

# Literacy Links

Spring  
2010

*a newsletter for volunteer tutors*

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

## Volunteer Tutor Conference Brings Tutors and Students Together

*by Troy Hickman, PCC Volunteer Tutor Coordinator (Cully/Concordia)*

Every March, the Portland Literacy Council puts on the Volunteer Tutor Conference at the Reed College campus in southeast Portland. The event brings literacy tutors together from local community college programs and non-profit organizations. At the conference, tutors enjoy a day by sharing ideas, networking and sharing about their programs, participating in workshops, sharing a tasty lunch, listening to student speakers, and even winning door prizes.

More than 100 tutors filled the Reed College Campus on a beautiful spring-like day, some traveling from as far as Astoria and Lincoln City. Tutors began the day connecting with one another and sharing conversation over coffee and pastries, but what drew most tutors to the conference were the workshops led by experienced English and literacy instructors and tutors. Tutors attended two workshops in the morning and another in the afternoon. There were many workshops from which to choose.

This year's workshops included a wide range of topics of interest to tutors. Tutors who attended workshops on providing instruction for low-level readers and beginning ESL students left with activities in-hand that they could use in their tutoring sessions. In other workshops, tutors practiced using the Learner Web and other web resources to supplement lessons and to connect students to resources for self-study.

Another well-attended workshop in the afternoon focused on providing ESL instruction in a multi-level classroom. The workshop was a part of the Bridge of Language Project, a grass roots project designed to improve the quality of English language and literacy services in community-based settings. Patrik McDade conducted this workshop and conducts similar workshops throughout the year. He demonstrated a number of techniques that tutors could incorporate to better serve multilevel groups.

Later in the morning, tutors crowded into a popular workshop where ESL students spoke about culture. The presenters shared stories about moving to a new country and adjusting to new cultural surroundings. They were part of a conversation group at St. Anthony's Catholic Church

in Tigard and represented many countries from around the world, including El Salvador, Vietnam, India and Mexico.

The highlight for many of the attendees was listening to the student speakers over a hot lunch served in the student center. The luncheon featured three speakers from around the world that currently study with tutors in Portland. Rudy Vega, from Peru, began studying English at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in 2007. He continues to study, but also works a classroom assistant, helping others improve their conversation skills. "I am glad to be a helper," he said, addressing the tutors.



Student Speaker Rudy Vega with St. Anthony's teacher Derene Meurisse.



Alka Hatwal from India, Hilda Campos from Mexico and Ricardo Villalta from El Salvadore participated in the Culture Exchange.

Emilia Cuesta and Shan Qing also addressed the conference. Emilia studies with her tutor, Arnold Vinnard, at Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus. She left Veracruz, Mexico to live and work in the United States. She told the group, "It is easier to learn in a small group than in

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## Recommendations from Multnomah County Library

By Melissa Medanski, Multnomah County Library Adult Literacy Coordinator



### A Place to Practice Your Multnomah County Library!

- What do you do if you want to practice English, and you're not enrolled in an ESL class?
- What do you do if you don't have a computer at home and want to use an online English program?
- What do you do if you're not sure how to use the computer to get to English learning websites?

### Come to the language lab at Rockwood Library:

Learning Labs: Guide to ELL Resources. From 1:30 to 3:30 every Sunday at Rockwood Library, trained facilitators help non-native speakers access language learning websites.

The lab is drop-in, no registration required. The first 20 minutes are devoted to learning 1 - 3 new websites so come at 1:30 to find out about new resources. The rest of the time is "just" practice.

The labs welcome people with no English (bring a translating friend) or the more advanced student. Our labs are friendly, helpful sessions designed to give you practice on the computer and help in finding online programs for your personal goals. We have earphones with microphones and a laptop for each participant. Best of all, we have time - 2 full hours for practice.

If you are a student of English, or work with students learning English, try us out. If you're a volunteer looking for a home, we have other branches ready to begin labs. Call Melissa Madenski @ 503 988 6318, if you're interested in volunteering in the labs.

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## Volunteer Tutor Conference Brings Tutors and Students Together

a classroom." Shan moved to the United States from China. He now works to improve his conversation skills and computer skills at Portland Community College's SE Center. It was a special moment when Shan paused from his prepared speech. He took a moment, looked out toward his tutors Emily Or and Sue Moser, and simply said "Thank you, Emily. Thank you, Sue."

Other community groups helped make the event complete. The Children's Community Book Bank made a huge contribution by giving out bags of books to tutors and students. They asked tutors to share these books with those students who have children as a way of encouraging parents and children to read together. Also attending was Heidi Dryden from the Portland ESL Network. Heidi organizes an ESL Wiki for the community, which lists curriculum resources for tutors and maps ESL programs in the Portland area. She worked with local programs to update the wiki, which can be found at <http://portlandesl.pbworks.com/>.

Next year's tutor conference is scheduled for March 19 at the Reed College Campus. Registration information will appear in our Winter newsletter and will be available at our web site: [www.portlandliteracy.org](http://www.portlandliteracy.org). Hope to see you there!

## Romance Writers

### Donate to GED Fund

By Kris Magaurn, Chair, Portland Literacy Council

On Saturday, April 17, two hundred avid readers and local authors gathered at the Governor Hotel to hear best-selling author Jane Potter speak at the Rose City Romance Writers Annual Luncheon. The RCRW organization also invited the Portland Literacy Council to attend and speak at the luncheon because the proceeds from the luncheon are donated to the Portland Literacy Council. Since the PLC uses the funds for their GED Scholarship Program, PLC Chair Kris Magaurn and GED Scholarship Director Cari Martz brought GED scholarship recipient Brenda Walsh with them to the luncheon. Brenda gave a moving speech about her journey to complete her GED, and the successes she has had since then as she attends PCC. The audience was impressed with her determination and perseverance as she works toward her goal of being a radiology technician. Brenda expressed her gratitude to all who had helped her, and thanked the Portland Literacy Council for making her dream a reality. Borders Books sold books at the luncheon, and a portion of these proceeds will also be donated to the PLC Scholarship fund.



Cari Martz and Brenda Walsh at the Rose City Romance Writers Luncheon.

## Super Tutor

by Sherri Prodani, Volunteer Tutor Coordinator, PCC Cascade

Peggy Murphy is certainly a super tutor. She started tutoring at PCC Sylvania in 2002. Peggy worked with a Mexican student named Maria for three years. Peggy liked working one-on-one because she was able to form a bond with Maria. By working with Maria, Peggy learned that life in Mexico is difficult and that families who come to the U.S. struggle to adapt to a new culture. Overall, Peggy had a wonderful experience tutoring Maria.

Peggy went off to school at PSU to get her degree in Liberal Studies with a minor in Geography. In 2006, she volunteered for Oregon Literacy for two years where she did online research, working in such areas as adult literacy and ESL/Adult Education. She helped organize a Scrabble tournament in Redmond, Oregon. After that, she tutored a Cambodian student for a year. Peggy learned how difficult it is for women who work in the home, have a job, and go to school.



Tutor Peggy Murphy with her students at PCC Cascade.

In 2008, Peggy heard that I was recruiting tutors and approached me at PCC Cascade because she wanted to teach a group of students. I was really happy about this because the students needed practice with conversation. Peggy formed a group of twelve students and taught lessons that would help the students with real life situations. I remember walking across campus one day and seeing Peggy's students asking people questions to gain practice with their English. Peggy has fun in her class doing the hokey pokey and playing other games that students learn from and enjoy. Peggy says she learns constantly from students, and the students are appreciative having people help them. They keep coming back to Peggy's class. I feel so lucky to have Peggy Murphy as a volunteer tutor at PCC Cascade.

## TUTOR TIPS

By Jim Walseth, Tutor, Tigard Senior Center ESL Program

While preparing to take my ESL tutoring students into the realm of health care, I did what a lot of us probably do: I did a little searching on the internet. I happened to come across a site that I found helpful and we thought others might like to look it over as well.

The site is [www.eslflow.com](http://www.eslflow.com). It is wider in scope than just health-care-related topics, and seems to be able to accommodate beginner to intermediate levels. In my particular case, I noticed a sub grouping labeled "Health and the Body" at the site's home page and followed its link to another page which listed various helpful items, from body vocabulary-matching exercises in PDF form to doctor/patient dialogues to picture stories. I managed to work a few of these into my group and the students took to the materials well.

Although you may not be anticipating moving into the health area, you might benefit from checking out some of the other sub groups at the site such as: Food/Eating, Money & Spending, Giving Directions, Icebreakers, Housing, to name only a few. It appears to me to be simply a clearing house site which aggregates material from various sources (a caveat: as others mentioned on the site's guest book, do not be surprised to come across a few dead links). As its creator/administrator Peter Snashall writes in the *About eslflow.com* section: "...this site has become an experiment in the creative possibilities offered by advanced search techniques." Whether you're avoiding re-inventing the wheel or desperate for inspiration, I recommend you visit the site.

# Announcements

Promoting literacy in our community.

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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.*

Alder Creek Kayak  
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