

September 2008

MEET FRIENDS OF VISION LITERACY:



Larry Hayes
Board Member

How did you become involved with Vision Literacy? While working as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madras, India, in the late 60s, I was awarded a postgraduate scholarship offered by Laubach Literacy to study literacy journalism at Syracuse University. This unique MA program was taught by Dr. Robert Laubach (Dr. Bob), the son of Dr. Frank C. Laubach, the founder of Laubach Literacy now called ProLiteracy. Many years later, that experience led me to Vision Literacy.

Why are you interested in being on the board? I made a promise to Dr. Bob 40 years ago that someday I would make a contribution to literacy. About 10 years ago, my marketing agency created the current Vision Literacy branding program, including the logo design. Pro bono, of course. Two years ago, Pat Lawson-North asked me to join the Board so I could continue to help promote the work of Vision Literacy.

Tell us about your magazine ActiveOver50. This is my current passion and dream of a lifetime. I launched ACTIVE three years ago after shutting down my marketing and public relations agency of 25 years. Published quarterly, ACTIVE is a local, niche magazine written for people over 50 living in the Bay Area. The past three years have been the best years of my life. (For a free, online copy of ACTIVE, visit www.activeover50.com.)

How do you use your magazine to promote Vision Literacy? People over 50 represent the largest demographics for volunteer work. San Jose alone has over 250,000 residents over the age of 50. ACTIVE magazine is a perfect vehicle to reach this age group. I've run articles and free ads about Vision Literacy in ACTIVE magazine because I believe in the mission of the organization.

What recent success have you seen with Vision Literacy? The Toll House Hotel in Los Gatos is a group project teaching employees how to read and write. This is new so we won't know the results for awhile but it looks encouraging. There are other great stories among many others, including the literacy programs in Gilroy and at the Elmwood correction facility in Milpitas.

Why is being literate important? If you can't read, you're at a huge disadvantage with little chance of obtaining the American Dream. If I can help and inspire one person to get ahead in life, it's worth it.

Do you vote? Of course. If you don't vote, you shouldn't complain about government and/or our politicians. But I complain anyway.

What do you think of being able to vote? Voting is one of our basic rights of living in a democracy. If you can't read, you can't participate in our society, which is a terrible shame and waste.

What kind of books do you enjoy reading? All kinds. Fiction. Nonfiction. I loved "*The World is Flat*" by Thomas Friedman. If you can't read and know what's going on, the world can be a scary place.

Who is your favorite author? A tie between Ernest Hemingway and James Michener. Great story tellers. Big fan of Michael Crichton, Ken Follett, John Grisham and Stephen King.

Have you ever met an author If so, who? Dr. Walter M. Brotz, author of "*We Live Too Short and Die Too Long*" and "*Dare to be 100*." Highly respected and the foremost authority on aging. Everyone over the age of 50 should read this book. I also met the late Dr. Frank C. Laubach, who wrote "*Forty Years with the Silent Billion*." His teaching methods (still used today by Vision Literacy and ProLiteracy) helped over 60 million adults to read and write worldwide. A truly remarkable human being.

Have you ever written a story? I have written many stories, including a non-published novel about my days as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madras, India.