

LiteracyLinks

The Portland Literacy Council Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor

December 2012

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Save the Date!

Tutor Conference

March 16, 2013

Reed College

Imagine . . .

by Peggy L. Murphy, Editor

Imagine the courage an immigrant needs to walk into a classroom when her only English words are yes, no, or okay. As the door opens, a room of strange faces turns toward her. Meanwhile, her husband gives her gentle nudges across the threshold, shuts the door, and leaves her behind for hours. Now imagine how much more courage it would take to continue attending classes when it took two more years to understand English.

Thea Bou came to the U.S. to marry a fellow Cambodian. She left behind a culture where women's work is in the home, caring for the family, home, and property. She had no idea that she might have to join the workforce, raise a child without the support of extended family, or that she would need further education to earn family wages. While Thea attended school in Cambodia, she was unable to attend long enough to earn a diploma. It takes nearly three years for Thea to be comfortable having a conversation.



Thea Bou (on right) and her daughter, Lynn, are regulars at the local library. Thea is excited about sharing the library's "Book Babies" story time with her new baby.

(Please see **Thea** next page.)

(Thea, from page 1.)

Now imagine becoming pregnant, but being unaware of the meaning of bodily changes that suggest pregnancy. While Thea had experience helping her mother with her seven younger siblings, she had no idea about the impact a mother's diet and activity could have on her child's start in life. For every doctor's appointment Thea required an interpreter. Thea feels blessed that her husband, Chuun, was an active helpmate during and after her pregnancy.

As her reading and writing skills improve, Thea imagines continuing school and being a good example for her daughter, Lynn, now a second grader at a North Portland school. Thea is assigned a Volunteer Literacy Tutor, and begins developing more confidence about her educational potential. Even though the thought of taking math classes and using a computer are very scary, she sets her sights on getting a GED to improve her employment opportunities.

Thea has gained confidence and become more optimistic about raising children in the U.S. After Lynn was born, Thea shut her mind to the idea of another child because of the obstacles she experienced. Now that Lynn is older, Thea has been able to imagine a brother or sister for Lynn, and one will arrive in the new year. This pregnancy has been filled with new experiences: Thea's English has improved to the point she doesn't need an interpreter for doctor's appointments. She now has a driver's license and doesn't need her husband's help to get to appointments. And most importantly, she is able to read books about pregnancy and is using the information she finds to improve her nutrition and physical activity for the mutual benefit of her and her baby.

Thea has overcome hesitation and fears to complete multiple long journeys: first from Cambodia to the United States, from being single to being married and raising her daughter. Her educational journey has covered many years and demonstrates how long it can take an immigrant to feel at home in her adopted country. That's a lot to imagine — and a lot to be proud of.

Editor's Note: Thea Bou was one of the first students I tutored. I am grateful she knew my heart was in the right place and accepting of my flaws and missteps.

Will a Font Solve Dyslexia?

Could a solution for dyslexic readers be as simple as a font? Abelardo Gonzalez, a New Hampshire software developer of [OpenDyslexia](#), sees the possibility. This article will draw no conclusions; you, curious reader(s), are provided with a few links and invited to form your own opinions.

The following is a very small sample of the font. (Due to technological limitations, the captured image is not a quality representation of the fonts. For best viewing, see [OpenDyslexia](#)).*



Font design includes “heavy weighted bottoms,” designed to anchor the letters and guide the eye along the text. Gonzalez's OpenDyslexia website uses paragraph shading to help guide the eye down the page. If the cursor hovers on a line, it is shaded a darker gray.

Does Gonzalez have the credentials to back up his claims about the dyslexic font? The OpenDyslexic website has numerous links to “Press” reports on the font, although his website is silent about his qualifications. A link to a Nashua, New Hampshire, *Telegraph*, article “[NH man creates fonts for dyslexics](#)” indicates that intellectual curiosity led to the fonts.

How do dyslexic students feel about the font? The article “[OpenDyslexic: ‘Does the new dyslexia font help?’](#)” includes some favorable comments from dyslexic students. One direct quote reminds us that dyslexia is complicated “. . . dyslexia is not just about reading, it is about how our brain works and how we think.” The teacher found that students bypassed helpful reading techniques that increased comprehension. Problematic for the dyslexic students is the cluttered appearance of some websites: too many images is too distracting.

Editor's Disclaimer: Learning disabilities are highly complicated, so please see this article as food for thought.

What's in Your Tutor Toolbox

The Great Big BINGO Book *Bingo Games for ESL Learners*

Nina Ito and Anne Berry

Pro Lingua Associates, Publishers ©2001

Tired of rote exercises where you try to drum grammar or alphabetical order into students? Have some fun with *The Great Big BINGO Book*. This gem includes forty-four vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, writing, and cultural activities. The proficiency levels recommended for each variation are noted in the table of contents, and range from beginning to advanced.

The authors present four categories of bingo games: traditional, task, talking, and testing. In "traditional" bingo, students respond to the teacher's statement. "Task" bingo may include a writing exercise or a campus field trip to find answers. In "talking" bingo, classmate conversations lead to answers. "Testing" bingo allows the teacher to evaluate individual student progress.

Alphabet Bingo is a form of "testing" bingo. Designed for beginning to lower intermediate students, two game variations can be played on one bingo board. In one version, a caller draws an alphabet card and pronounces the letter and students put a marker on the letter name that they hear. The test is that all students should have simultaneous bingos, if not, it identifies which students may need more help.

Campus Scavenger Hunt is an example of "talking" bingo. Students work in teams and perform tasks, such as getting a course schedule and finding classes to take, finding a student whose birthday is in a particular month, or getting pamphlets on a particular topic from one of the college offices. This activity is designed for upper intermediate and advanced students.

Bingo is a flexible tool for a Tutor's Toolbox. *The Great Big BINGO Book* is full of ideas for improving vocabulary, learning aspects of U.S. culture, and developing conversation skills as basic as greetings and helping students fathom idioms. It is available at Multnomah County Library.

For Your Calendar

Volunteer Literacy Tutor Training

Registration Information (register by Email or telephone 971-722-6111 X3700)

January 19 & 26, 9 am to 4 pm

PCC Southeast Center, 2305 SE 82nd

To register:

Call: 971-722-4620 x3700

E-mail: pdxliteracy@hotmail.com

Tutor Discussion Group

Tentative Dates: February 2, April 27, & July 27, 2013. Look for firm dates and locations in upcoming issues of **LiteracyLinks**.

Opportunities

Health Literacy Conference Registration

Registration is now open for the second Oregon and SW Washington Health Literacy Conference, sponsored by Legacy Health and community partners. The conference, "Toward a Culture of Clarity," is set for Friday, March 1, 2013 in Portland. See the [conference details and registration for more information](#).

From information provided by Kari L. Stanley, LPH, Director of Community Relations, Community Benefit, Legacy Health.

Multnomah County Library

Multnomah Co Library GED Learning Labs

Learn general information about GED testing requirements. Take a practice test and learn how to study online and from library study guides. Learn about many resources to help prepare you for your GED test. Attendance at the lab qualifies participants for a partial GED testing scholarship.

Registration is required.

- Rockwood Library, Saturday, December 15, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Holgate Library, January 19, 12:30 to 2:30 pm
- North Portland Library, Saturday, February 16, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm