

# Literacy Links

Winter  
2010

*a newsletter for volunteer tutors*

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

## New Literacy Program in Northeast Portland

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

Portland Community College's Volunteer Literacy Tutoring (VLT) program recently expanded their much-needed literacy services in northeast Portland. The City of Portland identified the need for literacy and language classes through a 2007 community assessment. In the summer of 2009, the city awarded a grant to PCC's VLT program.

The city tasked PCC to work closely with community partners to integrate accessible literacy services in the northeast Portland community. "Partnerships and community support are the keys to getting this project off the ground," said Kay Talbot, the coordinator of PCC's VLT program. Among the key partners are Hacienda CDC, Harvey Scott Elementary School, the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) program, and community volunteers.

The program began serving students in the fall of 2009. Both Hacienda CDC, and Harvey Scott Elementary provided PCC with classroom space and worked with the SUN program and Hacienda residents to provide on-site childcare. These partners also reached out to their communities, raising awareness of the new literacy services. Hacienda CDC, an affordable housing organization, serves nearly 2,000 people, most of whom are either Latino or Somali. Hacienda's mission is to build thriving communities in support of working Latino families by promoting healthy living and economic advancement.

Harvey Scott Elementary reached out to the parents of



Students, tutors and staff members attending the literacy program at Hacienda CDC's Salon Comunal.

their enrolled students. Their goal was to give parents the tools to become more involved in the education. The staff distributed fliers at various events, including SUN School activities where parents and children participated in a variety of after school activities. The SUN program at Harvey Scott brings families together, making the school a "community center."

During the project's initial term, from September to December of 2009, PCC's Cully-Concordia Project served more than 50 students with the support of 8 volunteer tutors. For many tutors, this was an opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience, hone their teaching skills, or apply skills that they gained through graduate level classes. Others simply wanted to be involved in their community. They also enjoyed working across cultures and learning more about their Somali and Latino neighbors.



Tutors Amy Baker (left) and Mary Bishop (2nd from right) with their students at the Hacienda CDC program.

According to the action plan, the partners engaged in this literacy program were to "ensure the sustainability of existing English-as-Second-Language classes, and pursue additional programming and other language/culture competency classes for adults, high school completion/GED classes in Spanish, financial literacy, etc. at schools and in the community." Through a community survey, residents in these communities indicated a need for English instruction, specifically to prepare them for employment and to prepare them to better assist their children with schoolwork.

The literacy program received seed funding from the city to operate through June of 2011. Those interested in becoming involved in the project are encouraged to call the program's coordinator, Troy Hickman, at 503-943-2233. The project is in need of additional funding, general supplies, quality books and picture dictionaries, and community volunteers.

# Literacy Links

## Recommendations from Multnomah County Library

By Melissa Medanski, Multnomah County Library Adult Literacy Coordinator



### What's New at Your Library?

Multnomah County Library is hosting two new programs to assist patrons who are pursuing a GED certificate and those who are looking for resources to learn English online.

The first, *Learning Labs: Guide to GED Resources* is a series of six sessions that show:

- The pathway to a GED certificate
- Study guides and other aides at Multnomah County Library
- Online library databases and websites that help a patron study independently in all five content areas of the test.
- Practice tests in each content area and opportunities to test to assess readiness
- How to access scholarship help to take the GED tests

The free classes are taught in English and registration is required. Basic computer skills are necessary. The classes will be offered at different branches throughout the county.

#### Winter/Spring Schedule

St. John's Library	7510 N Charleston	503 988 5397
February 6-March 13	Saturdays	10:30-12:30
Gresham Library	385 NW Miller Ave	503 988 5387
April 10-May15	Saturdays	10:30-12:30

The second program, *Learning Labs: Guide to English Language Learning Resources* is an ongoing lab on Sundays from 2-4 at Rockwood Library, 17917 SE Stark. Registration is not required. People can bring a translating buddy to this drop-in lab that is taught in English. Websites designed for English language learners as well as library resources are covered. Beginning computer skills are required. Most of the time is devoted to working online on lab computers.

## TUTOR TIPS

By Tracy Buseman Carlstrom, VLT Coordinator, ESOL Instructor, Portland Community College

### "Adele's ESL Corner Website"

<http://members.iinet.net.au/~adelegc/index.html>

This website offers grammar, listening, and vocabulary exercises for beginning level students and grammar and listening exercises for low intermediate level ESL students. Students can use the website to practice newly learned skills on their own for homework, and tutors can also use the site with the students to evaluate what students already know, and what they still need to learn.

The website uses comic sans font which is easy for students with literacy issues to read. The directions are clear, and the pages are simple, easy to maneuver, and contain no distracting formatting or pictures. The listening exercises are narrated by an Australian speaker, so students can get experience listening to a new accent. If students struggle to understand the accent, they still have the written words to choose from to fill in the blanks.

For grammar and vocabulary exercises, students type in

answers and then can press the "check answers" button to see their results. There is also a "show answers" button so that the students can look at the correct answers if they aren't sure. Directions are clear, and there are examples to help students understand exercise expectations. The more advanced grammar exercises ask students to type in complete sentences or questions.

For beginning level listening exercises, the screen shows a story with blanks for the students to complete. There is a box of vocabulary words above the story for the students to choose from. For the more advanced level exercises, there may be no vocabulary word list to assist the student. There is an audio clip that the students can listen to which contains the missing vocabulary words that the students need to put in the blanks to complete the story. Students can check their answers when they complete the exercises. The website offers the listening exercises in print versions so that tutors can print out the exercises to use with students.

## Why I Am a Tutor

by Peter Talbot, Volunteer, PCC Sylvania

Eleven years ago, I happened to see an article in the Hillsboro Argus saying that volunteers were needed to help people improve their English. My wife, Kay, and I are both avid readers, and we have always loved language, so we thought we might have something to offer. Little did we know that the Portland Community College Volunteer Literacy Tutoring program would become an avocation for me and a vocation for her.

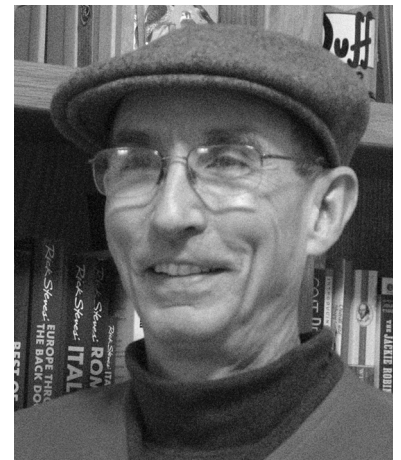
Sister Brigid Bauman, a whirlwind of energy who ran the Hillsboro program, assured us that, with a little guidance, a pair of novices could become assets to the program.

We were a little apprehensive before our first classroom experience, not knowing just who or what to expect. Our first class turned out to be a wonderful blend of Eastern European, Central and South American, and Asian students, whose warmth and eagerness to learn soon convinced us that we were not "in over our heads." From that very first class, we realized that tutors gain as much or more from their tutoring experience as their students.

Since that first term, I have had the good fortune to work with learners from many countries. Being a tutor has allowed me to learn about other languages and cultures. It has given me

a new perspective on the plight of immigrants, and a new appreciation of the courage they have shown in adjusting to a new language and a new way of life. And it has made me more appreciative of many things we take for granted in our country.

I have seen the changes that tutors are making in the lives of their students just by being willing to share some of their knowledge and a little bit of their time. I am happy to support the VLT program in whatever way I can, whether that means making copies for Kay, who is now a Senior Coordinator in the program, filling in for a sick tutor with a conversation group, or soliciting donations for the annual tutor conference, because I know that the program really is "making a difference."



Volunteer Peter Talbot finds many ways to assist the VLT programs.

## New VLT site at PCC Willow Creek Center

By Edit McDonald, Tutor Coordinator and ESL Instructor, PCC Rock Creek

The Willow Creek Center (185th and Baseline Road) in Washington County was opened at the end of 2009 as part of the college's 2008 bond measure and special funding from the state. The 100,000 square-foot educational center serves as a one-stop for the unemployed and under-employed, and houses programs from the old Washington County Workforce Training Center and partner agencies.



Programming at the site, located on Tri-Met's Blue Max Line, include GED testing, certified nursing assistant training, medical assisting and emergency medical services. It also has offices and classrooms for GED, Spanish GED (Jason Johnson coordinator), MAP and Volunteer Literacy Tutoring

(Tracy Buseman-Carlstrom and Edit McDonald, coordinators, Chely Castillo office support). The VLT ESL classes at this site are on Fridays from 10:00-12:00, and on Saturdays from 10:00-1:00pm. The term started on January 16th and classes are already full. Our volunteer tutors benefit greatly from the well equipped classrooms: Internet, laptop access; document readers that project textbook pages onto the screen. The whole facility was designed and built to be eco-friendly, and to consume as little energy as possible. We are very excited to be one of the programs to occupy this beautiful new PCC center.

## Announcements

Promoting literacy in our community.

Portland Literacy Council  
P.O. Box 2872  
Portland, OR 97208-2872

2009-2010  
Board of Directors

Chairperson  
Kris Magaurn

Treasurer  
Penny Russman

Secretary  
Audrey Lee

Board Members  
Gary Marschke  
Cari Martz  
Jay Morgensen  
Emilia Gilroy-Sander  
Troy Hickman  
Nicole Zdeb



**LITERACY**  
Investing in the Future

## Save the Date!

The Annual Volunteer Tutor  
Conference is March 13 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](http://www.portlandliteracy.org).

NONPROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 5134  
PORTLAND, OR

Portland Literacy Council  
P.O. Box 2872  
Portland, OR 97208-2872