

Vision LITERACY

Partners Creating Opportunities

408.262.1349

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

www.visionliteracy.org

Tutor & Volunteer Newsletter

May 2009

VOLUNTEER REFLECTS ON 12 YEARS OF TUTORING AT-RISK WOMEN

Claire Markus never thought she'd have any thing in common with young mothers struggling with drug addiction. But after 12 years of tutoring them, Markus says, "I've learned that these women are not so different from me."



Even before finishing her career as an elementary school teacher, Markus knew she wanted to spend some of her retirement working in adult

literacy. So when she finally left teaching in 1996, she quickly completed tutor training at Vision Literacy and looked forward to working with learners one-on-one in a library setting.

But after an appeal from her literacy specialist, she agreed to try working with pregnant women in treatment – and she never stopped. Her first assignments came from the Perinatal Substance Abuse Program (PSAP), where she worked with women individually. After that facility closed, she moved to Blossoms, an affiliate of Gardner Family Health Network in the Alum Rock neighborhood, and began teaching a Friday morning class in basic academics.

"It was an eye opener for me," Markus comments on her experience working with her learners. While their challenges – from drug addiction to legal trouble to single parenthood – were personally unfamiliar to her, she empathized with the love they had for their children and the desire to give their kids a better life.

While witnessing difficult circumstances and experiencing occasional disappointments, Markus has nevertheless found fulfillment working with adults after a career focused on children, and she is proud of the hard work her learners do to set their lives straight. Occasionally, there

are even moments of joy, such as when a former learner, children in tow, recently approached Markus and proudly announced that she has been clean and sober for two years.

By any measure, 12 years of tutoring demonstrates remarkable devotion and caring on Markus's part. She attributes her long tenure to two things: choosing an activity she loves – teaching – and being absolutely committed to living up to her word. "If you say you'll do something, you need to do it."

Spoken like a dedicated role model.

COMPUTER CLASSES TO BEGIN IN JUNE

North County computer classes are set to launch! Three separate classes will be offered on June 13, 20 and 27, and July 11.

Class times are:

- Beginning skills: 10-11 a.m.
- Beginning skills: 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- Intermediate skills: 12:30-1:30 p.m.

All classes will be held at the Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 540 Valley Way in Milpitas.

Learners who would like to participate, or tutors who would like to assist, can contact the Milpitas office at 408.262.1349. Registration is required, and space is limited, so don't delay!

UNITED WAY 2-1-1 OFFERS LIFELINE

If you know someone in crisis or who could use help with basic needs, tell them about United Way's 2-1-1 non-emergency service. It connects Silicon Valley residents to hundreds of community services – for free!



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

LEARNER SPOTLIGHT

Leticia, a learner in Vision Literacy's south county area, was able to save money every month by learning how to write her own checks. In a literacy class made possible through our partnership with the Glenview Alliance – Neighbors Achieving Success (GANAS), students practiced writing numbers and placing them in the number line. Hands-on activities allowed Leticia to learn how to properly write different amounts on personal checks.

Leticia explains, "At first I was intimidated and afraid. I would not write my own checks to pay my bills. I would have the checks but did not know how to use them. Every month I would spend over \$6.00 for the cost of money orders. Now I am not afraid of writing my own checks. I still need more practice, but I now know and understand the system."

TUTOR TIP: IMPROVING COMPREHENSION THROUGH FRIENDLY CONVERSATION

Did you know that talking with your students before, during and after you read together is an important part of their learning?

As you and your students discuss a book you...

- Encourage them to make connections between the text and something in their own lives. Making connections like these is an essential part of learning.
- Provide an environment which makes reading a natural part of your pleasant social interaction. Don't underestimate the power of your positive relationship to encourage and enhance your students' learning. Research suggests that we learn best when we like the person who is teaching us.
- Facilitate their comprehension of the book in a natural, enjoyable way.

Remember that we are referring to talking *with* your students – not just talking *at* them. We want students to be active, not passive, participants in their learning.

This month's tip comes from Project Read, a service of the Provo City Library in Utah.

REED RECEIVES JUNIOR LEAGUE THANKS

Congratulations to Sandy Reed, president of the Friends of Vision Literacy, who recently received recognition from the Junior League of San Jose for her voluntarism. Reed, who donated nearly 600 hours of time last year to Vision Literacy, was presented with a certificate at the Junior League's annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on April 24.



Vision Literacy board and staff members attend the appreciation luncheon in support of Reed. Clockwise from top left: Jennifer Low, Sandy Reed, Pat Lawson-North, Kristin Seitz, Candace Levers and Kathy Campbell

COMING EVENTS

- June 6 Financial Skills Workshop, Milpitas Library, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- June 13 North County Computer Classes, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 10 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
- June 20 Learner Meeting, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 10 a.m.-noon
- North County Computer Classes, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 10 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
- June 27 North County Computer Classes, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 10 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
- July 11 North County Computer Classes, Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 10 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.



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