

Literacy Links

Spring
2009

a newsletter for volunteer tutors

editor, Kris Magaurn, PCC Tutor Coordinator, Tigard Senior Center

Springs Blooms with 2009 Volunteer Literacy Tutor Conference

By Scott Demos, Portland Literacy Council

The March 2009 Tutor Conference was a great success! Each year the Portland Literacy Council sponsors the conference with the goal of bringing together tutors and instructors to exchange ideas, develop new teaching strategies, and hone tutoring skills. This year's conference included educational presentations, hands-on learning workshops, a feature documentary film, student speakers, and a delicious buffet lunch.

With more than 140 attendees, this year's conference was the largest conference to date. Attendees included literacy tutors and educators from across Oregon and Southwest Washington, as well as student learners from around the world. As in years past, the conference was held at the beautiful Reed College Campus in Southeast Portland.

"The conference is all about making connections", states Kris Magaurn, conference director. "The workshops are meant to connect tutors with the information and resources that will help them meet the needs of their students. It is also a chance for tutors to connect with each other. It is important that we show tutors that they are not alone and that they are a part of a larger tutoring community. Every year we seek to make the conference a place where tutors can recharge their batteries - with new connections, strategies and ideas."

Offering everything from Grammar, Vocabulary Development, and Pronunciation to Library Resources, Goal Setting and Citizenship, the workshop selections gave tutors the opportunity to gain new ideas in basic areas, as well as broaden their understanding of other aspects of literacy. "I

got some great new ideas and activities to use with my ESL group", said tutor Bill Parker from the Tigard Senior Center, "And a new technique which I'm going to try next week".

A highlight of the conference is always the student speakers. This year, three students gave presentations about their country's history and customs in the Culture Exchange Workshop. Filiberto Santos told the tutors about his native Guatemala. Rosio Mendieta talked about Columbia and Nahid Rashi-Nezami shared stories about Iran.

Three more students spoke during the luncheon program. Ricardo Villalta (El Salvador), Anthony Phan (Vietnam), and Sergio Suarez (Cuba) each told their own personal story of coming to the U.S. and the educational and cultural difficulties which they faced. All three men took the time to thank the tutoring community, and especially the tutors who have assisted them in their educational development.

Ricardo Villalta (El Salvador) came to the U.S. in 2006 hoping to find work and send money back to his family. After arriving in the U.S., he was unable to communicate with non-Spanish speakers. Ricardo said that, "I vowed to learn to speak English and soon began taking classes at St. Anthony's Church in Tigard". He is continuing to study English, and in the future, hopes to serve as a volunteer helping others learn.

Anthony Phan (Vietnam) arrived in the U.S. when he was 18 years old and didn't speak any English. Anthony came from a small village in Vietnam and had quit school after the 9th



Above: Filiberto Santos tells about the history of Guatemala.

Left: Nahid Rashi-Neami (left) and Rosio Mendieta shared stories about their countries during the Culture Exchange.



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Portland ESL Network Website/wiki

By Heidi Dryden, Portland State University

Imagine you've been volunteering to teach an 8 week evening ESL class to a group of 15 eager and diligent students. The class is ending. Your students want to know about other classes they can take, and how they can keep studying. You don't know if the program you're teaching with will continue, and you don't know what to tell them.

Do you have ESL resources in Portland to share? Immigrants and refugees need the services provided by schools, churches, and social services in the Portland area as they struggle to survive in their new country. But many English classes are full, and place students on waiting lists. Unfortunately, the students and those helping them are often unaware of alternate resources.

The Portland ESL Network can bridge this gap between potential ESL students and programs striving to help them. It offers several resources:

- a comprehensive map with locations of available ESL classes and tutoring;
- an ESL class price comparison chart;
- links to cultural resources and articles;
- a community cultural calendar; and
- on-line resources for students and teachers.

The best part is that the Portland ESL Network is a wiki, which means that it can be maintained and edited by the community. If you have ESL resources to share, you can easily create a free account, logon to the website, and add or update information for all to see. The process is quick and simple. There are many well-known programs listed as examples on the site. By making this a community-run site, we will truly be able to better serve our communities.

portlandESL.pbworks.com - it's YOUR wiki

Local Author Donates 5 GED Scholarships

By Audrey Lee, Portland Literacy Council

Award-winning author Lucy Monroe, featured speaker at the Rose City Romance Writers Luncheon on April 18, donated five GED scholarships to the Portland Literacy Council's GED Scholarship program. At the beginning of her speech, she praised the work of all the tutors and volunteers who work with literacy students, and urged the audience to join her in supporting the literacy efforts in the Portland area. Prior to her speech, Kris Magaurn from the Portland Literacy Council told the audience about the literacy programs in the area and the needs of the GED students for scholarships. Lucy Monroe's donation of \$500 will enable five students to take the GED test through the PLC scholarship fund, which has seen an increase in scholarship requests this past year.

Attending the annual luncheon, which was held at the Governor Hotel, were 150 avid readers and authors

who gathered to hear speakers, raffle theme baskets, and enjoy a delicious lunch. After lunch the readers had the opportunity to meet the authors who traveled from all over the Pacific Northwest to attend the event. The Rose City Romance Writers will donate the proceeds from the raffle to the Portland Literacy Council for additional scholarships.



Lucy Monroe

Lucy Monroe, who lives in Hillsboro, has been reading romance novels since she was young, and published her first book in 2002. Since then she has written more than 30 books, and has been on national bestseller lists in the U.S. and England. She says that her most important goal with every book is to touch a reader's heart, and she certainly touched many hearts with her generous contribution to the literacy community.

Hillsboro Church Takes the Plunge

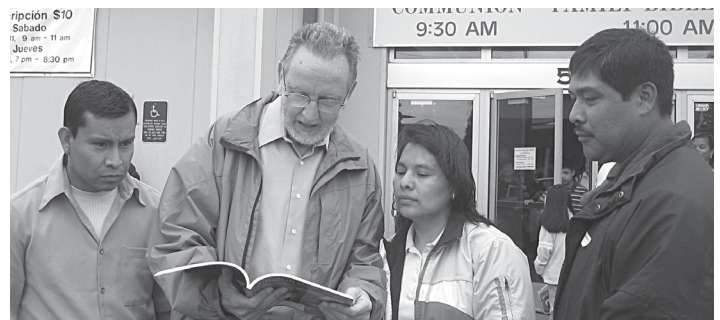
By David Cliffe, Westside Bible Fellowship ESL

If you walk around Westside Bible Fellowship on 9th and Walnut you will notice that most of the neighborhood stores advertise in Spanish. Eighty percent of our area is Hispanic. But we've been concerned that eighty percent of our congregation is Anglo. Even though we offer simultaneous translation of Sunday services and a 6 pm meeting in Spanish, we haven't been doing a good job of bridging the gap between Anglos and Hispanics - between "haves" and "have nots".

Anne and I arrived in Hillsboro in 2007 after forty years working in Ecuador, so it was natural to step into the Hispanic ministry at Westside. But people like "Margarita" made us uncomfortable: at coffee times she kept to herself, and in group studies she passed when we read aloud in a circle. In Central America she spoke a native dialect and after 22 years here she doesn't even read or write in Spanish. Her husband and children speak English well, so she lets them do the communicating. Her earlier attempts to learn failed and she's about given up. What gift could we offer Margarita and the others?

Enter your March PLC Tutor Conference - just what the doctor ordered! We were already recruiting volunteers to launch Westside's ESL program, so five of us attended the conference and spread out among the workshops offered, agreeing to share our findings afterwards. Good stuff! By the time this bulletin comes out we will have launched our spring term with eleven volunteers and three levels of ESL classes on Thursdays and Saturdays. Both new arrivals and long-term area residents like Margarita now have hope that there may be more to life than cultural isolation.

For more information about the program, call Westside Bible Fellowship at 503-640-5151.



David Cliffe shares ESL class information with students.

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grade to work on the family farm. In the U.S., he worked for several years at various jobs, but started taking ESL classes after being laid-off from his job. He found the ESL classes to be very difficult. He stated that, "I got lucky when a tutor helped me out". He has worked with his tutor, Arnold Vinnard, for almost two years. Through hard work and long hours of tutoring, Anthony is now close to his goal of completing the autobody repair program at PCC Rock Creek.

The final student speaker was Sergio Suarez (Cuba). Sergio came to the U.S. as a small child but struggled with dyslexia and found it difficult to learn in a traditional educational setting. After moving to Oregon, as an adult, he began working with tutor Carol Carpenter, at the Tigard Senior Center. As he says, "I have found a home, and I am finally able to improve my reading and writing skills. It makes me want to jump for joy!"



Luncheon speakers Anthony Phan (Vietnam), Ricardo Villalta (El Salvador) and Sergio Suarez (Cuba).

After these inspiring stories, the attendees were treated to a raffle with many exciting prizes, and the opportunity to take home the books from the table centerpieces. By the end of the day, tutors and students left with new ideas, gifts, and a connection to the tutors and students who share their joy of learning.

Save the date: Next year's conference will be Saturday, March 13, 2010.

Announcements

Promoting literacy in our community.

Portland Literacy Council
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Thank you

to the following businesses who generously donated the fabulous door prizes for the Tutor Conference, and to Peter Talbot for his tireless efforts in procuring them.

Acapulco's Gold Southwest
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