop literacy in conjunction with computer skills. This is often what separates those who achieve future success from those who do not, particularly since technology is so woven into all aspects of our lives. It also helps learners realize the practicality and value of the literacy skills they are learning.

Technology has become the backbone of information and a **significant source of learning and online lessons. It's a major** means of communication and the way many purchases and financial transactions are made. Technology enables access to job openings, application posts and provides the portals through which employers get to know the applicants. If you need government documents or citizenship information, you go to the Web. It offers a wide range of entertainment such as sports, music and videos, and links to major consumer sites such as Craigslist and retail stores. For those with limited literacy, limited technology skills compound the problem. Largely due to tutor support however, PAR learners are increasingly more interested and involved in computer literacy. We thank you for that.

Skilled instructors are available to respond to the many areas of computer training that are requested. They volunteer their time and expertise. Special recognition goes to Emilie Egger, Santiago Gallo, Kevin Height, Amna Hussein, Chandrika Khera, Habib Moon, Uyen Nguyen, Julie Oborny, Wolfgang Schaechter,

Daryl Serrano, Ed Vasper, and Anthony Vo. **They're a great team!**

Please continue to encourage your learners to use the computer services and join them, if possible. On Monday and Tuesday late afternoon and evenings, there is computer drop-in time. An instructor is available to help learners with any computer topic and no appointments are necessary. If your learners want individual instruction at a set time, they can make appointments with an instructor from Monday through Friday and on Saturday mornings. To make an appointment with one of the instructors, contact PAR at (408) 808-2361. The same learning programs that are in the PAR computer lab are also in the computer labs at the branches that have Family Learning Centers: Hillview, Tully Community, Dr. Roberto Cruz - Alum Rock, East San José Carnegie, and Biblioteca Latinoamericana.

Let's make the technology gap disappear!



I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.

- *Jorge Luis Borges*

