



*Celebrating
Our
Journey*

Volume 4

9m. Bruce

Celebrating Our Journey



Volume 4

*A Collection of
Life Stories
written by
Oklahoma Adult
Learners*

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Foreword

This collection of writings may change your life. The stories in this book are written by people who have only recently learned to read and write, and these real-life tales may alter the way you view the world and think about life. These writers are adult learners, and their courage takes my breath away.

Most adults spend time trying to look good to the rest of the world. We want to look successful, happy, and together. We don't want to appear to need help from anyone. Of course, this is unrealistic. The truth is, we all depend on one another—our families, our churches, our friends, even the strangers who come into our lives. The authors of this book had to admit that they needed help, find someone willing to provide that help, and then work very hard to learn. They did this on top of working jobs and caring for their families. For the most part, they did it because they wanted a better life.

The desire to express ourselves, to communicate, is a deep need. The power of stories to touch us, change

us, and make us better is one of the reasons I love to read. We often don't know much about authors. Their stories tell us what we need to know. In the case of this book, however, you need to know before you read these stories that the authors are truly heroes.

The life-changing aspect of this simple paperback book is that it gives a voice to adults who are new to the joys of reading and writing. Those who contributed to this book are bright, talented people. It may shake your assumptions about the differences between lifelong readers and new readers. I hope this work will make you want to take action—to become a tutor for someone struggling to learn to read, to contribute to your local program, or to advance your own education. If nothing else, it will make you proud to know that many of your fellow Oklahomans continue to improve their lives by learning to read.

Susan McVey

Director, Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Reading Is Important to Me

Reading is important to me because it is fun and entertaining. I can go to the library and read literature now. I like to read poems and biographies about different people. I can read paperback novels.

Here is my new poem:

One day Marcie Murray

Looked up at a flurry

Of clouds in the sky

Up so high

She saw fluff

Of all different shapes of stuff.

She saw a parrot, a fish, and a monkey

Then she saw some mystery

Fluff

She said, "It must be



Rain clouds

That I see

Forming to be.”

And then more the

Mystery clouds came

And it began to rain.

Marcie Murray

Had to hurry

Home

Before she got too wet.

Once she was home,

The sun shone again.

Doris A. ☞ Oklahoma City Literacy Council

Never Too Old to Learn

My name is Charles Amos. Mrs. Faye Cowan has been my reading tutor for two years, and she has changed my life by teaching me to read. My



Charles Amos

wife tried to teach me, but that didn't work out, so she searched around and found a place in Tulsa. I was going to drive to Tulsa twice a week and pay to be in a reading class, but my wife found out about the literacy program.

I was severely burned when I was six, and I missed some of my first grade. When I went back to school, they just pushed me on through, and I never caught up.

I moved here from Grenada, Mississippi when I was 13. We pronounced a lot of our words differently than they do here. When I graduated from high school, I still could not read very well, but I always wanted to learn. I now read 10 times better than I did. The literacy program has been a blessing to me. I can read without asking my wife what every other word is, and if

I can't figure the word out right away, I can usually chop it up and figure it out. It makes a big difference when you can read instructions, directions,



signs, legal papers, read to your grandchildren, and most of all, read the *Bible*.

I also now feel more comfortable being in the Lincoln Community Organization and handling the business part of my rental properties. I also served jury duty last year, something I would not have done in the past. Needless to say, the literacy program is a life changer.

At one point, I had a lot of things going on in my life, and I was going to get out of the program and my church. Mrs. Cowan encouraged me to not quit. I'm thankful she cared enough to do that. I'm glad I was not ashamed to get help.

I was honored to be the 2006 Student of the Year. I appreciate all that Mrs. Cowan and the Literacy Council have done to teach me to read. It has changed my life.

Charles Amos ➤ Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Phillipi Cassy Sandy

Phillipi Cassy Sandy lives in a very happy home. Cassy is a very good grandbaby to have. We play with her and we take good care of her. Sometimes she does not sleep at night. Sometimes she still wants to play when we want her to go to sleep. Every night I give her a bath. Phillip or I read a story to her and then she goes to bed. Now she sleeps all night. It was at the library that I learned to read. Now I can read children's books to my grandbaby at night.

Sandy Baucom ➤ Wagoner Literacy Group

In Control of My Own Life Now

I have really improved my reading by coming to the adult education class. This class has really helped me a lot. If you can't read or are having trouble reading, please get in a program like I did. Don't let people tell you that you should be afraid to come here or be embarrassed to let people know that you have trouble reading. It helped me and it can surely help you. It also helped me with my math.

I'm trying to better myself. For a long time people used to cheat me. Not anymore, because I'm in control of my own life now. I know now what I did not know in the past, thanks to Kaye Crawford and her assistant Irene Hinton. Thank you all very much. I know that I can accomplish anything life brings my way.

My message to anyone that can't read or under-

stand what you read is not to be embarrassed and don't let people put you down. I'm happy to say I am a part of this program. One more thing, don't do it for anyone but yourself. You will love the new you. I know I do. Thank you.

Jeanette Bedford ➤ Anadarko

Keep Going and Don't Give Up

The reason I came to the literacy program was because I wanted another position at the hospital where I work. To get the position, you have to be able to read, so I came to this class to learn how to read. When I first started with my tutor, Kathy, I thought it was going to be hard because I didn't think I could do it. I was kind of upset when I first came in because I wasn't learning to read fast enough.

After talking to her and being around her, she

told me I could do anything that I put my mind to. I had been studying for a good period and she would always tell me, “You better not give up.” I



Johnnie Bishop [left] with Carolyn Lee

told her I was ashamed that I couldn't read and she told me that I'd be surprised that there's a lot of people who can't read; all kinds of football players and basketball players and others.

After we had been working together for a couple of months, she got very sick and had to move back to Nebraska. Her last words to me were “keep going and don't give up.” And I haven't.

I'm still here and I'm going to continue to work on reading until I get my diploma.

After I talked to her, I felt better about myself and I went on TV to tell other people about the program. I'm not ashamed now, and I can read road maps. I read the *Bible* and newspaper, and I can read books to my grandkids.

She was a very sweet and very outgoing, fun lady and I miss her very much. She inspired me a whole lot. She will always be in my heart and when I get depressed I think about her and then about all the fun we had and all the good times and it puts a smile on my face.

Johnnie Bishop

➤ Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Lost in Time

I am a black woman at the age of 61. I am raising my grandchildren. I had given up hope of

learning to read until finding Project READ. They have helped me for two years now.



Learning to read has helped me to have more confidence in myself. It let me help the children with their homework and write notes to their teachers.

I enjoy reading books about great rescues, mysteries, escapes, disasters, and heroes. Some of the people I admire have beaten the odds. Evonne Goolagong became one of the top tennis players. Mother Teresa gave her life to help the poor. Florence Kelly fought for children's rights. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for human rights. Rosa Parks was a woman of determination.

And now I have hope for the time left.

A Brighter Future

My name is Virginia Brown but everyone calls me “Ginny” but I prefer to be called “Happy.” I was born in California but was raised in Oklahoma. I grew up in Hissom Memorial Center. I learned in Hissom but my comprehension skills were very poor.

I began (2002) to attend CCLP where I learned to use the computer and my reading level soared. I still attend CCLP where I am still learning new things. I am able to read and assist my daughter with homework.

I am very grateful to CCLP for taking time to assist me to a brighter future.

Virginia Brown ➤ Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Thank You

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for all the time you have taken to teach me English. I learn more than I used to. It's difficult to learn English. You have been a great teacher. You teach very well. Thank you for everything. You guys have been funny and I have a lot of fun in the class.

I liked when we talk about our family and learn different things. Sorry because I was a slow person to learn and thank you for your time. God bless you!

Dinorah Cardenas ➤ Guthrie Literacy Program

I Want to Learn More

The English is really good for me because it is very important every day in my work and with the American people for talking.



Raquel and Dinorah Cardenas

I want to learn more because it is so necessary every moment. I want to learn more because it is the language of this state.

Sometimes I want to talk or tell things but I can't.

I want to speak better the English.

Thank you so much for the help.

My Life Stories

I want you to know about my life story and what I've been through. My life was hard growing up in my house because I had to fight all the time. I went to school to learn not to get in trouble. After school one day in high school, I was jumped by a group of girls who were in a gang. I was only 16 years old at the time. I tried to stay away from them, but they would always find me. It got to the point to where I had to start fighting back. One day I walked out of class and saw one of my "homie" girls fighting. I started fighting too. That is what you do when you see your "homie" girl fighting! I guess that's when I decided to join the gang.

I really had to be "down" with them, so I had to do whatever they wanted me to do for them. I was always praying for us, "Can we just have peace today in class?" Some days we would have so much fun in class, but I got tired of be-



Dietrica Carolina

ing a gangster. It was very hard living a gangster life style. It wasn't fun trying to be what someone else wanted me to be. We always had to fight for another gang for turf. I was the smallest one in the gang, but I was always the one who got the stuff started. One day people started shooting at the school. I lost my first child when I was pregnant and fighting, and I was shot at while being in the gang.

Because of my grandma, I did graduate from high school. She stayed on me. I couldn't disappoint her. I finished. I got pregnant with my son, but I managed to find a good job so I could support my family. I went to church to keep my mind off gang banging. I started praying to God to help me take away the pain. I decided to get saved at the age of 18 years old. I really sat down

to think about things after my son was born. I really had to change my life style for my child. Then a few years later, I had a stroke. I couldn't work for quite a while. I found out that before I could get another job, I had to develop different skills; but if it wouldn't have been for my kids, I really wouldn't be in this program to change. My life today; it is "real talk." The Lord told me it is time to change your life for your family. That is why I came back to school.

In our program, we have life skills classes. I started one called Family Relations, and I was going through a whole lot of stuff with my son at the time. I had a lot of frustration because I saw him making the same mistakes I had made. I didn't want him to go through the same things I did. My Family Relations teacher helped me to use my "good tools" instead of my "bad tools," and it really



helped us. Instead of “busting” my son in the head (like I wanted to do), I used my good tools and we talked it out. I set rules. I asked him where he was going. I showed him I cared and didn’t want him to make the same mistakes I did. My son is now 17 and is graduating from high school.

The things I learned in that class will always be with me. The book we got in that class is so good; I always pull that out if I’ve had a bad day in school or something.

I have two wonderful children. They are doing so well in school now. My daughter always tells me that she learns how to do her work on the computer. That’s why I take some of my tools to help her at home. When I am working with my daughter, I use what I have learned in Multi-Sensory Reading and Spelling. I teach her how to break down the words. Now she sounds her words out. She does her homework with a friend

at school. Now she is teaching her friend to sound her words out just like I showed her. Right now, my daughter is working in fractions, and I want to learn all about fractions so I can help her. With my son, I didn't understand some of it. I can help my daughter so much more with what I know. I am learning so much now because I am more focused on my work. My school has helped me to find out that I want a job in computers. I have also found out that to learn better, I need to be in smaller groups in school.

I always tell my son, Terrance, and my daughter, Alyssia, that they need to stay in school, and it is very important to become what you want to be. Alyssia is why I get up in the morning because she always calls me every day while I'm on the bus on the way to school to tell me she loves me and to have a good day of school. Sometimes my son walks me to the bus stop, even though it's only 4:45 in the morning when I leave.

If it weren't for the people in my life: my grandma, my children, and my teachers, I wouldn't be where I am at right now.

Dietrica Carolina

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Hope Through Learning

By improving my English I hope to learn new words and different ways of expression like American people. Latino people write and speak very differently from American people. When I don't speak correctly I feel bad inside. I feel stupid. Sometimes other people laugh at me when I don't speak correctly. By improving my English I will get better with pronunciation and feel more comfortable speaking with other English speaking people. By speaking more English I will also increase my vocabulary. This will help me not only in my job but also in other areas of interest,

including politics, religion, and understanding other people’s thoughts and feelings.

The best thing about improving my English has been getting better at writing and speaking. But I also like reading English because I feel enthusiasm when I discover there are a lot of new things that I can learn. For example, at my last lesson I learned about Thomas Edison, and discovered that he invented one thousand things!

By improving my English, I can improve my job, income, and living. I can help my son so he can go to college and have his dreams. This is my hope.

Ofelia Castillo ➤ Enid Literacy Council

Maria’s Story

My name is Maria Castro. I was born in Durango, Mexico. I am number four in a family of eight



children, four boys and four girls. I have always lived in the state of Oklahoma since coming to the United States.

I lived in Hinton for about six months; then I moved to Guthrie and lived there for another two months. Then I moved to Clinton and I have lived here for about 14 ½ years. So I have moved around in many different towns.

I have four children, two boys and two girls. They speak English very well. I have been working at Bar-S, a meat products plant, for about eight years.

I went to ESL (English as a Second Language) classes twice a week in the evening and I like them (the classes) because I am learning to speak, read, and write in English. In the summer we have class only once a week, so I can be with

my children more of the time. I like the books that are in both Spanish and English. We have fun at our class and laugh a lot.

Maria Castro

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

My Goals

I will help my sons with work in school when they are older. I will encourage them to play sports and exercise for health. We can practice more exercise and play ‘football’ together. My goals for myself are: to understand and speak English. In the future I can work in this country on my degree for what I studied in Mexico. I studied Physical Education.

I have the goal of getting citizenship and legal residency in this country. I have already applied and studied together with my husband for the citizenship test. I will study the 96 questions.

I wanted to get my GED, for personal satisfaction, and I did it! I got my GED! Later I can get a better job. I want to get myself a new home, big, beautiful, and clean; no more renting because the buying of a house is an investment.

My goal for my sons is to visit different places such as zoos, museums, libraries, parks, and countries and see different scenery. When the children are older, I can get a job for that goal. So we will listen to more news, cartoons, movies, etc. only in English.

I have always had a united family, living with affection and love.

Ofelia Castro

☞ Even Start Family Education Program, Oklahoma City

A More Pleasant Life

Hi! I am Angelica, I am 30 years old. I am Mexican and in my family were five children,

four sisters and one brother. I was born and raised in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico (Old Town). It is a very interesting cultural town. Now I live in Weatherford.



Angelica Chavez

I have four children, three boys and one girl. My children are in Mexico with my parents. I came here to the United States to work to give my kids a more pleasant life, and because I want them to go to school and better themselves.

When I first came to the USA, I went to the state of Arizona, where I met my husband. I worked in a restaurant. I would like to learn English because it is very important in order to be able to converse with other people and be able to get a better job. Now that my coworker, Graciela, told me where I can go to learn, I am going to

take advantage. I am very happy to have met Roberta of the literacy department.

Thank you, thank you.

Angelica Chavez

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

A New Step in My Life

My name is Lorena Chavez. I am from Xilitla, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. I have lived in the USA for nine years. I have lived in three different states, but when I came to Claremore, I knew that I needed to learn more English. I have three

girls and have to do it for them.

When I knew about the Rogers County Literacy Council, I called them. I was assigned a tutor and have



Lorena Chavez

been studying for two years. In these two years, my writing and my speaking have improved greatly. I don't need a translator for anything. I was afraid to speak English, but I am not afraid anymore. Thanks to my literacy tutor, I made a new step in my life.

I am now working as a shift manager at McDonalds. I know how important it is to read, write, and speak English, for me as a second language. I feel that one of my goals has come true. My next one is to obtain my GED in order to continue my education and become a nurse.

By improving my reading, I am now able to help my daughters with their homework. This has made me feel proud, and I can spend more time in their activities.

Lorena Chavez ➤ Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

A Better Life



Michelle Cruz

Hi, my name is Michelle. I have been here in the United States for five years.

My purpose in coming here is that my family can have a better life, that

my children can learn the English language well so they can have better opportunities and a better life than they would in Mexico.

Before, I was a girl that studied, liked doing sports, and enjoyed being healthy and in good physical condition, but now I have to work hard for my kids, so that takes most of my time and energy. But I still want to learn English with the literacy organization in the class at the Catholic Church in Weatherford.

My parents gave me a wonderful life and now I

have to give my kids the same. That is why I am here in this country.

Michelle Cruz

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

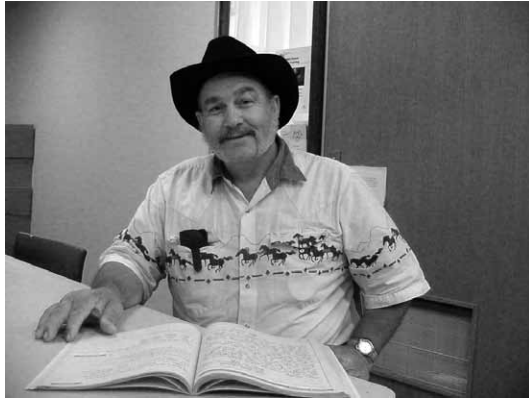
Reading Is Important to Me

Reading is important to me because it makes my brain smarter. It makes my memory better so I don't get confused. It creates better senses so I can remember things easily.

Colin D. ⇒ Oklahoma City Literacy Council

My Story

I worked myself into a position where I had to know how to read, but before I did, I had to admit to myself that I had a problem. Then, I could take care of it. So, I went back to school



Joe Davidson

to learn how to read and spell and write better. I am getting better at it. To those that think they are better than you and have to prove it, but don't admit there is a problem, I say you can do something about the problem. You have to admit the problem like I did. My mother asked me to learn to read before she passed away. I had to promise her that I would. I learned to read and spell better. I kept my promise to her.

Self Pride

I'm an adult learner who has always had problems in my reading. I have trouble in my math also. Back then, I was ashamed of being unable to read as well as some



Karla Davis

of my peers. I remember a time my cousin had asked me to read the instructions to his toy airplane. I felt so embarrassed when he asked me, so I just played it off. I didn't want to tell him that I couldn't read well. I was afraid of how my cousin would treat me because of my reading disability. So, I never told him. (We were close, me and my cousin.) Since I started at OIC, I have self-confidence, pride in myself. In the beginning, I was scared to read out loud to the class at OIC. I'm not afraid anymore to read out loud. I feel comfortable reading to the class. It's helped me to improve in my reading

a lot, so I can achieve my goals in tile work or get a better career.

I have always had a passion for fixing things around the house like stereos, TVs, and even holes in the wall. These types of activities have always been easy for me. I like working with my hands and the challenge of putting things together. I became interested in tile work because once I watched my friend repair his kitchen floor. I also saw him do other repairs on his house like the kitchen counter, door screen, window screen, and also laying carpet and painting. I learned the basics of how to lay tile. I would really like to go to school to learn carpentry and tiling for a career. Since some day I will own my own home, I would already know how to do the repairs myself.

I want to have a successful career, to be able to give my children the things I never had in my childhood. One day I will send them to col-

lege. Improving my reading and other skills has helped me decide these goals and know I can reach them.

Karla Davis

⇒ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Graciela's Story: Going Up, Up

My hometown is Guadalajara, Jalisco, west of Mexico City. I came here to make a better life for my family. In Mexico I was working in a clothes factory. I was sewing and making clothes. Everyone in my town was working to make clothes. Every store was clothes, clothes, clothes. There was no steady work. You had to sell everything in the store before you could start to make clothes again. So there was no work in some months in the year.

I am the fourth born of 15 children. Many in



Graciela De La Cruz with Darleen Wright

my family work in the factory. Some wanted a better life. So my husband went first to United States. He had a good job in Oklahoma. Then I went with my little boy and baby girl. We traveled for four days on the bus.

I could not speak English. A long time passed and I still could not speak English. I tried to help my son when he started to school—to do homework. But I did not know the words, what they mean.

I wanted to help my son and my daughter to get

good doctors and have good health. So I got help from a tutor (at the literacy coalition).



I wanted to learn to speak English and to read English because it is important for me to be able to understand the people here.

I went to the school when my son was at East Elementary (in Weatherford), and I needed someone to translate for me because I didn't understand anything. I went back this year (three years later) to the same school with my daughter, and the secretary said, "I remember you. You didn't speak English when you here before. Now you could be the interpreter for someone else." It makes me feel good.

Now I can speak English better. Now maybe I

will be able to get a better place in my job. I am first at the bottom—and then I can go up, up, until maybe I can be the boss. Then I can make many friends and talk to them.

Graciela De La Cruz

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Being Able to Make It

The thought of me going back to school is going pretty good. I hope to accomplish something in life. I really want to get my GED so I can get a good job. Right now I have three kids and one on the way, and the main thing I think about is being able to give them a better life. Sometimes I wonder if it's going to be okay, with my being a single mother and all, but I imagine it will be because I'm starting to learn new things I didn't know before and I'm hoping to learn a lot more. I believe I can do it if I just put all my effort into it. My parents sometimes don't believe me and

neither do my sisters. I really want to start over on my education, because I want to be an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse). I'll show them I can accomplish my goal. Because like I said earlier, I now have a family to support and, right now, I'm the only one my kids can depend on to provide for their needs.

I'm really hoping to have a good life because I believe my life is not so good right now without my GED, but I know if I really work at it, I can accomplish what I'm really wanting to. I'm learning to improve on my writing and getting my thoughts down. I know that's going to help me in the future and also organize my ideas. This is going to help me to get where I need to be. Well, at least I'm hoping on it!

I remember in the past I used to struggle a lot in my reading. Now it's like all this reading that we are doing in the Success Class is helping me. I never knew a lot of reading and writing

skills. I'm hoping to improve my reading skills. I'll more likely have a better chance in getting into college or vo-tech to get a good education. By improving my reading, I am now able to accomplish more. I believe that's the main thing that's going to help me through the future.

If I was going to tell a new learner about the benefits of learning to read, I would say, "Go ahead and go for it!" A good benefit of reading is going to help me get to a good career and be a better person in life. It's a big step you're taking for you and your family. I now realize that my life is starting to be a lot better ever since I decided to go back to school. If I can do it, anybody can do it. You just set your mind to wanting to do it. It's a big choice you have to make, but once you make it, it becomes a lot easier for you and



those around you. People may say it's too late to go back to school, because they have a family.

If you want to go back to school, you will just do it no matter what's happening in your life. You should never say you can't do it if you never try to reach for that goal. It's all about having confidence in yourself and trusting yourself and those around you...especially those who are going to support you all the way through, believe you can do it, and have confidence that you're going to make it.

Sonia Diaz ➤ Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class, Altus

More Confident and Independent

My name is Araceli Evans, and I'm a Mexican woman. I came here following the love of my life. I met this wonderful man in Mexico, and we got married there seven years ago. I left everything behind—family, job, and friends.

We made our home in Claremore. Everything was



Araceli Evans

fine except for the English.

All of my husband's family is American, and they don't speak Spanish. My English was bad, so I decided to take English classes.

I chose this literacy program because I knew some friends who already were attending this program, and they were making good progress. When I started in this program a few months ago, I wanted to improve my pronunciation, reading, and writing. My first goal is to take the GED test, and later I want to take the citizenship test. I want to be able to work and study something else.

After six months in this program, my life has changed a lot. I speak better English; I can read very well; and I'm improving my writing too. I feel more confident and more independent

because I don't need my husband's help anymore. I can go to doctor's appointments, parent-teacher conferences, and shopping by



myself. I can read a lot of books to my daughter. At family reunions, I can talk with everybody. I don't feel shy anymore. I can write love letters to my husband, and that makes me feel very proud, and he's very proud too. He's always encouraging me to keep learning and to look forward.

Everybody is noticing the difference. I still have a lot to learn, but I'm sure that one day I will achieve my goals.

I would like to give thanks to all the people who made this literacy program possible. You are really changing people's lives. Thanks to all the tutors for giving us their time. We really appreciate all your help. I want to give special thanks

to my wonderful tutor, Ms. Garrison, who has been very nice to me. Thank you for your time, patience, and help.

Araceli Evans ➤ Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Confidence

Last winter, I became aware of the Western Oklahoma Learning Center's program to assist in developing my reading and writing skills. I got the idea from a brochure that I picked up from Dollar General. It was called *Reading Better is Easier Than You Think. We can Help*. Feeling the need to improve in these areas, I signed up for the program.

My wish was to improve my reading comprehension, become better at writing and spelling, and to work on improving my pronunciation. Also, I want to learn to read the *Bible* better and pronounce the larger words that I couldn't

pronounce correctly. I felt this would help me become a more confident speaker and more capable member of my church and community.

So far, this program has helped me read better and pronounce words more completely and correctly. I have more confidence in what I say and how I say it. I can now smile knowing that when I say a word, I've said it correctly. I now look forward to reading and to completing what I have started to read. I even read more of the newspaper than just the Sports section.

Finally, I'm proud to say that I read aloud more often than before.

Tommy Evans ➤ Western Oklahoma Learning Center, Elk City

Hopeful

When it comes to getting a GED, one has to know how to read, write, and other basic skills.



Julie Gilbert

Therefore, when I decided that I needed my GED, I wanted to find a way to get it and quickly, so I started coming to the Success program with the help of the Department of Human Services and

my family. When I started, I felt as if I wasn't going to fit in. After about a week or so, I felt as if I were back in my old high school class again. The teachers here made me feel comfortable by letting me work at my own pace. The students were nice and didn't make me feel like I was just a new girl.

With this going for me, I now have a lot more skills that I never knew I could have. My reading has improved very much. Back before I started coming here, I wasn't able to read out loud in

class. I was too scared. It has helped me in so many ways that one wouldn't believe. I am a lot more confident when I read to my children before bedtime. Also, when I can read, I can write better.

Therefore, my writing has improved as well. When I write I use the correct words and punctuation. Before I started coming to the Success program I would use words that didn't even make sense, or I would even use words that I didn't know the meaning. I had heard others use the words, so why couldn't I use them? I guess I just thought that I was using them in the right way, but I wasn't.

Finally, I also believe that all of my other skills have improved as well. Now I have more confidence in myself to get my GED and to get into college to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. I eventually want to relocate to another state.

I'm Alright Now



Mavis Gilkey

One of my teachers said that when I first met her I was kind of shy, but that I have come out of that shell I was in. My life is much better since I've been coming to school. I have learned more about reading and math than where I was when I first came. I have learned

my times tables, long division, and about working with fractions. Since I have been going back to school, I have learned how to pronounce my words with the (ck), (ch), (tch) sounds and much more. I have two nice teachers who work with me, and I really do thank them.

My goals are to get my GED, and then get a job

in a daycare taking care of kids. I have experience with this and used to watch kids in my home. I would like to work at a place that has health insurance. I would like to be able to support myself and my daughter and have my own money for food, gas, water, and the light bills.



Something else that has changed in me is that I get upset now when my ride comes, but I do not hear the *People Helping People* van outside. I *want* to go to school! My friends at school tell me to put my glasses on. That's all good; I don't get mad because that means they care about me. That's what friends are for. I am alright now. I am not afraid anymore.

Mavis Gilkey

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Deena's Story: How Learning to Read Better Has Improved My Life



Deena Goossen

When I was going to school, I had a hard time keeping up with the classes because I didn't read as well as I might have. So when I graduated from high school at Hydro, I did not read very well. About eight years ago, I finally talked to Roberta Slagell about the reading program with the Weatherford Literacy Coalition. I have had several tutors who have helped me with reading. My teacher now is Rosalie, and I really enjoy her lessons and her friendship. She spent a lot of time recording stories and books for me to read along with. I have attended two Oklahoma Literacy Coalition

state conferences, which I enjoyed very much, especially learning to know the other students and sharing in the activities. This is my second story for the Oklahoma Student Stories.

Learning to read better has helped me improve my life especially in my jobs. I have worked for the Hydro-Eakly School in the cafeteria for about five years, making breakfast, bread, main dishes, and assisted with any other cooking. I also clean houses for five families in Hydro and Weatherford besides keeping my own family going. I have been married to my husband Phil for 34 years. I have two sons, Michael and Randy. I check on my 84 year old father every day at the nursing home. My family means a lot to me. We enjoy taking our camping trailer to Quartz Mountain where the men fish and I visit and exchange recipes with other ladies who are camping. I cook hot dogs and hamburgers, my family's favorite! Here is a recipe that my friend,

Alwilda from Claremore, gave me:

Pumpkin Dinner Rolls

- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 1 cup warm milk (110–115 degrees)
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup cooked or canned pumpkin
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 5½–6 cups all-purpose flour

In a mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm milk. Add butter, pumpkin, eggs, salt, and 3 cups of flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form soft dough. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6–8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size. Then shape into rolls. Cover

and let the rolls rise
until doubled in size.
Bake at 350 degrees
for 15–17 minutes.



I have many happy memories of my childhood with my parents, two brothers, and two sisters. I especially remember fishing in the neighbors' canyon creek with a cane pole, baited with fish worms or grasshoppers. Sometimes we would take a picnic lunch to eat. My parents took the family to California to see my uncle a long time ago. Seven of us traveled in a station wagon, stopping at places like the Dairy Queen to eat. That was a really fun trip.

My hobby is collecting angels and dolls. My mother also collected dolls so I have many from her, including a ceramic life-sized baby doll, which she made. My son treasures several ceramic Indian pieces which she made. I enjoy

going to garage sales and getting bargains like blankets or maybe another doll or two!

I am a 10 year cancer survivor. My doctor released me with a clean bill of health on June 29, 2007, for which I am grateful. It has not been easy, but there are still many good things in my life.

One of the good things has been my literacy experience, which has helped me to *imagine the possibilities* of a better life and meeting and making friends of my tutors and other learners.

Deena Goossen

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Spending Time Wisely

Reading is important to me because it helps me understand and I learn things by reading. Reading is spending time wisely. It is a very good thing to do. Read when you don't have

very much to do. I read newspapers to find out what is going on.

Cynthia H. ➤ Oklahoma City Literacy Council

A Quiet Mexican

My name is Antonia Handrahan. This is my little history. I am from Tamaulipas, Mexico. I have been in Shattuck, Oklahoma for 10 years. I came here in 1997 to visit my daughter.

As time went by, I realized I needed to be able to speak English to communicate because I didn't understand anything. Someone told me there were free English classes in the library at Woodward. When I came for information in 2003, I met a friendly teacher who told me about the English classes from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Mondays. Mauren Mora, and Georgie Evans taught these classes. They helped me very much



Antonia Handrahan

and gave me confidence in myself. Little by little my English vocabulary is increasing. They asked me if I wanted a tutor and I said I did. My tutor is Patrick Stout.

In 2005, I became a permanent resident of the United States and was able to get a job. My first job was washing dishes. I wanted a better job, so I took classes at High Plains Technology Center in dietary management. My tutor helped me very much with the homework for my classes.

In 2006, my tutor helped my study for the examination to become a citizen. Thanks to my tutor, I became a United States citizen on February 23, 2007. Now I want to take more classes to improve my English and become a dietician.

I encourage everyone who doesn't speak English

to come to the library and take English classes. Thanks to the Literacy Council and all the teachers and tutors for the help they have given me.

Antonia Handrahan

➤ Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council, Woodward

Hilda's Story

My name is Hilda and I live in Clinton, Oklahoma. I went to school up to the 9th grade and I studied one year to be a secretary. When I was 18 years old I came to work in this country. In California I worked in different places.

I got married when I was 20 years old. I have three children, two boys and one girl and I love them very much. We enjoyed very much living in Santa Barbara, CA, because we went to Disneyland and other places. And one of the important things is that I had the opportunity to



Hilda Hernandez

learn the little English that I know by attending school.

Right now I am in this English class because I want to learn more, since it is very impor-

tant in order to live in this country, the United States of America. This summer my teachers are Roberta Slagell and Aquilina Peñaloza. They are very patient, especially with my mother-in-law who doesn't know much English. I am working in the higher level books now.

Hilda Hernandez

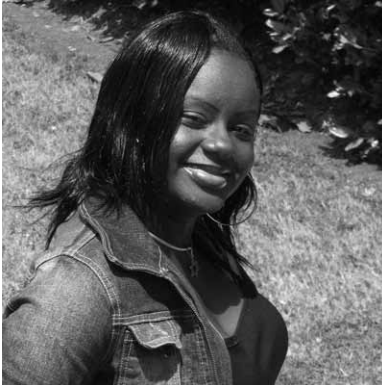
➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

I Will Succeed

Hi. Now let me tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Aleecia, but I go by Kakoa which

is my native name. I come from the tribe of Muskogee or (originally) Creek. Now, don't get me wrong; I am mixed with black also. Being a single parent is hard. I had my first baby when I was 15 years old. I was scared and had to drop out of school. They wouldn't allow you to attend that school if you were pregnant. I had two more children soon after that. I tried to go to a school for pregnant women the first two times, but it didn't work out for me because it was hard to balance school and my kids.

One day I looked at my kids, and they were trying to read a book. They asked me what a word was. I did not know. I got so mad at myself! When I put my kids to bed, I sat in the dark crying. The next day I got up and did something about it. I tried one school, but it just didn't work out. It was too far away, and they wouldn't accept documentation for days missed. You had to be there a certain percentage of time, or you wouldn't



Aleecia James

pass. Then I talked to my sister, and then she said, “There is a place called OIC. Call your caseworker and ask her.” Then I took a test to see where I was and

see what I needed help with.

When I came to OIC, I thought, “This is another place where they just give you the work and don’t explain it.” I was wrong. My teachers help me to break down words and sounds. They help me with the “Floss Rule” the “ck,” “k,” “c” rules. They help me recognize patterns in math with even and odd, positive and negative numbers, and also with my times tables. I find myself spelling and reading now just with the tools that they showed me. When I’m walking down the street, and I see a sign, I stop and sound out the words and read. I’m also doing more math. I am teaching my kids

more than I ever learned when I was their age. I am going to make sure they are prepared for what's ahead.



A teacher at OIC told me something that stays with me 'til this day, "Some things might seem easy to you. Other things will not. When you hit a brick wall, don't give up. Go back to it everyday, and we'll chip away a little bit of that wall every day." I know that if I'm in math, and I just can't get it, I need to keep at it and not give up because the more you keep at it, the easier it becomes. I still get frustrated, but now I go back to it. Because of my new skills, I now love to learn.

Now I might not be genius smart. I might not have a lot of money, but I have something most people don't have, and that is will power to get up and learn how to spell, read, and write. I will be somebody. I will succeed. It is going to take time,

but I'm willing to go through it. So baby boy, or baby girl, I tell you. Don't be ashamed because you don't know something. You're smart; you just haven't learned it yet. So don't let people tell you that you can't do something, because you can! Thank you all the teachers that help me. God will bless you in so many ways.

Aleecia James

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Then and Now

I have been attending Success Class through the Great Plains Literacy Council and the Department of Human Services for the past 15 months. When I began as a student here, I felt very behind in all the subjects. It had been over 22 years since my feet had graced the floors of a school building. With the help from my instructors, my learning has improved.

One can only imagine how my skills have expanded.

For example, math was one of the toughest subjects for me because I had never experienced

using fractions. With the help

from the staff, my skills improved immensely as I have advanced to algebra and geometry.



Glen L. Johnston

Because I quit school in the 11th grade, I never got a high school diploma. It took me a while to become comfortable with the class materials before I got my nerve up to take the GED test. The first time around, I got a score of 418, but it wasn't quite enough to receive my certificate. I waited three months later and tried again. I got a much better score at 440. It still wasn't well enough to receive that elusive certificate. But I was still proud of myself for improving my score. I am thrilled to know that I am only

10 points away from receiving that certificate. When I do receive it after more study, it will be a very fulfilling part of my life knowing I have finished something important.

When I first started the Success Class, my reading level was at 6th grade. Now I am reading at a 10th grade level. In my opinion that is a very significant improvement.

With all of this experience, I feel I am learning about the skills needed to get a GED and advance into college. It takes a well-paying job in order to survive in today's society. It has been a very exciting experience in being able to learn.

By improving my reading, my speech has improved greatly. That has helped me in conversation because people look at me differently now because I went from “country hick style” of speech to a more “sophisticated style” of speech.

When I talk now,
more people can un-
derstand what I have
to say.

This literacy pro-
gram has given me
inspiration to write

my own autobiography. I hope to publish my
life story in the future.



Glen L. Johnston


➤ Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class, Altus

Imagine the Possibilities

Improving my reading has helped me read a
full book. I understand the novel and the plot.
I am now able to read on-line chapters by my
favorite authors. I like to read on-line. It makes
me feel happy and confident. I have confidence
in myself.

The best thing about improving my reading is I can read stories to my daughter. It makes her a better learner. She won a \$5 gift certificate from Wal-Mart for perfect attendance at school. I was happy for my daughter.

To all new learners, ask for help and use the help. Reading opens a window of opportunity.

Rebecca Jones  Durant Literacy Council, Inc.

Finally Focused

When I was attending high school, I was always more focused on my social and personal life rather than my studies. It was hard for me to do my work, but still, it seemed to be going great. I was passing all my classes until I reached my junior year. That's when everything went downhill, and I had to transfer from a pretty good school to a bad school. I felt like they would have just let anyone pass at the new school. It made a big

difference in my life, transferring from a good school district to a bad one.

I tried to keep up doing my work. My math held me back a lot. It was really a struggle, and my teachers never really helped or explained my work. It was hard times when I had to figure it out on my own. I had teachers who just didn't care about their students at all. I never had teachers who would talk to me about why I was falling behind, and I didn't ask. It was a big struggle to me. I got to the point where I was really stressed about my work in school. The credit system was different too, so I was wondering about whether or not I would be able to walk across that stage.

My senior year, I didn't have *any* math classes. They told me I was finished with math, so I got to graduate from high school. I knew I still had problems with math. When I registered for college, I tried to find majors that didn't re-



Shrontel Knox

quire math, but I had to take at least some math. That's when I gave up with math. I was having the same problems focusing and problems that I was having before. I showed up for one col-

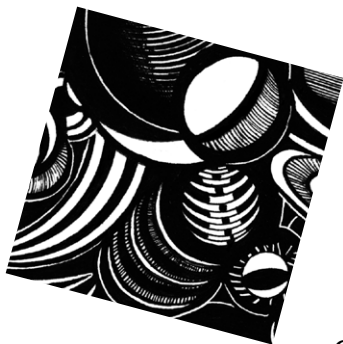
lege math class, and then made up every excuse (my child is sick, no transportation, etc.) not to go back. My teacher left a message on my phone, but I was too embarrassed to call him back. I went in the next day and dropped the class. I managed to finish one year of college, but I didn't want to enroll for another year without bringing my skills up.

I heard about a school called OIC. I knew I had a chance to improve my math skills again. The day I heard about this school that helps adult

learners, I knew I had a second chance to get back in school and improve all my educational skills.

I enrolled, and I have been improving my skills. I feel more confident about myself. It's more comfortable for me to talk to others now. I used to go to meetings with teachers and principals for my kids. I used to be really shy about asking and answering questions, but now it seems like I can never be quiet. I have so much to say to them: concerns for my kids, school, myself, and even financial questions. I used to have my mom make all my personal phone calls, now I can just pick up the phone and do it.

Just today I had to meet with a counselor about my son. He is seven and is having behavioral problems at his school. His emotions go back and forth, and they have been sending him home from school. I knew he needed help. Instead of waiting for someone else to help me, I started



calling around to see about getting him a counselor. I looked in the phone book, but couldn't find anything under "behavior problems," so I called a hospital. They found someone for me to go talk to today. I told them what was going on. They are going to find a counselor for my son and call me back.

Another change I have made is that when I was in school, I had no choice to read because it was part of school. Outside of school (when I did have a choice) I wouldn't read or write at all. Since I have come back to school, that's when I started to read more books because I wanted to. Now, I'm also reading more books to my kids. Our instructor started giving us kid's books, so we can take them home to read to our children. We read every night now. I also help them more with their homework. Before, my sister would

help them. I also love to write in my journal. I used to hate writing. Now, to me, writing is not a big deal.

I also feel more focused and confident. I thank the staff members of OIC for their encouragement and patience you all have with me. Thank you for helping me come so far. I want to finish college, so I can be a better person for myself and a better mother for my kids. I can be successful in life, if I put my heart and mind into it.

I have an opportunity to be what I want, and what I want to be is a physical therapist. I became interested in this because my mom manages a physical therapy clinic, and I grew up around it. I have talked to so many people there about all the things they had to learn. It's not just what I want; it's what I will be, and no one will tell me different.

Shrontel Knox

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

My Story

I was born early in the morning on December



Pamela Sue Laswell

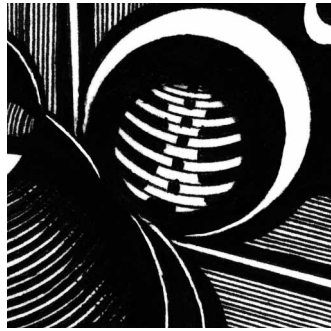
17, 1956 at St. Anthony's Hospital in Oklahoma City. My family name is Laverne and I was given my middle name, Sue, in honor of my grandmother, Elizabeth Sue. My parents said my first word was "Boska"

which meant the refrigerator. My favorite lullaby was:

*Hush little baby don't say a word,
Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird.
And if that mockingbird don't sing,
Daddy's gonna buy you a diamond ring.*

One of my favorite toys was my doll, named Sally. My grandmother gave her to me for Christmas

and she had real looking hair and was about the size of a real baby. I rocked her in the rocking chair and carried her everywhere I went because I loved her.



One of my happy memories is having a picnic with my whole extended family, parents, sister, brothers, and cousins in the park. We always had good sandwiches and chips and soda pop. One time we celebrated my parents' 25th wedding anniversary.

I am only able to describe these happy memories for you because I have been working with the literacy program to improve my reading and writing for more than 10 years. Before that, I would not have been able to tell you about them because I did not get the reading and writing skills I needed when I was in school.

I liked to go to school and my favorite studies were Math and Reading, even though I had trouble keeping up with the other kids in my studies. I only missed going to school when I was sick.

I made a lot of mistakes when I was a teenager. One bad mistake was dropping out of school before I had my son. My son is 34 years old now and I have two daughters. I love my children and my grandson. I have a friend, Merlin, and I hope we can get married someday.

My boyfriend and I go to church at Triple Cross Cowboy Ministries in Clinton, which meets in the Farmers and Ranchers Livestock Auction building. One of my goals is to be more honest with my friend Merlin. We really like the pastor, Alan, and his wife, Sherry, because they are friendly and helpful to everybody. I especially like the potluck dinner on the first Sunday of every month. There is always plenty of good food

and fellowship. The literacy program and my tutors have helped me be able to read the *Bible*, the songs, and other church information.

On the subject of “Imagine the Possibilities,” one of my dreams is to get my GED. I am going to classes now. I am trying to “Imagine the Possibilities” of how my life would be different if I had my GED. I really appreciate my GED teacher and my tutors, Betty, Mary Ann, and Roberta.

Pamela Sue Laswell

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

They Were Wrong

My name is Dena Ann Livingston. I came here in 2001 and still come here to learn to read at CCLP. Barbara has taught me how to turn my letters the right way. I read better and use the computer and do my genealogy.

I love to come here to learn. I have read “Little House on the Prairie” books one, two, three and four.

Everyone in my past said I could not learn. But they were wrong. I thank God from 2001 to 2007 for the people now that are here and helped me!

Dena Ann Livingston

➤ Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Juana’s Story

I came to the US in 1989. I was born in Nuevo Ideal, Durango, Mexico. I got married on September 18, 1983 when I was 17 years old. I have four children, Adriel, Erenda, Orlando, and Manuel.

My purpose for being in the United States is to give my children the opportunities that I didn’t have: school, education, and a better future.

I work so my children can attend school full-time. I am very thankful, especially to God and the American people that have



Juana Martinez [right]
with Jeanne Ellinger

given me support, a job, and their time to teach and help me learn their language (English).

Thanks to God and all the people that have helped me. I have been able to get my driver's license and pass the citizenship test so that I can become an American citizen myself.

I have been attending the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition classes for almost 10 years and I am so proud and thankful for my tutors, first Lois, second Fannie, third Ruth, fourth Roberta, and now the awesome Jeanne Ellinger.

Juana Martinez

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Success

I thought I would never go back to school. I felt, “Well, I didn’t finish. I’m too old.” See, I’m 59 years old. One day I was at church and the pastor talked about literacy and how it is affecting the community. He said, “You are never too old to go back to school.” A bulb went off in my head. As I was listening, I had already made up my mind. I had a goal now, but I didn’t know how to go about it. One day I was talking to a sister from church about wanting to go back to school. She said, “That is wonderful. Let me get back with you in a couple of days.” Well, she did call back and told me about OIC.



Joyce Miller

She gave me the telephone number and two names to ask for. I made an appointment and enrolled. That is the best decision that I could have made.

Most of all, I'm proud of myself. Going back to school is the best thing that ever happened in my life. Now my whole life is coming full circle.



I never liked to read. Now, I'm not just reading; I'm involved in the Oklahoma City Literacy Coalition organization as a student representative, speaking to encourage others to go back to school. I also help give program ideas about how to retain adult learners. My learning has helped me at home with my grandchildren. I read more books with them. We are really getting into the stories, reading and interacting, not just plain reading. I've been taught so much in these few months. I've been at OIC for five months. The Lord has truly been awesome in my life. OIC! OIC! OIC! Go!

Learning at school has changed my life, but

there is something else that I've learned that has changed my life as well and it is ...

Story is continued on the Oklahoma Adult Learner website —ok-adult-learners.com— in the Student Writings section.

Joyce Miller

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Literacy Possibilities

In February, I started literacy tutoring at the Great Plains Literacy Council. I have learned more about reading, history, math, and several other subjects. Mrs. Ida Fay Winters is the literacy coordinator and she got Ms. Kay to be my tutor. Ms. Kay is a really nice, beautiful teacher. She takes her teaching seriously and makes the lessons about everyday life. She is a very kind lady and I'm very comfortable around her. I really feel like family to her. She teaches me at the Altus Library two times a week. I enjoy the small class with another student on Wednesdays and

my private tutoring on Fridays.

I have learned about some history that I didn't know from the reading books. It's really exciting and fun. We are using the *Challenger 2* because I



Shreen Mitchell

finished the *Challenger 1* student book, the writing book, and the puzzle book. The stories tell me about history and other topics of interest.

When growing up, I did not like math. That is changing as Ms. Kay has had me practicing addition and subtraction. I still have to improve on multiplication and fractions with Ms. Kay's help.

These literacy classes are for people who really want to learn and improve their life. I wish more

people would volunteer to help as Ms. Kay has been doing. I have told other people about the tutoring. It is causing me to remember some things I have learned in elementary and high school.

I want to work on my handwriting. Most of my writing is printed. I do know cursive style of handwriting, but I want to improve it. This is one of my future goals.

My learning was possible because of the Lord and the Literacy Council, who let me know Mrs. Winters and Ms. Kay. My boyfriend has been very encouraging, and I could not have come without his driving me to the library. Edna Douglas, who has been like a mother to me, has also been complimenting me on going to literacy classes. May God bless every one of these people. God loves them, and I do, too!

Courage for Success!

When I first came to Success Class, I was feeling a little out of place here, but the teachers and some of the students helped me and gave me courage. At first, I was struggling with my math, but now I think I have gotten just a little better in that subject. I am going to work hard on my other studies. I am glad that I've been here this long because I have already learned a lot and I'm going to get my GED. I will be very happy and my family will be also. I'll be the first in my family to get my GED.

Another thing that gives me strength is the hope to be reunited with my four children. The reason is that I don't want them to experience the negative things I have gone through. My family has always said that I will not do anything with my life. I am now doing something wonderful as I write.



Janie Morin

It has been 16 years since I've been in school. Since I have been coming to the Success Class, I'm improving myself in lots of areas such as learning to read legal documents and making my own decisions.

I have had lots of problems making my own decisions. For example, I recently received a form. I wasn't sure about the information and what I was supposed to do with it. I put down wrong information on the document and sent it back. That resulted in me being put on a waiting list to get my own home. While improving my reading skills, I will understand what I am reading or signing.

Thanks to the man upstairs, I have gotten this far, closer to my goals.

Improving my reading and literacy skills will help me to get my GED, get a good job, and become a more independent woman.

Janie Morin ➤ Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class, Altus

New Glasses

What is it like, being better at reading and how has it affected my life?

It's like driving when you get new glasses. Have you ever driven without glasses? You might think you don't need them anymore. You're happy to be driving, and you can see the road. You see clearly ... you think. But then you put on your brand new glasses and it's like night and day. You see a new world. You realize everything is so detailed and that you weren't seeing it all before. It's in color; it's focused; you are fascinated!

You can see! Reading is the same way. Once you learn how to sound the words out, you can't get enough. It's like the Forth of July—it is *booming* out, like fireworks steadily popping off. It's a feeling of accomplishing something.

Before

What was my first memory of school?

My first memory of school is of just being frightened, but I couldn't show it. I remember the first day of first grade. I was scared of being away from home. Believe it or not, at one point, somewhere between 2nd and 3rd grade, they thought about letting me skip a grade. They thought I could do more, so they started throwing me all this hard stuff. They demanded more and more. I even asked and tried to be in special education classes, but they just said I was being lazy. Then the low-self esteem started because I couldn't keep up. I knew I was not getting it. I became such a good memorizer. My best things in school

were typing, cooking, and gym. I graduated from high school. I even had the chance to graduate early. I studied and memorized. I was so good socially and good at communicating.

How were things different before I improved my skills?

Before learning to read and write better, I always had to be on guard. Since I wasn't a good reader or speller, I always had to be ready for whatever might come up, whatever people might ask me. I had to store everything in my mind: recipes, how to figure my bills, everything. I made pictures in my head of things. This is what I had to do because I didn't want to be asking people all the time how to do the same things. They might tell me, "but the directions are right there in front of you." I made lots of lists; I always liked to try to write things down. I would copy down names of food items from the newspaper and find words in the dictionary. I drove, but I never



Marion Morris

felt like I could read signs or directions. I was afraid of getting lost. Every time I went somewhere (unless I had gone there a lot and knew exactly where I was going) I

would always have to take my little sister or a friend with me.

People just assume because you can communicate well, carry yourself well, and are smart, that your skills are fine. I had good jobs. I would be offered supervisor jobs right when I applied to some places. I would tell them, “I’d rather learn with the other starting people so that I can build my way up.” Really, I would just be worried about what would be asked of me. Would I have to write a report? Would they ask me to do something that I wouldn’t be able to do? I never

had to leave a job or was fired because of my low skills, but I did pass up better jobs. I went back to school and studied different things. First, it was nursing, but I realized I liked the care part, but the vaccinations and needles really weren't for me. I went to a skill center where I learned pressing (like in dry cleaning) and worked in that for a long time. We had tests, but I did the same thing. I studied with people; I memorized. I felt like I was always fighting to find that job where I didn't have to have good skills. Getting hired was no problem. I found jobs, but I was always looking for a better job.

With My “Glasses” On

Why did I first decide to come back to school?

When I first decided to come back to school, I think it was because I believed that if I learned to read better, I would want a different job. It took me so long even after I was here to accept that I am going to school—that this is my job

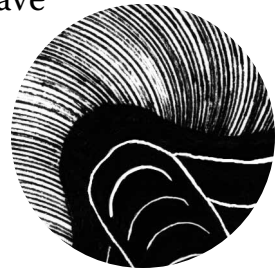
now. I was so used to working and having a job my whole life. I still don't know exactly what I want to do, but I am interested in a lot of things: food preparation and especially presentation and making all kinds of things around the home just look better.

How has it changed things?

One thing I know is that I'm more relaxed now because I don't have to prep for everything in life. Believe it or not, this will sound funny, but I even feel lazy now. When you are "slow" you have to keep everything in order, so organized. You never know what life will ask you. The more knowledge I get, the lazier I get, because I'm not so nervous. I know I'll be able to locate that piece of paper or answer that person's question because I can read better. For example, here at school I have an advocate, a woman that I have to meet with at school to talk about my learning, attendance, and goals. If I would have

had meetings like that in the past, I would have panicked. Maybe I would have forgotten about the meeting, and I would have quickly looked for a word that I could find somewhere, like if I saw the word “beautiful” up on the board or on a sheet of paper. Then I would have focused all my conversation on the word “beautiful.” Or I would have just told her things were “beautiful” and left it at that. I wasn’t shy. I just couldn’t gather my thoughts unless I had a lot of time to prepare, practice, study.

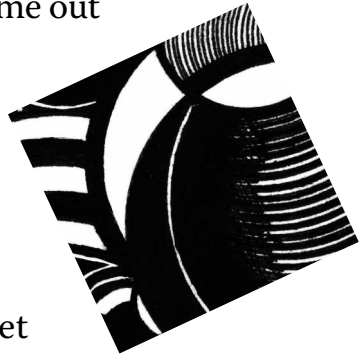
Now it’s easier. I thought I was hearing the sounds in words before, but I wasn’t. What I used to think was the short “e” sound, others would hear the short “i” and they would know what it was. Now I feel like I have been trained to really try to hear the difference. I still study on my own a lot, but I feel like I am studying the things that I really



need. I study my multiplication tables everyday here. I study short vowel sounds every morning. I have to! I do the sounds with my daughter. She doesn't have the learning problems I have; she already knows how to break them down, and she helps me and corrects me. We study together a lot. We do homework all the time. I bond with my daughter through learning.

Other things are different now too since I have become more confident in my learning, since "I have my glasses on." I can go places myself because I can better read the signs and directions and am not so scared about getting lost. I still need help with my reading and writing, but it gets better all the time. My teachers say my writing sticks to a subject better. It is clearer. Before, I didn't have the vocabulary. I didn't read that much, so I didn't have that much to write about. Now I read the newspaper. I have read books in class. I even get inspired to write

poetry. I can see how words come out of people now. I get so motivated when I write; I can't stop. I can figure out more words from sound and other clues too. Also, recently, I met with my advocate. I remembered she was coming. I wrote a few notes before and practiced a little bit with my teachers in front of other students, but I was more relaxed this time. I told her some real things I had done and wanted for myself.



What else has learning done for me?

Well, I've always thought that if I'm around people who have the qualities I admire, that I will learn from them. I am doing that. It has always fascinated me to learn things. I used to love working in places where I was just around the people with the really good jobs and the really nice clothes, the people at the top.

What are my next goals? Well, when places ask you to apply for the job on the computer ... now that is a problem I need to work on.

Marion Morris

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Keep the Learning



Bonnie Moss

When I was younger in school, I moved around a lot. Not one school could understand me or my reading problem.

My dad had a similar problem as I did, and he told my mom about how difficult it was for me. She didn't understand how to help me. When she was in school, she liked to read. As an adult now, she "falls into"

books for hours. She knew I was trying but didn't know what was needed. She would just get mad too fast.



After I moved to Altus, my grandma told me about the Great Plains Literacy Council. I started being tutored and have been learning for three years.

Now I have no shame. I have told my friends and anybody I can about my learning. They are so nice and understanding about my progress. I have even been able to attend adult learner conferences through the literacy program to continue my learning.

I married last year. My husband and I are expecting a baby. I'm so happy! I don't know everything, but I will learn more for my child. I want the

best for my child. If I don't know something, I will find someone who does.

We all need to learn more, so please keep the learning going.

Bonnie Moss ➤ Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Story, My Life

I came to America with my father when I was 19 years old. I went to high school to learn English. One teacher was so nice. She taught me to read and talk and told me what the words meant. She taught me how to say and sound out the words during the school year. Sometimes in the evenings, she came to my house to teach me more how to understand the words.

When I was 21, I had to study and take the citizenship test. A lady asked me the questions, and I understood what she said. Then she would tell

me to write a word, and I would write it down. I answered all the questions very well, and she told me that I passed the test. She said I had learned English very well. I was so happy and said thanks.

With what I learned, I went to college to study computers. I got a degree in Computer Design. I found a good job with a company as a Computer Technical Support person.

But then, after 5 years my father got sick, and he went to the hospital. They called from the hospital and said, “Your father died.” I drove my car to get there right away. When I got there, I said, “Father! Father! Please don’t die. I want you to live with me right now! Please don’t die! I will have to live by myself!” I cried so much. After one year, I got married, and one year later I had a baby girl. I was so happy because my daughter was born. Before my daughter was grown up, my husband changed everything. After he left



Lisa Ngo

me and my daughters and son, we cried so much, I didn't know whether to live or die, but after that we stopped crying. I was so sorry for my kids! They were too young! I kind of lost myself then. Something different was going on in my brain. I couldn't remember things well.

Since that time, my life has flown by quickly. My kids are 12, 13, and 14 now. I was short of all things, but thanks to God, I got a small amount of money from my job for nourishing them. I have a fixed life now. I am so happy to be with them.

I came to OIC, an adult literacy program to learn more English, and they taught me reading, spelling, and what the vocabulary words mean too. I have learned a lot. I can fill out forms better and do things for my family. I feel

like I don't remember things but I hope that will get better. I hope someday everything will be good inside my heart and my head, and I hope my brain



comes back to me. My daughters and son, they learn so very well in school. I am so proud of my children. They are very advanced in their schoolwork. My oldest daughter was invited to go to summer school at OU through the Upward Bound program. She already has her college plans laid out. They are all so smart!

I am soon going to look for a job now because my TANF support will end, and I will be getting some child support. I will look for a job so I can work and have some more money for my children. I hope someday I can buy a house for my children, and we won't have to live in

an apartment anymore. I met some friends in school and will remember all the teachers who taught me and cared so much, and I say thanks to all the teachers who were so nice to me. I feel like I can be out on my own better now.

Lisa Ngo

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

The Short History of Angela in Wagoner

Hello! My name is Angela. I was born in Tamaulipas, Mexico. My family and I arrived in Wagoner the last week of July and then one month later a cashier at Wal-Mart asked me, “Do you speak English?” I said, “I speak a little” and the cashier said to me, “If you want to learn more English, you can go the library and ask for Francia.”

The next day I went to the library and Mrs.

Shirley and Mrs. Nancy helped me a lot. Then I met Francia. She is a good person and friendly. She is working hard now with our new project, the cooking book.

Maybe one week later I had my first class with my tutor, Lisette C.

Lisette is a nice person, she helped me a lot because my pronunciation is not good and Lisette repeated words many times until I said them correctly. She explained the English language to me. Thank you, Lisette, for giving me your valuable time.

And then I met my tutor, Becky C. She is very nice and expressive person, I like your class very much, Becky. You teach me different things, words and expressions. Thank you very much, Becky, for helping me in every class to learn new lessons.

My children Graciela and Roberto also help me.

Nancy helps Roberto. Nancy has worked hard with him, because Roberto was not speaking English when he arrived in Wagoner. Because Nancy has a lot of patience and is creative, Roberto is learning many things from her.

A big hug for your great job with Roberto and thank you, again!

Jane helps Graciela to improve her grades in school every day. Thank you for giving me your precious time.

An enormous thanks to Mrs. Shirley for maintaining programs to help everybody who asks regardless of status, legal, or economic. And thanks to everybody who supports her and the program financially.

Thank you, because these many little contributions result in a big difference.

You're Never Too Old

As a Hispanic being raised the way I was and coming from a large family, it was expected of me to stay home and raise a family. I didn't think I had much of a choice to make other choices about my life.

During my childhood, I went to school and went as far as the 7th grade. I was told to drop out. My education didn't seem important to my parents.

Later in my life, I married and had seven children. The oldest five children are married with children. My marriage didn't work out and my husband and I separated. I raised my children by myself. I worked and supported my family by doing housekeeping and with support from my older children.

In 2005, I started attending the Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class in Altus,

Oklahoma. This outreach program is provided by the Department of Human Services and the Great Plains Literacy Council.

While I was in the literacy class two years ago, I developed personal and health problems and couldn't complete my studies. One of my daughters was deployed to Iraq in the United States Army immediately after the tragic incidents with the Twin Towers in New York City. That was a very stressful time for me. (She has since been deployed four times to Iraq and made it back to the United States safely.)



Angelina Orona

I decided to come back to the Success Class in May 2007 to continue improving my literacy skills to prepare for my GED tests. Since I've been back, I have developed more self-

confidence. By improving my reading skills, I read more often to my grandchildren, Jasmine and Dario, and my great-grandchild Emilio. I can explain the meanings of the stories better. We all enjoy reading.



I have learned the importance of learning to read better. I would tell any new learner that the benefits of learning to read better are limitless.

I also plan to volunteer some of my free time to read to the elderly in nursing homes. I am grateful for being able to attend again the Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class. One's age and personal situation should not be a barrier to improving your life skills and getting a job. I've learned how to be strong, go for what I want, and to get it.

I would like to thank the Literacy Class and my children for encouraging me to continue my

education and to move forward. I want to say,
“You are never too old to learn!”

Angelina Orona

➤ Great Plains Literacy Council Success Class, Altus

From Learner to Teacher: Aquilina’s Story of Success

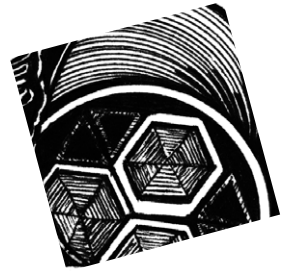
My story started when I was born on June 13, 1944 in Cuadrilla Nueva, Guerrero Mexico. My parents were Salomon Peñaloza and Ernesta Jaramillo. I was the number eight of eleven children, five boys and six girls. I loved my father very much and I was and still am very proud of



Aquilina Peñaloza

my mother and loved her dearly. My mother is an awesome woman. One thing that makes me proud of her is that of her generation, she

was one of the few common people who knew how to read and write. Consequently, she became the writer for mothers that stayed, fathers and sons that left, and for boys and their girl friends that had to send each other letters. My mother was also a potter; she would make all kinds of cooking pottery, and my father and I would go to sell it to the nearby towns.



I first left my family house when I was nine years old. My mother sent me to Acapulco to take care of my oldest sister's children. I lived in Acapulco until I was about 14 ½ years old. Then I went back to my hometown for a while and then left again for Mexico City. In Mexico City, I worked for a great family where their children were doctors, engineers, and business administrators. The engineer would make fun of the business administrator for not speaking more than one

language like his secretaries did. He would say that one of those days their housemaid would be the one speaking more than one language, and here I am, trying to speak English as my second language. I was that housemaid!

My thanks go to all the teachers who dedicate their lives to teaching adult students.

When I came to the U.S., I already had five children whom I left in Mexico with my parents. My plans were that first I would get a great paying job, then get my high school diploma with honors, then my own house, and last my citizenship. In those years landlords did not like to rent to families with many children. So in order for me to have my own children with me I had to have my own house. By that time I already had another two kids—my niece, Trini, and my youngest daughter, Yesenia, and within another five years I had my miracle—my last and youngest boy. By then my family was composed

of eight children, five boys and three girls. Their names are Martin, Rigoberto, Guadalupe, Mauro, Cristobal, Trinidad, Yesenia, and Hector.

Again my great God blessed me with a wonderful boss who had more than one house and was going out of business. I asked her if she would be willing to sell me one of her houses and she said yes and thanks to God and her, I became the proud owner of my first house—and can you believe it?—in the United States! Since I came to the U.S., I have been going to adult school, and within five years I got my 8th grade certificate, and then in another five years I got my high school diploma, with honors as in my plans, and I graduated as Valedictorian. However, after that it took me 10 loooong years to get my Associates Degree in General Supervision. Even though I have a college degree I still need more schooling.

I was also very blessed to have worked for a

very large and great company in California (Burroughs/Unisys) for 22 years. Being a truck driver, my husband told me he had found a wonderful place to live with great people where we could have our own business. So thanks to my company's 401K I was able to save some small change in addition to refinancing the house that I had owned in Oceanside, California. We were able to have enough for the down payment on a restaurant. My husband was right—Weatherford is a great place to live. Like anything else, it does have its share of bad apples, but I have been lucky to have found more good than bad. Some of the good that I have found includes the opportunity to have met Mrs. Roberta Slagell at the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition where I eventually decided that I would like to offer my services as a volunteer. Mrs. Slagell is an awesome lady and has a wonderful and kind family who have taken me as their friend. So I

do thank God for them. Teaching the Spanish-speaking students has given me a chance to continue learning English. Therefore, I feel that I am getting a lot more than what I am giving, and for that I am grateful.

So now I can testify that yes, my husband was right—Weatherford is a great place to live in and its people are wonderful. Thank God for it.

Aquilina Peñaloza

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Can't Smile ... Won't Cry

My name is Perla Perez. I was born April 11, 1986, in El Paso, Texas. My family lived in Texas six years. Then we moved to Oklahoma City. We have lived here ever since.

I have three older brothers. I'm the youngest. I had an older sister, but she passed away. My oldest brother doesn't want anything to do with us.



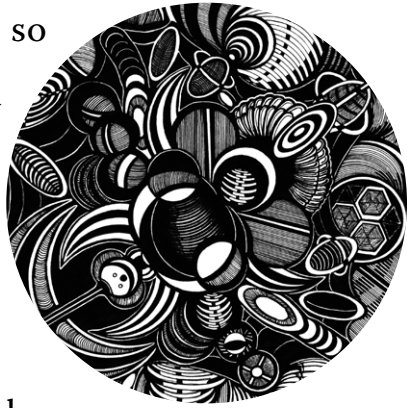
Perla Perez

My second brother is in Hominy, Oklahoma, serving three more years, and my third, Luis; he's kind of disoriented, and really he's in his own

world. Only Luis and I have kids. All of my brothers dropped out of school. Even my mom and dad dropped out. We all had different reasons for doing this. My reason started when I passed the fifth grade.

The first day of middle school was horrible. I remember I used to be a good student, but middle school changed me a lot. Kids can be cruel, and they can also make people stand up for themselves. I started ditching, talking back to the teacher, and acting up in class. Some students were even scared of me. I was mad at

the world and myself, so you can say I became a “bad girl” or however you would define it. I started wearing dark make-up, *cholo* clothing, and even my brothers seem to respect me more. I



remember when I used to get into trouble; my mom would cry tears of blood. Now, I realize that I put my parents through a lot. I hope they forgive me.

I started working at the age of 14 ½ years. My first jobs were at McDonald’s, Buy for Less, and I also worked in restaurants. When I turned 16, I dropped out of school. I was only 17 years old when I met the father of my son. He was 29 years old. I sometimes had to stay away from him because all he did was snort cocaine; therefore I did too. He was no good. After I had my son,

I got pregnant again, but I had a miscarriage because my baby's dad beat me up due to the fact that I wouldn't drink with him or do drugs. I left him then, and I gave full custody of my son to my parents. After my miscarriage, I went crazy. I became a drug addict and an alcoholic. I had actually started drinking at the age of 14 years. I now drink only occasionally (not like I used to) and I don't do drugs either. I've been clean for 2 years. The father of my 4 month old baby girl was real good with me, but he broke my heart because I haven't seen him since I was 6 months pregnant.

Nowadays, I think not about the past, but about the future, because my past is about poverty, drugs, gangs, and alcohol. My parents tried their best, and they gave us everything they could give us. I think that it's never too late for anything, because I have goals for family and myself:

1. Get my GED,

2. Get a good job,
3. Get a family-sized car, and
4. Get my mom and dad a new house.

I have to finish school for myself and my kids, and so my parents can be proud of me for a change. I don't want to disappoint my dad or my mom. Every night I pray to God, so I can pass the GED test. I want them to be proud of me! That's why I put my gang colors down. I'm reformed and clean of drugs. I don't really care about what others might say; going back to school now has given me the confidence and opportunity to work hard, so I can get my GED. Plus, the teachers work one-on-one with me, and they're very helpful and nice. I feel I am in the right place. I thank the Lord for giving me another chance and for changing my life for the better!

Perla Perez

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Imagine the Possibilities of English



Laura Piña

My name is Laura Piña. I am happily married. I have four marvelous children, three boys and one girl. Their names are Luis Felipe, Saul, Enrique, and Lupita. I immigrated to the

United States 16 years ago. I came with my first son, Luis Felipe, only. The other three were born here in the United States.

Right now I have one grandson from my first son and I love him very much, together with my son's wife. I have my husband, Felipe Sr., who is my adoration. We get along very well and I love him so much.

I have, thanks to God, my mother Estela, that is my reason for living, and if one day God wants

to take her, I will fill her empty space with all the good memories and examples that she gave to all of us, her children.

I have three brothers that I adore and one sister whose name is Alejandra.

I love going on vacations to Mexico with my family. On Sundays I like to go to mass with my family and go out to places to break the everyday routine of work and school. I like to help other people who are depressed. I talk to them about God, because He is the weapon that I use to help others.

I really like going to summer English class. The teachers make it fun, especially when we have a party. They say “Imagine the Possibilities” of learning to speak and read English.

Laura Piña

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Mercedes' Story

Hello, my name is Mercedes Piñon. My husband's name is Alberto, my son's name is Alberto Jr., and my daughters' names are Alexia and Cinthia. Alexia is in school and gets very good grades. She helps me with my English. Cinthia is in Head Start and loves going to school.

I have been in English class for about four years and have had several tutors, Ruth, Carolyn, Roberta, and now my teacher is Opal. She is a very good teacher and I am working hard to



Mercedes Piñon

learn as fast as I can. It is difficult for me to imagine all the good possibilities of reading and speaking English. Right now I'm volunteering once a week at the Agape Health Clinic, and at the Community Closet. My husband and I keep family guests in our home until they can buy their own house. I cook and do laundry a lot. In May I made six dozen homemade tortillas for the WOLC bake sale.



I am so thankful for the privilege of learning to read and speak English. My goal is to become a registered nurse so I can help sick people. I have had training in Mexico and will keep working on that goal. Literacy training has certainly helped me to *imagine the possibilities* to improve my life and my family's life by studying English.

The Weatherford Literacy Coalition board members helped to find furniture, food, and other items for some needy Hispanic families at my

request. So I'm thankful not only for the English lessons, but for everything else my friend Roberta has done for me and many other people I know. She and WOLC have helped me to pursue my goals. Thank you very much.

Mercedes Piñon

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

This is Diane's Story

A year ago, I started going to the literacy program at the library. I learned to do clocks, and learned about money. Since then I have written recipes for the cookbook we are making. I have gone three times with the literacy program to Oklahoma City.

I like to talk to people. Now I go to Toastmasters every week. I make speeches, listen to speeches, and I even made a quilt for a lady there.

At Wal-Mart I met a woman who asked me to

go to church with her. Jeanine and I go to church every Sunday. I like to work at the church and I like Jeanine a lot as a friend. I like church services and I like the class I go to. I like my boss Debbie as a friend. I like all the things I do in Wagoner.

Diane Potter ➤ Wagoner Literacy Group

My First Chapter Book

My name is Kimberlie Ragland. I am 16 ½ years old. I was 13 years old when I started coming here. I was in 6th grade. I was in the 4th grade reading level.

I would read Accelerated Reader books at Lone Star School. If I read enough I could go to pizza parties at the end of the nine weeks. When I first started coming here I read poetry books a lot. This year I read my first chapter book, *The Babysitters Club*. I have worked on computer

games, spelling, and dictionary work. My last project I took pictures, made a scrapbook with these pictures, and wrote a paragraph on each picture.

My future plans are to complete high school and culinary school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Kimberlie Ragland ➤ Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

My Story

In 2000 I came to work at Rotek Company. I knew only a little English. After one year, the boss decided to send me to a literacy class to learn to speak English.



Emilio (Pedro) Ramos

I had classes two hours a week. Mrs. Garrison gave me the classes and sometimes I couldn't meet for

class but I told her the reason. I always tried to have my homework finished.

Now I speak much better English and can read and write in English. In March, 2007, I was chosen employee of the month. Now I can train other workers in my job in different positions.

Next I will study to become a citizen of the U.S. Literacy will help me study for the test. I am grateful so much for the teacher Mrs. Garrison for her helping me and her patience.

Emilio (Pedro) Ramos

➤ Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Imagine the Possibilities

My name is Silvia and I came from Mexico 10 years ago. In Mexico, I have my parents, four brothers, and two sisters that still live in my home country. In the United States, I have three broth-



Silvia Reyes

ers and one sister. They live in California, Georgia, and Oklahoma.

The reason I came to the United States was to make a better life for me and

my family, since I lived in a small area in Mexico. Now I live in Claremore, Oklahoma.

I feel I need to learn English. My friends told me about the English as a Second Language program (ESL), because I want to be able to speak, read, and write English. I started the ESL program in October 2006.

My tutor, Jane Wallace, and I meet at the Will Rogers Library two times a week for 1½ hours on Mondays and Wednesdays. The first time I had my class, I felt nervous and scared. After

we had several classes, I began to feel more confident. I even joined the library and began reading books. I read books to my little son, and he understands the stories. I can speak more English to my sons, teachers, with my tutor, and my friends. Sometimes I can help my children with their homework, and that makes me feel good. I still have a lot to learn, but I am confident that with the help of my nice tutor, I will reach my goal.

By improving my reading, I hope to speak better English to my sons, husband, and the community. Better speaking and reading English will help me get a job and communicate with people in the public.

When my sons bring their friends to our house, I don't understand when they speak English. By improving my English, I will understand their friends.

I want to continue with the ESL program, and I want to give thanks to all the people who made this program possible, especially to my tutor Jane Wallace for all her patience.

Silvia Reyes ➤ Rogers County Literacy Council

I Can Read to My Boys

The best thing about improving my reading is that I can do more now than I did before. When I came to a word that I did not know, I would just pass that word and go on to the next word. Most of my papers in school would be wrong.

Now I can read to my boys that are four and three years old. This class has helped me a lot. Also I can read out loud now and not be scared that someone will laugh at me. I can spell too. Now I can go and get a good paying job so my boys and I will have the things I need.

People who have trouble with reading should not be ashamed of getting help.

Kimberly Rhoads ➤ Cement

Many Good Possibilities

My Story

I was born after midnight on July 28th, 1976. I was born in Thailand. My birthday was the same as the Thai prince's.

My parents chose my name from the Thai Dictionary. They said “Nattaya has a good meaning; it means philosopher woman.”

My best friends' names were Prapian and Rathana. They have been my best friends since I studied in high school. We played, ate, read a book, worked, and shared things. Now Rathana is married and has two sons. Prapian is not married yet. I have one son named A.J.

My First Pregnancy

I got pregnant in September, 2004. When I became pregnant, months one through three



Nattaya Rhymmer

were very terrible. I got morning sickness every day and could not eat. Food smelled very bad to me and made me feel like throwing up. During

months six through nine, I was very big and my parents said to me when they saw me walk, “You walked like a duck” and laughed. Well, this was my first experience with pregnancy.

My Son

Now my son is 22 months old. He gets everything he can. Somebody told me about “the terrible twos,” and it is true. We can’t do anything with two year old kids because they are beginning to become curious and learn. But for my son,

he started to talk very early and learn fast. He likes to read books and listen to music. I always have time for him, to play and teach him words or something he wants to know.

My Work

I just began to work one week ago. I am tired every day because I have to work, clean house, take care of my son, and study. Some nights I do homework or reading but I feel sleepy and sometimes fall asleep.

My Class

I like to come to study at the church and talk with my teacher, Edna Hayes. She picks me up at my house. I studied with Mary Ann Hayes but she died, and I am sad. Roberta Slagell and Yvonne Harris also help with my lessons and take care of A.J. They are very nice and I have a good time with them. I want to learn English to get a better job and to help A.J.

There are many good possibilities of literacy.

Nattaya Rhymer

➤ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Days with Mr. Gil

What is it ... with no GED when you have high



Gilbert Roberts

school kids that need your help? You start off saying, “I got to help my kids, but I don’t know what to do myself.” I think about when I was growing up. I had a mom and

dad. I went to a good school. I played football for high school. I just didn’t care for anything but football. I got put off my team, so I stopped going to school. I started running the streets, smoking weed, and drinking. Then came the ladies; then came the kids; then came the “pen”, and

with that came the no-good friends. I was not thinking about anything but a way to get money. Education was not there anymore.



So there I was trying to get a job because I was looking after my kids and their mom. I needed a job! What could I do? I couldn't read and write well and didn't want the streets anymore. But I was so used to that. My kids' mom wanted money right now. I tried so hard to make things right for us, but it was too late—she was leaving me anyway. She loved the fast money. I thought school would help me. I was trying to go back to school for the first time as an adult. It wasn't working for me. There were more important things I needed then, like trying to pay the rent, etc., so I quit and started working for the public school system. I was doing well for 6 years, then it came—lay offs. Sure they loved the way

I worked, and they loved me. But I had no GED, couldn't read or write that well. I wasn't the one they picked to stay.

Then I found the adult education program I'm in now. Wow! I didn't think that there would be anyone who would be there for me the way they have been. Coming here is a totally different atmosphere: the staff and the other students. For example, I can sit with someone in class here and read a book out loud with them now. I can take my time and really try to work the words out. There is no teasing; everybody is real and out to help one another. Another thing that has helped me here is working in a place with mostly women whom I've become friends with. It has helped me deal with my 3 granddaughters who I am now raising as a single parent. They are age 1, 2, and 5. I want to be able to give my grandkids more than what we gave our kids. I think I missed a lot with education with my own kids.

My goal is to get back to the football field. The best job I ever had in my life was working as a stadium manager for a high school football stadium, and it will be again! There is a brand new field being built at the high school now. I filled out an application and put together a resume with the help of my teachers. I have been in constant contact with the people at the school, and have really high hopes that I will get the position when the stadium is finished in the fall.

When I worked with schools before, I became a kind of a “counselor” to some of the kids. I loved working with the kids, and they trusted me. This time around I will feel like I know what I’m doing. Now I could also help them with a little bit of school work too.

I still have some problems; I have a ways to go with my learning, but I have more confidence in what I have to do. Here at OIC, they help me out with my job applications and resumes. They

make me think about what's real. My confidence is up. I know that now, I can get a job that I like. My hopes are to get the job I most like and also continue my education and finally walk in one of those robes with that paper in my hand. I can see it now!

Gilbert Roberts

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

A Beautiful Thing

If I were telling a new learner about the benefits of learning to read, I would say... “Once you learn how to read, you would never put a book of any kind down. There are a lot of benefits of learning how to read.”

When I was in 1st grade in 1979, at age six, they declared me as having what they called “a learning disability in reading and in spelling.” After several years in school, I was getting better in

reading and in spelling, but not that great. I never did like reading or spelling while I was in school. Now, I enjoy reading and if I cannot pronounce a word, I go to a dictionary and see how they would pronounce the word and what the word means.

If there is anyone that does not know how to read, I would say to them to get help with reading, because knowing how to read is a beautiful thing.

If you know how to read, you should cherish it in your heart and go and help others that do not know how to read.

Tina Roberts ➤ Cement

Ready at My Own Pace

School Days

One of the first things I remember about school

is that in third grade our desks were in different areas. Everybody was divided up, and it was like we were separated even then. That's the first time I really noticed that I was being left behind or that I didn't grasp the situation like those other students did. I really didn't understand the alphabet—the “l, m, n, o, p” part especially. It was said so fast, and I wasn't picking it up. It was like “da-da-da-da-da”!

Okay, I'm really not getting this.

In the fifth grade is when it really hit me that, “I'm not getting this.” I had a teacher—*oh he was hard* on us, on every student. The word could be spelled right, but you might not have dotted your “i,” so the word was marked wrong. Every word we missed, we got a swat. I remember getting a lot of swats because I did miss a lot of words.

Things at Home

I grew up with one parent, my mom. I had a stepfather, but it was still like a one parent home.

My mom worked a lot. I felt like I was an outcast at home, plus an outcast in school. So, that made me withdraw, a lot.

I can draw!

I'd sit off by myself a lot, and I'd draw. Back then, in the back of magazines, they would have this advertisement with cartoon characters that said, "If you can draw this, send it in." When I was eleven years old, I sent in one of my drawings. I addressed the envelope myself and everything. And then here comes a knock on the door. I answered the door, and I said, "Mama, there's this man here to see me about my drawing." We all sat at the table, and he told my mom that I had potential in art. He was showing her all these documents. He was trying to get me enrolled into an art school, and I could have done it at home. I didn't have to go anywhere because I was still a minor. I was very excited. It was going to cost \$100. It's not a lot of money now, but back then



it was a lot of money for my mom. I didn't have my stepfather in the home then. So, nothing happened with that, because she said it was too much money. He said we could just do payments, like \$60. That bothered me too, because I thought, "I'm not worth \$60?" You know to me, at that age, I'm saying to myself, "I'm not worth \$60, what am I worth?" To me, it was like I hadn't measured up in my reading, and the talent that I did have was not any significant thing either.

The man left me things, like worksheets with different patterns and told me to try to copy these shapes, and then turn them around. He said what I did was good, so he left some more paperwork and asked me to mail it in. So, I did that for a long time. They would grade it and send it back to me. That was a good thing. I got good grades on that work! The artistic side started coming out in me, and I started sewing too when I was

like 16. In home economics, that was the first dress I made, and I got a good grade on that. That was something for me to feed on.

As I got more into school, getting older, I withdrew more. I still went to class. I wanted to learn. I would say to myself, “Why can’t I get this? What’s going on with me? How come I can’t get it, but everyone else can?” I was thinking that I was the only one. I got a lot of snickers, a lot of laughing in class when I’d try to read.

I finished the 10th grade because they kept passing me. Even though I was getting all these bad grades, they kept passing me. I went to the 11th grade, but then I met my daughter’s father. I was a teenager and met this guy four years older, and he was paying attention to me. When I was pregnant, I went to an adult day school for a while, but it was a struggle and I didn’t finish. I passed up a lot of good jobs



too. The thing with me is if you show me something once or twice, I will have it. I think that's how the Lord blesses people who don't have certain things; he blesses you with something else to work with. Instead of me writing down something, I would draw it. Like a shopping list, when I needed to go to the store, I would draw the things I needed to buy. I went to a literacy school in Dallas too, and I ended up quitting again. I wanted to do it, but it was a volunteer staff, and the program ended up being cut.

Best Time Around

I had gotten injured; I had my surgery. So it came to be that I couldn't do any more manual work, and I decided that I needed to go back to school. I chose OIC.

I can do this now. In my life I was always stopping stuff. I always stopped because I'd get to the point where I would feel like it was just too hard. A lot of times here at school it gets hard trying

to learn everything I missed. When I first came here, my brain hurt for a whole month, really because it hadn't been exercised. I didn't get it when I was in school, so it was like an overrun circuit in the brain. I am learning. And when you're learning things that you've never gotten before, and you realize that you have it in you, that's a natural high all by itself! When you really realize, "I can get this. I'm not stupid. I'm not the only one." Realizing that you're not alone, that's the key thing. That's what has changed most about me.

School Opens Other Doors

Through OIC I was able to attend the annual State Literacy Conference in Tulsa. That was awesome! And I wouldn't have known about all the people like me if I hadn't come to OIC. I also have been attending the Oklahoma City Literacy Coalition meetings, representing adult learners. A whole world opened up to me when I came

to OIC, a whole world in the area of education, things that I didn't get. The walls just opened, and it's like I'm not the only one.

When I was little I was thinking I was the only one. It was only about 10 or 15 years ago when I found out that one of my sisters can't read that well. I saw her handwriting. People that don't know how to read really well, they can always pick up what another person can't get. I could tell something about her writing. Her penmanship wasn't that great. I had learned some sight words, and could look at her writing and I could tell some things that weren't correct. I asked her if she was having problems, and she looked at me like, "Ooooh, how do you know"? I said, "I do too." She said, "You do?" It was like there was a connection, a deeper connection then. We kept it a secret. It shouldn't be a secret, but I kept it a secret for a long time because I didn't want people to put me down or push me away. I always

wanted that connection with somebody. This is probably why my life went the way it did. I got the negative connections instead of the positive because, I guess, when you feel that way about yourself, that's what others will feel about you. But now I know it's not just me; I'm not the only one. My sister and I are not the only ones. There are adult learners struggling everywhere.

What else has changed in me?

I was thinking that this time at school, it was going to be the same rush, rush, hurry up, do this, hurry, hurry. I went to OIC one other time in the past, and it was like that. I would always rush myself too in the past, "I've got to hurry up and do this. I got to do things good." I said, "It's going to be the same, and if you don't get it in the time that they want you to do it, then just quit." But I realized that you go at your own pace at OIC. You try to get what you can get while you're here. It's not a laughing matter any more. You know I said

that my peers used to laugh at me when I tried to read. We don't laugh at each other here. And that's a good thing. I think you get discouraged when you remember how it was in school, your peers laughing, the teacher looking at you like, "You dummy," and everything is negative. But here at OIC it's not like that. Everybody's here for the same thing. We all know our shortcomings and our strengths. I take my time. I study at home too. I take my journal home and write in it. I write poetry!

I feel like it is a place and a time now where I can finish. My reading has improved at least 2 levels in reading and in math; my vocabulary has grown, and my sense of value and who I am in



the classroom and beyond has grown a lot. I have been able to share with my family, my grandkids that I am learning, that I didn't get it

before, but this time I'm going to get it. I'm not going to quit no matter what because I've got to get this. I'm getting older. I got to achieve this in my life. I believe I can get it here. It surprises me every day when I do walk in here, and I still have that drive to come back. You know my daughter always says, "Mom, you're always stopping stuff. You're always quitting." Not anymore!

Devoria Ruffin

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

The Joy of Reading

Life is so dark when you don't know how to read. When you learn to read, it brings a blessing of light and understanding and self reliance.

I love to read books now. It still surprises me—it's



Linda Shannon

like a miracle.

We thank our tutors who spend their time to teach us. Thank you.

I still paint. I want to take more art classes when I can read better. I am also studying for my GED. It may take me a long time, but I *can!*

Linda Shannon ➤ Cleveland County Literacy Program, Norman

Strong Enough to Succeed

My name is Tyesha Thompson. I'm 21 years of age and am focused, focused on achieving my GED. When I was attending regular school, I made sure my grades were up. I didn't see myself having any difficulties in subjects, except math. I never made higher than a C average in math. I had the basics down, but when it reached to higher levels, such as Algebra, I hit a downfall.

In high school it was like a different world compared to elementary and middle school. The math classes seemed to get very tedious; it wasn't interesting enough to make me want to sit and learn. Around my junior year, I started to slack off. I was barely coming to school, and I wasn't earning credits to graduate with my class on time.

In the middle of 2003, I decided to upgrade and directly study for my GED. I took the exam within a couple of months, passed everything except math. I still needed to study more than what I had. Thinking about math just made my head hurt; that's just how much I hated math. I took my chances and kept studying.

Around the summer of 2004, I became pregnant and started to work as a telemarketer. In 2005, my son was here, and he opened my eyes really well. I realized it wasn't about me any more. The choices I made from then on have been for him. I



Tyesha Thompson

want my son to do better than me, so I knew I needed to make some major changes.

When it came down to my career choices, I was interested in the medical field. I started

reading up on radiologists; it caught my attention on how different they were from being an RN, LPN, CMA, or even a CNA. It was like radiologists had their own world compared to the other doctors in the medical fields.

Radiology is something I really want to do in my life. While wanting to go to school for radiology, I was thinking of my back up plan. My back up career is going to school to learn how to be a receptionist. I already have a little experience in what a receptionist does, but I want to learn more. I really enjoy doing things like that. I

like challenging jobs to challenge myself. It's important for me to learn different job skills to help me better myself in the near future.



I realized I had so much I wanted to do in my life, and only I can make it happen for myself. I couldn't depend on anyone to just hand me these skills or this good job, I had to get up and go for what I wanted, but then I still had something holding me back from getting into the school and training I needed for my upcoming future. Then it hit me; I needed to talk to someone about my plans and to get really started on my path one step at a time.

After a while I decided to talk to my mama about my situation. She was telling me about this government program that helped her get further in work experience; the program was TANF, and she was on it years ago. I decided to

sign up, and I became a believer. I believed they could help me further my education. They sent me to this adult learner school (OIC).

When I got here, I was thinking, “What are they going to do that I’m not already doing?” I was doing testing and getting annoyed. I was thinking like, “What does this have to do with my GED?” The test results would determine the different grade levels I was on in each subject. I was really anxious to know because I never thought about what grade level I was on.

Even though I had passed my reading section of the GED test, when I became a student at OIC, my reading level according to the TABE 7/8 was a 6.2. During the little time I had been out of school, I think I lost interest in what I had worked on prior to the GED test. I slacked off because I hadn’t been in school where the material was just handed to me. It was just a feeling I had at the time. I wasn’t in school. I wasn’t going

to worry about it. I think this caused my reading level to go down.

Since I've been back in school, my reading level has increased on my own development to a 10.5. I don't have the "whatever" attitude anymore. I have the "What Am I Going to Do Next?" attitude. I've realized that I'm a fast reader, and I always catch myself reading my material over. Since I've been in school, I've been learning to slow down and take my time to see exactly what I've read. I've improved a lot on taking time out and actually concentrating on what I'm reading. My math skills have improved to where they are better than at any other time during my life. I feel more comfortable with working with word problems and fractions.

OIC has been a blessing to me, especially the staff. They have helped me so far in my education skills and been so patient with me. That's what I like the most, because they care and want

to see me succeed. They don't rush or push you, but they guide you in the right direction.

Their direction led me toward taking my GED exam again. Once again, I passed everything with flying colors except math. The secret to my success is staying strong and keeping my confidence to know I can pass my exam. OIC has done so much for me, so that I can hang on to that, and I appreciate everything. As I'm writing (and you're reading) I'm still holding on to that goal to succeed and achieve my GED. My secret still remains in me.

Tyesha Thompson

➤ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

It's a Hard Knocks Life

I came from a very hard life. Most of it was hell for me and my family members. I grew up with 7 brothers and sisters, and my mom

and my dad did what they could for us. I remember growing up just in a two bedroom house with all of us in that small house. We couldn't bring our friends over because



Niresha Thrash

it was so small. It was hard, but somehow we made it to school.

At some point, a big blessing happened and we got a 7 bedroom house. It was very big, and it had a huge backyard. It was lovely. Things started to happen, and we all started to go to this little *Bible Club* church. The women they had in this program were the sweetest ladies in the whole world. We started at the Rescue Mission; that's where we had church. They would come by the apartments and do whatever they had to do (like give away food) to get kids to come to church. So

after church, we had friends over, and we were going to school every day.

And then we would have very bad days like when mom and dad would argue about Lord knows what, then the fighting; then me and my sister would start crying. Me, out of all 7 of us, I was the main one who would run in crying, screaming, and saying, “Get off my mom!” or the one who would call 911. So many times, other parents who went to the *Bible Club* would come to get us and take us home with them. So many times we didn’t get any sleep but still had to go to school. So, that made us mad. We had to act like we were big and bad; if any body tried to mess with one of our brothers or sisters, we would fight them because that’s what we knew.

It was very difficult because my dad was like the devil. He would always punish us. He made us clean the whole house. We couldn’t have friends over. He never played with us; he never

said, “I love you.” He was the one who we got in trouble by with a belt or anything he could find, and he didn’t care if he really hurt one of us. Everything had to be perfect and picked up in the house. If we had friends over, we would have to sneak them out the back door where we had a trail leading into an apartment where we went to play.

Somehow my big sister and big brother were like a mom and dad, because if it came down to it; they would do whatever they had to for us. I will always love my family. I just hated what we had to go through.

Elementary School

I was a bully when I was in elementary school. I knew how to protect myself and my brothers and sisters if anybody was to mess with us. When I was in lab classes in the 3rd grade, I didn’t actually know what I was in there for, but I knew it was different because I had to go outside to the

yellow building. I felt special a little bit because we had different stuff from the other class, and we didn't have so much work. We got to do fun activities. It was better for me until I got to the 5th grade when it got a little bit harder. Teachers started to get on us about our work, and they'd say things like, "You won't be able to get on the computer!" Or sometimes we couldn't go on field trips. That use to make me so mad to miss out because I wasn't doing what I had to do. I got used to the teachers more and more every day, and thought 6th grade would actually be a little better. "Yea, Y'all, Jr. High, here I come"!

Middle School

So, as I got older, going to middle school, I took the mean girl with me. I was always in trouble. Sometimes I didn't go to classes. I would just walk around the hallways or go to the clinic and act like I was sick to get out of class, but I made it ok until my boyfriend got in trouble and

had to leave me. He got locked up. It was very painful because we were together five years and that was my first love. That's when school really started to go down hill. That's when my report cards started saying, "D", "C", and "F." I wasn't in focus in school, was chasing the pretty boys down the hall getting their phone numbers, and ditching school. That's when everything just seemed to be a game, and I didn't have to do it unless I wanted to. That means no one could tell me anything without me giving them attitude or talking smart.

Then I got kicked out for a while when a teacher put her hands on me. She didn't like the smart mouth I had. I called my mom and told her that the teacher hit me in the arm. My mom came in and she "went off." We had to go to a school hearing, and that's when they said I only had to go to school 3 days out of the week. Then I really

didn't learn very much. I wasn't trying to learn at that point in time.

High School

When high school came, I went like maybe two weeks and dropped out. For one thing, I had problems at the school dealing with race. I would have ended up fighting somebody because they called me a name, so I said, "Forget it," and dropped out. So, I didn't learn anything in high school, nothing at all.

I started doing things that I know I had no business doing. I got pregnant, and it was very hard because I was not ready for a baby at 17. The boy who got me pregnant was some years older than me, and he didn't care too much. Now I know what my dad was saying was true, "All they want is one thing, sex." If only I would have listened, but it was too late. Even though my kids are a blessing from God, I didn't think that boy would do that to me. He said he loved

me, and he lied to me and left me to have my baby by myself. So, I tried to go to school, but then I dropped out because my mind and heart was not set for it. I didn't have any support, so I ran away from home. My parents didn't care. I was gone for about a year, then I went back to stay with my big sister.

Going back to going to school

The father of my son and daughter is helping me with trying to do my best and talked me into coming back to school, even though he needs to also. He's a real good helping hand around me and my kids. He was the first one who said, "Yes, you can do it. Don't worry about it. It's going to be okay."

I tried 3 or 4 other programs, and didn't like any of them. I wasn't learning anything, so I dropped out. I couldn't do Job Search anymore because I didn't find a job. Not too many places would hire me without my high school diploma

or GED, so this time I am going to stick to my plan. Now I have more positive people in my life to say, “Niresha, you can do it. You’ve had it along. You just have to tell yourself, *I can do it!*” And I am going to do it. I haven’t been here long, but I really like it. The teachers make you want to come back. They do believe in you, and they really teach you. They are not like any other school or classes that I have been to.

Hopefully, with the grace of the Lord, I will have my GED before next year. After I get my GED, I want to go into the field of medical coding. That is something I think I would be good at. The time will come when it will happen. It is coming soon, and I can do it, I know. The struggles at home affected me, but somehow I got to be one of the blessed ones who made it out of the hard, bad life. Maybe I am a lucky one; I know that.

Niresha Thrash

☞ Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

My Story

I was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island to Mr. & Mrs. Edward Leonard. I went to Catholic School in Pawtucket. I was a sickly child, so I was home more than in school, so I didn't have the proper learning. I was moved to a public school at age nine where I was put in a special needs class because I was behind the other children. I was pushed through because I was getting older.

When I got married I raised six children. At age 48 I told my husband I wanted to learn how to read and write and got involved in a literacy program in Rhode Island when my husband passed away. I moved to Oklahoma. I found out there was a literacy program at the library. I met with Barbara and have been involved ever since.

I have learned alot being in the program and met many nice people. My tutor's name is Betty.

She is the best teacher I have had and we have become best friends.

Improving my reading has helped me to read directions on food boxes, newspapers, recipes, and maps.

If I were telling a new learner about the benefits of learning to read, I would say, “Do not be ashamed to go to a literacy program for help. They will teach you to read and help you with math. This program will raise your self esteem. It is beautiful!”

Lois Thurston ➤ Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Imagine the Possibilities

I come up here to learn about reading.

You help me to read better.

I am doing a good job for my self.

I did finish Skill Books one, two, three.

I finished my *Bible* home studies one and two.

I came to school in 2000 here.

I am happy doing well on my reading.

I get on the computer.

It will help me to learn more about reading and the *Bible*.

I like to help people to read.

I want to read an adult book.

I like to read Leap Pad books

It helps me say the word on Leap Pad.

Anna Trozera ➤ Pushmataha County Literacy Council, Antlers

Guadalupe's Story

My name is Guadalupe Uribe. I was born in Buena Vista de Cuellar, Guerrero, Mexico.

I have lived in United States for 16 years. I lived

in California for 12 years and have lived for four years in Clinton, Oklahoma.

I have seven sisters and five brothers. I started working in the field with my father when I was seven years old. I loved working with my father.

My life has always been work, work, work, but I like working. However, I get too tired now. I work at Bar-S for necessity in order to pay my bills.

I am going to summer classes at Saint Mary's Church in Clinton with my daughter-in-law, Hilda. I need to learn English and study so I can pass the citizenship test. My teachers are good teachers; they bring me books to help me learn. I like to have Aquilina because she explains the sentences in Spanish so I can learn English.

Guadalupe Uribe

⇒ Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Never Too Late to Learn

My name is Francia Vermillion. I live in Wagoner, Oklahoma. I came to the U.S. in 1995 from Mexico, and this my story.

Four years ago I was visiting the library in Wagoner, and I met Shirley McCowan who asked me if I would like to learn to write and read English and to even speak English better.

At that time my girls were two and four years old. I thought, “I really need to know how to read because my girls are little now but later they will ask me to read to them.”

So I told Shirley, “Sure, Thanks!” Shirley set me up in the literacy program. Mary Harris was my first tutor. She really helped me so much. The most important thing she taught me was to write my name in cursive, which was my first goal. Thank you, Mary Harris.

Later on Shirley had an idea that would help



us with our writing. Some other girls and I started a recipe book in English and Spanish. Doing that helped us to learn more words and improve our writing and our

English. Nancy Brown and Shirley McCowan have been there to help us always, not just on the recipe book but lots of things. Thank you, Shirley and Nancy.

Later this wonderful tutor named Peggy Cooper, who I respect because she is such a good person, saw that I needed more help with my English. Peggy believed in me so she introduced me to my tutor now, Janet Lane, who teaches me so much like writing in English. That was the second of my goals. A third goal was learning to write a check. For that Janet taught me to spell all the numbers. Also Janet is helping me now to get

ready for my U.S. citizenship test, which is my next goal. Thank you, Janet Lane.

Being here in the program I have learned that I am not alone. There are lots more people like me, that really need help. I want to tell all those people not to be scared. If you want to learn you will make it. Now I am working in the literacy office as a translator, and I am a tutor too. Best of all I am able to help my daughters with their homework and reading books. It is never too late to learn. I am still a student because I want to learn more for my girls and me and to help more people like me. Thank you to all the tutors for their time and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and our board for supporting our literacy program.

Thank you and God bless you all.

I Learn ...

Reading is important to me because I learn. My eyes get better and my vocabulary gets longer. But the important thing is I learn to write better. I have written many stories in my class.

Johnny W. ➤ Oklahoma City Literacy Council

Looking Up

Since I was 29 years of age I have been looking for the right place to help me improve my reading. I took for granted that if I could improve my reading I would have more self-esteem. I found Project READ in Edmond, and they are helping me reach my goals.

Reading for pleasure is relaxing for me. If you are a slow reader or a non-reader get a book you are interested in and you won't want to put it down. Meet with a tutor and he or she will

help you with the words you do not understand. Knowing these words will bring a smile to your face when you recognize them the next time you see them.

My Auntie gave me a book to read and I was up till 3:00 in the morning trying to get to the end knowing that I had to be at work at 7:00 AM. Since then I have read the Fantasia biography and Joyce Meyer's book *Approval Addiction*. I admire Fantasia because she didn't give up on her goal and now she is successful and can read stories to her daughter. Reading the Joyce Meyer book is like having her speak just to me!

I have reached a place where I have the confidence to speak to other learners and supporters at meetings and conventions about my accomplishments and improved self-esteem. Do not look down on yourself like I did—look up!

When you look up you are looking at heaven,

when you look down you are looking at hell. Be proud and remember you are somebody and you are God's child.

W.M. Wallace ➤ Project READ, Edmond

Using My Mind to Imagine the Possibilities of Life

The mind can be enriched through experiencing the contents of many different kinds of books. But, first, you need to be able to read well. Through my literacy classes, I have been



Harold D. Wilson

improving my reading, writing, and spelling skills. Most of all, I am enjoying all of these skills so much more.

I started taking literacy classes because I felt that I drastically

needed to improve in the areas of reading and writing. I feel that I have moved forward and that I have accomplished more than I had thought I would.

My future goals are to improve so that I will be able to secure a decent paying job that will fit my needs; to improve so that I will be able to attend college or vo-tech classes which will further my skills; and to improve so that I will be able to tutor others who also want to improve their reading and writing skills.

Life is short. Life can be whatever a person wants it to be. I know that I can read and write better. I feel that I am making progress as a student and as a man. I am grateful to the Great Plains Literacy Council for its outstanding program because it works and the people care. I will make it in life!

O • K • L • A • H • O • M • A



LITERACY RESOURCE OFFICE

For information about literacy efforts in Oklahoma please visit www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy or call the Literacy Resource Office at 1-800-522-8116



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