

Literacy Links

Winter
2007

a newsletter for volunteer tutors

PCC Program Gathers Grant for Work with Volunteers

by Kay Talbot, Tutor Coordinator, PCC Sylvania

Portland Community College's Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Program (VLT) has been successful in using volunteers to supplement the work of paid teachers in ESL classes. In recognition of that success, the VLT program has been awarded a grant for a national project funded by The UPS Foundation and ProLiteracy America.

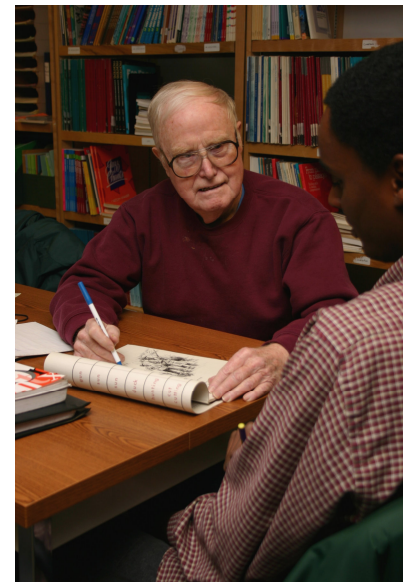
During the next 18 months, the VLT Program and nine other adult education and literacy programs will share their experiences in employing volunteers. The end result will be a "promising practices" guide that will help publicly-funded adult education programs recruit, manage, and support volunteers. The guide will be distributed nationally.

"Adult education programs are being asked to serve greater numbers of low-level ESL students than ever before, and they are looking for strategies to help serve those adults who need to learn to understand, speak, read, and write English," said Peter Waite, executive director of ProLiteracy America. "Volunteers have long played a key role in adult education. Programs such as the Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Program are proving that the combination of paid staff and volunteers working together can make a significant difference in publicly-funded programs," Waite noted.

The Volunteer Literacy Tutoring (VLT) Program is one of three programs in the Adult Basic Skills

Division at PCC. The ABE/GED and ESL programs provide classroom instruction, while VLT complements and extends the services offered to students. VLT also partners with community organizations serving adults in the greater Portland metropolitan area whose reading or math skills are below an eighth grade level, as well as adults working on high school equivalency (GED) exams.

ProLiteracy America is the U.S. program of ProLiteracy Worldwide, the world's largest organization of adult literacy programs. ProLiteracy represents 1,200 local program affiliates in all 50 states and 120 partner programs in 62 developing countries. These affiliates and partners serve more than 350,000 adult literacy students each year.



Ken Jacobsen, a Volunteer Tutor since 1998, works with a student at the Portland Community College Sylvania campus

The UPS Foundation develops and champions innovative solutions to social problems. It focuses its support on hunger, literacy, and volunteerism.

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Conference Proves Rewarding for PCC Tutor

In November of 2006, Portland Community College (PCC) sent two volunteer tutors from its Southeast Center Campus to attend the Oregon Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ORTESOL) Conference at Clackamas Community College. The tutors, Janis Christian and Sofia Segurola Calderon, found the conference to be both enlightening and rewarding. Janis gave this report on the workshop which had the greatest impact on her.

I was particularly moved by one workshop presented by two Portland State University graduate students, one from Turkey and the other from Japan. The workshop was entitled "Transformation of Socially Structured Attitudes Toward Non-Native Speakers."

The presenters described the socially structured assumption that all people in the U.S. should speak "standard English," which they said meant the spoken and written language of the educated speaker. Non-native speakers can often be recognized by their accented and/or imperfect English. Accented or imperfect English is sometimes described by native speakers as "bad English," "exotic English," "foreign English," or "faulty English." Native speakers may unconsciously act as though a non-native speaker is invisible by speaking to their English-speaking partner or avoiding eye contact with the non-native speaker. Such actions may reflect a bias toward non-native speakers because of ethnicity. The result is that non-native speakers become marginalized and/or stigmatized.

Promoting literacy in our community.

Portland Literacy Council
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In order to reduce the stigmatization of non-native speakers, we must transform our socially structured beliefs about them. Some suggestions for transformation include:

- realizing that people have multiple types of intelligence and that we cannot evaluate a person according to one aspect
- understanding the courage it takes to reside in a foreign country and learn both a new language and a new culture
- appreciating that non-native speakers may bring new world views

Educators in particular can help by becoming aware of the feelings of marginalization experienced by non-native speakers, by showing appreciation for their efforts and perspectives, and by focusing on improving intelligibility rather than accent by teaching pronunciation. They might also explore the politics of accents with their students.

When Pat Knox, a tutor at the Tigard Senior Center, asked her class of *Beginning II* students to write about something that was important to them, these are two of the stories she received. Yeong Joo Lim is from Korea and Eric Erickson is from Iran.

One Summer Day by Yeong Joo Lim

One summer when I was a young girl, my family went to the river. We played in the river and fished. My father was fishing with a net and a jar. He put bean paste in the bottom of the jar, then he hid it under water. The fish liked the smell. He threw the net in the river, and caught many different fish. My brothers and I watched him doing that. We played together by splashing water and swimming. We made a sand castle, but it fell down. We did it again. We were tired and hungry. My mother made a delicious lunch. It was fish stew noodles and fried fishes. It tasted good. My family never forgot that day and the food that we enjoyed. We were very happy during that summer. Sometimes, we wish we were young again with our parents that summer day.

What Was I Thinking but What Actually Happened by Eric Erickson

Sixty-five years ago I start school. After six years, I had to choose a second language in order to continue my education. I chose to learn French. I continued French from then on.



Tutor Pat Knox, center, with students Eric Erickson, left, and Yeong Joo Lim, right

Afterwards, I joined the army. I realized I needed to study English. I started learning English and then I ended coming to America. I was thinking I would learn English in two months once I came to America, but I couldn't. Therefore I stayed in America for more than six months, but I still couldn't learn English as well as I thought. Now it has been 14 years since I have been here and I still don't know much English. I must tell you, if I can't learn English very well, it is not my fault, it is because on my age. So, you should learn English while you are young, and since I am not young anymore, I will try my best to learn English from my teacher.

Mark Your Calendar! Annual Tutor Conference is March 10th

Announcing the Portland Literacy Council's Annual Tutor Conference
"Climbing the Ladder of Literacy"

Saturday, March 10, 2007
Reed College
3203 SE Woodstock Blvd.
9:00am - 4:00pm

The conference will offer a variety of workshops featuring new presenters and new topics, along with many favorites. The day includes three workshop options, a delicious lunch, an inspiring program of speakers and a chance to meet other tutors who share the same passion.

Look for registration information in the mail in February,
or contact Kris Magaurn at 503-636-2888 or kmagaurn@aol.com

Come celebrate 40 years of Volunteer Literacy in the Portland Area.

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