

# Vision LITERACY

Partners Creating Opportunities

## Vision Literacy Tutor and Volunteer Newsletter November 2006

### Welcome New Staff

Vision Literacy welcomes three new staff to the team. **Rachel DiFranco**, a new public ally, started in October; she will be working with the FIRST 5 initiative in Alum Rock to provide educational resources for families. **Arlene Remmers** accepted the administrative assistant position in the Milpitas office, and she brings a wealth of experiences from her many professional endeavors. We are also excited to announce that **Kristin Seitz** has joined the team as communications and events coordinator to assist with marketing and outreach efforts in the community. We are pleased to add these talented individuals to our staff, and we look forward to future collaborations.

### Online hours report not working

Please be aware that the online hours report form on the Vision Literacy website is still not working properly. While the form appears to operate normally, all data submitted via the online form is not received by the Milpitas office. Until further notice, all tutors should continue to submit their "Tutor and Learner Progress Reports" by regular mail, or by emailing directly to [info@visionliteracy.org](mailto:info@visionliteracy.org). We apologize for the inconvenience and will send a notice when the online form is functioning properly.

### *Congratulations to Fran Theiss, Winner of Jefferson Award*

Fran Theiss was presented with a 2006 Jefferson Award for her work teaching Bay Area adults how to read. The award, which celebrates outstanding volunteers in the community, was presented to her at the Santa Clara County Elmwood Correctional Facility, where she volunteers every week as a tutor.

Since joining Vision Literacy in 1999, Fran has devoted thousands of hours to teaching inmates at the Elmwood facility to read. She works one-on-one with inmates using everything from magazines to workbooks to generate enthusiasm for reading and encourage vocabulary building. "Fran's work has made an enormous impact on the lives of hundreds of students over the years," said Sheryl Springer, associate manager of corrections. "She has helped these men develop the basic skills they need to find jobs and lead lives free from the burden of illiteracy."

Established in 1972, the Jefferson Awards recognize extraordinary contributions made by community volunteers throughout the United States. Bay Area award winners are nominated by members of the community and are evaluated by a selection committee at KPIX-TV. We thank Fran for her dedication and commitment to adult literacy.



Please remember to turn in your monthly progress report by mail or email the first week of each month (please do not use the online form). To support this effort, Vision Literacy will be sending out a monthly newsletter with the form as a reminder.

## California Literacy Conference

This year, the California Literacy annual conference was held on October 18-21 in Pasadena, CA. California Literacy is the oldest and largest statewide adult volunteer literacy organization in the United States. Vision Literacy sent one student-tutor pair, Linda and Martha, to participate as well. Here are their thoughts about the experience.

### *Linda's Thoughts:*

Linda liked the cartoon class because when "I was younger I used to do a lot of art, drawing flowers, hearts and roses." I got a lot out of the class with Big Jim and enjoyed drawing with letters and numbers. I taught my sisters and nieces how to do it. I think it is cool, so I passed it on to them and they liked it. It is interesting. I don't get bored, and it keeps me focused.

My learning style includes touching, viewing and listening. When I draw I'm looking at it. I'm listening to the teacher tell me how to make it. I'm touching it because I'm learning how to draw it.

Most workshops were for tutors and teachers to learn how to teach students, but what I enjoyed the most was meeting new people. It was nice to talk to students who are now advocates for students and tutors. A lady I met (a learner who is now a tutor) told me how she learned to read and write because she wanted to help people learn. She told me her mother didn't know how to read, so she didn't learn as a child. She told me how they are trying to take literacy programs out of the budget. We need more people to stand strong for the program to help more people. One day I would like to learn enough to be an advocate for my friends and learners.

### *Martha's Thoughts:*

Sharing experiences with representatives from other literacy programs was a wonderful way to learn about what is happening in other parts of the state and what might help us as well. My goal was to learn techniques that might be useful for

working with learners. The 'Creative Writing' and 'Games and Tutoring' workshops offered simple exercises that can be used with words the learners have already learned. They produce material that can be used as a reference source and the learner can have a tangible item to show for his/her efforts.

John Corcoran's speech will be the most memorable moment for me. He represents the purpose of all literacy programs. The enthusiasm and joy he expressed when talking about his journey as an adult learner reached beyond the walls of the ballroom. The success of our learners, that's what we all want to achieve, right?

Linda and I both enjoyed the conference very much. Attending workshops and meeting new people was a wonderful experience. We both learned strategies to help keep the learning process fun. Having a variety of teaching methods is useful to address different learning styles as well.

## Volunteer/Tutor Orientation Dates

Help us spread the word about upcoming volunteer/tutor orientation dates. To sign-up, call (408) 262-1349.

### ❖ *Cupertino Library*

Sat., Jan. 27 at 10:30-11:30 a.m.

### ❖ *Mountain View Library*

Tues., Jan. 30 at 6:30-7:30 p.m.

### ❖ *Los Altos Library*

Wed., Jan. 31 at 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Here is information about our next tutor training:

### *Saratoga Library*

Sat., Feb. 17 from 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Sat., Feb. 24 from 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Sat., Mar. 17 from 9:30 am - noon



*We wish you a  
great  
thanksgiving!*