From the Editor

Happy spring everyone! Our learners have been achieving some amazing things this fall and winter: becoming U.S. citizens, writing their first letters, sharing the magic of reading with their grandchildren, volunteering at the library, finding new jobs, reading their first books, and much more. Share the joy of their hard-earned successes by reading all about it in our Achievements section! Don’t forget to check out our creative writing feature Creative Corner, too. Our learners are as talented as they are dedicated!

Randall Hinson
Adult Literacy Librarian
Literacy Learners

More Oxford Picture Dictionary Resources Now Available

- *OPD Workbooks* for low-beginning, high-beginning, and low-intermediate, with high-interest exercises correlated to each page of the dictionary. Activities address individual learning styles.
- *OPD Reading Pack* with nine beginning-to-intermediate readers based on *OPD* topics that reinforce vocabulary and build critical thinking skills.
- *OPD Teacher Resource Center*, a one-stop digital shop with worksheets, lesson plans, videos, and activities relevant to adult learners.

Interested in trying these *OPD* supports? Your literacy coordinator can get you copies to review today.

**PROGRAM MADE POSSIBLE WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caroline Singleton Literacy Endowment</th>
<th>California State Library Literacy Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flora L. Thornton Endowment</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUFG Union Bank Foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dean Hansell Fund</td>
<td>The Sharon Oxborough Endowed Fund for Adult Literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Individual supporters of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles
It’s a Match

About It’s a Match

A special relationship is created when a tutor and learner are successfully matched together. It’s A Match allows tutors and learners to express how they feel about their match in their own words.

Marleny Moreno
By Tutor Jonathan Lesser

As a tutor, I have been working with Marleny for 2 years and I continue to be impressed with her dedication and her progress every time we meet.

What is most impressive to me about Marleny is her continued dedication to improving her reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition to our tutoring sessions, she has also attended English language classes at a local adult school, and is always looking for additional opportunities to learn and to practice. Marleny also writes pieces in her spare time to practice her English on topics of interest to her, and proudly submits her work to any writing challenge or call for articles that she sees. I am fortunate for the opportunity to hear about her life and to see how she expresses herself on things that are meaningful to her.

Additionally, I am very moved by the subjects and themes Marleny chooses to read about. Marleny has been very interested in reading non-fiction and biographies, and has selected works by important female activists and figures in social justice – together, we have read works on Malala Yousafzai, Nelson Mandela, Rigoberta Menchú, and John F. Kennedy. It makes me very happy to see her focus not just on improving her English, but also on engaging with important issues as well.

As a learner, Marleny is always engaged. She will always ask questions if there is something she doesn’t understand, and is always excited to learn about a new phrase or expression that she can add to her vocabulary. Not only has she been able to meet one of her goals in being able to speak English with people she doesn’t know, but she has also been able to support other English learners with their speaking as well!

I’m so glad that I could be partnered up with Marleny through the library’s adult literacy program. Her commitment to improving opportunities for herself and for those around her is incredibly inspiring, and I feel privileged that I am able to play a small part in that.

Thank You Jonathan
By Learner Marleny Moreno

It’s my turn.

It is time to talk about my amazing tutor Jonathan Lesser. I’ll always be very grateful to Jonathan for all he has taught me since March 10, 2018 until now.

I have learned a lot from him. He is a very good teacher. I admire him because he is active and also has a lot of energy to teach me after his job. When I started to meet him I did not have the ability to talk and write in English like today. In our meeting we have conversations. If I make a mistake he corrects me. In addition, he teaches me how to pronounce and write words that I write incorrectly. When I read to him, he asks me questions about what I read. Also I have to write about what I read. I always see him happy. In his spare time, he plays guitar and plays very well.

Recently I have had job interviews and I feel confident going alone because before that my daughter interpreted for me. Now I feel overjoyed because of my progress. For now, I’m working on Challenger 4! Thank you very much Jonathan for volunteering in the Adult Literacy Program. You and the other tutors are doing a great job helping people like me to achieve our goal. Speaking English was one of my goals.
Creative Corner

About Creative Corner

*Creative Corner* is where literacy learners share their personal stories, recipes, movie reviews, and other creative writing!

---

My Trip to San Diego

By Mehri Rashidi

I went with my youngest son to San Diego. This distance is about 3 hours by car. There’s a train there too. I visited the beautiful places.

- He lives in Mission Valley near Fashion Valley Mall.
- Presidio Place is the name of Arash’s complex, one bedroom condo. It has security guard and office. It has water foundation, tennis court…
- Old Town is very beautiful, it has History Park and we ate Mexican food, it was delicious.
- We watched the sunset in Delmar Beach.
- Trolley ride it, my son will go to his work.
- Shelter Island has a lot of yachts and launchramp.
- Mission Bay Park near Arash’s house has a lake, hotel, playyard, bike…

I love San Diego.

---

Highlights of My Winter Vacation

By Graciela Jacobo

My vacation was very fantastic. My daughter drives 6 hours from Los Angeles to Lodi, CA. We went December 24 in the morning, the night everyone is happy for the food and present, every time. We sometimes together celebrate the days of festivals and memorials. While return in home, the freeway was very snowy.

We prepared the tamales for dinner on Christmas. We did not prepare the dough we only prepared the meet the pork with spices and guajillo. We the rosted the guajillo consisting of blend of the garlic, black pepper and whater.

I love San Diego.
How I became more confident in the United States
By Ivy Liu

In 2008, I moved from China to the United States and I started my brand new life. In same year, I married and began to be a mother. My older son was born in 2009.

I was very excited. I keeped myself always busy for my family. But sometimes I felt it seem to me it was an unclear life. I am living in the United States. I know nothing about this country. I have no work here. I have no friends. I don’t even have a chance to talk with somebody to know this world in here. No, this is not right! I have to change my circumstance. I started to learn to drive. I started to take my son to go out to make some friends. I also tried to find a job. I learn basic English. I tried to go shopping myself. I tried to pick up the phone call to speak myself.

Learning Upgrade for every adult literacy learner!

Learning Upgrade is a fun way for adults to practice reading and math skills between tutoring sessions using a smartphone or desktop computer. Learners have access to 900+ lessons that include songs, video, and games. After a short assessment, learners start at their current level and earn certificates and awards that keep learning fun.

Learning Upgrade does not replace the one-on-one tutoring experience, but can accelerate learning by providing practice during the week.

Ask your literacy coordinator to sign you up today!
Tutor Elizabeth Arroyo is very proud to see learner Cristina Sanchez’s progress! “She studies at home on her own, and I find that she sometimes reads words and letters that we did not learn in our sessions, because she spent time studying at home.” Way to go, Cristina!

Learner Luz Maria Nava shared with tutor Laura Conejo del Aguila that she can read the labels at work now, and “this makes her job easier instead of waiting for somebody else to read it to her! This makes her more independent at work.” Congratulations, Luz!

Literacy Coordinator Amy Ramirez has wonderful news to share: “Learner Claire Hung has been in the Adult Literacy Program since 2016. She has had a few tutors throughout her journey with us and now is paired with tutor Patricia Garfield. This team has been phenomenal! If I have the opportunity to sit in during one of their sessions I see the bond they have created.

This summer, Claire mentioned to Patty that she was interested in becoming a STAR Reader at the library. Once Claire completed the application, she and Patty reviewed it together. Claire started as a STAR Reader in September and she eagerly shares the books she will be reading to children with Patty. It is clear to see how much passion Claire has for learning and teaching!” Beautiful!

Learner Teresa Cardiel finished a 219 page book called The Maid’s Spanish Secret by Dani Collins! Amazing!

“As a direct result of learner Maria Bohorquez’s significant progress in English literacy skills, she has increased her level of involvement in her daughter’s high school, specifically their drama program, and Maria will be one of the parent chaperones heading to New Orleans next month!” says tutor Abraham Leibovici. So impressive!

Tutor Jonathan Lesser says that learner Marleny Moreno was very excited to submit another piece to the annual Writer-to-Writer competition this year! “She read The Call of the Wild, and wrote a letter to Jack London. She appreciated the opportunity to write and edit the piece, as well as to practice her typing as part of the submission process.” We’re rooting for you to win, Marleny!

“One of learner Justin Charles’s goals was to read a complete book. He recently finished reading Lincoln, A Photobiography by Russell Freedman!” says tutor Diana Linden. Congratulations, Justin!

Tutor Jeffrey Miller has this sweet story to tell: “Learner Gwen Walten and I are grateful to the staff of the Sherman Oaks Achievements!”

Learner Elizabeth Hegedus and tutor Faye Melton
Branch Library for making us feel welcome and allowing us to use one of the student tables for our tutoring. We both wrote notes of thanks to the staff and delivered them — along with a big box of chocolates — just before Thanksgiving. Gwen works hard, and considers our time together as ‘school’ — and likes to call me ‘Teach.’ I am proud of Gwen and her progress, and I very much enjoy our time together!

“Learner Benita Martinez is a huge supporter of our program!” says literacy coordinator Ashley Binning. “Benita stopped by on my very first day on the job, and she has been an eager participant ever since. Benita completed ALLI 2018, Families Read Together, and is getting ready to submit her letter for Writer to Writer 2019. She has big goals, and is even considering earning her high school diploma with COHS. Benita uses many of the resources that our program provides and shares them with her friends and family!” Thanks for all your support, Benita!

“Learner Masoumeh Hashemi completed a course on Electro-Cardiogram and has decided to register for an Ultra Sound Board Certification examination!” says tutor Cheri Olsen. Fantastic!

Learner Tom DeHaven has finished the Laubach Series and has moved on to the Challenger Series! Congratulations, Tom!

“GIANT NEWS!!” says tutor Gayle Smith. “On November 21st, learner Laleh Tabrizi became a citizen of the United States! The ceremony was in Pasadena, and I was privileged to attend. 1,380 individuals from 86 countries were sworn in on that day! It was memorable. On the very day that Laleh became a U.S. citizen, she applied for a U.S. Passport too, and has now received one.” Hooray!

Tutor Sandra Stevens says learner Ivy Liu is continuing to read Jane Eyre through an independent online reading program. “Her writing and ability to express herself continue to improve very quickly. She is an excellent student. Ivy has nearly completed Challenger 2, and will be progressing to Challenger 3 within two weeks!”

Learner Mohammad Ashhadi recently passed the citizenship test! Great work, Mohammad!

↑ Learner Rosa Cid has reached many important milestones recently. She memorized the alphabet, wrote a letter to her son, filled out her first job application, and started learning typing and Microsoft Word! Amazing!

“Pico Union learner Iris Tobar is almost done with Career Online High School!” says
literacy coordinator Gloria Cervantes. “She is looking forward to the graduation ceremony in April 2020.” We can’t wait to see you walk across the graduation stage, Iris!

Terrific news from tutor Cathie Sherman Greer! “Learner Elaheh Kazempour finished the Challenger series! She has been working hard over the years to improve her English reading and comprehension. She also enjoys writing stories and poetry, and has written letters in the Writer to Writer Challenge. She won it two consecutive years! In addition, she attends weekly conversation classes to improve her ability to speak English. I admire her dedication and hard work, and appreciate the opportunity to be her tutor.” Congratulations, Elaheh!

“Learner Hee Young Gu has advanced very quickly and in two months finished the Challenger 2 book and moved on to Challenger 3!” says tutor Kerren Brull. “She is very proud of the work we’ve done, and I think she is amazing, coming to America from Korea and having to learn not only comprehension, but grammar too. And boy are our American expressions tough to explain sometimes!”

Tutor Rivka Givoni says, “I am very proud of learner Naima Elhajaoui’s progress. She has moved from Challenger 2 to Challenger 3. Great progress!”

Learner Anson Zheng recently completed Challenger Book 3! Great job, Anson!

Tutor Craig Hilary says, “Learner Pedro Alvarez is getting more confident using English within his own experiential contexts. It is exciting to see him light up when something confusing suddenly makes sense!”

“Ruth Milagro Shandrew is a learner that is very eager to improve her English,” says literacy coordinator Priscilla Rojas-Naiman. “She has been seeing multiple Walk-in-Tutors (Cahuenga, Los Feliz, Hollywood) so she could pass her TOEFL exam, which she did!!! Thank you to my amazing WIT volunteers!”

“Learner Maria Obando has found a job!” says tutor Cynthia Hudley. “It involves talking to the public. It cuts into our meeting time, but her language skills allow her to manage. This is a job in a store, and some patrons speak Spanish, but not the supervisors.” Congratulations, Maria!

Tutor Rensi Ke has some sad news to share: “Due to a schedule change, learner Yolanda Gonzalez and I cannot work together anymore. I am so grateful to have worked with her for the past five years and two months. She is the most inspiring learner I’ve ever worked with. Our friendship means a lot to me!”
“Learner Ana Alvarado has been praised by her family, mostly her grandchildren, for sharing her time with them, reading the children’s books Ana receives as part of the Families for Literacy program,” reports tutor Carmen Munoz. Yay!

Learner Maria Murillo’s family has seen much improvement in Maria’s reading ability and writing skills, and are very proud of their 92 year old mother and grandmother! So inspiring!

Learner Olga Mishuro recently completed Challenger 3 and is ready to begin Challenger 4! Tutor Catherine Pelonero is very impressed with her progress and so are we!

“Learner Irma Leyva Ornelas and tutor Jeffrey Brustrom are an amazing team!” says literacy coordinator Priscilla Rojas-Naiman. “They both really respect each other and are impressed with what each has to offer. Jeff says that Irma is always prepared and does all her homework. Her enthusiasm makes him want to teach her more! Irma says that she is encouraged by Jeff’s knowledge and creativity when teaching her. These two are an amazing pair!”

Tutor Mayra Altamira reports that learner Evaristo Sesmas is now able to read simple children’s books and comprehend information read! Great progress, Evaristo!

“Learner Griselda Hernandez is dedicated, focused and a fast learner,” says tutor Emma Dennis. “As a mother with two children, she has a busy life already and I am consistently impressed with the time and effort she puts into her English lessons and homework. Coming into this program, she already had a good grasp of the language and we are working on building up her confidence as well as her skills, so that she can really flourish!”

↑ Learner Chi Brooks recently volunteered at the Santa Clarita Library teaching origami to celebrate the Chinese New Year and the Year of the Rat! “She had over 50 participants learning how to fold adorable origami rats!” says tutor Joan Lavery. Wonderful!

Happy news from tutor Ione Malang! “Learner Thao Nguyen was sworn in as a citizen on 1/22/2020! She worked hard to achieve that important goal.” Congratulations, Thao!

Tutor Dorothy Ungerleider reports that learner Esperanza Solorio has found two part-time jobs and seems very content with her work schedule and mastery of new skill requirements! Great news!

“Learner Mehri Rashidi has been reading children’s books to her granddaughter in English!” says tutor Carol Zuckerman. Brilliant!
Recent COHS graduate Thabang Mnculwane was a Nike-sponsored, international running star, until an ankle injury cut his athletic career short. He was barely making ends meet and in search of opportunity, when he discovered Career Online High School.

We caught up with Thabang, who now lives in his native South Africa, to ask him how it feels to be a new high school graduate, what his experience in the COHS program was like, and what his plans for the future are.
Thank you so much for agreeing to talk to us, Thabang! Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I am a million things in one: self-motivated, a hard worker, a father, an athlete, an avid reader, a photographer, a child of God. Most of all, I am caring and humbled and God fearing.

Before I started COHS I was a professional athlete, and a studio associate in Commerce, California.

Can you tell us why you decided to get your high school diploma?

I had always wanted to get a better job, and being a father and a breadwinner I wanted to lead by example. I wanted to show the world that it can still be done, that it doesn’t matter how long it takes you. The prize is at the finish line.

I love that expression – the prize is at the finish line! As a former running star, you would know that especially well. Was it hard getting started with COHS?

I wouldn’t say it was hard to start. Starting was the most exciting time of my life, because I could see my dreams unfold to what I have always dreamt of as a child. But the most difficult part was when I was halfway through, when I was exhausted from work and had only a few hours of sleep for the longest time. I feel like I put myself under pressure, because my goal was to get my high school diploma. It was not the easiest, but with the support of my academic coach and my family, I had to keep going.

It’s great to hear that your academic coach helped you reach your goal! How has COHS prepared you for your next goal?

COHS has played the biggest role in shaping my future and my family’s. I have always known that one day I would be a respected somebody. I always knew that one day I would fulfill my goals. It takes a lot of hard work, determination, and discipline to actually make the time to study, so that you can be the person you want to be.

When you completed your last COHS course, what was the first thing that came to your mind?

When I completed my last course the first thing I needed was a good night’s sleep, but with all the excitement it was impossible! I had made plans to either apply to medical school or law school, but after that good night’s sleep, I figured I had to be a lawyer. It will help me a great deal to help those who are going through life difficulties.

It is so noble of you to want to help others in difficulty. Would you recommend COHS to others?

Yes, definitely. If the chance arises I would climb every skyscraper, shout at the top of my lungs so the world would know that COHS can and will change your life. It doesn’t matter what you have been through you just need at least 2 hours a day to reach your goals.

Do you have any advice for current students and future COHS students?

My advice to current students is never give up! It might get tough along the way, but with the big support system that LAPL has created, including the resources and the academic coaches, you will make it.

To all the future students I would say the key to your goals is to start. Find that stepping stone. Have goals and know that your situation will change as long as you put a little more effort and hard work in.

What are your next steps?

I am starting law school in February 2020. I will be doing my Bachelor of Laws in South Africa. I know it will take me 4 years to complete, and I am ready with every fiber in my being.

That’s so wonderful! Congratulations on being accepted into law school! Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

I give thanks to Los Angeles Public Library, from the bottom of my heart. I say thank you very much for affording me this opportunity. Nelson Mandela once said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” And today I live by that quote. There are still more hills to climb in my journey, but I strongly believe that if I don’t start climbing this mountain and see these beautiful views, I will still be in the dark. Always start something no matter how small and never give up.

Read more stories like this at: lapl.org/literacy/blog.