

Vision LITERACY

Partners Creating Opportunities

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Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 540 Valley Way, Milpitas CA, 95035

www.visionliteracy.org

Tutor & Volunteer Newsletter

March 2009

SUCCESSFUL TUTORING PAIR GRADUATES TO FRIENDSHIP DURING 11 YEARS

When **Irma Morales** came to the United States from Mexico in 1992, she spoke only a few words of English. Seventeen years later, she is helping her American employer run training programs in Guatemala and reading English language novels. What were the magic ingredients in her recipe for success? A personal commitment to learning, and her tutor, **Karen Pogue**.

The two women (pictured at right) first began working together when Morales joined a small Vision Literacy group Pogue was leading. The other students gradually fell away, but Pogue and Morales were committed to their task and had already established a strong bond. They continued meeting as a pair for the ensuing 11 years.

During that time, they met weekly at the Vision Literacy office in Gilroy. The sessions followed an informal learning structure, using reading as a springboard to discussion.

“We never looked at our meetings as a chore or a class,” Pogue observed. “We just talked.”

However, while the curriculum may have been flexible, their dedication to learning was not.

“You never stop learning a language,” states Morales, who still keeps – and regularly uses – a dictionary and thesaurus at work. For years, she also used an English-Spanish dictionary, although that particular tool fell by the wayside a number of years ago as her skills improved.

Pogue agrees that Morales was a dedicated student, pursuing knowledge outside of class by reading

newspapers (and looking up vocabulary words in the dictionary), and watching English-language television.

But Pogue also emphasizes that a tutor must have a similar level of dedication, if she is to serve her learner well.

“I was committed,” she states simply.

Morales recently tested out of the Vision Literacy program, but not before achieving a milestone goal: finishing the novel *Mutant Message Down Under* by Marlo Morgan. The book, which was a gift from Pogue two years ago, takes place in Australia, a country that fascinates Morales. The two women spent nearly a year reading the book together,

sometimes paragraph by paragraph.

While they won't be able to read more books together as a formal tutoring pair, Morales and Pogue still plan on seeing each other weekly. Only now they will meet as friends.

NEW STAFF JOIN VISION LITERACY

Welcome to **Jim Johnson** and **Susan Castro**, who recently accepted positions on the Vision Literacy team. Johnson, who has been tutoring at Elmwood Correctional Facility since June 2008, will assume the job of associate manager, corrections. Castro will work in the Gilroy office as a part-time administrative assistant for the south county, a growing service area for Vision Literacy. Good luck and congratulations to our newest staff members!



Tutors: Please submit your monthly progress report by mail or online at www.visionliteracy.org. Reports are due April 3. Thank you!

TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: My First Day at Vision Literacy by Maricela Solis

I had my first experience for Vision Literacy Monday night. It was a wonderful experience, and I loved it. I got there, and the people taking the class got in early and were eager to learn new things. They had their questions ready and were very friendly. They are very humble people, and they appreciate the help they are being given. So when class started, their instructor asked the students what they would like to learn. It was so interesting because most of them just wanted to learn simple things that I take for granted. Some wanted to learn how to send an email and copy a person, and others how to use iTunes and Windows Media Player. I had the opportunity to assist a couple of the students, and I was so happy because I haven't done anything like this in a long time. It feels good to help someone out, and it's so nice when they are so welcoming. I am looking forward to volunteering as much as I can, and this experience is an eye opener for me.

Solis, a Gavilan College student, recently began volunteering in a computer class in Gilroy.

TUTOR TIP: USING CROSSWORD PUZZLES

This month's tip comes from Tracy Van Zanten, a tutor at Elmwood Correctional Facility in Milpitas.

Vision Literacy tutor **Tracy Van Zanten** reports that she and her learner have been having a lot of fun doing crossword puzzles. They recently started doing them in *News for You*, a weekly newspaper for adult learners published by ProLiteracy. The learner had never known how to solve crossword puzzles, so the pair worked on the first one together. The learner was surprised to discover that that she could complete most of it on her own. Van Zanten observes that working crossword puzzles requires her learner to pay attention to whether words are present or past tense, and singular or plural. It has also opened the door to learning about U.S. Geography, since clues often refer to state abbreviations and major cities.

Simple crossword puzzles can be found online at www.abcteach.com under "Fun Activities." A subscription application and past issues of *News for You* are available at www.newsforyouonline.com.

THINK GROUPS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR TUTOR AT CET AND INNVISION

Two Vision Literacy group programs are looking for additional tutors.



At the Center for Employment Training (CET), tutors work with approximately 15 women who are enrolled in early childhood education classes to earn credits to become assistant teachers in daycare facilities. Tutors work with small groups of students, who are primarily ESL learners, on homework and class assignments. The class meets Wednesdays from 10:15 a.m.-noon at 701 Vine Street in San Jose. Meetings will continue through June.



At The Villa, InnVision's transitional housing for women and children, tutors work with small groups of women on a variety of skills such as computer basics, resume writing and English grammar. Groups meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-9 p.m. at The Villa, 184 South 11th Street in San Jose.

If you are interested in the CET opportunity, please contact **Sandy Reed** at sreedca@earthlink.net or 408-867-6700. Those interested in volunteering at InnVision should contact **Marina Dols** at mdols@visionliteracy.org or 408-262-1349.

WRITING CHALLENGE ACCEPTING ENTRIES

California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) is now accepting entries for its annual Writer to Writer Challenge. (See enclosed flyer for details.) Adult learners are invited to read a book of their choice and then write a personal letter to the author of that book, sharing with the author their thoughts and opinions as to how the book affected them. The deadline for submission is July 17, 2009. For more information, call **Martha Inouye** at 408-262-1349 or visit the CLLS website at www.libraryliteracy.org.

COMING EVENTS

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| March 28 | Orientation, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits
10:30-11:30 a.m. |
| April 4 | Financial Skills Workshop,
Milpitas Library, 10:30-11:30 a.m. |
| April 9 | Orientation, Campbell Library
6:30-7:30 p.m. |
| April 16 | Orientation, Mountain View Library
6:30-7:30 p.m. |



Let us know if you have a question, comment or submission for the newsletter. Contact 408-262-1349 or info@visionliteracy.org. Next deadline for submissions: April 13, 2009.