

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

A BI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING AT LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF GREATER HARTFORD

February 2001 Vol. 1, No. 1

Overview of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford's Community Literacy Initiative

Beginning on July 1, 2000, through the support of a three-year grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford (LVGH) has established the Community Literacy Initiative (CLI) to develop partnerships with ten city agencies over a two-year period. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), 41% of the adult population in Hartford functions at the lowest levels of literacy. This represents an enormous challenge to the ABE and adult literacy community in the city.

Building institutional and organizational capacity to better serve this population is one of the most important tasks facing provider agencies. The CLI is a response to this challenge. The goal of the CLI is to enhance community-based tutoring in ESOL and Basic Literacy throughout Hartford by creating custom-tailored programs responsive to the needs and unique opportunities available at each of the sites. A true partnership emerges between LVGH and the participating agencies, as both parties bring vital resources to the relationship. As a result, the network of collaborating agencies in taking on the vital work of providing adult basic education, is expanded and strengthened through the CLI. In the collaboration between

LVGH and the community-based agencies:

LVGH provides:

- ◆ Tutor training (pre-service and in-service support).
- ◆ Guidance and consultation with curriculum development and materials selection.
- ◆ On-going site supervision.
- ◆ Program management consultation.
- ◆ Assistance with student assessment.
- ◆ Annual program review and evaluation.

The participating agency:

- ◆ Recruits students either directly from the agency or from the surrounding neighborhood.
- ◆ Recruits tutors or teachers from agency staff or agency clients or volunteers.
- ◆ Provides on-site space for small group tutoring.
- ◆ Maintains an on-going relationship with LVGH through an institutional agreement to sustain the relationship beyond specific staff changes at the program level.

The values of the CLI both to the community and to LVGH are many:

- ◆ Programming becomes increasingly accessible to students in highly supportive learning environments.
- ◆ The project expands the city's capacity to serve more adults at the lowest literacy level.
- ◆ The project expands the pool of organizations committed to adult literacy, thereby strengthening the cause of literacy in Hartford.

- ◆ The project strengthens volunteerism in the community.

The CLI is off to a great start. Programming is up and running at five sites. LVGH has completed tutor training at two additional sites and has initiated discussions with other potential partners.

A Tour of the Sites



Asian Family Services

Asian Family Services (ASF) was founded in February 1996, by Ms. Vichhyka Shelto who came to Connecticut in 1975 as a refugee from Cambodia and earned an MSW degree from the University of Connecticut. Located in the Parkville section of Hartford near Park Street, most of the clients of Asian Family Services are from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Many experience traumatic stress as a result of years of war and dislocation.

The purpose of Asian Family Services is to aid Southeast Asian refugee populations to adjust to post war life in the United States. Current services include:

- Individual and family counseling
- Case management
- Advocacy
- Group counseling
- Employment training
- English language group tutoring

This past summer LVGH held a tutor-training workshop and trained four new tutors in addition to Asian Family Services support staff. Currently, three groups are held in the morning, afternoon, and evening, consisting of approximately twelve students. Pauline Gauger, Rosaline Malone, Mary McClintock, Irene Clark, and Jennifer Tobias provide the tutoring. LVGH's Yvette Garner provides tutor support. Adrienne Brown serves as ASF liaison to the Community Literacy Initiative. ASF VISTA Volunteer, Wyns Lee serves as translator between students and tutors. Wyns provides case management support to ASF clients.

Instruction focuses on independent living, current events, including news of Asia, and personal reflection. LVGH and Asian Family Services will also develop instructional material that focuses on welfare rights, refugee/immigration rights, and parent advocacy with the public school system. The program has published a book titled *In Our Voices: Stories Told or Written by Students in ESOL Classes at Asian Family Services*.

Burns Family Resource Center

Iris Rodriquez is the parent educator of the Burns Family Resource Center, located at the Burns Elementary School on Putnam Street. Iris teaches an ESOL class consisting of parents of children from the school, located in the Frog Hollow section of Hartford in the city's south end. Much more than a teacher, Iris is a friend and mentor. As Iris puts it, "With my students, we've become friends. If they have a problem, they'll call me up at my house. It's just like a friendship thing, it's not tutor-learner, it's just friends." The students participate fully in the activities of the family resource center. In addition to attending English classes, they take sewing and cooking classes and participate in parent meetings

throughout the week at the school. Some of the parents also volunteer as classroom aides. The relationship between the Family Resource Center, the Burns Elementary School, and Iris's ESOL class represents community-based education at its finest.

The Clark Family Resource Center

The Clark Family Resource Center (CFRC), which has served as an LVGH site since 1994, is located in the Main Street area of North Hartford. The program completed its first summer session in 2000. Eight students participated for the four-week session. Summer tutoring will now become a regular feature of the Clark program.

The regular program consists of three groups. Students have been recruited primarily from the neighborhood. Many have participated for several years. Pam Schonberger, Cathie Benner, Rose Howard, and Yvette Garner provide the tutoring. Rose also volunteers at the CFRC, as does Pam. Clark Family Resource Executive Director, Linnette Carty serves as a member of LVGH Board of Directors. Parent Educator Manny Bermudez provides counseling and referral support to the students in the program as part of his outreach to the community and to the parents of the Clark Elementary School.

LVGH recently edited **Into the Light 3**, a collection of student narratives written by the adult basic literacy Clark Street Writers. This text includes selections from a discussion facilitated by the Hartford-based agency, Democracy Works, held at Clark on *Building Strong Neighborhoods*. It features student essays of a highly poignant nature.

Student writing is a strong feature at Clark.

During the fall of 2000 the LVGH groups worked with student interns brought in through the CFRC, from the University of Connecticut Allied Health Program, who provided information and instructional material on nutrition. Those materials are now accessible to students throughout the Community Literacy Initiative.

Collaboration between LVGH and the Clark Family Resource Center is ongoing, extensive, and informal, the fruit of a several year relationship between the two agencies.

Salvation Army Senior Citizens Center

At the Salvation Army Senior Center, ESOL program runs continuously throughout the year. The program, located at Salvation Army Headquarters at the corner of Asylum Avenue and Sigourney Street, consists of three groups with approximately 15-20 students. The students are mostly Russians from West Hartford who sought out the Salvation Army for assistance. The program has been in operation for several years under the leadership of Director of Salvation Army Senior Citizen's Center, Mary Halloran. Paul Hartung has also tutored in the program since its inception and Rosemarie Doris has recently joined the tutoring staff.

LVGH's Yvette Garner maintains regular support to the program. The Salvation Army Senior Citizens ESOL Program is featured in the February edition of the LVGH newsletter.

Shepherd Park Corporation

In the fall of 2000 LVGH began an ESOL program at Shepherd Park

Corporation, a residency for senior citizens and the disabled located on Sisson Avenue. Lori Bilosz, former Tenant Services Coordinator at Shepherd, and residents Michael Stahl and Mary Quinto, provide the tutoring, with support from LVGH's George Demetrian.

A major feature of the Shepherd program is the creation of student narratives as seniors from Puerto Rico

New Program Sites Under Development



Annie Fisher Family Resource Center

This fall, LVGH completed a Basic Literacy tutor training workshop at the Annie Fisher Family Resource Center located at the Annie Fisher Elementary School in the Blue Hills section of northwest Hartford. Six individuals completed the training, including Family Resource Center Director, Sonja Hall. Parent Educator, Jessica Hammond-Holmes has previously worked with Literacy Volunteers of America-Greater New Britain and is a trained workshop leader.

Congratulations to Monica Ross, Cheryl Joseph Louis, Mildred Dougall, Sonja Hall, and Phuong Ngyuen for completing the tutor training workshop!

and Vietnam reflect on their rich life experiences. Students express a strong commitment and enthusiasm for the program through a wonderful sense of community that has emerged among the participants of the program.

A Basic Literacy program began on January 22, 2001 at Annie Fisher, which will consist of parents from the school and other interested individuals from the Blue Hills neighborhood and other sections of the city.

Center for Youth Family Resource Center at Betances Elementary School

Recently, LVGH completed an ESOL tutor training workshop at the Center for Youth Family Resource Center, located at the Betances Elementary School in the Charter Oak section of Hartford's southeast end. Four individuals took the training. Congratulations to Anne Anderson, Kate Fisher, Julie Core, and Richard Chylinski on completing the tutor training workshop!

We are working with Center for Youth Family Resource Center's Executive Director Asomjee Pamoja to set up the program early this year, consisting of parents from the school and adults from the surrounding neighborhood.

Hartford Public Library Campfield Branch

LVGH will conduct an ESOL tutor training workshop this spring at the Campfield Branch of the Hartford Public Library in the city's south end. The library will recruit students from the

surrounding neighborhood and volunteers from friends and associates of the library.

The Hartford Public Library's new initiative, *The American Place* (TAP) currently offers English and Citizenship classes at the Central and Dwight Branches and serves as an information and resource center for new immigrants and refugees. The mission of TAP is to help newcomers adjust to life in America while preserving elements of their native culture.

For additional information about *The American Place*, including many great resources for ESOL instruction, click on Immigration Services from the side bar of the HPL web site at www.hartfordpl.lib.ct.us Here you will also find LVGH's collection of student writings, *Voices From Around the World: Essays and Reflections by Hartford's Newest Residents*.

Burgdorf Health Clinic

Phuong Nguyen, who is serving as project liaison, is setting up Basic Literacy small group tutoring groups at the Burgdorf Health Clinic, located in the Blue Hills section of Hartford's North End. Plans are also under way to set up a spring tutor training workshop at the Clinic.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the value of literacy in assisting adults to better access health services for their families and themselves. A partnership between the Burgdorf Health Clinic and LVGH holds the promise of developing a unique family literacy program through a combined focus on health education and parenting skills.

Community Literacy for the Soul

Yvette Garner



Yvette is on staff at LVGH and provides support to several of the programs of the Community Literacy Initiative.

Having observed the classes at the Salvation Army Senior Center, Asian Family Services, and Clark Family Resource Center, I have found the students to be kind and caring people. They are eager to learn and appreciate the help they receive from their tutors.

The dynamic tutors at these three sites give unselfishly of their time, but more importantly their enthusiasm, patience and understanding. Witnessing the encouragement, support and nurturing between the students and tutors is more like observing a family.

For instance, there are times when some material is harder for a student to grasp than others, but the encouragement they are given by their tutor is just what they need to keep pressing on. I recall being at Clark Family Resource Center one day and overhearing a conversation between tutor Rose Howard and student Geraldine. Rose was introducing a math lesson to her class, Geraldine was having difficulty understanding the work. So, Ms. Howard took extra time to explain the exercise until Geraldine understood it. Geraldine's classmates rallied around as well and cheered her on to keep trying. When Geraldine did understand the lesson, she beamed with sheer joy at her success.

Although the course work is important for students to learn, the support of their tutors truly fosters learning at the community sites. For instance, Irene Clark, a tutor at Asian Family Services noticed that one of her students was not attending class as consistently as she used to do. In turn, Ms. Clark asked the student if everything was all right. Irene's student was elated that Irene asked her how things were going, but was more thrilled that Ms. Clark genuinely cared about her and took the time to listen to her problem. As a result, the student smiled gratefully and was able to refocus on her class work.

Besides encouragement and support, tutors nourish both the minds and souls of the students they teach. Such is the case in Paul Hartung's ESOL class at the Salvation Army Senior Center. Paul engages his students in discussions of current events and addresses topics most relevant to their lives. While engaged in conversation, his students shine as they are given the chance to freely express their thoughts and ideas. They are then able to walk away from class with a new sense of self and a deeper understanding of the world and people around them. Moreover, they smile in anticipation of the following weeks class.

Being involved in Community Literacy has been a rewarding experience for me. I feel blessed to be involved in work that is positive and makes a difference in the lives of others. What I get in return is far greater than what I may give of myself. I have learned about different cultures and worlds. Now I better appreciate what I have in the past taken for granted. I value the uniqueness of others and the similarities we all share that make us God's children.

The wonderful work that goes on at the Salvation Army Senior Center, Asian Family Services, and the Clark Family

Resource Center would not be possible if it were not for the fantastic tutors that volunteered their time to help adult learners. As well, it is the encouraging, supportive, and nurturing exchange among the students and tutors, that creates an environment of positive learning and makes for a family unit at each of these sites.

Tutor's Corner



A New Tutor at Clark Family Resource Center

My name is Rose Howard and I'm a mother of three, two girls and one boy. A Hartfordian all my life, I have worked various jobs that entail working with people of all ages. Over the past few years I have been working in the Clark Family Resource Center since it's been open to the families in the community. Some of my duties have been tutoring in the Fleet Training Center in Clark School, Troop Leader for the Connecticut Valley Girl Scouts, and volunteering in the school store. I've also worked as a violence prevention program facilitator.

Now I am working for the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford in the Clark Family Resource Center. The experience has been challenging and rewarding. The students are dedicated and eager to learn new things. They work very hard and make good progress in their studies. Their positive attitude and their willingness to learn will help

them to reach their goals. I look forward to coming to class and working with outstanding and carefree students.

In an interview we asked Rose to reflect on the importance of holding the program at the Clark Family Resource Center. This is what she said:

It makes them feel comfortable, basically. It's a warm feeling place. It encourages them to come back. They feel comfortable here. The goal is to make them feel comfortable here with no one judging them. If you need some extra little space to go somewhere to do something you can. The Clark Family Resource Center gives them the opportunity to have the class here, which they love. But it also gives them the opportunity to know other resources in the community. It's there for them and the staff here let's them know if there's things going on that they need to know or if they'd like to get involved in. They have different workshops here where they can participate in.

Additional Excerpts from an interview with Rose Howard. We have changed the names of the students.

Margaret wants to go farther. She really wants to go farther. She wants to do better, but just doing it in the classroom is not going to just do it. In the beginning, she had low self-esteem. We discussed that with a paper we were doing. In the beginning she wasn't comfortable with going out filling out applications. This was in September. This is now January. She's feeling a lot more comfortable now. If she put her time to it, she can succeed.

June's doing extremely well. She's picking up more words. At the beginning of the class, she was kind of slow, but I felt she knew more than what she wanted to express. She's sounding

words out better. She sometimes guesses at word, but she knows she guesses wrong. She knows it! Then I will give her a look. She looks at the word again, then she'd pronounce it and she'll say, "Oh, I don't know where that word came from." She's reading very well.

Beverly is looking for more independence. She doesn't always want to depend on someone having to be with her to deal with everyday life things. For instance, she needs someone to go to the bank; to read a prescription, to read her mail. She just wants to be able to do things on her own so that she can feel confident about herself.

We were doing a poem which I took out of a book. It was called, *I Wonder*. It basically made you wonder about things, everyday things. "Do people go through regrets and sorrows. Do they go through satisfactions or regrets?" Different things, emotions and feelings. It was all different things basically dealing with everyday life. And it ended with, "I wonder." And when it ended with "I wonder," they all perked up like, "I like that." It gave them the opportunity to think. We began to talk about it. They said, "I like that. That's deep." In other words, it hits to a point where you wonder how much satisfaction are you trying to get out of life. It makes you wonder about today, tomorrow, things from yesterday. I just thought that was different.

Excerpts from an Interview with Jennifer Vong, former Bi-Lingual ESOL Tutor at Asian Family Services

George: Why do you think your students participating in the program?

Jennifer: I think they really want to learn-the language barrier has really kept them out of participating in the mainstream activities. I think that's one of the reasons they are there. They want to learn. They want to be able to communicate. They want to be able to pick up the phone and have a dialogue with the other person, whether it's cold calling or what? I think that's probably one of the biggest incentives on why they want to learn.

George: What might be some of the specific English learning environments that they might be interested in having more of an interaction with?

Jennifer: At this point they need a controlled environment. We have to keep in mind that they're learning and are still at a very basic stage. I try to have them interact a little bit in class. To talk with them you have to go slow. If you go too fast, they won't understand. Sometimes if you ask them if they understand they'll just nod just because it's the polite thing to do or they don't want to seem like they don't know. So it has to be a controlled environment, I think, where the speaker has to talk slowly or watch the facial expression.

George: How would you characterize the progress your students have made?

Jennifer: One of the things I try to do with them is make them not only try to learn more English, but become more aware of the new culture, aware of the new environment. Hence, in the last election I brought in articles from newspapers and I read with them. We talked about the election. One of them indicated she was registered to vote. So

I encouraged her and the rest of them just to get into understanding the meaning of the newspaper, watch the news, become more aware. Just different articles I collected. The election, the campaign. Bush's point of view versus Gore's point of view.

George: So they're getting a sense of U.S. culture. I was in one of your classes and I remember a discussion of going to the dentist and you had gotten into some real detail about what was involved and it might be different than it was in Vietnam.

Jennifer: Right, I don't assign them homework a lot, 'cause I recognize they come after work and they're there because they want to learn. What I try to do is to help them interact in their every day lives. I wouldn't expect them to go to college at this point. I'm just trying to teach them everyday abilities.

George: What were some of the other topics you covered?

Jennifer: Visiting a doctor's office, a dentist's office, giving someone directions or taking directions. I kind of got them to tell me what was important to them. Telephone conversations were another one. What can they expect if someone calls them or they want to call someone. Just to have a little dialogue with them.

George: You speak Vietnamese, so you were able to conduct the class bilingually. How did you go about doing that? Just take a ratio, for example, what percentage of the class was in Vietnamese and what percent in English? It varied obviously from class to class.

Jennifer: Right. I think at this point it's a little bit more 45% in Vietnamese and 55% in English, which is much better than before when it was a lot more in Vietnamese.

George: When you were speaking in Vietnamese, what were you communicating? I ask because you were using your native language to communicate issues or ideas in English, obviously. How did that work?

Jennifer: I used it to explain what a word means. I used it to get feedback from them as well to see if they got the meaning of the work.

George: What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of using the native language in an ESOL class?

Jennifer: The advantages are, as you can see, I'm able to communicate with them and actually get pretty good feedback from them. I know when they don't understand something and I know when they do. The disadvantage is that they rely on me more than they should. What I try to do in that case is answer them back in English. And I ask them if they understand. They just give me those blank looks and I just say it in Vietnamese to them.

George: What would it take for a tutor who spoke only English to work with your group?

Jennifer: Speak slowly. Watch the facial expressions. I think that's probably going to be the key, and get to know them.

George: Do you think someone who speaks English only as a tutor should take a more structured approach or not?

Jennifer: I think at this point where I left the class, and I mentioned it to Jennifer [the new tutor], get some very basic stories— and go through it with them. Read the stories. Do a lot of reading with them. I think they're going to learn that way. Talk to them about the stories.



New Instructional Materials

LVGH has compiled a wide collection of instructional materials for Basic Literacy and ESOL on such topics as employment, family, health, learning, and civics including many lessons directly based on student narratives. These materials are

broken down into short lessons within specific units. They include a text and questions. The questions are often the most important part of the lesson when they stimulate new learning and personal reflection on important topics of concern to students. Many of the lessons include vocabulary work and other skill-related activity and strike a good balance between reading for meaning and developing basic skills.

233-3853 or through e-mail at:
Gdemetrion@lvgh.org or
Gdemetrion@juno.com

The materials are also available on line at:

http://www.crec.org/atdn/teacher_resources/lvalifeapp.shtml

You need pdf formatting to access the materials on line.

Three samples from these materials are included in this edition.

Hard copies of the Life Application Curriculum Sourcebook are available through George Demetrion. George can be reached the LVGH office at

Overview

The premise of the *Literacy for Life: Life Application Curriculum Sourcebook* is very simple. Literacy and conversational English are best learned while being applied in contexts that matter to students. Basic language skills are not ignored, far from it. Rather, work on them is integrated with context in a balanced way, allowing students and tutors to move back and forth from basic skill development to contextual learning as determined by the specific learning tasks, at hand. The information provided in the curriculum, both theoretical and practical, is a resource to enable students and tutors *together* to establish a well-focused, flexible instructional program that helps students apply what they learn in the tutoring session with broader based life long learning needs, interests and aspirations.



Life Application Curriculum Sourcebook, Vol. 2 From Unit on Family Literacy



Lesson Two: Discipline and Your Child: Adapted from the New Reader's Press Let's Work It Out series

1. *Teach your children about rules. Set a good example for them.*
 - Identify at least three rules you would like to teach your children.
 - Why are these important to you?
2. *Work with your children in making rules. Family teamwork is good.*
 - What are some practical ways you can teach your children these rules?
 - Which rules are you willing to be flexible about as you work with them?
 - Which rules do you need to maintain no matter what?
 - How does the age of your children make a difference?
3. *Teach your children about what happens if rules are broken.*
 - What might be some of the natural consequences of going against the family rules?
 - Can those be explained to your children in a way that they will want to follow the rules because they view it as good for them?
 - When is it important to exert external discipline because you believe it is important for your children to follow the family rules even if they may not want to?
 - How can you turn discipline into a learning process?
 - What are some ways you can balance discipline with love?
4. *Listen to your children. Talk about what discipline means.*
 - Share some examples where there has been some conflict between you and your children?
 - What do you think was driving it?
 - What do you think your children wanted?
 - What do you think they wanted under the surface?
 - In what ways might a positive approach to discipline have helped?
 - Under what circumstances might it be best to allow your children to learn on their own even if they make mistakes?

5. *Praise your children when they do what is right.*

- Identify some situations when you felt proud about your children.
- What did they do?
- What was it specifically about what they did that made you feel proud?
- Did your children know that you were proud?
- How did you let them know?
- If you were to write a letter now to your children about some situation, whether in the past or present, that made you feel proud about them, what would you say?
- Would it make sense to give or send that letter to your children?

6. *Teach your children that they have jobs in the family.*

- Do you believe it is important for each child to have a job in the family? Why or why not?
- What are some jobs that you have given to your children?
- Why have you chosen those jobs?
- How have your children carried them out?
- Were you able to give help to your children in carrying out the assigned work?
- What is more important: the attitude in which they have taken the job on or their ability to carry it out in the manner that you view as correct?
- What is the relationship between right attitude and doing the job well?

7. *It's okay to seek advice about problems with children.*

- Were you ever in a position where you needed advice about raising your children?
- Where did you turn?
- What were the results?
- Are there any current areas where you would like to get help or receive additional information about problems that you might be having with your children?
- What aspects of this do you feel comfortable about sharing in the small group?

8. *Discipline is teaching.*

- What does the word, “discipline,” mean to you?
- Look up “discipline” in the dictionary. Does that open up any new ways of understanding the word?
- What does it mean when someone says, “She does things in a disciplined way?”
- Under what circumstances is it important to separate discipline or correction from punishment?
- In what ways are you your children’s best teacher?
- What new skills would you like to develop or refine to help you teach your children?

The following lesson is from a new unit titled Student Voices from South East Asia



Lesson Two

I have a problem to remember what I learn in class. But I know that coming to class everyday, I at least learned my rights as a refugee.

I get frustrated when I cannot remember the English word I learned in class. When I come home I ask my grandparents to teach me. I don't think I can use a lot of English skills to do things by myself yet.

But I could do things I could not do before class. I can answer the telephone in English, spell my name and address.

I would like to wish the people that help make this program long life, happiness and God bless all of them.

Ms. Ngo Pham
Asian Family Services

Words	Syllables	Write Sentence
problem	prob-lem (2 syllables)	
everyday	ev-er-y-day (4 syllables)	
frustrated	frus-tra-ted (3 syllables)	
refugee	ref-u-gee (3 syllables)	
remember	re-mem-ber (3 syllables)	
grandchildren	grand-chil-dren (3 syllables)	
appreciate	a-pppre-ci-ate (4 syllables)	
answer	an-swer (2 syllables)	

Unscramble sentences

- remember what learn I have a to I in class problem

2. spell I telephone address can answer the English, my name and in

Fill in the Blanks

I have a _____ to remember what I learn in class. But I know that _____ to class everyday, I at least learned my rights as a _____.

I get _____ when I cannot remember the English word I learned in class. When I come home I ask my _____ to teach me. I don't think I can use a lot of English skills to do things by _____ yet.

But I could do _____ I could not do before class. I can _____ the telephone in English, spell my name and address.

I would like to wish the _____ that help make this program long life, happiness and God bless all of them.

Questions

1. Do you have a problem remembering what you learned in class?
2. What can you do to help you remember what you learn in class?
3. Who helps Ms. Pham learn English?
4. Who helps you learn English?
5. How does Ms. Pham use English? How do you use English?



This lesson is from Volume I of the Life Application Curriculum Sourcebook on Work

LESSON 2—IDENTIFYING CAREER GOALS



Mary has worked as a housekeeper for five years. She is 36, a single parent with two children ages 9 and 6. She is well respected at work and is secure in what she does. She wants something more in her work life, but doesn't know what that is. She works during the day while her children are in school so she only needs day care when her children are on vacation or are sick. Her employer is flexible and allows her to take time off if she needs to attend to her kids, but does not pay her for the time. She makes enough money to meet her basic needs, although finding money for emergencies or extras is difficult.

She is attending night school two nights per week and would like to get her GED. She senses that the GED will open doors for her, but does not have a clear sense of what to pursue or what her options are. Mary likes working with people and she would like to work in an office setting. She also feels secure, but not totally happy in her current job.

Reflection on Mary's Situation

1. What is Mary's situation?
2. What are some of the factors she needs to consider when thinking about making changes?
3. What factors do you believe are in Mary's circle of control? What are some other factors she might need to consider?
4. Have you ever been in a similar situation whether about work or something else that called for long term planning and gradual change? If so, how did you deal with the situation? What did you learn? What was hard to learn? How did things turn out? If you have not faced this situation before, what factors might you need to consider?
5. What information does Mary need to make good decisions? How can she get such information?
6. In your situation what information were you able to get? Where did it come from? How useful was it? Where could you have obtained more and better information?
7. What action steps should Mary take? How should she evaluate the effects of them?
8. What action steps did you take in the situation you were in?
9. What did you learn about yourself in the process?
10. What new problems or issues did you discover?

Literacy for Life

George Demetrian
Manager of Community –Based
Programming
Literacy Volunteers of Greater
Hartford

You are going to teach; but as you teach, you are going to learn much more than you can possibly teach, and in the end, you will feel as grateful to your students as those students feel to you for the dignity that you created together.

Jonathan Kozol
Illiterate America

According to national literacy researcher Thomas Sticht, over 4.2 million adults nationwide participated in adult basic education programs in 1998. In that same year, Sticht goes on to state, "the K-12 system served some 46.8 million enrollees while the post-secondary, higher education system enrolled about 14.6 million. Sticht's point is that as indicated by the number of enrollees, adult basic education is far from a marginal aspect of this nation's total education system. In drawing our attention to these numbers, Sticht's intent is to move adult basic education from the margins to the mainstream in the public's eye. As a veteran adult literacy educator, I heartily embrace Sticht's vision.

Individuals participate in adult literacy programs for many important reasons. Most desire general language (reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking) development. In an increasingly print-based society that depends on effective communication, this is clearly a valuable goal in itself. Closely related in importance among

students is the sense of confidence and personal dignity, self-esteem, and enhanced competency adults experience as they expand their language communication skills. Although hard to measure, this somewhat intangible impact cannot be overestimated. As one study puts it:

Students do not necessarily have a concrete goal in mind, an instrumental view of literacy tied to some specific task or aspiration. More than anything, they want to feel that there are possibilities for the future, that there are choices and potential for change.

Current research on literacy states that language development is most fully acquired when it is learned through living contexts that people identify as important. This becomes more the case after students have participated for some time, and obtain a better sense of what they might learn and the length of time required. Thus, instead of learning to read and write or speak and understand English first, say through workbook exercises, one develops such skills through direct application in real-life situations and interests. This may be through interesting stories in the newspaper, a church bulletin, correspondence from a child's school, work related instructions, the *TV Guide*, stories from other adult literacy learners, as well as short fiction and other culturally-derived material. In programs like LVGH's Community Literacy Initiative, students and tutors work on long range planning and goal setting to help connect specific learning with broader life projects. Our student-centered approach not only makes learning fun and interesting for the student and the

tutor, but makes it relevant to the lives of adult students. This, in turn, fuels the motivation to stay engaged in learning for the year or more that it often takes to make significant progress.

Let's look at one student we'll call Ed, who entered a literacy program with very limited reading skills. Ed was motivated by practical concerns. As he put it, "what I need now is filling out applications, stuff like that." With help from his tutor he learned to fill out money orders and how to pay his rent and insurance. He drove, but couldn't read signs, so he limited his driving only to known areas. So-called friends that he depended upon to write money orders kept the money for themselves. What troubled Ed most about not being able to read was feeling trapped in situations over which he had no control. As he put it:

I thought about it, but you're not comfortable with it. You know you have limitations to what you can do. So, I'm stuck. It's not like I can go out there and get a job doing something else because I don't have the ability for it. So you have to settle for what you can get, most of the time.

Things were not easy for Ed. He felt shame in asking his girlfriend for help. Certain coworkers referred to Ed as mentally retarded because he could not read. Ed's need to bolster a precarious self-esteem was perhaps nowhere more poignantly stated than in the following sentence: "I live by myself, so I have to be motivated because I don't have anybody to do anything for me."

As Ed participated in the program he was able to master some of these areas

through the caring support of his sensitive tutor, Jane, one of the unsung heroines of our field. He also learned to read by studying stories of other students in the program and became inspired. As he said it:

It motivates you, you know? It makes you want to keep going to learn something for yourself. Sometimes you don't think you can learn until you see other people do it. So that motivates you a little bit. Well, a lot, I might say, a lot.

Ed's progress has been slow. He has made good progress, but still needs a lot of help with his reading and may never gain total fluency. Still, he is learning and applying what he has learned in his personal life, at work, and particularly in the adult literacy community where he is still active. His confidence has improved a great deal which gives him courage to face new challenges.



Sondra Stein of the National Institute for Literacy points out the importance of "literacy for life" rather than for any single purpose. She says "while the specific tasks, roles and responsibilities vary from context to

context adults seek to develop literacy in order to change what they can do, how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves in specific social and cultural contexts." For Ed, the change has been slow rather than dramatic, but profound on the cumulative impact of his life.

Ed's story is paralleled by another student, Pat, who grew up in the Canadian backwoods. Pat, who never learned to read either in his native French or English started to learn to read for the first time in his 40s. The following describes in a more compelling way than anything I ever could the impact of literacy on Pat's life:

Now if I go into a restaurant, I don't have to pretend I'm reading the menu; I really read it. My wife used to read it to me. I hated when people were with us or around us because they know that I can't read and may think that I am a dummy. But now I can order my food myself.

As stated by Hanna Fingeret at the conclusion of her massive 1990 study of students at Literacy Volunteers of America-New York City, "The impact [of literacy] is profound, touching every aspect of their lives." In short, literacy is for life. It opens doors in many different ways for individuals in family, community, and workplace settings and has an incalculable impact on self-esteem. It is for this reason that we embrace Tom Sticht's vision of moving adult literacy from the margins to the mainstream.

Literacy for Life in the Real-World

Students apply what they are learning in tutoring sessions in their lives in many ways. In order to help us understand this better, we asked some students to explain it to us. Seven Students at Clark Family Resource Center worked on the sheet titled, *Applying Literacy and Language Development to Real Life Needs and Interests*. The sheet was based on a quote by literacy specialist Tom Sticht, who states that "literacy is developed while being applied" to real life contexts. We defined such contexts as:

- Home
- Work
- A community setting
- Shopping
- Medical issues
- Personal

Here is a sample of what students wrote in each of the categories

Home

- I pick up books and find I can read them
- When I watch TV I recognize I don't understand what all the words mean
- Now I can pick up the paper and understand a lot of it
- Reading the Bible
- Cooking
- Helping my daughter with her homework
- Cooking at home for me and my daughter
- Puzzle books
- Talk (more) with family members
- Reading books with my mother

- I help my son with his homework

Work

- Check list
- Talk and listen to boss
- Counting money

Community

- I can follow directions better
- My self confidence (in public settings) has improved
- Listen and talk to others
- Read road signs
- Fill out forms
- Attend workshops
- Talk with others
- I take sick people to the doctor all the time.
- Helping at daughter's school

Shopping

- When I go shopping and they give me the receipt, to make sure
- Buy things and check price
- Read sizes/labels
- Count my money

Medical

- Went to doctor's and read the form

Personal

- Now I can read and write I am willing to take more risks
- I read some books at home all the time
- Read my Bible
- Drive a car (going for driver's license)
- To get my own business

- To get my GED
- To be a policewoman
- To go to hairdressing school
- To own my own building and fix it up
- To be a clothing designer
- I am determined to learn to read and write and do math really well so I can help teach others who have problems



The tutoring at the Clark Family Resource Center did not specifically focus on most of these topics, but represented the overflow of learning in class, which students drew upon elsewhere to achieve their own purposes. This is encouraging because it demonstrates that students are able to transfer such learning from one context to another. What it also demonstrates is some of the specific ways students utilize literacy outside class, which tutors can draw upon to more closely link learning to read and write (or speak and understand English for ESOL students) with student goals and aspirations. Working with students to help them more effectively make such connections is invaluable.

STUDENTS CORNER

Asian Family Services

The Most Important New Event of 2000

Irene Clark has taught ESOL at Asian Family Services since September. They regularly read and talk about the news. Recently class members identified the most important news event of 2000. Here is what they said.



Young Park

I think the most important news event in 2000 was the family visits of North and South Korea after fifty years of separation.

Huu Vinh

I think the most important news event of 2000 was when President Clinton met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. He tried to help them make a plan for peace in the Middle East.

Ngoc Viet

I think the most important new event in 2000 was the class event to the teacher's house. We saw her Persimmon tree. We had a little party.

Sothera Saing

I think the most important news event in 2000 was the election of the president. Voting is very important.

Chuc Van Pham

I think the most important news event was the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Kim Dae Jung for his work for democracy and human rights in South Korea and Asia.

Clark Family Resource Center

Michelle Whatley wrote the following letter to her daughter.

Dear Jahneil,

How are you? When you read my letter, please do not cry. You are my only girl and I will always love you, but you are a sad person in the morning. Jahneil, when I talk to you in the morning, you get upset. I do not like when you get upset with me. I am your mother and you should listen to me in the morning when I talk to you.

Jahneil, one day I will not be with you. There is nothing like a mother. You will always cherish this day. I love you so much. The Bible says honor your mother all the days of her life.

You are a loving person. When you grow up, you should do anything you want with your life.

Your loving Mom

Salvation Army Senior Citizens Center

My Life History
Eduard Priymets



I was born in 1931 in Ukraine, formerly a republic of the U.S.S.R. During the Soviet period my family was persecuted because we disagreed with the communist political philosophy of the Soviet Union. Also, my two uncles were arrested by the KGB, the Soviet security apparatus.

My mother was a teacher from 1922-1931. She worked in a Ukrainian children's orphanage with children who lost their parents during the 1917 Revolution and subsequent Civil War. At that time the American people helped the children by providing clothes, food, books, and toys. Later, my mother

explained the American assistance to the children. She also told about the arrest of innocent people and the truth about American help.

In 1946 my mother was arrested as a political dissident. She was sentenced for seven years to Karaganda, Kazakstan, a former republic of the U.S.S.R. in central Asia. I was left alone and had to work hard to survive with the help of my Aunt Xsenja. My family was constantly persecuted as political dissidents in the U.S.S.R.

For this reason we received permission from the American government to immigrate here in 1992. It is a free country in comparison to the undemocratic Soviet system.

Now my daughter has a job in a nursing home and speaks English well. My mother is 99 and she is very active in her day care center.

My wife and I have SSI (Supplemental Social Security Income) and we are improving our English at the Salvation Army Senior Citizens Center. I also study English at the Capital Community College in Hartford, CT.

My son George, works in a photo lab and does not have problems with his English.

We are all U.S. citizens. We studied American history to prepare for our immigration test at the Hartford, CT Salvation Army Senior Citizens Center with the help of Mary and Paul. Thank you America! Thank you, Salvation Army!

Shepherd Park

Antonia Santiago

My name is Antonia Santiago. I was born in Utuado, Puerto Rico. I was born on March 14, 1918. I came to American in 1964, to Hartford, CT. When I came to the U.S. my nephew sent for me because I am a widow. My sister came to Hartford in 1974, but she died two years ago. I have two brothers and two sisters in Puerto Rico. I miss my family in Puerto Rico. My sister calls me every month.

Autobiography of Ha Tran

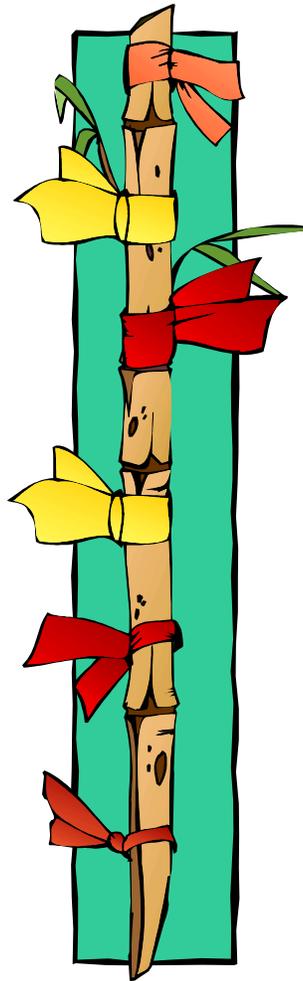
When I was a baby I lived with my grandmother in the village. When I was a child I lived with my parents in the city. Then I went to school. After that time I got married when I was 24 years old in Haiphong. My husband worked in the custom office. From 24 to 32 years old I already had 5 children, one son and four daughters.

In 1954 the communists took over North Vietnam so we had to evacuate to the South Vietnam to Saigon. My husband still worked at the same position. Then in 1972 my husband got sick and died. I had to run businesses and raise my children. All of them got to go to school.

In 1975 the communists took over Saigon, too. And now all my family is in the U.S. except one daughter who lives in France with her husband and two children.

When I first came to the U.S. I was very depressed, I worried about a lot of things, especially for my children. All

of them got a job, but at night they all went to school.



Actually, I am very content and happy because all my children got a better job. I have ten grandchildren, all of them go to school. They're all polite. I think they will become good students.

Someday the communists will be gone. I will come back to my country again.

Why You Have to Learn English
*Ha Tran, Maria Gonzales, and Aida
Candelenia*

You have to learn English in this country to get a job. If you have to pass a test you have to know English.

If you understand English you can go to a doctor's anywhere in the U.S. If you need to find a street you need English. It's most important for communicating with each other in the U.S. where the common language is English.

How Do You Practice English?
*Ha Tran, Maria Gonzales, and Aida
Candelenia*

Maria: Last night I watched a program on channel 20 on the brain. I understood it. I watch TV on channel 20 every night at 8 p.m. It's educational. They speak slowly.

Ha: I watch the news and weather at 7 in the morning, 12 noon and 6 at night. I watch *The Young and the Restless* and *The Bold and the beautiful*."

Aida: We need to practice reading, watching TV and talking with other people.

The Holiday Season

Antonia Santiago

December 24th in the morning in my house I cooked, I studied the Bible. In the night I went to mass at St. Anne's Church on Park Street. After the mass everybody went to the reception at the church. December 25, I went shopping with my friend and bought a sweater, pants, and stockings. In the night I watched television and went to sleep. December 31st I went to church again to wait for the New Year. There was a

reception for the people after the service. We had a meal and talked together.

Aida Candelenia

I had a good Christmas. I spent it with my son and his family. I spent four to five days with them. Every night we watched movies. We watched *The Patriot*. Another night we watched *Mission Impossible*. I didn't like it. It was too violent. We went shopping for clothes for my grandson in Enfield. It was a good time to spend with my family.

Maria Gonzales

December 31 I got together with my family; my children, my grandson, my son-in-law, and my sister-in-law. I cooked a lot of food. We had turkey. I bought cake. I didn't like one thing. My sister-in-law told me, "I'm not going to eat the cake because that gets me too fat." I don't like that because I bought this cake. I want all my family to be happy with the cake.

Ha Tran

I had a wonderful Christmas. All my family was together, about 20 people. We made a lot of noise, a lot of people talking. It was at my daughter's house in West Hartford. My daughter and son-in-law are very busy. My son came from New Jersey. My daughter had to cook a lot. We had soup, egg rolls, pork roast and a lot of things. We ate too much. We drank a lot of beer and wine. Everybody got a gift from Santa Claus. My daughter-in-law made the Christmas cake. It had nuts and we put cream on it. All the grandchildren played a game on the computer. My children and I played cards until 2 a.m. Everybody was tired so we went to bed.

Reflections on Literacy by Students and Educational Writers

As you read the following reflections, you may want to ask yourself how do each of these compare and contrast with the students you have worked with? You may want to share some of these passages with your students. What implications for instruction do you draw from these passages? What questions do you have?

Comments from Students

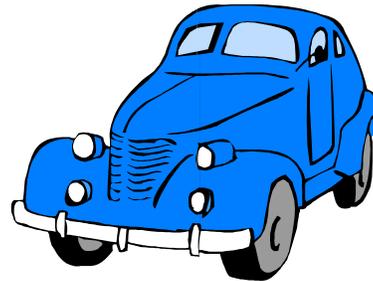
1. "Like in mechanics I take things and put them in my head. It fascinates me. One of the first cars I had I took it apart, fixed the pistons and it worked. Definitely I want to get into mechanics, on my own professionally. Now I know I can learn. I can do it. If I could master reading and writing I will do it. When I went to fix my car, with the little I can read I was able to do it. I like being a grease monkey. There's a lot to know about."

2. "At one time I thought this was going to be a bother and frustrating. But I said to myself, 'What's this going to hurt?' Now that I'm able to read for a year, I'm able to tackle a few things and I might be able to learn something. Anything I learn will help me in the long run. That's what's motivating me to come to class."

3. "Here I read about history and geography, and about the planets. It's a thrill to go back in time and live in that time. I now find that interesting and fun. I like to know about nature and stuff, human and animal. And all these things are pretty exciting. It keeps me motivated. Too bad I wasn't thinking before, when I was in school. I've been cheating myself. Your miss

out on a lot you should be doing, things you like doing, because you can't read or learn about it."

4. "What I learned here has helped me to move around a lot, to go places by car because I can read the signs that I could not read before and find streets. At first I could not read the road signs, my own street name, stuff like that. Now I can read the street names."



If I go to Massachusetts, I have to know where the exit is. You have to know where you're going. If somebody writes it down for me, it's easy for me to find some place. Like last week, I had to go somewhere for my aunt. I had directions and it was easy to find the place."

5. "I want to comprehend and to read better. And I'm hungry for knowledge. I'll be more independent. I won't have to depend on anybody. I want to be an art teacher. I want to share my knowledge with a younger generation."

6. "You have a variety of ideas to offer. But it takes education to bring all this out. I guess what education has done for me is to bring all of these things out of me. I may have had it from the beginning, but there never was an opportune time for it all to be brought out. I had to wait until education came into my life and opened up all

these things up to me, to give more ways to express myself.”

7. “I think this is a big test for me. What are my limits? Right now, I’m seeking to see what that is. If I get into something that doesn’t work right, I move onto the next thing. I think that’s where I stand right now. I don’t know my limits right now. I’m just taking anything I can grab onto and see what I can do with it.”



8. “I see now that even though I thought all I wanted for myself was reading and writing, I wanted more than that. A lot of doors opened. When you keep feeding the brain with new ideas, knowledge about reading and writing, and other learning skills, other doors open. Whatever a student has hidden, learning can bring it out. It feel good, because when you learn something of value, you can’t take it away. Learning sets new adventures for me, new ideas, new challenges.”

9. “We couldn’t read and write, then we came to school and improved ourselves. When we go to the doctor, we can fill out the forms. We can read safety and road signs. You learn a lot about how you live. You learn how to fix things. You can follow instructions. You can read a newspaper and know what’s going on in society. Even though we don’t read the whole newspaper, we can read part of it. I feel good about it. If I go to the pharmacy for medicine I know what to buy. When you clean and put

chemicals together you have to know what can go together and how much to mix. If you put ammonia and bleach together, you better get out of the room. It takes up the air. You can’t breathe.”

10. “So far, coming to school, I’ve learned to read and write a little. I went to New York to spend a weekend with my brother and had to take a train. I was able to read a schedule and I found my way. I felt proud about myself.”

11. **Interviewer:** How strong would you say is your motivation to continue?”

Student: It’s very strong.

Interviewer: What is the source that drives it?

Student: I want something. I want to do something; to have a goal. That’s the motive. I want to go up in life.

Interviewer: You want to go up?

Student: To the top.

Interviewer: Where’s the top?

Student: To be a nurse.



Comments from Adult Literacy Specialists

12. “As in any social system, the boundaries change as people and situations change. Sometimes the boundary-crossings feel like major changes, such as the first time an adult

actually engages in any new literacy practice outside the program. At other times boundaries are pushed, rather than crossed, as part of a process of moving on the continuum to engage in practices that are progressively more public and feel more standardized” (Hanna Fingeret and Cassandra Drennon, *Literacy for Life*)

13. “Students do not necessarily have a concrete goal in mind, an instrumental view of literacy tied to some specific task or aspiration. More than anything, they want to feel that there are possibilities for the future, that there are choices and potential for change” (Hanna Fingeret and Susan Danin, *They Really Put a Hurtin’ on My Brain*).

14. “The aim of education is growth. To live, the student must learn to conduct successful transactions with his or her environment. To grow, the student must create novel forms of recognition and response, which he or she must then refine in ways that make them more discriminating and in ways that integrate them into his or her experience” (James Garrison, *John Dewey’s Philosophy as Education*)

15. “When adults who enter programs are given the opportunity at the outset to explore a range of possibilities, they typically go beyond a general interest in ‘becoming better readers’ [although they certainly do desire that] to name particular reading and writing tasks they hope to accomplish, often for specific purposes and audiences. Some come with a desire to learn more about a particular subject, for example, African-American history, parenting, or health. Many seek ways to deal with their own children’s

literacy and schooling whereas others wish to participate or assume new roles and responsibilities in their families, workplaces, or communities. Some are looking for community in the literacy program itself. Some seek economic improvements in their lives through new jobs or promotions, or by dealing more competently with personal finances and/or their encounters with ‘the bureaucracy.’ For many, the program offers the possibility of taking more control and ownership of their own learning. For most adult learners who come to the programs, the desire for enhanced self-esteem is implicit in many of their stated and unstated goals” (Susan Lytle, *Living Literacy: Rethinking Development in Adulthood*)



16. “The classroom becomes a place where parents can bring school-related issues and develop the ability to understand and respond to them. They can explore their attitudes toward their own and their children’s school experiences. They can assess what they see and determine their responses, rehearse interactions with school personnel, and develop support networks for individual and group advocacy” (Elsa Auerbach, *Toward a Social-Contextual Approach to Family Literacy*).