

# Vision LITERACY

Partners Creating Opportunities

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## Tutor & Volunteer Newsletter

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# SPECIAL APPRECIATION EDITION!



All photos in this month's issue are courtesy of Bob Martin, who donated his services for the Volunteer Appreciation Event.

### EVENT RECOGNIZES GENEROSITY AND SUCCESS OF VISION LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

Sixty-four tutors, volunteers, learners, board members, staff and community partners gathered to celebrate another year of successful learning at the Volunteer Appreciation Event on Saturday, Oct. 17. Held at the Toll House hotel in Los Gatos, which generously underwrote half of the catering expenses, participants from every Vision Literacy program came together as a community to share brunch, socialize, and recognize the generosity and commitment that is at the center of 2009's literacy accomplishments.

Many speakers participated in this year's program illuminating the diverse ways in which people engage with Vision Literacy's mission. Program Manager Pat Lawson-North and board members Sandy Reed and Steve Toy addressed the program and business elements of Vision Literacy's work. Campbell City Council Member and JPA Chairman Dan Furtado, Mexican Consul David Figueroa-Ortega, and Honorary Board Member Rigo Chacon spoke to the importance of literacy within the larger community. And, at the heart of the program, three Vision Literacy learners – Ernestina Barrios, Marina Hayes and Gausen Parmenter – expressed their gratitude for the tutors who selflessly help learners achieve their dreams. (Two of the learners' statements are shared on the next page of this newsletter.)

The finale of the program was the awarding of the Bev Popper Spirit Award to tutor Frances Theiss, who has volunteered at Elmwood County Correctional Facility for a decade. Theiss was recognized for her exceptional contribution to adult literacy, having provided over 5000 hours of instruction to nearly 150 inmates. She was presented by Sheryl Springer, associate manager of corrections, with a certificate and an engraved trophy.



Theiss (on left) accepts the Bev Popper Spirit Award for exceptional service

While not all volunteers were able to attend the celebration, the annual event was intended to recognize and celebrate the outstanding efforts of the Vision Literacy volunteer community, on whom the success of the organization depends. Collectively, volunteers provide thousands of hours of free instruction – time and work that truly changes lives.

# VISION LITERACY LEARNERS SAY THANKS...

## How the Vision Literacy Program Changed My Life



Three years ago one day I was in the Milpitas Library and checked their bulletin board. There was a little note; it said “free English tutoring.” “Free?” I said to myself. “If tutoring really is free then there must be a requirement or some kind of donation expected.” Out of curiosity I called.

Since then I have been with this program. I have had three tutors and my current tutor’s name is Kathy.

Through this program I met some friends and have heard some very encouraging stories; and also stories from other learners about how the program has changed their lives.

My English still needs a lot of improvements, but compared to two years ago it’s much better. I am not afraid to write any more and I feel more confidence to deal with people in English. I am glad that I made that phone call three years ago; I feel very lucky that I found this program.

I want to thank all the people working with Vision Literacy to make this program possible. And thanks to all the tutors for their time, gasoline money and the energy they spend on helping and ask for nothing in return. You all are great people; people like you make this world a better place.

*Gausen Parmenter wrote and presented this essay for the Volunteer Appreciation Event. She has been a Vision Literacy learner since 2006.*

## How My Tutor David Changed My Life



When I used to watch TV I didn’t usually get the story right.

When I used to talk to people, either they didn’t understand me or I didn’t understand them.

When I used to watch a movie, I usually miss the main idea.

When it was time to vote, I usually chose the most handsome candidate because I couldn’t read and understand their points of view.

When there was a conversation about something I was afraid to participate because I wasn’t sure that I got the right idea.

When I met David, my tutor, we started talking about sports, plants, food, politics, history, geography, health, tools, animals, insects, new vocabulary, etc. I also practiced writing, reading, pronunciation and I was not afraid to ask.

Now I feel that my life changed for the better. Conversations are more clear and easier to understand. I think my understanding changed from 30% to 70% in the two years. It is a good feeling to be able to capture the stories or conversations right the first time. Therefore, now I want to thank David for being so patient and understanding, for constantly teaching me, for being so flexible when I have a job to do, and for not giving up on me.

*Marina Hayes wrote and presented this essay for the Volunteer Appreciation Event. She has been a Vision Literacy learner since 2007.*



Ernestina Barrios, a South County learner for three years, also addressed the audience at the Volunteer Appreciation Event expressing her thanks to everyone who makes the Vision Literacy program possible. The text of her speech was not available at press time but will appear in a future edition of the *Tutor and Volunteer Newsletter*.