



# LiteracyLinks

The Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor  
September 2013

## In This Issue

Community Grants  
SE Works Needs Tutors  
Tutor Toolbox  
Literacy Is . . .  
Calendar  
Opportunities

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**March 15**

**Annual Tutor Conference  
Reed College**

**Save the Date!**

## PLC Invites Nonprofits to Apply for Community Grants

The Portland Literacy Council invites applications from interested community nonprofit organizations which operate local literacy programs that advance Adult Basic Education, including GED preparation, or assist English Language Learners through English-as-a-Second Language instruction.

PLC's 2013 Community Grants are limited to \$500. Grant funds are available to support existing projects only and may be used to meet the program or operational expenses of the sponsoring agency.

**To apply:** Authorized representatives of interested agencies may submit a letter describing, in 500 words or less, the literacy project for which funding is requested, the students served, the project's goals, and how a community grant will advance the project mission. Submissions must also include a copy of the requesting agency's IRS 501 (c) (3) tax exemption letter or other acceptable evidence of nonprofit status.

In 2012, Portland Literacy Council awarded three community grants:

- Julia West House, Portland, received a \$500 grant to help support their GED preparation program.
- St. Anthony ESL program, Tigard, received a \$500 grant to defray utility and photocopying costs, and to continue providing free ESL classes.
- Pamoja House, Portland, received a \$250 grant to defray photocopying costs.

Visit the [Portland Literacy Council](#) website for more details on grant program guidelines and eligibility criteria.

**Contact:** [Bryan McGowan](#), Board of Directors

## SEWorks Needs ESL Tutors and Youth GED Mentors

Imagine yourself as an immigrant to this country, and you need to improve your English and develop skills to get and keep a job. Where do you get help?

Gebresilassie, from Ethiopia, came to [SEWorks](#) about three weeks ago with very limited English skills. He was extremely shy. He began attending weekly ESL lessons with Chris, a volunteer. Chris has helped him gain new English communication skills, survival phrases, and most importantly, confidence in communicating. They will continue working together to help Gebresilassie reach his goal of improved communication and eventually, employment.

SEWorks, located on SE Foster Road, is a one-stop career center for job-seekers. Their Community Learning Center, established in 2004, responds to an overwhelming demand for basic skills classes, GED preparation, and ESL instruction. About half of their students are youth (under age 25) earning GEDs. Other clients include adults wanting to increase English language skills or upgrade basic skills to obtain employment or enter training programs.

### SEWorks is recruiting volunteer tutors.

The center has a waiting list of 30 adults who need one-to-one vocational ESL tutors; each week the waiting list grows a bit. The median age of clients is 40, and their demographic includes a mixture of newly arrived and long-time residents. While clients have an overall goal to improve their English, their immediate need is employment.

The Vocational ESL program includes an established curriculum. Students learn to accurately fill out applications, print clearly, and write their signature. The lessons break down employment forms and what the different sections mean. (Any tutor who has helped an English learner to complete a form knows

SEWorks tutor, Chris, with Gebresilassie, a vocational ESL client. (Photo courtesy of SEWorks.)



that it can be exhausting for student and tutor alike.) Another topic of Vocational ESL at SEWorks includes appropriate attire for interviews (which introduces the grammatical concept of “should”). Lessons include past, present, and future tenses. Tutors and students work on clear communication, spelling names, and checking for understanding of verbal communication. The training includes interviews, resumes, cover letters, and thank-you notes.

Volunteers interested in tutoring at SEWorks may contact Blair Orfall, Volunteer Resources Specialist, by [Email](#) or phone: 503-772-2341. Tutors are provided training and must submit to a background check before being matched with a student.

*Editor's Note: Blair Orfall of SEWorks contributed to this article. SEWorks is a 501(c)(3) organization.*

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**Looking for free resources for tutors and students? Try the Portland Literacy Council [website](#). Available 24/7.**

## What's in Your Tutor Toolbox?

### GED Changes Coming Soon

As you may know, big changes are in store for the GED test. The test is being upgraded to meet Common Core Standards and paper tests are being discontinued.

At Portland Community College testing centers, November 1, 2013 is the last day to register for the current test version. December 21 is the last testing date. (Dates are subject to change. For information about PCC GED testing, see [GED State Test](#).)

The City of Portland, Multnomah County, and community agencies are encouraging GED seekers to complete GED testing before the end of the year. This coalition set in motion a GED Close-Out Campaign with a call for volunteers to tutor GED candidates. Over 40 volunteers responded to this call to action, allowing tutoring resources to be available community-wide.

In addition to tutoring, classes to help prepare for the GED are available at the community colleges, some workforce training centers, the Londer Center, and elsewhere. Multnomah County Library GED Learning Labs are designed to help participants use available resources for GED study. There are numerous online resources for GED study, and local libraries have GED study materials in their collections.

Reference: [Common Core Standards](#)

## Literacy is . . .

"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics, and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone everywhere, literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman, and child can realize his or her full potential."

Kofi Annan

Source: [UNESCO Office in Cairo](#)

## For Your Calendar

### Tutor Training

Saturday, November 9 & 16

PCC CLIMB Center

1626 SE Water Avenue, Next to OMSI

Preregistration and prepayment by check or credit card are required.

- [Register online](#) at Portland Literacy Council website.
- Register by mail, print [tutor training brochure](#), complete registration form, and submit to  
Portland Community College  
Attention: Kay Talbot, VLT  
P.O. Box 19000, SY SS 3  
Portland, OR 97280

**Questions:** Kris Magaurn, Portland Literacy Council,

[Email](#) or phone, 971-722-3700

## Opportunities

### ORTESOL Fall Conference

October 21, 9 am, Portland State University  
Conference includes a panel discussion and five sessions with multiple workshops. Tutors may find the workshops on Adult Education/Citizenship of particular interest. Sessions include:

- Literacy Ambassadors: Service Learning and Social Justice in L2 Classrooms
- Empowering Adult Learners to Create Meaningful Text and Personal Narratives in Literacy Classrooms
- USCIS Educational Tools for Citizenship Preparation
- Change Your Students' Minds about Learning Pronunciation!
- Boosting Student Writing through Charts and Graphs

Details at [ORTESOL Fall Conference 2013](#).

## GED Learning Labs

[Learn about GED test preparation.](#)

October 19, 10:15 am.

Registration opens September 28.

Midland Branch, Multnomah County Library  
805 SE 122nd Avenue, Portland