

Literacy Links

Winter
2009

a newsletter for volunteer tutors

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

New Book Give-Away Program

As a Teach for America high school math teacher in rural North Carolina from 1991 to 1993, Danielle Swope, the founder of The Children's Book Bank, experienced firsthand how students from poorer families struggled to succeed in school. Interestingly, the most significant obstacle she faced teaching math was that her students' reading skills were so limited. The high school in which she taught was neither under equipped, nor understaffed, nor underfunded, as she expected when she arrived. Rather, upon reflection, it became clear that the lack of resources at home was a contributing factor, and that the students she taught had, years before, arrived in kindergarten lacking the foundational literacy skills on which their future educations would be built. For children in poverty, one of the biggest obstacles to literacy development (which begins at birth) is the scarcity of books in the home. While the ratio of books to children in middle-income neighborhoods is approximately 13 books to 1 child, the ratio in low-income neighborhoods is 1 book to 300 children. The Children's Book Bank, which opened in Portland in the summer of 2008, seeks to get more books into the hands and homes of young children who might not otherwise have books of their own. To do this, The Children's Book Bank invites schools, clubs, congregations, and businesses to host book drives to collect the books their children have outgrown and are no longer reading. Volunteers spruce-up, sort and bundle books for distribution to children in need of books.



Children and their parents will enjoy books from the Book Bank.

Since September, The Children's Book Bank has delivered 750 bags of 11 new and used "read aloud" books to children in need!

The Children's Book Bank and Portland Literacy Council are excited to announce our new partnership to further identify and serve families and children in need of books. Beginning on March 1st, Portland Literacy Council tutors may apply for a book grant to give a bag of children's books to a student and his/her children for the purpose of enriching the teaching, learning, and reading environments. The hope is that the books will be used both in tutoring sessions and at home where students can practice their reading skills by reading aloud to their children. Book grant applications will be available on the PLC website in March. All grant requests must meet the requirement of The Children's Book Bank's mission of assisting low-income families. Tutors may apply more than once. One application per recipient family per year, please.

"This is very exciting! An adult who is learning to read does not have to be an expert reader to read aloud to his or her children. Reading children's books is a great way to practice new reading skills while at the same time preparing a child to be successful in school!" -Dani Swope, Founder, The Children's Book Bank.

For more information, please contact Dani Swope at danis@childrensbookbank.org.

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Recommendations from Multnomah County Library

By Melissa Medanski, Multnomah County Library Adult Literacy Coordinator



Did You Know?

One of the best parts of my job is meeting the skilled folks who work with literacy in and around the Portland area. My first meeting was with Kris Magaurn from Portland Literacy Council. Lucky me! It has only been three months since that meeting, but it feels like 3 years. With her rich experience, Kris started me on the visits that would leave me humbled by the good work our community colleges and non-profits do in the hope of literacy for all.

Though I've taught ESL and worked in various educational settings around the state, I've entered the new culture of the library. I'm discovering, again, that one is never too old to learn! My main goal is to reach out to individuals and groups who will make use of our materials and space, to make the library inviting to folks who work hard to improve literacy with GED study, language acquisition, citizenship materials and computer use. Promoting family and adult literacy is something you do every day as teachers and tutors. As a teacher, I was always running to colleagues and saying, "Do you know about this book?" or "I just learned about a new technique I want to try." (Now, it's "Have you seen this website?") Teaching and tutoring invites collaboration. In my own case, I'm a better facilitator when I use the wisdom of my fellow-teachers.

Did you know that you can order any of these books and have them transferred to your community branch? If you're not sure how to do it, call me, and I can walk you through the process. All you need is a library card. The service is free.

Here are the titles on hand, and those I've ordered. The new titles are not yet catalogued, but will be housed in the same Dewey decimal system as those we have on hand: (ALWAYS, feel free to phone me with suggestions: 503-988-6318)

You Can Teach Someone to Read

Lorraine Peoples, 428.407 P419y

This text is geared for native speakers, but the activities could be adapted easily for ESL.

Teaching Adults, A Literacy Resource Book

Laubach, 374.012 T252

Laubach Way to Reading, 428.34

Skill Books: Levels 1 to 4, including
Teacher's Manuals

New Titles:

Filling Out Forms Student Book

On the Job English

501 Five Minute Activities

504 Absolutely Essential Words

Look Again Pictures

ESL activities and themes

First Class Reader

ESL Lessons and Activities

Action English Pictures

One of my personal favorites that is thematic and pictures only. It is perfect to use at any level with individuals or small groups.

Litstart

An "old" favorite that covers tutoring techniques for non-native speakers and native English speakers.

Cervantes Spanish-English Dictionary

Uses native language phonetics for Spanish speakers to practice pronunciation.

Great Big Bingo Book

(3 on order) reproducible

Zero Prep

Many people recommended this title for those days when you're in a hurry.

Did you know that you're so appreciated? I look forward to listening to suggestions and meeting you all one day.

A Tutoring Success Story

by Lynda Campbell, Volunteer Tour Coordinator, Clackamas Community College

Last Spring I received a call from Mary who inquired about the Clackamas Community College Literacy Program. She was asking questions on behalf of a friend who was moving to the Portland area and wanted to improve his reading ability. I explained the services and told her that he should get in touch once he is settled and ready. Often when the caller is not the one who wants help, I never hear from the student, so it was a bit of a surprise when Milo Bitner called in May, made an appointment and came in for an interview and assessment. According to the CASAS test, he is a low-intermediate reader.

Milo, who was one of 11 children, finished the 9th grade in Michigan. He always struggled in school and extra resources were never made available to him. The fact that his family moved frequently didn't make things easier. Milo was in and out of jail in his younger days and got some help with reading from cell mates but, other than that, he had no schooling or training after leaving high school in the mid 60s.

What Milo had going for him was his ability to work with his hands. He held a variety of jobs as a cook, heavy equipment operator and auto mechanic. He passed the required tests by having them read to him and said manuals weren't all that important because he could always figure out how things worked. When I asked him why he decided to improve his skill at this stage of his life Milo said that he has emphysema, on disability and wanted to make his last years count for something.

Peter Bourlin was available and willing to tutor Milo. They began meeting once a week in May. He went through training in September 2007 and had previously tutored an ESL student. Peter emailed me in December and said Milo was doing so well they were ready for the next workbook in the *Reading For Today* series. He came by the office and seemed very excited about Milo's progress so I decided theirs might make a good story.



Peter and Milo have been working together for 8 months and Milo is now reading *Huckleberry Finn*.

I met with Peter and Milo during a tutoring session at the Harmony Campus. Both are enthusiastic about the tutoring experience. Milo is reading *Huckleberry Finn* which he checked out from the library after getting his first ever library card. He also reads articles in newspapers, magazines and his girlfriend is teaching him to use a computer. Milo also searches out books to learn more about his interest in gems and gold prospecting. Besides improving his reading, Milo has gained confidence and is even thinking about working toward his GED. He realizes this is a long-term goal and means he has to work on writing which is more difficult for him than reading, but the fact that he and Peter see it as a possibility is exciting.

Peter also teaches a class at his church on budgeting and money management. Peter was born in China to Russian parents and lived there until they moved to Brazil when he was six. At that time Russians could only immigrate to the U.S. via a neutral nation. From Brazil he spent time in Hawaii before it was a state. Peter's experiences growing up as an outsider having to learn several new languages has given him a unique perspective and ability as a tutor. Peter said he considers himself a guide and the only thing he asks of Milo is that he tries. He also appreciates the materials and resources available from the program. Peter feels that he learns as much as Milo and that they motivate each other to continue along the path toward progress.

In less than eight months this tutor-learner pair has found a rhythm working together that has enabled Milo to improve his reading skills, make lifestyle changes, and look forward to more challenges and Peter to broaden his perspective and add to his briefcase full of ideas for tutoring.

Announcements

Promoting literacy in our community.

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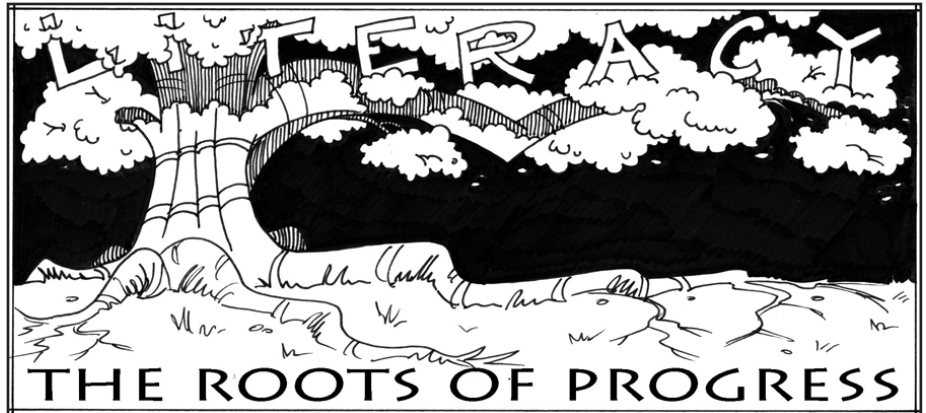
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Save the Date!

The Annual Volunteer Tutor Conference is March 14 at Reed College, from 8:30 to 3:00. Registration forms will be mailed by mid-February and also available on the PLC website www.portlandliteracy.org.

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