

LiteracyLinks

The Portland Literacy Council Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

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Looking Back, Going Forward

by Peggy L. Murphy

As editor and chief writer of *LiteracyLinks*, I often feel humbled by the adult learners we feature in our newsletter. In spite of adverse circumstances, these learners have not given up learning or improving their reading. Some might perceive their goals as small, yet for a person with lifelong learning difficulties their accomplishments will be huge. This month, we'll check on the progress of two native English speakers who had difficulty learning to read.

Our two learners are Cody Bauer and Archie Hendricks. Both of these young men stress the importance of not ever giving up on learning. Both of them greatly benefited from volunteer tutors who believed in their ability to learn and who generously gave, and continue to give, the gift of their time and guidance.

From GED to Biomedical Physics



Kris Magaurn,
Portland
Literacy
Council
President, and
Cody Bauer at
2012 Tutor
Conference.

Cody Bauer, in "[Superman, Sherman and Me](#)", *LiteracyLinks*, September 2011, wrote of his long road to getting a GED. As a teenager, he dropped out of high school and entered the workforce. On the way to high school, he had made progress with the help of tutors. Sherman Alexie, the native American writer, became his role model. Cody had difficulty learning to read in elementary school; emotional and family issues in middle school; and social troubles in high school that led to dropping out of high school. In 2010 he enrolled in Portland Community College and earned his GED.

Please see Cody, page 2.

[LiteracyLinks](#)

Archie's In the Driver's Seat

"[Archie's Triumph](#)" (Literacy Links, Fall 2010) is an unforgettable narrative about Archie Hendricks' long struggle learning to read. Childhood illness, hospitalizations, and a move to Mexico without access to education in English were big struggles. His biggest obstacle when he returned to the U.S. was placement in Special Ed classes where he was labeled as unable to learn by a teacher.

Archie Hendricks never gave up. He's always had an intrinsic desire to read and write, which strengthened when he began having children. (He's the proud father of Marisa, age 9, and Aubrey, who's almost 2 years old.) His goals include greater penmanship because he wants to write letters and journal. Archie works in shipping at a local manufacturer, and his career goal is to be a Tri-Met driver because he likes people.

In the tutor-student relationship, Archie is driving the bus and Barbara helps navigate. He describes Barbara as patient, being there, and helping him to get out the words. They began with basics: word lists, rhyming words so that Archie could spot spelling patterns. One technique they used was for Archie to dictate his thoughts to Barbara, while she wrote them down so he could see his words. Barbara finds Archie to be naturally poetic, for example, "You find yourself in the words you write" is an original Archie expression.

Reading is easier these days, and Archie's favorite commute-time reading includes Percy Jackson



Archie Hendricks and Barbara Kashuba

fantasy novels. He is proud to read to his children.

Take it one day at a time, show up, be responsible, and respectful are Archie's advice to learners working with tutors. While learning can be frustrating, he advises having an open mind and not transferring anger to your tutor.

The relationship between Archie and Barbara demonstrates the value of respect and acceptance of one another's strengths and challenges. When Barbara and Archie first began working together, they met in a private room; he's developed greater self-esteem and confidence. We conducted our interview in a public area. He's not ashamed if people can't see into him and find the real person.

A collector of "jewels," Archie is grateful for the assistance of the Volunteer Literacy Program at PCC Southeast — his most precious gems are Kathleen Holloway, VLT Coordinator, and his tutors Percy Whiting and Barbara Kashuba.

Cody (continued from page 1).

Cody describes getting a GED as life-changing. He knew he had to return to school to expand his choices.

Cody is enrolled at PCC, taking general chemistry and trigonometry, and will take calculus. He works 30 hours a week as an ASPCC senator, and is active on environmental projects at the college. Cody's career goal is to work in biomedical physics or chemistry. His dream job includes calculating radiation doses for cancer patients. Cody will continue at PCC, then transfer to Portland State University. His chosen field requires a master's degree, three exams, and certification requires two years of field work.

Cody learned a lot during the time he prepared for the GED exam and began college. Like many serious college students, time management, setting priorities, and including study hours in his schedule are essential. He has embraced being a student and has a network of contacts including study partners, as well as teachers who serve as advisors and inspiration.

Inspiration to help others is modeled after his grandmother who works every day in adult foster care. A constant influence in his life she encourages Cody to keep going. Cody hopes to pass such inspiration on to others.

What's in Your Tutor Toolbox?

Resources for Tutors of Pre-Literate Students

At the tutor discussion groups held each school term, tutors express the need for resources they can use in tutoring pre-literate adults. LiteracyLinks offers the following additions to your tutor toolbox.

[Tacoma Community House Training Project, 2005](#)

If you are looking for a how-to manual, this is a good place to start. "[Making It Real: Teaching Pre-literate Adult Refugee Students](#)" (108 pages) discusses teaching speaking and listening skills, teaching reading and writing, managing a multi-level classroom, and more. The workbook presents techniques and practical advice about how adult pre-literate students learn. Advice includes repetition, building oral competency before reading and writing, and the use of visuals. For example, pictures and simple drawings are more useful than printing out a list and expecting students to write it down. There is a good discussion of the mechanics and protocols involved in putting pen to paper.

[Practical advice from CAELA](#) (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition)

Recommendations include physical activity, repetition, limit teacher talk, and respect of your student's intelligence and capabilities. CAELA's website includes links to resources, research, and other information.

A Variety of Resources for ESL Tutors

The [Florida Literacy Coalition](#) has a rich website. Its Literacy Resources page has a very long list of "relevant sites." Links include

- American TESOL - Ways to Visualize Vocabulary
- Easy Conversation for ESOL Beginners
- The Internet Picture Dictionary - categories include body parts, kitchen, and tools, and is available in English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Activities include "stinky spelling," which displays six objects and their names: each name has an incorrect letter.

Florida Literacy Coalition website also contains numerous links for articles and professional resources.

For Your Calendar

Tutor Discussion Group - Spring Term

Saturday, May 11, 10 am to Noon.

PCC Climb Center, 1626 SE Water Avenue.

Light refreshments provided. Discussion items include one-to-one/small group activities, what's working, challenges.

Space is limited. [Register online](#) or [Email Peggy Murphy](#).

Volunteer Literacy Tutor Training

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

- May 11 & 18, 9 am to 4 pm
CCC Harmony Campus Bldg
7738 SE Harmony Rd, Milwaukie

To register:

Call: 971-722-4620 x3700

[E-mail: pdxliteracy@hotmail.com](mailto:pdxliteracy@hotmail.com)

FYI: This is the last tutor training for 2012-13.

Save the Date!

March 15, 2014

Annual Tutor Conference

Reed College

Opportunities

Multnomah County Library

GED Learning Labs

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

[Registration is required](#)

Reminder: GED testing format will change in 2014. Test-takers who have not completed all five tests will need to start over.