

Celebrating Our Journey



Volume 6

Celebrating Our Journey



A Collection of Life Stories
written by Oklahoma Adult Learners

Copyright © 2010 by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries

This book is printed and issued by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries as authorized by 65 O.S. 2001 §3-110. 550 copies have been printed at a cost of \$4,680 [sw]. Copies have been deposited in the Publications Clearinghouse of the Department of Libraries. 7/2010.

Table of Contents

| | |
|------|--|
| xvii | Foreword |
| | Advice |
| 3 | The Good Advice That My Sister Gave Me Agustin Chavez |
| 4 | About the Best Advice I Ever Had Angelica Chavez |
| 6 | Advice Chaz Michael Belongie |
| 8 | Advice I Wish I Had Taken Demetricia Bell |
| 11 | Advice Dolly Bond |
| 13 | Advice from Experience Elsa Castro |
| 16 | Advice on Making Life Easier Jeff Bell |
| 19 | Advice Jennifer Lee |
| 20 | Joel's Story: The Best Advice I Ever Had Joel Jesus Olivas |
| 22 | Teen Sexuality Advice LaDonna Brodnex |
| 24 | Advice Lana Lewis |

- 27 Advice
Leanna Pyle
- 29 New Hope for the Future!
Margarita Hernandez
- 32 Learn English
Maria G. Martinez Nunez
- 35 Filtering Advice
Marion Morris
- 37 Advice
Meagan Aguirre
- 39 Good Advice
Mercedes Piñon
- 42 Advice
Ray Current
- 43 Choices, Possibilities, and Advice
Ricky Brown
- 46 Ronald's Story
Ronald G
- 47 Advice
Sarai Lara
- 47 Advice
Shanna Hardy
- 48 Three Pieces of Advice
Terra Johnson
- 53 Wendell's Advice
Wendell Wortham

Choices

- 61 Choices
Adriana Pedraza
- 62 My Friends Who Made a Choice
Aeksha Patel
- 64 Haiku
Aeksha Patel
- 65 Choices
Amber Valera
- 67 A Chinese Girl Choosing to Marry an American
Amy Daye
- 70 Things I Like
Anna Trozera
- 71 Ben's Experiences and Choices after Arriving in Oklahoma
Anouar Hassan
- 73 Choices
Ashley Cline
- 75 My Choices In My Life
Ashley John
- 76 Choices
Bobby Morris
- 77 Good Choices I Have Made
Brenda Embree
- 79 How Choices Affect My Daughter
Brittany King
- 82 Choice
Chena Thompson

- 84 Changing to a New Country
Christin Chen
- 85 Choices
Claudia Olacio
- 88 This Is My History
Esler Beletzuy
- 89 Choices
Ethan Wilkerson
- 90 Choices
Felicia D. Nero
- 95 Choices
Henry Allen
- 96 Choices
Hissell Ball
- 98 Escape to the Unknown
Hiyam A. Ahmed
- 102 Choices
Janice Cruz Padilla
- 103 The Choices in Life
Jessica Hernandez
- 105 Listen to Your Heart
John Jones
- 106 Choices
Jose Pantoja
- 108 Choices
Joyce Miller
- 111 A Difficult Choice
Junko Okumura

| | | |
|-----|--|---------------------------|
| 114 | Choices | Karina Montantes |
| 115 | Where I Am Now | Katie Lay |
| 117 | Choices | Krystal Martin |
| 120 | The Choice and Possibility of Learning | Lameka Miller |
| 122 | My Choices | LaShawndra Calhoun |
| 127 | A History of My Country | Leda Salinas |
| 130 | Choices I Made in the Past | Letha Parker |
| 133 | My Recent Journey | Maria Bermudez |
| 134 | Choices | Mattie Black |
| 138 | Why I Chose to Get My GED | Lisa Minor |
| 140 | Choices | Maria Escobar |
| 140 | Choices | Marquas Henry |
| 143 | American Love Story | Mitza Johnson |
| 145 | Choices | Monica Smith |

- 147 My Story
P. Silva
- 149 Choices
Robyn Gabriel
- 152 Where I Am Today
Rosa Medrano
- 155 The Family Choices
Shayla Massenburg
- 156 Choices Facing Me
Susanna Cuellar
- 158 Choices
T. Nallely Ortiz
- 160 Choices
Tacesia Thomas
- 166 My Life's Choices
Tonya Brashear
- 168 The Dog's Wagging Tail
Wan Chun Kuan
- Friendship
- 173 My Mother
Alicia Berry
- 175 Friendship
Angel Huzarski
- 176 Friendship
April Moomaw
- 180 Lost and Found
Bill Skaggs

| | |
|-----|--|
| 181 | All My Friends Carl Haugh |
| 182 | Friendship Catherine Stiver |
| 185 | Friendship Chong-Cha Factor |
| 185 | Friendship Concepcion Salcido |
| 186 | What a True Friend Is Dechelle Jeans |
| 188 | Friendship Dewey Jernigan |
| 190 | The Life of Friendship Elizabeth Johnson |
| 193 | Emmanuel's Smile Emmanuel Njike |
| 197 | Friendship Gloria Vazquez |
| 198 | What is Friendship? Harold Wilson |
| 201 | Friendship Heather Cligan |
| 203 | Friendship Holly Herron |
| 204 | Friendship James Kasper |
| 206 | Haiku Jen Xuan |

- 207 Family and Friends Are Valuable
Julia Pawpa
- 209 Friendship
Karem Vargas
- 210 My Story About Friendships
Katrina Mae Flaming
- 212 Friendship
Kylie Hoover
- 215 My Best Friend Alicia
Luz Elena Zepeda
- 216 “Charlie Parker”
Manuel Beltre
- 224 Friendship
Maria Reynoso
- 224 Friendship
Marlina Taylor
- 225 Friendship
Mary Helms
- 228 Friendship
Moises Eliab Inestroza
- 229 My Sisters Are My Friends
Noelia Cuellar
- 231 Friendships I’ve Made in English Class
Ofelia Lopez
- 233 Great Friends
Pamela Johnson
- 235 I Miss the City
Paula Jan Watson

| | |
|-----|--|
| 236 | Friendship Raymond Beets |
| 238 | Friendship Rosario Elvira Vaca |
| 240 | Friendship Is ... Sandy Dees |
| 242 | Friendship Sherry Lynn |
| 245 | I Miss My Best Friend Shewaye Tefera |
| 246 | Haiku Shewaye Tefera |
| 247 | My Best Friend is a Four-Legged Dog Shirley Rebolo |
| 249 | Friendship Sookwon Yi |
| 250 | My Best Friend Soraida Mariquez |
| 251 | Friendship Stacie Prater |
| 255 | Friendships Tai Jackson |
| 257 | Earth Angels Teresa Rodriguez |
| 260 | Odyssey Ulises Castillo |
| 262 | Friends Until the End Vicky Lynn Patterson |

265 Friendship

Yolanda Teos

265 Friends

Yvette Pendergrass

Possibilities

271 Possibilities through Sacrifice

Alberto

272 Possibilities

Alicia Burdett

274 Possibilities

Alicia J. Walter

276 Believe in Yourself

Amy Cooper

278 Possibilities for the Future

Andrea Rojas

280 Possibilities

Anthony

280 The Opportunity and Challenge of Literacy

Benjamin Galindo

282 The Possibilities That Come From Reading

Brittney Shelton

284 Possibilities

Cameron Cassell

286 English Language Has Possibilities for Me

Carmen Figueroa

288 Possibilities

Charmayne Young

| | |
|-----|--|
| 290 | Possibilities! Chico Flores |
| 292 | Continuing the Journey Danielle Morris |
| 294 | Possibilities Donna Bentley |
| 296 | Possibilities Ezekiel Huzarski |
| 297 | Possibilities Elia Escalera |
| 298 | No Matter the Obstacle, I'm Not Giving Up! Elia Perez |
| 304 | Possibilities of Learning Eloisa Galindo |
| 306 | Possibilities in the United States Everardo Nunez |
| 309 | Unlimited Possibilities Frances Alexander |
| 311 | Hope Glenda Jones |
| 312 | Learning English Is Very Important Graciela De La Cruz |
| 314 | The Opportunities of Learning English Graciela Ramos |
| 316 | Literacy Gives Possibilities Guadalupe Rojas |
| 318 | I Thank God for the Possibilities of Learning English Isabel Galindo |

- 320 The Great Possibilities of Being a Mother
Ivana Piñon
- 321 Possibilities
Jeffrey Hunt
- 324 My Class Experience ...
Jennifer Edwards
- 327 Fight for your Dreams
Jose Rivera
- 329 Possibilities
Josefina Alvarado
- 331 Life Changing Choices; Not Just a Thought
Juanita Louise Hennessee
- 334 Possibilities
Junyue Li
- 334 Possibilities
Kaora Burkhalter
- 335 Possibilities
Karina Flores
- 336 Becoming a United States Citizen
Katie Yu
- 340 Possibilities
Kelly Ballinger
- 340 U.S. Citizenship Gives Me Possibilities
Kim Nguyen
- 342 Opportunities That Have Helped Me
Leandrea Stehr
- 345 Possibilities
Lucia Martinez

| | |
|-----|--|
| 346 | Possibilities Manuel Tello |
| 346 | A Better Life Maria Nichols |
| 347 | Possibilities Maria Salgado |
| 348 | Our Family's Hopes and Dreams Mario and Nina Banda |
| 350 | My High School Days Mark Murray |
| 354 | Possibilities Martha Robertson |
| 355 | Taking the Challenge! Martha Rosa Salinas |
| 358 | Possibilities Mary Barnes |
| 361 | Possibilities Miguel Gamonal |
| 361 | Possibilities Nancy Lopez |
| 362 | Possibilities for Me and My Family Norma Rojas |
| 364 | The Wonderful Possibilities of Living in Oklahoma and Learning English Nubia Ramos |
| 366 | Omar's Story Omar Banda |
| 368 | My History Pablo Cifuentes |

370 The Possibilities of Space Travel

Pamela Davis

372 Possibilities

Paula Olcaytore

373 Spirit in the Wind in Autumn

Priscilla Caldwell

375 Possibilities

Reed Boomer

377 I Was Proud of Myself

Romeshia Brothers

379 Possibilities

Samantha Harjo

381 Possibilities for my Life

Sherrie Jesuit

383 I Was Proud of Myself When I ...

Terry Terflinger

384 Possibilities

Trung

386 I Shall Be Able

Ziba Tagmir

Foreword

Welcome to the sixth annual *Celebrating our Journey* compilation. It is always a privilege to unveil the latest edition of this publication, and we hope you are as inspired by the stories inside as we are.

Each year, this book honors the accomplishments of Oklahoma adult learners who have taken pen to paper in order to express themselves in ways that once seemed impossible. The ability to express oneself in writing is empowering, as these learners are discovering. It is another step on their journey, and we are fortunate that they have chosen to share their stories with us. It is indeed a cause for celebration.

You may notice that this year's edition is much heftier than previous efforts. There is good reason for that. For the first time, students in Adult Basic Education classes around the state were invited to contribute their writings to the book. Their stories join the ones

that have been submitted by students of Oklahoma’s library and community-based literacy councils. As a result, this volume marks the Oklahoma Department of Libraries’ largest compilation of adult learner writings yet. Inside, you will find more than 400 pages, and more than 180 story contributions—ranging from personal testimonials, to poetry, to works of fiction.

Through their commitment to the learning process, these Oklahomans have chosen a path of courage over one of fear, and in the process they teach all of us about the power of knowledge, hope, and hard work.

Bravo!

Susan McVey

Director, Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Advice

The Good Advice That My Sister Gave Me

Hello. My name is Agustin. I came to the United States for the first time four years ago, and I couldn't speak any English at all.

After a few months, my sister invited me to be part of the English literacy program. Now



Agustin Chavez

I know most of the basic things.

I had to go back to Mexico about a year ago, since I wanted to go see my newborn child. There I realized being a father is one of the greatest things in life, and seeing my kid made me realize how much I want his future to be a good one. So I know that I need to take my sister's advice and learn better English.

I had gone to class at the Catholic Church for a while and then to the Wednesday evening classes at the Methodist Church. I came back five months ago and I'm really looking forward to improving my English and being better able to reach all my goals for me and my family.

Thank you to my sister and all the other people and churches who have helped me. That's the best advice I ever had.

Agustin Chavez
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

About the Best Advice I Ever Had

My name is Angelica. I've been living in Weatherford for four years. I have been going to class for about three years. My family kept advising me to attend the WOLC class



Angelica Chavez

so I finally listened to that advice. It was the best advice I ever had. Roberta has given me the opportunity to learn English, and improve my reading skills.

I can feel the progress I've made with English, because I can talk to people with limited English and also understand what they are saying. For me it's a bit complicated, since I can understand it better than I can speak it.

I go to class two days a week, and if I ever have any questions, I know that Roberta, Mercedes or any of the other tutors are there for me to help me. I'm extremely grateful for their patience, and their time.

Thanks to all of you at WOLC and the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition for making this

possible and to the Methodist Church for the use of their facilities and for the delicious Wednesday evening meals for the students and the tutors.

Angelica Chavez
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Advice

The advice I wish I had taken was to stay in school. If I had stayed in school I would have my high school diploma and a good job. I would not have gotten in the trouble I did. But, on the other hand, I would not have met the most important person in my life, Blossom.

If I had stayed in middle school and not dropped out, I would have finished school by now. I would have gotten my diploma and

gone to college. I would have studied hard for a degree to get a really good paying job.

If I had stayed in school, I would have never met the dude that influenced me to ruin my life. This put me in jail and cost me a lot of money in tickets, and trouble with the law.

I wish I had listened to my Grandpa and stayed in school. But if I had, I would never have met all the people I have here at Mid-America Technology Center that I now call friends. Also, I would never have met Blossom, who is so special to me and the love of my life.

In spite of all that has happened in my life, if I had to go back and do it over again I would not change a thing.

Chaz Michael Belongie
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Advice I Wish I Had Taken

My mother, who is my role model, gave me advice I wish I had taken. She was always there for me, but I often ignored what she told me. However, as I got older, I realized that her advice was inspirational.

The very first piece of advice my mother gave me was that since no one is perfect, I should do my best at everything, and I can accomplish all I set out to do. She told me this during elementary school, but by middle school it seemed as if the advice was getting faint to me. It was then that I started doing as I wanted and not listening to her. When I was coming late to class, not doing homework, and not taking school seriously, I began to have failing grades. Friends became more important than concentrating on schoolwork. I had forgotten that trying my hardest was more important than having fun in the moment. Even though

I had not followed her first advice, my mother continued to offer me her wise words.

Then high school began, and she offered me some more good advice. She told me just to put my mind to it and remember that boys will be there once I walk across the stage. I took that advice and ran with it. I discovered that I enjoyed science and history, so my grades improved dramatically from middle school. However, about the middle of the school year, I started losing concentration on my studies and focusing on a boy. My mother's advice grew very faint again. By the end of my freshman year, I realized that all of the advice that I was receiving was in vain because I found out that I was pregnant.

My pregnancy did not stop my mother from giving me more of her knowledge and experience. She told me that this was not the end and that God was not through with me. She

said that I could get through this and still finish high school. She enrolled me in the Margaret Hudson School for mothers-to-be. I went there for a year, got restless, and decided I wanted to get my GED. Again there was more advice.

My mother next told me that I could complete my GED and that there was another person now counting on me, so I should do my best. Even though I was close to passing my GED and just needed to study the math portion more, money ruled over my education. I began to work with the mentally disabled and found my passion for helping the handicapped in the medical field. I worked at Hissom for three years until they closed and then worked for a private client for eight and a half years. When my client moved, I moved with her to a different agency. I worked with that agency for six years.

Now, it is twenty-two years and three children later, and I am finally taking my mother's advice because I am back pursuing my education. By attending a literacy class at the Tulsa Dream Center, I am continuing my studies to get my GED at last. This time I am not quitting until I have my diploma.

Demetricia Bell
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Advice

At first, I was afraid to enroll in this class; but now, I feel confident that I can succeed. I thought I wasn't smart enough to learn the things needed to pass the GED test. Coming to class has opened up new possibilities for me. I know now that I can learn, I can do, and I will succeed.

Coming to class has changed my life forever. A better education can help me improve my life greatly. I will be able to talk and interact with people better and with more confidence. With a better education, the possibilities of getting a better job are endless. With a better job, I can make more money for my family.

I am very proud of myself for making the choice to come back to school. It would have been easier to just give up. However, giving up would not have been an option because of my personality. Never give up and never surrender are my words of wisdom. I always do the very best that I can. I always keep trying until I finish. I am so glad I found the courage to come to class every week.

Now, I know I will succeed. By coming back to school, it has given me the confidence to go on. I have enrolled in five courses in the secu-

rity field. I have finished four of them. I know now I can succeed in anything I choose to do.

If someone asked me for my advice about going back to school, I would gladly tell them to please go back. The feeling of finishing something important, that is just for you, is a wonderful feeling. That feeling may just lead you into possibilities that will change your life forever.

Dolly Bond

OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Advice from Experience

If you asked me for advice, I would tell you about two things to do to be happier and more successful. Keep learning and take care of your body. After 54 years of life, I know the importance of these tips for myself and for you.

Going to school or trying to get a better education is good advice. It was not possible for me when I was a young Hispanic girl. Growing up in Tampico in the state of Tamaulipas of Mexico, I only got to finish the 9th grade. Later, my husband Adam Castro and I became migrant farmers in Oklahoma and raised four children. I was too busy to even think of going to school.

Twenty years ago when I was pregnant with my youngest child, I became diabetic. It is very important for me to eat no fried foods or sweets. That is easier said than done, but that is good advice for any diabetic. I try to eat oven-baked meats, fresh fruits and smaller amounts of food. Exercise also helps the body, but I wish I could do more exercise.

About eight years ago, I wanted to learn English. I began at the Altus Adult Education ESL program at the Booker Learning Center.



Elsa Castro

Mrs. Jeffries was my teacher. Then I went to the Great Plains Literacy Council, and Jessie Reynolds became my tutor. I

learned so much English from both women. I so much enjoyed going to the 2006 State Literacy Conference in Oklahoma City. I would suggest that adult students and tutors try to go to that kind of learning.

Due to health problems, I have had trouble getting to go to school the last couple of years. My 20-year-old daughter Mariana became a Great Plains Literacy Council tutor to help me. I really like the literacy DVDs to check out and study at home. Mariana is going to Lawton to college and helps me on the week-ends learn to read, write, and speak better

English. During the week, I listen and watch the DVD lessons.

I hope you know that this advice is what I have learned the hard way. This advice is for me as well as for you.

Elsa Castro
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Advice on Making Life Easier

Life is too short to not be able to read. You miss out on so much. Through the years, I have regretted not being able to read well. There are some ideas I want to share on what is helping me to read better and making life easier. These include making time to learn, using accommodations, and letting others help you.

My uncle once said that the day you quit learning you might as well die. You should



Jeff Bell

not stop trying to better your reading and writing. Sometimes I wish I could be a teenager again and really concentrate on taking advantage

of life's possibilities. There are so many things to try and learn. Too often people think they have plenty of time to improve or reach their goals. I am 43 years old, and I'm trying to go back to some basic reading to get it right. But, it will take time, and I'm willing to make the effort and try new ways. Take time to try new methods or materials as they might help.

I have been screened using the PowerPath tests. They showed me the need of being able to use more concentration with fewer distractions. I have visual stress syndrome, and that

has caused me trouble in progressing. I recommend using the aids or suggestions such as the colored overlays, special tinted glasses, stress relief balls, and avoiding bright lights. These are just some of the accommodations that will help me work on improving and coping with the letters. Have your eyes checked to know if you are seeing the words correctly.

Ask for help. People have helped me during my life, and I do appreciate them. First, I thank my supportive family like my mom Lavon, my stepfather Wayne Braun, and my dad Stacy. My past public school teachers such as Mrs. Walker at Mayes, Kansas, and Mrs. Kay at Granite, Oklahoma, were willing to help me. Literacy tutors in Texas and Oklahoma are wonderful volunteers who have helped me. Learn to rely on others for help. Don't dwell on the bad or your weaknesses, but look at your strengths.

These are some of my ideas that make life better. Keep on making reading part of it. Make time to improve, use reading accommodations, and get some literacy help from tutors and teachers.

Jeff Bell

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Advice

I want to give advice to someone who wants to learn new skills. We have a good proverb in Korea for this situation.

It is, “If you start something, you have accomplished half of it right at that time.” I like to say that. “Don’t worry, just try!”

Jennifer Lee

OSCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Joel's Story: The Best Advice I Ever Had

My name is Joel Jesus Olivas. I am 21 years old. When I came to Oklahoma, I didn't speak or read much English even though I studied for four years in Mexico. I stayed with my Aunt Inez and Uncle Arsenio for one year before I bought my own house which I am remodeling. I work for my uncle in the construction business of concrete work, fences, and building houses. My uncle encouraged and advised me to learn more English. He helped me find an English tutor, Roberta Slagell, who worked at WOLC. My sister and I took English classes at the Catholic Church every Saturday morning with her for about a year. Later, I started going to class three times a week with her. When my sister went to Weatherford High School, I helped with her math homework and that helped me to learn



Joel Jesus Olivas

more English. My tutor says I'm very good at math and very quick to learn anything, including English.

One reason I want to learn more English is because my goal for the future is to learn the construction business, and to be able to speak English with the customers. Being in the U.S. gives me more opportunities to make a better life for myself. Maybe sometime I'll want to get married and have my own family and I know speaking English will be an asset to these plans. I appreciate my uncle's advice to attend classes and learn conversational English.

I am making some other new friends now which helps me not to be so shy and lonely. Thank you to everyone who has helped me learn English, especially to my tutor, Roberta,

and to my uncle who gave me good advice about learning English. It's the best advice I have ever had.

Joel Jesus Olivas
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Teen Sexuality Advice

Teen sexuality is an issue that should involve teens, parents, family members, friends, and the community. Even at age 24, I know that advice about teenage sexuality is needed. Parents and their children need to have an open relationship and discuss sexuality, get correct information, and be involved together in activities.

It is an important topic that begins with a good communication between parents and children at an early age. Both parents should talk about sexuality with the children to show

the different perspectives of both males and females. This attitude begins with discussions about appropriate and inappropriate touches with even preschoolers. With close and open



LaDonna Brodnex

relationships with children, parents will find it easier to talk about these personal situations.

Health choices start with correct information about the body and sexuality. Parents should get books and pamphlets from the public library or health department to read to get current health facts. These sources can tell about how to explain sexuality to children. Community health agencies, church staff, and medical professionals can answer questions for parents to give correct information.

Parents need to monitor their children's activities. Involvement in school programs

such as sports, drama, studies, and music can be a way of keeping kids busy with fun and learning. Doing things together as a family is very important. Parental supervision of the Internet, phones, and TV can avoid problems with children before it is too late.

Learning about sexuality is a big responsibility for parents and teens. Having a close, open relationship between parents and their children, obtaining correct health information, and family activities together will help avoid teen sexuality problems.

LaDonna Brodnex
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Advice

We all make choices. We choose everyday what we wear or what we drive, but some of us make choices that bring about a huge

change in our lives. Through change, we can open the doors of possibilities and through those possibilities come second chances.

Some of my choices were not good ones like my choice to not finish high school. I am now finding out that without my high school diploma, I am very limited in career choices. I even have a certificate in medical billing and coding but that does not matter. Employers still want to see a diploma or GED.

Changes in our life are made when we first see our life could be better. Seeing that is the first step toward your goals and dreams. The second step is asking for help and finding out the possibilities. There is a whole world of possibilities. Adult Education classes are a start. These classes can be obtained through most libraries and some colleges offer them also.

Now, I am proud. I am proud of myself for taking the step to get my GED. The possibilities of a good paying job will be open to me. Second chances come with making the choice of going back to school and that demonstrates courage. The ability to put forth the time and effort for your future takes strength from within. We make choices everyday and choices bring changes; then possibilities open to you and you are given your second chance. My advice to anyone who wants to make changes and learn a new skill is: “Walk through the door of change and see the possibilities. Second chances are around the corner. Reach for the stars.”

Lana Lewis
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Advice

Advice I wish I had taken from my family a long time ago was when they told me my ex-boyfriend was not worth fighting with every-day. At times, you need to listen to people that care about you.

The day my Mom tried to tell me he wasn't worth it, I didn't listen to her. Then one day he put his hands on me and hurt me very bad. I tried to leave, but every time, I would go back to him. My family kept telling me to leave but it was hard to leave the person that you really thought you were going to spend the rest of your life with.

So, I left one day and I didn't talk to him for two months. But, I saw him one day and we started talking again and I went back. Well, one night I went out with some friends and he didn't like it. When I came home, he put

his hands on me again and he wouldn't let me leave or call for help. When he finally went outside, I found the phone and called my best friend and told her I needed help bad. I told her to come get me and bring the cops with her. So she came with the cops.

They walked in the house and saw me and saw the marks I had all over my body. They took him to jail that night. The cops stayed there so I could get all my stuff to leave and never come back.

I should have taken my family's advice and none of this would have ever happened. Since I have been away from him, I have had a little girl and I am back in school again. My life is so much better. My advice to all girls out there is don't let a guy put their hands on you and hurt you. You're better than that and prettier than that. If you or your friends are in a rela-

tionship like what I went through, get out fast or they will kill you.

Leanna Pyle
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

New Hope for the Future!

In my life, I didn't have much of a chance to get an education. I left school at age 12 to help my mother raise and feed three children. I had no other choice as my dad left and abandoned us. I went with a cousin who owned a carnival, and worked so hard. I cried every night because I never knew how hard it would be to be away from my mother. I missed my mother and got very depressed. I would come home and visit but had to get the courage to go back to the carnival. My salary went to my mom. They were hard times for me but I worked to get my mom a piece of land with a little house for her to live.

At 17, I decided to leave the carnival. I came back home and worked as a seamstress until I got married at 21. Now, I am a housewife with five children and I am learning to better myself for my family's sake.

I am married to a very supportive man. He has helped me succeed and supports my learning. We came to Altus, Oklahoma. I began to hear about the Literacy Program from friends. Deep inside me I wanted to learn English. With my children in school, I felt unable to help them succeed. I didn't want my children to fail and be kept behind another year so I decided to go to school myself to be able to help them with their homework. I wanted to be an example to them. I wanted them to be proud of their mom. I tell my children this story so that they understand how hard it is to be without an education. They can't get discouraged in school or in anything



Margarita Hernandez

they do. My advice goes to everyone who might listen.

I heard from friends about the Great Plains Literacy Council. They

gave me one-on-one lessons. I loved it. My tutor is Elsa L. Garcia and she has been very patient. I am very grateful to her because she encourages me and tells me I am so smart. I give special thanks to her and the Great Plains Literacy Council for their effort to help so many people like me. I am even learning to write in cursive. I love it! It feels good to know that I can write my name in cursive. My children, too, are very supportive and tell me all the time, "Yes, you can!" when I say I can't say it or do it right.

My advice to all of you is to never give up. Learn as much as you can! My life was hard

at a young age. I would never want any child to work as hard as I did. I want all children to enjoy their childhood and to learn as much as they can in school. School is so important in life. My life of hard knocks has taught me to be strong and I keep telling myself, “I can do this.” People of all ages, do not give up, even if you sound strange, say it, someone will understand. Practice, practice, practice and you won’t be an illiterate!

Margarita Hernandez
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Learn English

I am from Mexico and have lived in Altus, Oklahoma, for nine years. When in Mexico, I only went to school through 6th grade. Spanish is my native language. Now that I am in the United States, I wanted to learn English.

Friends told me about free tutoring at the Altus Library with the Great Plains Literacy Council. I thought it would be very difficult, and that I wouldn't learn. But, I knew that if I didn't go, I would never learn the English



Maria G. Martinez Nunez

language. I went to the library in November 2009, and was glad to get another Spanish-speaking tutor, Elsa L. Garcia. We meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. She started me with the ABCs and now I am reading in Lesson 3 in Laubach Reading Level 1. I have been reading, writing and speaking words in English, but it is hard for me. My advice to others is to never give up on learning something new.

Learning English will also help me with communicating with others. My Hispanic husband

speaks Spanish and English, and we speak to each other in Spanish. When we go out in public, I need to know how to speak English and talk to others in English.

Knowing English is also important at work. I am employed at Bar-S Foods Company. My job is cleaning the offices. I have to vacuum the floors, empty trash, wipe off the desks, clean the plant area, and do other housekeeping duties. I like my job and knowing how to speak English would help me more at my job.

I advise other non-English speakers to learn English to better themselves, to communicate better, and to do better at work. Have patience, don't give up, and keep on trying to be the best that you can be.

Maria G. Martinez Nunez
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Filtering Advice

I chose advice because it fits my story. I have to rely on other advice for a reason. I have a disability—a learning disability. I am not able to read and write well and I have a hard time always understanding what I read. Because of this, I struggle to get past a certain level and it is difficult for me to do certain tasks such as reading mail, filling out forms, reading prescriptions and many other things that require reading and writing skills. So, I do have to ask for a lot of advice.

It's good to get advice, but I started to think that I would like to be able to read and write and understand things on my own. Just think, if everyone dies and I was the only one left alive how would I survive? See, there are different types of advice that can be given to you. There are different categories.

One type of advice is the one you depend on when you can't read or write. I call this "unfiltered" because you have to take it all. The other type of advice is the one where you ask



Marion Morris

for opinions and help from others but you can choose to use it or not because you already have an ability to do it mostly on your own. Most of my life I have depended on others unfiltered advice. I don't mind, but how would I get any other information without depending on another person? After I realized that I could filter advice, I had these experiences at school. My teacher advised me that I must learn the multiplication tables. I had never learned them before so I took her advice unfiltered. That turned out to be good advice. My teacher also advised us to keep a journal. She

said it would help our spelling, reading, and punctuation. I suspected this advice would work and so I did it. I knew that it might be a very long process. Since being here I have had to rely on lots of advice and it's helped me through my tough times.

Marion Morris
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Advice

Many people give advice, but the best advice I ever got was to never give up in life. The reason why is because you'll never accomplish anything if you always give up. Another reason is you have to push yourself if you want to become successful. My last reason is if you give up all the time you'll be used to failure.

I believe if you give up in life you'll never accomplish anything. A lot of people in this

world are quick to give up. You have to push yourself no matter how hard the situation is. My grandpa has always told me to set my mind on something and never give up even if you fail a couple of times. In the end, you'll accomplish what you set your mind on.

If you want to become a successful person, you have to push yourself. There will be some people motivating you, but you hold the key to being successful. Some people would kill to see you fail. But if you keep pushing yourself, and you don't listen, one day you'll be successful.

If you always give up, then failure will become your best friend. My grandma once said, "If all your life you give into failure, you'll never make it in life." I believe that she's right. You'll never have what it takes to be successful if all you know is failure.

The best advice I ever got was to never give up in life. You can accomplish anything you set your mind to. You have to push yourself to be successful and never give up, or you'll get used to failure.

Meagan Aguirre
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Good Advice

My name is Mercedes Piñon. I am from Chihuahua, Mexico. My family and I have lived in Weatherford for seven years. I have been married to Alberto Piñon for twenty-three years. I have one son, Alberto Jr., a daughter-in-law, Ivana, two daughters, Alexia and Cinthia, and a grandson, Dylan. We enjoy spending time together as a family playing cards and dominoes. I would like for my children to have the opportunity to get a good education and to go to college.

One of my favorite hobbies is reading, especially historical and romance novels. One of my favorite authors is Isabel Allende. I go



Mercedes Piñon

to English classes because I want to speak better English. My tutors are Opal Crall, Roberta Slagell, Linda Pye, and Jeannie Ellinger. My tutors are important to me because they can explain things to me so I can read, write, and speak better English. I assist WOLC with translating into Spanish and by contacting other ESL learners about events. Now I am teaching an English With No Barriers class two days a week. I am also on the WOLC Board of Directors as a student representative. Each year, I attend the state conference, sometimes with Roberta Slagell, but this past year with Rebecca Hightower. Also, each year

I make tortillas to sell at the Annual WOLC Bake Sale.

When I first moved to Oklahoma, I didn't know any English. I knew I needed to speak English, because English is the language spoken in Oklahoma. Then a friend told me about the literacy program where I could learn to speak, read, and write English. I was excited about going to classes because I knew learning English would open up many possibilities for me and my family. My children quickly learned to speak English, and I wanted to be able to communicate in English with them, their friends, and their teachers. Also, I love to cook and I wanted to be able to read recipes and exchange recipes with my tutors and English-speaking friends. Now I can read and speak enough English that I can exchange recipes and cook using some American recipes and cookbooks. Also, I have many friends

that I would not have if it were not for English classes. I was proud of myself when I could understand my tutors better and could go grocery shopping and read labels and talk to the store clerks. Now that I can read English better, I want to read more books in English. I want to continue taking English classes and learn to speak better English so I can fulfill my dream of working as a nurse in a hospital or a nursing home. I am grateful to my friend who gave me good advice to attend English classes because it has opened up many possibilities for my future.

Mercedes Piñon
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Advice

My advice to someone who wants to learn to read is to find a tutor or friend that is willing to help you. It will help you in life if you learn

to read. Being a good reader will help you find a job, read signs in the community, and help you when you are on the Internet.

I can read a lot better since I began my tutoring sessions. I feel more confident.

Ray Current
Ardmore Literacy Council

Choices, Possibilities, and Advice

It was only a few years back when I decided to make my own choices concerning my 401(K) retirement account. Without any formal education on economics, very little experience trading stocks, and finding myself being emotionally involved with the fluctuations of the stock market, I had become vulnerable to what is often called “risky business.”

To be a true stock broker, one is required by law to be certified with a formal education and years of studying the fundamentals of how world events affect economics. You need a specialized educational background in statistics, stock backgrounds, international politics, and asset management.

My own experience as a day trader was exciting, profitable most of the time, but it was gambling. It gave me a false sense of success. I believed I had a lucky touch at picking stocks before they began to move. Manipulation of volume is illegal because it can and did cause traders like me to follow a false lead and lose a lot of money. When considering making any stock trade, be sure to do your homework.

It is very easy to become emotional when trading your own stocks without any outside advice from a broker, who I would have to pay a premium for information that I thought I

already was aware of. I have countless stories of runs of success and falls of failure.

Many people tried to give me advice to not put myself in a position of managing my own portfolio of my life's savings. The results of my ignoring advice left me in an embarrassing position of being broke and owing the IRS. If I had to do it all over again, I would hire a well seasoned high profile professional stock brokerage firm to manage my money. My criteria would require lots of education, experience, and a broker who would not become emotionally involved with what goes on down on Wall Street.

Ricky Brown
Norman Adult Learning Center

Ronald's Story

My name is Ronald G. I have been an adult learner for three years. When I began, I was fifty-nine years old. When I found out about the Literacy Council, I was nervous and embarrassed to talk to people about not being able to read. Going to the State Learner's Conference, I met other adults like me. I saw that I was not alone and that made me feel better. A lot of people out here have problems learning to read. Lots of programs can help you if you really want help!

When I first became an adult learner, I could not read well. Working with a tutor twice a week for two or three hours a day, I can now read. I can read menus, the TV Guide, newspapers, and my Bible. This program has made

my life better and I recommend it for anyone who wants to do better in life.

Ronald G

Ponca City Area Literacy Council

Advice

The best advice I ever had was from my parents. They told me all the time, be an honest and friendly person with myself and with other people.

Sarai Lara

OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Advice

I wasn't much of a reader when I was in high school; it wasn't until I finished high school that I really got into reading. It was a tutor that had given me the courage to read my first book with a few simple words, "Read what

you like and if it is a chapter book, try reading the first three chapters. If you don't like it ... you don't have to read it. No one holds you to it.”



Shanna Hardy

From that day on, no one has seen me without a book in my hand. A lot of my friends ask me how I read so much...some of them even started calling me a bookworm. I never thought I would be called that in a million years. But, I smile and tell them what my tutor told me and keep reading.

Shanna Hardy
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., Oklahoma City

Three Pieces of Advice

Throughout my life my mother has always been involved with all six of her children. She

never gave up on any of us, and still today, she helps me with reading and understanding documents. I also value three pieces of advice that she gave me as I was growing up. She told me to stay in school, wait to have children, and stay out of trouble. I wish I had listened to the advice she gave me then, but I learned the hard way instead.

Even though my mother told me to stay in school, I dropped out in the ninth grade because I got pregnant with my daughter. I think this was due in part to molestation during my preteen years. After two years of worrying about constant sexual abuse, I could not focus on my education because my mind was concentrating on what was going on at home. No young girl should have to go through this type of situation. When a person you trust betrays you, it turns your world upside down and makes you violent, angry, and promiscu-

ous. I stopped paying attention and doing work in my classes, so I was put in LD classes, but I was already too far behind. I did not learn anything, and the teachers just passed me right on to the next grade anyway. It was not until I had four children that I was able to return to school by attending the TANF literacy class. I now have five children and am working toward my GED. With the knowledge I have gained in class, I can now help my own children with their school work, since they are having some of the same learning difficulties that I experienced.

When I quit school, I did not have a job and was still living with my mother. Six months after I had my first child, I wanted to live on my own because I did not want to abide by her rules, such as her curfew time. I thought I was grown because I was a mother, but I was only sixteen and still immature. My older sister and

I got an apartment with my mother's consent, but when my sister had her baby and moved out, I ended up getting back with my ex-boyfriend, who supported us with drug money. When he went to prison for the second time, I could not make ends meet, so I stole whatever I needed to survive. When I got caught stealing baby supplies at Wal-Mart, I spent two weeks in a juvenile detention center and was sentenced to do 80 hours of community service. I still did not wait to have more children, and I did not use the best judgment in choosing my boyfriends, so I have had the main responsibility for their support and upbringing. If I had followed my mother's advice, I would have graduated first and then planned to have a child when I had a job and could afford the living expenses.

In addition to waiting to have children, I should have listened to my mother's third

piece of advice, which was to stay out of trouble. She warned me that grand larceny would be a felony. My shoplifting was petit larceny and a misdemeanor, and even after my punishment, I continued my criminal ways until I started the TANF class. It helped me provide for my children money-wise and also helped me learn what I had missed out on in school. When I was in school, I would fight and skip class because of the bullies who ridiculed the LD students. I even wanted to be suspended so I could avoid the other students seeing me in those classes.

Today, I am grateful to my mother for the advice she gave me as I was growing up, and the advice she gives me now about raising my children. I use her wisdom to advise my own children to stay in school and keep out of trouble. When they get older, I will also en-

courage them to wait to have their own kids and complete their education.

Terra Johnson
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Wendell's Advice

Hi, my name is Wendell Wortham. I am twenty-five years old. I have a wonderful wife named Britney and a newborn son named Kamari. I hope some of the advice I have may help someone.

I have been with the Oklahoma City literacy program for about six years. One thing I can say is “don’t ever give up,” which is the most important thing. Most people would have given up if they were in this program as long as I have been. Times get hard for everyone but you have to take one day at a time, and keep your head held high. You can accom-

plish anything you want to if you just believe in yourself. Not knowing how to read well, I never would have thought I would be able to have the job I have, a wonderful wife that stands by me no matter what, and a beautiful baby boy. But guess what? I do! I have always believed in myself.

My tutor's name is Mrs. Dickens. She is a wonderful tutor and person. There have been many times when I had to stop and ask myself, "How bad do you really want to be able to read and spell?" Being able to read and spell is a dream that I have always had and I can't let that dream die. Sometimes it gets hard for me, but I keep moving forward and I will never give up. I pray and pray about my reading; and with the help of God, Mrs. Dickens, and my never giving up, it is getting a lot better.

You may be embarrassed to talk about your problems with some people, but I opened up



Wendell Wortham

to my wife and she started helping me. When I would get off work she would have work ready for me to do, like spelling words with a quiz, or my writing sentences with the words. My wife has been a big help. She believes in me and stands by my side no matter what. You can't just work with your tutor for one day a week or however many days you see them. You have to work on your reading every day. That's the only way you will get better. It may take another person to help you besides your tutor for the times when you are at home, but a lot of it you need to do yourself. Challenge yourself. Go to the library and pick up some books. Start out with something easy and then keep challenging yourself by getting books that are a little harder. Don't give up

because it seems too hard, because it is going to be hard, but eventually it will start getting a little easier.

I want to be able to help my son with his work when he gets older, so my goal is to be able to read and spell well by the time he starts school. I help myself by trying to read to him every day. Just remember to always keep your head up. If you are always looking at the ground you are going to feel low, and when you feel low you will never accomplish anything. If your head is held high you can do anything. Always remember, even though you have problems and feel down sometimes, there is always someone who has it worse than you, and things could be a lot worse for you. So just have faith and don't ever give up, and your dreams can come true.

Wendell Wortham
Oklahoma City Literacy Council

Choices

Choices

When I was 16 years old, I made the choice of getting married, and I am happy to say



Adriana Pedraza

that next year will be my 25th anniversary. Because of this decision, however, I didn't finish high school, but I have had much happiness in my life. My husband has been able to provide a very comfortable life throughout the years.

One thing that made me feel sad though, is that I could not help my son, Ivan, with his homework when he was in high school. Now, my second son, Daniel, is going to start high school next year. This presented me with two choices. I could do the same thing that I did with Ivan and just sit back and watch, or I could prepare myself and learn right along

with Daniel. I have chosen to go back to school.

Right now, I am taking classes to get my GED diploma. This is my first goal, and after this, I'm going to continue my education. Needless to say, my children are very proud of me. Ivan, who is now in college, helps me a lot, and he is very patient with me. I am very glad that right now there are so many choices for people like me that want to better themselves through education.

Adriana Pedraza
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Friends Who Made a Choice

My friends Radha and Krishna are in India. We grew up together from the beginning of school to college. We played together, and we

did our homework together. After some time when I was in high school, I moved to another place for my study. Radha's parents also sent her to another place for high school. Krishna stayed at the same school where we had met.

Well, Radha and Krishna had fallen in love with each other. I will tell you about their love story. Radha went abroad to England for study because her father sent her. When Radha and Krishna met the last time before she went abroad, they gave some gifts to each other.

Radha was gone for several years. When she went back to India, she found him, but she didn't know his face because, after a long time, they had changed. She couldn't recognize his face, but one day she went to a party, and there he sang a song, and she saw her gift around his neck. When she last saw him before she went abroad, she gave him a watch

and small music box on a chain. So, they got together again.

After finding each other, they told their parents about their love and said they wanted to get married. But their parents couldn't accept their desire for marriage. So, because Radha and Krishna loved each other, they left their family and went to a temple and got married to each other. Then they lived a happy married life in India. Sometimes I call them, and sometimes they call me. It was a difficult choice to leave their families, but they did because of their love.

Aeksha Patel
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Haiku

Fish, the swimming queen

Water is a fish's life

Frightened when it's touched.

Aeksha Patel
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

The choice I made to come to the adult learning center to further my education was one of the best choices I have ever made. I believe it will be a good choice when I graduate because I will have completed one of life's first major challenges—to graduate. I want a job in nursing. I enjoy helping people. I really like to work with seniors that have dementia.

My grandmother suffered from this disease, and I watched her fade away a little at a time. It was so difficult. She would have good days and bad days. I think it is important for people with this disease to know that the people

around them understand. This affects not only them, but everyone around them.

If I could just be there for one person, the choices I had made will not be so painful.

I cannot imagine what it would be like to not remember family members and friends.

I would not be able to remember what I had done with my life, how I met my husband.

This includes my first date with him and the birth of our children. I want to remember why I wanted my two children and how it felt to carry them and have them.

When I looked at my first born for the first time, a thought went through my mind of how beautiful she was. I do not ever want to forget that!

My choices in life have affected me and my family very much, but since I have been in the

GED class, my choices are getting much better. I am beginning to feel great about myself.

Amber Valera
Norman Adult Learning Center

A Chinese Girl Choosing to Marry an American

When I got to the Los Angeles airport in 2008, a friend of mine went to pick me up and take me to my new apartment. On the freeway, I saw the skies were very blue, and the air was fresh. Trees and grass were beautiful green. It looked like a sea of green.

Another friend of mine is an acupuncture doctor named Lee, and he is Chinese. Lee owns the acupuncture place, and so he and I had a talk about how to open a new acupuncture place. So, I went to visit that place often.

One day, I went there again, and Lee told me, “There is a friend of mine who comes from Arizona, and his name is Don.” Don went for acupuncture frequently because he liked to play sports and sometimes got injured. That day, Don, who was single, was in the treatment room for his neck and shoulder. Lee said to me, “Would you like to make some American friends? I’d like to introduce you to someone.” So I said, “OK. That’s great!”

Lee then asked Don, “Are you dating now, Don?” “No, no more dating,” Don said. “That is too bad because I have a beautiful friend from China,” Lee said. “I’m not going to date a Chinese,” Don answered, but when Don opened the door and he saw me, he told Lee, “I think I’m interested now.”

So Doctor Lee introduced us. When I first saw Don, he caught my eye. He was attractive and handsome. My heart was beating fast. It was

like a dream! I wondered if Don would like me because I spoke little English, and I was from China. When our eyes met, I knew he loved me. After we talked for a while, Don asked me out to lunch. Then he took me to a Chinese restaurant, and that showed me he cared about Chinese. We sat there and had dinner and we stayed for a long time talking about every topic.

We spent most of our time together and went to some movies. We also went shopping, and he always had a nice smile. He was respectful to everyone, and when we went shopping, he was helping old people, putting their walkers into their cars. He liked helping people in a lot of different ways.

Then Don went back to Arizona, and then came back to California. After several trips he asked me to move to Arizona, and I said, "OK." Absolutely, I wanted to be with him the

rest of my life. I had prayed to meet a special man, and I did.

Then, I said bye to Doctor Lee and the apartment owner. Three months later, Don and I got married in Las Vegas on October 18th, 2008. We are very happy together now. Thank you, Jesus, for helping me to find a very special man.

Amy Daye
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Things I Like

I like to go to Russ' house for one week.

I like to visit the temple. I learn about everything.

I like to help Gary in the park.

I like my new little black and white cat.

I like to read a book that is funny.



Anna Trozera

I like to watch Handy Mandy on TV to learn Spanish

I like to go to my mom's house to see my sis.

I like to work at my Dad's Mug, a restaurant.

I like the warm summer in July.

Anna Trozera
Pushmataha County Literacy Council

Ben's Experiences and Choices after Arriving in Oklahoma

When Ben was new in America, he had to make some choices. He came to Oklahoma speaking only French. He brought his 8-year-old son, Mike, with him.

They found an apartment in Edmond, Oklahoma. They lived there for only two months when a neighbor's big dog jumped over the fence. The dog ran toward Ben's son. Ben put his body between the dog and his son. The dog stopped when it saw Ben shouting at it. Ben was going to punch it in the nose, but the dog turned around. Ben took his son upstairs. They stayed in the apartment all weekend. Then Ben found another apartment close to the school his son was going to attend. It was later that Ben knew he made a good choice.

Soon, Ben had to buy a car to get around town. So he called up his friend who told him about a Honda salesman who spoke French. Ben called and told the salesman if he could come over to pick him up, Ben would buy a new car from him. The salesman said he

would be right over because he wanted this new customer to buy a car.

Ben had several choices to make when he faced some new experiences. He was happy to make good choices. He was glad he could save his son from a dangerous dog, and he was happy to buy a new car, his first one in America, from someone who understood his language.

Anouar Hassan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

In my life, I have made many choices, some wrong and some right. Many of the choices made, I did not stop to think about the outcome. They, in turn, became wrong choices. Some of the other choices I have made, I

ended up thinking them through and they turned out good.

One of the many wrong choices I made was to move to Illinois with my mother. I was only fourteen years old and had no real chance to voice my opposition to the move. If she had not decided to move in with her new “significant other,” I would not be in the situation I am in now.

Because she made me move with her, it led to my getting pregnant. Because of the pregnancy, I had to drop out of school. If I had not been made to go there, I honestly believe that I would be doing much better now than I am.

I am trying to put my life back together, but it is very difficult. I have two wonderful children that I would not take anything for, but it would be much easier for me if I had to just worry about myself.

I am now enrolled in the GED classes so I can get the education that I was denied by my mother. I need to better myself for my children. They need to understand the importance of getting a good education. I do not want them to obtain their education the way I have had to get mine.

Ashley Cline
Norman Adult Learning Center

My Choices In My Life

Hello, my name is Ashley. I'm 25 years old. My choices in my life have changed a lot since I had my kids. I have two of them. They're both girls. My oldest is 3 years old. Her name is Makayla. My youngest is 11 months; almost one year on May 29, 2010. Her name is Mikelanne. Before they came along, I was into a lot of things like hanging out with the wrong

crowd. I made bad choices in friends. They always got me in trouble with my grandma.

Ashley John
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., Oklahoma City

Choices

Choices can break you or support you. In the past, making good choices were never a strength for me. Some of my choices came



Bobby Morris

from lessons that I had to figure out: being homeless for 3 years and not letting life bring me to my knees, keeping my head up, and standing here today being me.

Choices are a part of our lives the same way that hours are minutes and seconds. Now, I am here, 38 years old, and letting you know

that just because one choice was bad, don't give up. I have chosen to take care of my kids and support them with my love and thoughts, even though I don't get to see them. I also have made some great choices, like taking control of my life, getting a better job, and getting my GED. You can make choices that work out to bring you good things, so let choices be your teaching tool in life.

Bobby Morris
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Good Choices I Have Made

Everyone makes choices, and some of the choices are good and some are bad. I have made both kinds. My story is about some of the good choices I have made with the help of my parents and other counselors.

One of the best choices was to request help with reading and life skills. My reading tutor, Ann, helped me, using the Laubach books.

Another good choice I made is to go to church at Emanuel Baptist Church where my Sunday school teacher is Cheryl. Going to church encourages me to listen to good advice and make good choices.

I was born in Clinton, Oklahoma, on a cold day in December. My parents live in Yukon, and my sister and a brother live in Oklahoma City. Another brother lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his family. Several years ago, I made the choice to live in Weatherford in my own little house. My mother helped me decorate it. I can walk to church and to the grocery store and the Dollar Store to shop.

I had a pet cat one time, which I really liked. She was black, very pretty, and had a sweet

disposition. But I had to make the choice to give her away because I became allergic to her. She made me sneeze and made my eyes water.

I work at Alan Markum Training Center four days a week, which was a good choice for me because I have friends there. I have learned that if I make good choices, it makes my life better and happier.

Brenda Embree
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

How Choices Affect My Daughter

I hope my daughter Trista makes better choices than I did when I was younger. When she came into my life, I realized that I needed to be a good example for her. In order to be a good example, I had to get my life on track. I decided to go back to school, get my GED,

and get trained for a job that could support
the two of us. One day I sat down and wrote
this poem about my daughter:

Miss Trista Marie
my beautiful baby girl
so precious and wonderful
my whole entire world
her laugh makes me so happy
her smile warms my soul
she lets me know I did something right
she came from me
I gave her life
her big blue eyes
so loving and true
I cherish every minute
I know she does, too
her golden blonde hair shines like a halo
my perfect little angel

my light in any dark place that I go
her tiny smile beams
so happy and bright
she makes every day better
her strength amazes me
in all the hard times we've been through
my bundle of joy
she is in every thought I have
and in everything that I do.

As you have read in my poem, my daughter is the best thing that happened to me. She is my joy, my strength and my hope. She is what has encouraged me the most to go back to school. I want a good life for her, and I want the choices I make to help, not hurt, her. Now, I know that I must succeed not only for myself but for my precious daughter. Then, I can encourage her to not make the mistakes that I

made, and support her in the way that I want to.

Brittany King
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Choice

The Act of Choosing or Selecting Something

I have made many choices in my lifetime: wrong ones as well as right ones. The wrong choices in my life started when I was 13. I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I got into drugs and I dropped out of school. I was sent to drug rehab. This made me more rebellious. I got out doing the same thing that I went there for. I was much worse the second time around.

Everything changed when I met the love of my life, Eddie. He helped me get off drugs.

We got married in 1991, but our lives took a turn for the worse in 1999. We both got on drugs and we both got into trouble with the law and he was sent to prison for 5 years. He only did 2 years. When he got out, six months later, I was pregnant with a baby girl.

She was born March 12, 2002.

My life totally changed. It did not change my husband. He got into more trouble and is back in prison.

As for me, I am drug free, and am studying for my GED. I will make choices all through my life. I will choose more right ones than wrong ones. My children depend on me for that.

Chena Thompson
Norman Adult Learning Center

Changing to a New Country

About two years ago when I came to Oklahoma from Taiwan, everything changed in my life. I was nervous. I was afraid. And, I was excited.

I was nervous talking with people because my English was not good. At first, I worried what I would do if somebody asked me something. First, I had to translate it in my mind. When my kids were sick, we went to see a doctor, but we didn't make an appointment, so we couldn't see a doctor then. We learned that we had to make an appointment first.

I was afraid to drive, and I didn't know how to get directions because I never drove before. I had to practice driving over and over in order to get a driver's license. I could read and look up words in the dictionary. But, I worried

about getting lost and asking someone where I was and how to get directions.

Now, I'm excited and enjoying starting a new life here. Finally, I have adjusted to living here and learning to talk with someone. I drive everywhere and I know how to ask for directions.

I'm so glad my family and I chose to come to Oklahoma. It was a good choice to change countries.

Christin Chen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

Throughout the course of my existence, my choices have altered my life and those of my family. My choices regarding certain issues have changed the course that my life could have taken.

One of the choices that I made was when I was growing up as a teenager. It never occurred to me that an education was important. I did not attend high school and I did not get the education that I now need to be able to succeed in life. At that point in my life, my friends were more important to me than getting an education. This led me down the wrong path.

A few months after I dropped out of school, I got pregnant. I then had to find a job to provide for me and my child. Years later, I had two more children, which made my situation even more difficult. Raising my children on my own was and is very hard. It took me years to understand that dropping out of high school was a very bad choice.

After a while, I had two choices. One of the choices that I had was that I could obtain two part-time jobs so that I could try to support

my children and myself. The other choice was that I could attend an Adult Learning Center and obtain my General Education Development certificate and, in turn, get a better job.

I therefore decided that going back to school would be the best thing for me to do. I decided this because I was tired of going on in life without the education I need to be a successful person.

I have been through many hard times, but I know that the education that I am gaining will put me in a place to get a good job. This in turn will help me support my children better.

Claudia Olacio
Norman Adult Learning Center

This Is My History

My name is Esler and I'm From Guatemala. I came to the United States originally just for two years to obtain my dream of buying a car, because I needed a car to get to college. I didn't like walking to the bus because it was far away. I also have back problems that bother me when I walk.

I have now been here for 9 years. I have my car, and I like everything else I have, but I have little money. I don't miss my family and friends too much because now I have a new family and new friends. I am happy in my English class with Mrs. Sonda, and everything in my life is wonderful right now.

Esler Beletzuy
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

We all make choices in our lives, some good and some bad. But at some point in our lives, we have to make the right choices, not just for our own well-being, but for everybody else's too.

There are many different things we have to choose from, such as whether or not to take life for all it's worth. Do we try to make it easier on ourselves by making easy choices and get in trouble? I was one that made wrong choices growing up.

While I was making wrong choices, I was only hurting myself. It made my life a lot harder than what it needed to be. I was on a never ending road of bad choices, I guess. It was that I just didn't care.

One day, I had the choice to make things right, to make it easier on myself and every-

one else, so I did just that. Since that day, I've made right choices.

That right choice made life much better and easier. What I'm trying to say, is choose carefully what you are doing in life, because you never know what is on the other side of that choice.

Ethan Wilkerson
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Choices

Today, I'm currently enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes at OIC in Oklahoma City. I also volunteer in "Prison Ministry and Recovery" with friends of my home group, the unregistered fourth Dimension group, and also my church, "Fairview Baptist Church" in Oklahoma City.

Hi, my name is Felicia Nero. I'm 36 years old and I've made lots of choices in my life, some bad and some good. I started out when I was 14 years old, making choices. I began to hang out with people much older than me; I decided then that I was all grown up and nobody could tell me what to do. Then one day, I went to jail for selling drugs.

Afterwards, I left Oklahoma and moved to New York City where I began to prostitute; I loved the money. While there, I began drinking alcohol and depended on it so that I could get the job done. That was in 1989. Eventually, I moved back home and opened up a Furniture & Clothing Store. I had a partner who was addicted to "Bingo," so that didn't last. Also, I purchased my first house for \$80,000. I ended up selling after 2 years in 1994. At this time in my life, I'm just spending money and living life.

In 1998, I had my experience with using drugs.

I moved from state to state. I always dreamed of going back to school, so I enrolled at Rose State



Felicia Nero
(before and after)

College. My father had paid my tuition. I ended up dropping out because, at the time, I was taking pills. My father was sick with cancer, and I'm his only child. Of course, I was spoiled. I could do no wrong in his eyesight. At the time, I had moved to "Vegas" for a year, until my sister told me that my dad had fallen twice, so I came back home. Eventually, he passed away on Easter Sunday, 2000.

I felt at that time I had nothing to live for, and then I moved to Dallas, TX, still using drugs. I ended up getting two drug charges,

and getting two years in Texas Department of Corrections.

I came back home to Oklahoma City on my release. In February 2003, I began working at Wal-Mart for about 3 years. Then, I had the option of relapse, another choice to live or die. In 2005, I ended up pregnant with my only child, Reagan R. Berryhill. I was still getting high and drinking, neglecting me and my baby.

Eventually, the Department of Human Services (DHS) got involved. My sister ended up taking temporary custody of Reagan. I had to sit down and get it together. I had to start loving myself, so that I could love my child. It still took a couple of years to do that, but I did it after a lot of soul searching. I was able to get custody of my baby girl, and today, I'm enrolled in the Adult Basic Education classes in order to get my GED.

I have always been told that it's never too late to learn, and I'm determined to do what I have to do to earn my GED Diploma. I was told that OIC was a good program for Adult Basic Education. I've made a decision to give it a try. Today, I'm loving my classes and I am learning everything I need to learn to accomplish my goal so I can make a difference in people's lives.

At this point I have traveled many miles in my life journey. My mind-set is very positive. I know nothing can hold me back now. If I can do it, you can too!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Good luck!!

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.” Proverbs 3: 5–6

Felicia D. Nero
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

My name is Henry Allen. I was born December 2, 1989 in Clinton, Oklahoma. My



Henry Allen

Mother has encouraged me to take reading lesson from the WOLC. She drives me to Weatherford for reading lessons. I

have also been able to enroll in GED classes in Clinton. Lynda Richert is my teacher, and she encourages me also. Patsy Chasteen, my WOLC tutor, helps me a lot. By making the choice to improve my reading, I hope to get a job and attend vo-tech or college.

Henry Allen
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Clinton

Choices

Hello, my name is Hissell Ball of Peruvian nationality. I have lived in this country for 5 years and attend English class at the Midwest City library with Erma, my teacher for 8 months, where we formed a nice group with people from different countries, in which we share ideas and other things.

Before coming to this country, I was in college. I studied in college. I have a bachelors in tourism administration. I chose this career because I really like the city where I was born and raised. It is a city that has a lot of tourism. I am from a small family. I grew up with my mom and grandma. I learned many things from them. They are the engine that helped to give me life as a person and a professional.

Life gave me the opportunity to leave my country and come to the United States where

I met a very special person, who is now my husband. We got married 5 years ago. Now I have a 4 year-old daughter and I have a stepson and a stepdaughter.

The first year, I was getting used to my new life here—the meals, customs, people, traditions, climate, and language. I missed my country and my family, but in the end I am now adapting to this country. I love it! It gives me the opportunity to progress as a person and professional. Every day I learn new things.

For now, I am just dedicated to my house, and learning more English, because it is the main base to get ahead in this country. Maybe in the future, I would like to work in order to experience something new.

During the time I am living here, I have the opportunity to meet new people from different countries and can start good friendships.

I like to know and learn more about them and their countries, but sometimes find it difficult when their language is different.

Hissell Ball
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Escape to the Unknown

Before the war, life was simple. I could think about the livelihood of our family. However, most people were deprived of their simplest rights, and many things were forbidden. The Iraqi was dreaming and wishing that the future was more beautiful and that he could live and enjoy his country's wealth; nevertheless, he was experiencing quietness and safety and lived in love. The Iraqi was not thinking if his neighbor was Sunni or Shiite or Christian. After the war, all that changed. The ideologies mixed together into a cauldron of hate where killing and destruction became dominant. The

displacement and the fear threatened the life of these simple people. Death began pursuing us everywhere at anytime.

The love changed to hatred, and we began knowing fear, and we could see it in all of the eyes of our neighbors. Soon after, we lived through months of the sectarian fighting that began pursuing us everywhere, whether we were in our house or on our way to work or to shop. Even our children's schools turned to battlefields. Wherever we went, we saw the destruction and the ruin in front of our eyes. Chaos and fear were everywhere, and everything that was nice, quiet, and beautiful collapsed in my beautiful country. We were forced to choose between escape from the homeland, going to the unknown, leaving our family, friends, and work that we loved; or remaining in the country and waiting for death

or being kidnapped. Both decisions were very bitter.

These bad and highly risky circumstances obligated my two children and me to escape to Syria. The road between Baghdad and Syria was about 700 kilometers, and it was very dangerous because it was occupied by the terrorists of al-Qaida. After a long and dangerous 20 hour trip through the desert, we expected the terrorists to stop us and kill us, or kidnap us, at any minute throughout the entire car ride. After that horrible trip, we arrived in Syria. However, our suffering did not end; it just began in a new way. Things like establishing residency and having to find a place to live were very difficult. I had to get my kids registered for school while I was alone. Then I had to deal with the financial pressure of providing for a family in a strange country with little resources. The worst part was the

waiting. I thought when I left Bagdad that I would be in Syria for three months at the most. Those three months turned into three years before I was able to get a visa to join my husband in America.

Here in America, we started a new life; I hope that it will be a life full of happiness. We found the safety and the stability that we lost in Baghdad, and we found friends who helped me to surpass my ordeal. They have helped me to be successful in my new life as I always was in my country. I pray to God for my country to return to a stable and safe place to live, and for the people to return to love. I thank God a lot in my present with my lovely friends here.

Hiyam A. Ahmed
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

In my life before, I had made very bad choices; like getting in fights and doing drugs and going to jail. My life was a mess. I was so bad that I had to give up my son; that killed me. I did not know what to do instead, so I turned to more bad stuff and I kept getting in trouble over and over again until one day, I got pregnant again. So, I told myself my life had to change one way or the other. I did. My life now is so different compared to what I used to be. Now, my life revolves around my kids. I couldn't see myself going back to my old ways. That's why Tapestry is my soil and Cathy Hook has been watering me. Now, because of them, I am going to school and church. Now, I am doing everything like I was supposed to do before in my life. I am so grateful to them. If I had kept making the wrong choices, I would have died. So, that's why now I have goals. My

goals are getting my GED so I can go to college for dentistry so that I can have a good future for my kids. I don't want my kids to go through what I have had to go through in life. I want better for my kids so for everyone out there; do the right thing for your life because making wrong choices is not going to get you anywhere in life. You will either end up dead or in jail or without your kids.

Janice Cruz Padilla
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., Oklahoma City

The Choices in Life

At first, I was afraid to call the literacy program, but now I am happy that I did. I found a lot of help in this program. I was afraid to have a mean teacher, but no, I have a great one. She is teaching me how to spell words and how to read. I think my English has improved over the last few months with her

help. I talk more and I also understand everything. I think this is the best advice I ever got, to ask for help.

When I came here from Mexico, I was 13 years old. I spoke no English; I did not know what “Hi” meant. The first months here were a very hard period in my life. I was feeling very ignorant because I didn’t understand anything. My teachers at school were trying to help me but I did not understand what they were talking about. American people tried to talk to me but I was a very shy person. I didn’t have friends. I thought my life was ruined. Then, my mom heard about this program. I was afraid because I knew that my new teacher for this program just spoke English. This program changed my life.

Jessica Hernandez
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Listen to Your Heart

My name is John Jones. There are two things that made me successful without being able to read.

I was living in Arkansas. I opened up a used furniture store and went to an auction. I bought an apartment size stove for \$10, and I thought paid too much. A friend of mine who already had a used furniture store came over. I told him I paid too much, and he said to put it on his ticket. Two days later, I saw him sell the stove for \$150.

Being my friend, he told me, "I'm only going to say this once. Your heart said you were doing the right thing being my competitor. Don't listen to me, always listen to your heart."

This is the reason I'm going to school at the age of 56 to learn to read, because my heart says it is the right thing.

John Jones
Miami Area Literacy Council

Choices

When I first came to the United States, I was 17 years old and ready for work. At first, everything was a little hard, but as time passed it became easier. I started working as a roofer in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1990. Just five months later, I had an accident at work. I fell from a two-story house and broke my left hand and hurt my lower back. I was disabled for almost 2 ½ years. This was a difficult time for me because I was by myself and all I had then were my friends. But, it's not the same when you have somebody from your family. Thanks be to God I went through all that and made it.

In 1993, I went to Mexico. I stayed there for three months and then came back to the United States. This time I was more prepared for everything. I immediately returned to the U.S. and started working on roofing. So again, I was back at work in the U.S. Before I was working for someone else; later I started my own group of roofers. I began to prosper and was able to help many of my family members after that.

I also met my wife in Ft. Worth and I married her in 1995 when my first child, Jose, was born. We named him Jose Jr.; and then, after two years, we had a little baby girl, Gaby. Two years later—another surprise—our third baby, another girl, Juanita. She was a beautiful little baby. Two years later we tried for another boy, and another little girl, Jessenia, was born. We stopped for four years but my wife was so crazy for a baby boy we tried again. Guess what?

We had another little girl. Her name is Nicole. I said to my wife, maybe our family was big enough. So, we have five beautiful children.

I am so happy with my family. Thanks be to God, I came to the United States. My life has changed 180 degrees in all aspects. This country has given me many opportunities to help my family members, and make their life easier. That's why I like this country.

Jose Pantoja
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

When a person is at a young age, growing up knowing right from wrong, you learn about choices; some good and some not so good. I found out in life it is a learning process. In my life of sixty-two years of age, I have made some very bad choices. At the age of fifteen, I

got married (very bad choice). I was trying to get out of my mother's house. The marriage was abusive. I left and went to California to live with my grandparents.

I found myself making bad choices after leaving my grandmother's house. To move on in my story, I started drinking at a young age, and started drugs in my twenties. My drugs were cocaine and alcohol. See, these were very bad choices, but that was my life at the time. The cocaine went on for about sixteen years. I have been drug free and delivered going on sixteen years. In the mix of all this, I lost my child, my self-respect, and so much more. With my life change, my daughter and I were reunited. I have two beautiful grandchildren. By the way, I live with my daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren.

I never finished high school. I left after eighth grade. I always wanted to finish school. So at

the age of fifty-nine, I heard about OIC, an adult school, from a sister at church. I looked into it and found out that was one of the best choices I could have made. Coming back to school to get my GED has been a wonderful journey. I have learned so much at OIC and on my journey. I have met so many beautiful people for life. I was blessed with wonderful teachers, something I didn't have growing up. My favorite teacher at the end of my journey at OIC is Ms. Shannon. I love her as a teacher, as a person, and also as part of my family.



Joyce Miller

I will be getting my diploma soon and will be going on to college. As a grandmother, I am teaching my grandchildren to make good choices. Remember, when starting my journey I was fifty-nine and now I am sixty-two. What

a life and what good things have come to me when I made great choices.

Whether you make bad or good choices, learn from them so you can have a beautiful life. But, most of all, put God first and you will always make great choices.

Joyce Miller
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

A Difficult Choice

It was a difficult choice to come to the United States. My husband's company requested he go to the U.S. for his assignment three years ago. I wondered if I should go with him or not. There were three things I was very concerned about.

First, I could not speak English well. When I lived in Japan, I learned English for eight years in junior high school, high school and col-

lege. But, I couldn't speak it yet. So, I was very nervous about English. I was not confident that I could do daily life without my husband's help. I thought if I was sick, I couldn't go to a doctor alone, and if I had some problems in my home, I couldn't solve it by myself because it would be difficult for me to express or tell what happened.

Second, I was worried about leaving my family in Japan. I have two children. They graduated from the university and had jobs. They were grown-up, but I still worried about them and would until they get married. My husband and I have four old parents. They are over 80 years old. My parents don't have any particular health problem. But, my husband's father needed care for his walking problem. His wife was caring for him every day. It became difficult for them to live by themselves in their house.

Third, I worried about driving a car because we drive a car on the left side of the road in our country, the opposite of driving in the U.S. So I was concerned about being confused about directions. I thought about getting a driver's license. I needed English skills to read a driver's manual and to hear the driving test instructions.

I finally decided to come to the U.S., and my husband and I live in Edmond, Oklahoma. I am learning English everyday going to the ESL classes and watching TV. I have met many new friends. I think my English is becoming better little by little. My children are glad that we live in the U.S. I have left them, but I think their life is in their hands, and that is good for them. My husband's parents have moved to a nursing home. They are living pleasantly and happily there. I am relieved that they seem happy. We are lucky we can go back to Japan

three or four times a year to visit our parents. Driving on the right side is not as big a problem as I thought. And the driving test went OK too. I got accustomed to driving a car in a short time.

I thought these three problems were obstacles to coming here, but they were not. My husband has a good job, and I am enjoying living here and am very happy. After all my worries and concerns, I believe it was a good choice for me to come to the United States.

Junko Okumura
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

I can make the choice to go to ESL or go to work, but I want to speak and write English correctly and in the future, have a better job.

Karina Montantes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Where I Am Now

Hello. My name is Katie and I am eighteen years old. I have a seven month old little boy and his name is Jakobie. Right now, Jakobie and I are living with my boyfriend's aunt and uncle. How I ended up where I am now is a choice I made when I was sixteen. I was still with my son's real father. He and I were taking everything slow, but after dating for six months, we chose to have sex. Around that time, he asked me if I wanted to have any kids with him. I said yes, but not right now. When we had sex I would ask him if he had protection and he would tell me yes. When we found out that I was pregnant, he admitted to me that he wasn't always wearing protection. After that, things changed. He started acting weird about where I went and who I was with. I should have left, but I didn't. It got worse. He started doing drugs around me. I asked

him to stop for the baby's sake, but he got worse. What made me leave him was when he threatened my sister. After we broke up, my sister Courtney, my nephew Hayden, and I walked to the gas station to meet up with my friend Tyler. He walked up there to hang out with me. My sister's boyfriend was up there too. We all hung out for a while, then we all started walking back to my house. Next thing I know, here comes my son's real father slamming on the brakes, jumping out of the car, and going after Tyler. He thought Tyler and I were dating when we were just friends. I got my son's father to calm down and leave. Then, we all started walking home again. Tyler and I hung out for a little while longer. Then I went to my friend's house for a cookout. Before I got to my friend's house, we had to stop to pick my sister's boyfriend up. After the cookout, we went back to my house. My friend of

ten years, Paul, came over. We talked and he asked me out. I said yes. That is how I ended up where I am now.

Katie Lay
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

In my lifetime, I have made a lot of choices, some good and some bad. I believe that my son may have started out as a difficult choice, but now, I know he is a wonderful choice. I know it was not a good choice for me to be out there, running around, while I was still so young. I was uneducated and had very little knowledge about the world, but I feel in my heart that I am on the right track now.

It took me a while to finally get my head on straight, and to tell the truth, I am very happy that I did. I struggled so hard day by day, hour

by hour, and minute by minute. I honestly felt like giving up, but I knew in my heart that it wasn't the right thing to do. My son is counting on me. I am all he has, so I have to do my best to provide for him. I used to cry myself to sleep every night, praying to the Lord that he would make something shake for me; that I was tired and needed help.

One day, I was sitting in at home, crying, when something told me to pick up my Bible and read it. I opened it and turned to my favorite scripture. As I finished reading, I said a prayer. Just then, the phone rang and it was a very good friend of mine. While we were on the phone, we started talking about some of our problems. She gave me some very good advice. I was so excited that I had talked to her; because of that day and that conversation, I started to believe in myself.

The next day, I went and signed up for the GED classes. I was real glad when the lady said that I could start the next Monday.

My first day of class was a little rocky for the simple fact that I was back in school. It had been about two years since I had been in a classroom and I knew that it would take a little time to readjust. In the beginning, I felt like it was too hard, and I could not do it. My teacher, or should I say my favorite teacher, Mrs. Burtcher, always told me, “You are very smart. You can do this and I believe in you.” Just hearing those little words every other day made me keep coming to class. It has been about two months since I started! Man! I really can say I have come a long way.

I may have had a rough start at life, but like that one saying goes—“everything happens for a reason.” And I honestly believe that it does. All of my choices had played a big part

in my life, and the one I told you about today, I will never forget. This is the first of my new life. I will go take my GED test in a couple of weeks—April 8th and 9th. I hope I pass so I can move on with life. Afterwards, I will be able to make more positive choices in life. One of those choices will be to go to my graduation in May!

Krystal Martin
Norman Adult Learning Center

The Choice and Possibility of Learning

I was reading in the LitBit about the adult literacy learners' stories. I want to share my story.

When I was in high school, my teacher said my reading went from a 3rd grade level to a 9th grade level. I have always had trouble with

my reading and spelling. In 2005, I went to a job training class. In that class, I had to take a reading test. When I had to do the reading part, my reading was not good. The job training teacher took me into a room and told me that I did not qualify for the job due to my reading level.

I told my mom and dad. My dad told his friend, and that friend gave my dad a phone number. The phone number was to the Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service. I called the next day and went in for my assessment.

One thing I can say is that both of my parents told me that it was my choice to do this. I ran with it. It was my choice to learn, and that is what I am doing now.

I want everyone to know that “YOU” have the choice and possibility to learn.

If you make the choice, then you will win. I have met some interesting people since I have been in the program, and I am still learning even now.

My reading has improved a lot. My spelling is still not all that good, but it will get there with my tutor's help and also with me doing things on my own. So, with that being said, I hope anyone who reads this will make the choice to learn and know the possibilities will come.

Lameka Miller

Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Choices

Making choices in life was something I really didn't think twice about. I just started my life, and found out I was pregnant. It was scary. I knew time was running out and I had to make a choice to keep it, get an abortion, or even

give it to someone who could take better care of it than I could. Making decisions at this time was hard for me. Getting pregnant and deciding to keep the baby was even harder because I was just eighteen and still wanted to have my fun. I did not believe in having an abortion nor giving my child away, so I told myself, I got myself into this situation and now I am going to have to take responsibility for it, so I signed up for Job Corps. I wanted to make sure that my child and I had a good future. I thought that our lives would be set: get my High School Diploma, get a trade, finish, and get out into the world and live our lives. Then, they tell me that I had to leave when I was six months pregnant—“great.” So I went home and had the baby. Leaving Job Corps was hard, but I didn’t really have a choice.

My choice was to go back, but things didn’t work out that way. I did want to stay at home

and just hang out with friends, but as you know, having a child changes everything. So, I actually chose to get out and look for a job. That didn't work out as I had planned because I didn't finish high school. I had never liked school, so when it became difficult, I quit. The ninth grade was the last grade that I completed. So at this time, I had no choice but to go straight into People Source and get help to find a job. Yes, it was temporary, but it was a good start. First day there was great. It was just the job I needed. But there was a slight little problem. All women employees had to wear skirts or dresses. I had one skirt and no dresses and I did not like wearing them at all. So I didn't go back.



LaSawndra Calhoun

Two years later, I chose to have another child with my boyfriend at the time. Was I scared to have a second child? Yes. But, I decided to have one anyway. Shortly after I had my child, my relationship didn't work out and I was on my own with two children. At the time, I was staying with my grandmother and needed my own place.

To me, life came at me fast, but I think becoming a single mother has helped me stay focused on more important things. It has helped me to make better choices when it comes to raising a family. I knew that having kids is about making positive choices. Kids look up to a parent as a role model as well as a provider and a hero. The person who looks out for them is the one who makes sure their needs and wants are met. I wanted to make sure that my kids had everything they needed: food, clothes, a roof over their heads, and a

good mother who is willing to do any and every thing to make their lives better. I knew I had to go back to school in order to provide that for them. Making the choice to go back to school was the best choice for me.

Now, I am at OIC working towards getting my GED. I have grown to like learning and going to school. It now feels great to be someplace where I am not ashamed or shy to speak up for what I need, and I feel good about the successes I am making. I am at a place where I am learning things that I never learned in public school. I am now doing things that I never did before with my kids. I am reading with them and teaching them their ABCs and numbers. I want to make sure they don't struggle with their education as I did.

As a single mother, I have not always made the best of choices, but I still strive to do better. I will not lie—getting up every morning

for school is a struggle. Sometimes I just want to stay home and do nothing. However, I have this thought in my head that says I am going to miss out on something and get behind in my studies. I don't want my kids to see their mommy being irresponsible. I know if I give in and stay home I will get behind in my work, lose what I learned the day before, and slow down my school routine. I don't want that to happen, so I make the choice everyday to stay focused on being a successful student, as well as a responsible mother.

LaShawndra Calhoun
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

A History of My Country

Honduras is a beautiful agricultural country. The capital is Tegucigalpa. This city is the fourth largest in the country. It's a commercial center for the agricultural region. A third of

the whole country spends every day cultivating land.

The most cultivated crops in order of importance are: banana, corn, beans rice, coffee, and tropical fruits. Another group of the people in Honduras work hard on their farms caring for their animals. In the Northwest of Honduras, the most famous Mayan site, Copan Ruinas, is a charming little town with cobblestone streets, white adobe buildings and red-tile roofs. It's a relaxed peaceful place that envelops you the moment you step off the bus. Maybe it is the beauty of the town or having a good meal, but one thing is for sure, you'll probably end up staying a day or two longer than you planned. That is the reason many people come from other countries to visit this town.

Honduras has many natural treasures, parks and wildlife refuges. But, most travelers come

here to scuba dive on the bay islands. Islas de la Bahia, Roatan, Utila and Guanaja are islands that form the second longest coral reef in the world. You can see multicolored fish, sea turtles and whale sharks—it is a great



Leda Salinas

place to learn and have a wonderful time. The bad thing in Honduras is the gang violence.

Gang violence preoccupies the average

Honduran. Maduro, president in 2000–2004, lost his own son when he was kidnapped and murdered in 1997. Maduro promised a get-tough approach to gangs, called “Hard Hand.” It increased penalties for gang-related crimes. The gang violence has been curbed, but still Hondurans live worried, because violence is still prevalent.

But, this is my country and I love it. I miss it. All my family lives there and I have not seen them for ten years. I really want to see them again. We talk by phone every week, but it is not the same as seeing them. I hope to see them very soon. I have a lovely family and I love them so much.

Leda Salinas
Ardmore Literacy Council

Choices I Made in the Past

If I could choose how to live my life all over again, there is one main change I would make, because it determined the course my life has taken. I got pregnant at the age of fourteen because I associated with the wrong crowd and had little parental supervision. Even though I attended school after my baby was born, I could not go on a regular basis because my family charged me babysitting fees. My

baby's father was older and would sometimes support me, depending on the state of our relationship, but his presence and money were too unreliable.

Because of this, I decided to quit school to take care of my own child. Growing up, I didn't have a role model in my life. I grew up fast. Because I was a mother at a young age, I had to learn to be responsible and dependable for my baby since I was all she had. She did not ask to be here, and even though I was a child myself, I tried to be the best young mother I possibly could be. I lived with my mother and supported my baby the best way I knew how.

Having a baby so young was a lesson to learn. I had to provide for her, rock her to sleep, feed her when she was hungry, and stay up all night when she was sick. Later, when I got old enough to get a job, I worked at a little

convenience store for minimum wage. It was hard but we survived, especially because my mother required a lot of money from me, even though we didn't have much.

On October 27th, 2008, I decided to further my education by studying for my GED at the Dream Center in the Adult Literacy Class under the instruction of Miss Janet Hoeltzel and Miss Lindee Johnson, who are both very good teachers. I feel really blessed and fortunate to have them as my teachers. They are well educated, and I have learned so much from them in the seventeen months I have been in the class.

There have been days when I have wanted to give up, but Miss Janet wouldn't let me. I appreciate this because it lets me know that she cares. Having said that, I feel privileged to be in this class learning different subjects: algebra, geometry, reading, writing, science, and

social studies. Continuing my education is the best thing I could have ever done. I thank God for the opportunity.

Letha Parker

Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Recent Journey

My name is Maria Bermudez and I'm going



Maria Bermudez

to write about my journey from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City. I lived for a long time in California, but one

day we decided to come to Oklahoma, looking for a better life. I have five children; three are grown up and two little ones. My husband told me that we needed to look for a better life for our little ones—and here we are. The best thing is that I have the opportunity to come to English classes to bet-

ter my English, and in the future try to find a job. It's been hard for me because I had to leave all my family there in California. On the other hand, I now have more time to study.

Maria Bermudez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

If I could choose to live my life over, I would choose to have gone to the twelfth grade in my childhood. It felt so bad to be in a group of people and I couldn't read. It felt so bad that I stayed at home a lot because I couldn't read.

My parents were poor and we farmed as share croppers in Arkansas. Kids just helped with the crops and didn't go to school. I went to school some. My clothes weren't sufficient, and the children made fun because we didn't have socks. I felt bad because the children

made fun of me. I didn't want to go back, but I did finish the first grade. I remember one time my sister from Oklahoma sent me some dresses, and the kids at school kept pestering me to tell them where I got them. I wouldn't tell them where I got my clothes. My teacher then asked me where I got the clothes. So then, I told her. I felt like she shouldn't have done that. I always felt just a little bit beneath other people.

I have had a lot of trouble in my adult life with depression so severe that I attempted suicide two times. My kids have had problems with depression, drugs, and alcohol. I feel like if I would have had help in my childhood, and finished school, it would have saved a lot of heart ache for me and my children. If I had known how to reach out for help, I might not have tried to commit suicide. I hurt my whole

family. It was a selfish thing to do, but I couldn't see any way out.



Mattie Black

My advice is to reach out for help. Don't do like I did and turn to the bottle. The bottle was my buddy for a long time, but it let me down. I'm eighty years old now. I've been in AA for 28 years and made a lot of friends in AA.

I go to church now and I sing in a quartet. In past years, I wouldn't go to church because I didn't want to hear about God because I was afraid of God. I have asked God for forgiveness and he did, but it was hard to forgive myself. I still have problems reading the Bible, but I believe the preacher.

I chose to call the Literacy Link because I had a tutor in Ardmore before I moved to

Midwest City. I talked to Mr. John and told him what I wanted to do. He asked me, “How far do you want to go?” I told him that I would like to go to the twelfth grade if I can get there. About a month later, he had me a tutor; A very nice one, and we “knit” together.

I am reading better and I have learned a lot. I am going to keep up the good work until I feel secure in reading.

People, if you are out there hurting, I would suggest you get professional help. If you can't read like me, don't feel bad. Get help in reading. The more schooling you have, the better off you will be. If you are young, old, or middle age you can learn. Don't be one of those people who thinks you can't learn, because you can. There is a lot in this world for you, just for the taking. You'll be happier when you learn all this. I love you people, and hope you

don't go as far as I did in the wrong direction before reaching out for help. Love you all!

Mattie Black
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Why I Chose to Get My GED

At first, I was afraid to enroll in this class, but now I'm very excited and proud of myself.

When I first got down here to Oklahoma, my friend told me that I should enroll for GED classes. I really didn't want to, but I knew I needed to. I was very scared and nervous because I really didn't know how to do math. I dropped out of school in the 9th grade. I really didn't have a very good education. I was scared that the people would think I was dumb because I really didn't know much. The main thing I was worried about was my fail-

ing and my wanting to give up.

Now, I've been here for a month, going to my GED classes everyday, and I've never been so



Lisa Minor

proud of myself. I'm learning so much, and I'm catching on very quickly to every subject. Nobody looks at me differently because I don't know something; the teachers are very patient and helpful with the things I need help with.

I now will be taking my test in June. I will finally be able to say I achieved something in my life—for my children and myself. I'm very proud of myself for not giving up, and I know my kids and my family will be proud of me also.

Lisa Minor
Hugo Adult Learning Center

Choices

I can make the choice to come to school or stay home and watch TV.

Maria Escobar
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

You have choices in your life, in everything you do. Some are bad and some are good.

You learn from the bad and move on with the hope that things will work out for you. I have made some very bad choices in my life, but know that I have learned from them. The bad choices I made have taught me how to be a better person, father and husband. I believe that I am now on the right path in my life. I have made it through the bad times and did not give up. When my children were taken from our home, my wife and I had to make

the right choice in order to get them back. We did everything the courts told us that we must do to get our children back. We now have all our children at home with us, and it means more to me than I could ever explain.

It was not hard at all because I had it in my head that my children are the most important things in my life and NOT the drugs. I left the drugs behind, and got into Family Drug Court where I had to go to class at NAIC, and that is when I realized just how bad my choices had been. It was not bad enough to use the drugs, but I sold them as well. Drugs messed up my life and my family's life as well. I learned how to make the right choices so I will NOT ever go back to drugs again.

By going to drug court, I got my family back, and nothing is more important than they are. Now, I have to keep making the right choices and show my children the right way in life,

so they will not make the same bad choices I made. If they do make the wrong choices, I hope they will learn from it and they won't let the mistake get them down. We will keep on moving down the right path in life and make sure that our children see our choices.

Looking back on all the things I have done in the past year, the best choice I have made is to say NO to drugs. Things in my life are now in my hands, and I love it. I am going to the GED class in Moore, so I can become a better provider for my family.

Bad choices can't get you down if you learn from them. They make the right choices all that more important.

Marquas Henry
Norman Adult Learning Center

American Love Story

My name once was Mitza Contreras. The life that I had in Panama was not easy. From the time I was thirteen, I worked very hard. I had four children. One of my daughters went to the United States.

In 2007, the universe changed my destiny. I came to the United States to visit my daughter. My daughter had one very good friend. One day, my daughter's friend asked me to fix her hair. When I went to her home, the father of this lady was visiting. The man could not take his eyes from me. This surprised me very much.

This man wanted to take me to dinner. One month later, this man asked me to marry him. I never thought after 54 years, I would fall in love. This man I met taught me about love; it makes no difference the language or the na-

tionality. Love has no language. Love is love, because you will know by the feeling you have when you touch and when you look into each other's eyes.

I married this man for all my life. This area of Oklahoma, Lone Grove, is as much my home as where I grew



Mitza Johnson

up in Panama. My husband loves hunting pig, deer and turkey. Sometimes I help my husband with the cleaning of these animals. I love to plant trees and garden behind our house in Lone Grove.

I am going to school for English and trying hard to speak and write English. I want to know everything about the United States.

The secret in life is that there is something good in each person, and each person in this

universe receives more than they give. When you need love, it will come to you. God will help you find this love. My name is now Mitza Johnson.

Mitza Johnson
Ardmore Literacy Council

Choices

Choices—we all have them. I’ve put a lot of thought in the choices that I make since I’ve become a mom, because the choices I make not only affect me. They affect the two most important people in my life, my two little boys. They are a big part of why I decided to get my GED. I want so much for them to finish high school and go to college. We still have a long way to go since one is in 3rd grade and the other is in 4th, but I asked myself, “How can I be an example to them?” I have to go back to school!

It was really a hard decision to follow through. All of the guilt and all of the shame weighed so heavy on me. I remember my mom called me the morning of orientation and gave me lots of words of encouragement as I was sitting in the parking lot, trying to talk myself into walking through the doors. She helped more than she'll ever know, just as she always does. Thank you, Mom.

I had to remember that the horrible choice I made 14 years ago does not define who I am. There is so much more to who I am. Although getting my GED will not feel like walking across the stage my senior year, it will be doing the best I can as of right now. It will still be an accomplishment and one to be proud of! I only hope it will take away some of the shame and guilt I have put upon myself for so many years.

Just remember, there's a right way and a wrong way to do things. If you make the right choice, there's usually a good consequence. If you make a wrong choice, there's usually a bad consequence. I've made a promise to myself, and that is to not sell myself short ever again. I will be the best that I can be because that's my choice.

Monica Smith
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Story

I was born in Quetzaltenango,
Guatemala.

My family name is Silva, a Portuguese
name. In Latin, it means "forest."

My first name was chosen because "it's
just a name my father liked."

Our family has been in Oklahoma for 7 years.

One of the things I want for my children: a respect for God.

The funniest English mistake I ever made: mispronouncing “refrigerator.”

My most loved books: my economics textbooks.

My favorite subject in school: Physical Education.

Fun things we did as a family: played football (soccer).

A favorite memory of my childhood: New Year’s Eve.

I like the ESL classes, because I learn new pronunciations. My favorite tutor is Gerald Black because he’s my first one.

P. Silva

Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Choices

Hello, my name is Robyn Gabriel. I am currently attending an Adult Basic Education program in Oklahoma City called Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC). I am here to raise my math scores. I have made many choices in life; some were good, some were bad.

The choices I made when I was younger weren't so good. I thought I knew everything, which got me into a lot of trouble because of the choices I made at the time. I was always living with different family members and in school, my grades begin to drop. Because of this, I decided to drop out of high school.

After seeing that my life wasn't going in the right direction, I was ready to change. I started thinking about better choices. I set a goal to get my high school diploma and driver's

license, so I joined Guthrie Job Corps, which was a great choice. While I was there, I had to do six weeks of training before I could get into a trade or my high school diploma class. After completing my six weeks, I chose Culinary Arts as my trade and started my high school diploma class. While I was doing this, about seven months later, I found out that I



Robyn Gabriel

was pregnant. Even though I was pregnant, I didn't let that stop me from accomplishing my goals. I got my driver's license and I got certified in Culinary Arts as a cook. I also received my High School Diploma.

After graduating from Job Corps, I had a beautiful baby girl. Two months later, I started working for Aramark at Langston University

as a salad bar preparer. Once I started working again, I was doing cashier work. But because of my lack of math skills, I was doing my job incorrectly. So I went to college, but I only stayed one semester. I didn't have any income at the time, so I went to my family for help. They helped me until I got back on my feet.

When I finally found another job, I had to quit due to circumstances. During this time, I found out that I was pregnant with my second child. After I had my son, I started working at the zoo. While I was working there, my baby's father went to jail. I had to make a choice that would help me support my family, so I applied for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Once in the program, I had to take the TABE—Test for Adult Basic Education. When I got my results back, my scores were low, so I was referred to OIC to improve them.

Now that I am here, I am surrounded by positive students and a great instructor who cares about her students. I have seen an improvement in my subjects, especially in my math. So, I am happy that I made the right choice to come to OIC.

Robyn Gabriel
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Where I Am Today

Hi my name is Rosa Medrano. I am married to a wonderful man, Rueben Medrano. I met him when I was seventeen and we have been together ever since. We are blessed with three young boys: Angel, Adrian, Jordan.

My family has always been my number one priority. My life consists of me taking care of my family. I am a meticulous and active sexy lady that enjoys working out, cooking, clean-

ing, and having numerous amounts of different tasks to do. I am very determined to es-



Rosa Medrano

tablish my success on advancing and achieving my goals.

When I attended high school, I didn't like school. I thought it was boring and, in my mind, I didn't think education was important, so I dropped out. I started working at Hertz Corporation for three years. At the time I was making good money. When I applied, I just told them that I had a high school diploma and they never bothered to ask me for it. I worked until I became pregnant with my last son Jordan. I decided to stay home with my family and provide as a homemaker. I enjoyed and loved every minute of being with my family. My boys are now all in school, and Jordan has started

going to school all day. I was faced with the decision to either go to school or get a job. In order to get a good paying job, it is necessary to have either a GED and, in some cases, a degree as well. So then, I decided on going back to school. I am excited—devoting my time to learn because I am looking forward to a prosperous outcome of attending college.

On March 1, 2010, I enrolled at OIC. At OIC, there are several opportunities that are offered. I am learning how to write better and studying sentence structure. I feel that my writing has improved, but I am not completely satisfied! I am going to continue to read and write until I achieve and accomplish my goals and I feel completely satisfied with my education.

Rosa Medrano
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

The Family Choices

My name is Shayla Massenburg and I was born and raised in Altus, Oklahoma. I have two beautiful little girls named Sincer Massenburg and Shaziya Massenburg. I love those little girls and they mean the world to me.

When I was growing up, things were a lot different than things are today. We could go to the store or to the movies without our parents worrying if we would make it back home safely. So, I am trying to teach my little girls how to make the right choices in everything that they do. I want them to become somebody one day and be all they can be. The choices that I would like for my children to learn are to never drop out of school and to go to college after they graduate. By doing this, they will be able to make a good life for themselves.

This is the reason I chose to go back to school and get my GED. I want to be the best example I can for my precious little girls. By setting the example, they will see how important education is in their lives. I will also be able to provide for my girls and be there when the time comes for them to graduate high school and college.

Shayla Massenburg
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Choices Facing Me

October 24, 2010, is the due date of my first baby. Since I will be a new mother, I want to make good choices for having a healthy baby. These include medical checkups, the right kind of food, and learning the English language.

I go for medical checkups every month at the hospital clinic. The doctor examines me to be sure the baby is growing. Dr. Rivera has me taking calcium pills to help my baby's bones to



Susanna Cuellar

grow.

I try to eat good food for me and my baby.

Meat, milk, fruit, grains, and vegetables

are foods I eat every

day. Good nutrition helps me as well as the baby to grow and develop.

I am trying to learn the English language since I am Hispanic. I bought a Franklin dictionary that speaks Spanish and English to me. I want to be able to teach my baby to speak both Spanish and English. I am a literacy student of the Great Plains Literacy Council. I have English class every Tuesday afternoon with my two sisters and our tutor. It will help me

in raising my baby, the more I can read and speak English.

There are many choices facing me during my pregnancy. The medical checkups, good nutrition, and learning English will help me as well as my first baby.

Susanna Cuellar
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Choices

Howdy, my name is T. Nallely Ortiz. I attend English class in Midwest City Library. My teacher is Erma Broussard. I like my class. It is very agreeable. My friends bring food and cookies. It is good. My friends come from different places. I like my friends. I'm Mexican. I have my work here in Oklahoma. I work in Midwest Veterinary Hospital. My occupation is Technical Veterinarian. I was a veterinar-

ian in Mexico. My last work in Texas was with horses. Now, I came here to Oklahoma for a better future for me and my family. I miss my city in Mexico, the culture and the simplicity of the people. I like Oklahoma, too, because I have a job and friends.

I am happy because I am doing something with my life. My father and my mom always told me, “you can do it,” and I am doing good. I know it is difficult to have a good life but not impossible. You choose to make your life good or make your life bad. You can have a good life. Don’t do drugs, do not smoke, and get an education to assure you have a good future. If you do not have a good life, wake up! Live one’s life not smoking. Study hard and work hard. Go walking to make you strong. Then, your dreams you can see soon.

I make choices and have dreams in my life,
and now I see some of my goals realized. If I
can do it, you can do it too.

T. Nallely Ortiz
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Choices

When I was nine years old, I was raped. I thought it was all my fault. So every time that I got scared, I ran. I ran away from school, jobs, and relationships. The only thing that I didn't run away from was being a mother.

When I was fifteen years old, I had my first child. I had a choice to stay in school or drop out. Because my main focus was to raise my daughter, I dropped out. I didn't know anything about being a mother except to change diapers and feed and clothe her. I wanted to make sure I did a good job as a mom.

I had a learning disability, so it made school hard. Dropping out was easy for me to do. When I turned sixteen, I got my first job in fast food; not the job that I really wanted, which was truck driving. Working at Burger King or McDonald's or Wendy's were all boring jobs. None of them paid well. So, I made another choice about how to support myself.

I started selling drugs. I didn't need an education for that. All I needed to know was how to add and subtract. I was good at that and nobody knew I didn't know how to read.

I didn't like the way my life was going, so I married the first man who asked me. Now, I was 20 years old, married, and still unhappy. Unfortunately, I continued selling drugs.

I knew I had another choice to make. I left my husband, and I stopped selling drugs. I tried to go back to school and be someone who

I would be able to love. At the first school, I didn't feel it. It was so hard to go back to school as an adult who didn't know how to read or spell. This upset me more.

One day, I was given another choice of where to get an education. I could go to OIC. That is when my life started changing for the better. It seemed I had everything I needed to succeed. By now, I was 28 years old and was about to have my second child.

At first, I was afraid going to OIC would be another disappointment. But, I was determined to get my GED, so I made up my mind to tell people that I had a learning disability. When I made that choice, my case worker put me in OIC, which is the best program of my life.

Let me tell you about two of my teachers. Ms. Shannon Carter is a teacher who will not

give up on me or on any of us. With her, I do not feel dumb. Ms. Marion is the same way. She pushes me to try and believes I can learn. Though she and Ms. Shannon teach very differently, they have both helped me believe in myself. These days, I wonder if I ever had a learning disability. I am learning so much, not only about reading and writing, but also math. School is making a big difference in what I believe I can do with my life.

Finishing the program at OIC has not been easy. I have dropped out and sometimes disappeared. The first time I only went to school a month. The teachers and students made me feel welcome, but family problems were still my focus at that time.

I wanted to feel better about myself, so I came back six months later and was on a roll. It didn't last long. I was about to deliver my second child. I dropped out again.

One day I was sitting at home and I realized I didn't want to raise my son like I did my daughter. I would get the education I needed. This time, I was determined. I was not going to keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. I would get my GED.

Then, a month after I came back, everything changed. Last Christmas Eve, when I was shopping, turned out to be the worst day of my life, because of another choice I made. As I was exiting the store, someone else was going out with me. As she did, the alarms went off. I got very frightened.

I didn't know what was going on.

Unfortunately, I chose to run. All I thought about was getting away. As I was running, someone grabbed me around the waist from behind. It was just like the time I was raped when I was nine years old.

This time, I was determined to fight back. I wasn't going to be treated like this again. I was still trying to deal with the first rape. I fought so hard. I kept struggling until they put me in handcuffs. Things got worse after that; however, when the winter break was over, I came back to school at OIC.

I am still here. I am determined to do whatever it takes to have a life that works. Every day I have gone to school here, I have a little more hope. Ms. Shannon makes me work hard and she doesn't give up. She is very patient with me.

Our counselor, Ms. Betty, listens to me and gives me great advice. She has helped me figure out what to do with personal problems. I know I am not alone now. I have a lot of people who care about me at OIC and can help me. I know my life is different now, because I am different. No matter what happens, I am

determined to have the life I want. OIC has showed me how to get it.

Tacesia Thomas

Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

My Life's Choices

Life has many choices, such as going to school, making a better life for my family, and staying healthy. In life, those choices can be good or bad. I choose the good ones.

My first choice has to do with going to school. I was fourteen years old when I quit school because I chose to have children. These were not very good choices, but today I am glad to have my three children. I realize now that it would have been much easier to complete my education before taking on the responsibility of raising a family. Now, my number one goal is to finish school, have a GED, and make my

family proud. I would also like to go to college to pursue a degree in the medical field.

Second, I want to make a better life for my family. When I was a little girl, my parents did not make much money. We lived paycheck to paycheck, and I do not want to raise my children that way. I want a good-paying job so that my family will have a more secure financial future. I hope to set an example for my children so they will work hard and earn enough money for them to afford nice homes and cars and provide for their own families.

Finally, staying healthy plays a big part in my life because if I do not stay healthy and in good shape, I cannot succeed in my goals. My mother suffers from heart disease, so by keeping my body healthy, I can try to prevent the same disease in myself. Breast cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and COPD all run throughout my family history. By eating right,

exercising, and losing weight, I hope to avoid the same medical problems that my family members have suffered.

Making these wise choices will be beneficial to me for the rest of my life. By completing my education and keeping myself healthy, I will be able to live a productive and joyful life with my family.

Tonya Brashear
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

The Dog's Wagging Tail

It was a cloudy day, and the wind breezed through my hair and clothes. I went back home happily after school with my sister. We were chatting with each other. However, a thing happened on the way when we were walking home. We made some choices on that walk home.

That day when I was in elementary school, my sister and I were walking and chatting on the way back home from school. A white dog lay in the street wagging his tail, so I thought he was friendly. The dog drew my attention when he wagged his tail. Suddenly, I had a question in my mind. I asked my sister, “Is anything inside the fur of the dog’s tail?”

I was questioning what was inside the tail. When I asked her the question, she said, “You can step on his tail and tell me the answer.” I followed what she suggested. I stepped on the tail to check if anything was under the fur. At that time, I could not forget what happened to me.

The dog yelped and barked at me. He got fully mad so that he ran after me. The dog followed me while I ran away quickly from him. My heart beat definitely fast when he jumped and barked loudly. Fortunately, the dog did not

bite me, although he chased after me right to the corner on the same street as my house. My sister and I were scared but got back home safely. We yelled loudly and cheered each other up because nothing bad happened. Sometimes people do things without thinking, and they don't realize they could do something bad. I was lucky when I stepped on the dog's tail, but I will not do it again or hurt animals. Being curious guides people to make different choices. I am glad I escaped without getting hurt. There won't be a next time because I learned a good lesson.

Wan Chun Kuan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

My Mother

My mom is my best friend and a great role model. She is actually my only best friend. A friend is someone you can call on and talk to about anything. When I feel like I need to talk to her, or just need to cry on a shoulder, she is always there.

My mom understands me very well. We go shopping together and go on vacations. We are like sisters and everybody always thought we were twins. I don't know what I will do when she is not around. She always told me when she is gone to watch over my brothers. They really wouldn't know what to do without her. I have three brothers and I am the only girl. Jarmin is nineteen, Antonio is twenty, Lotharro is twenty-four and then there is me; I am twenty-two. They are my friends too, but my mom is my best friend and my role model. I look up to her and learn from her mistakes.



Alicia Berry

My mom graduated from high school, went to college, had four kids, and raised us by herself. When I realized that, it made me want to accomplish my goals. I am going to school to get my GED, and after that I am taking up becoming a medical office assistant. I will also be taking care of my daughter, Jakyla. I want to be a good role model and a friend like my mom. My mom gives me good advice and encourages me in what I am doing. I thank my mom for raising me, guiding me in the right direction, teaching me right from wrong, and allowing me to be the person I am today. Thanks mom for being my best friend.

Alicia Berry
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

My best friend is Sterling. I can talk to him about anything. He is there when I need him and he makes me happy.

I can talk to him about anything. I know that he is not judging me and telling everyone what I say to him.

I can have the worst day ever and I can call him. He will be there to talk to me.

When I am in a bad mood or having a bad day, he can make me laugh and be in a good mood.

Sterling is my best friend. I can talk about anything with him. When I am having a bad day, he is right there with me. When I am in a

bad mood he can make me laugh. I would not change that for anything.

Angel Huzarski
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Friendship

Friendship is an important part of life. Part of friendship is being a good listener, giving good advice, and always being honest. I think it is how friendship should be. Sometimes, you don't know how important a friendship is until it's not there anymore.

First, my mom was a good listener. She would always listen to me without criticizing me, no matter how much she didn't like what the situation was. Then, she would tell her opinion on the situation. For example, there was a guy that I was dating for some time. Then, he broke up with me for another girl. I was

broken hearted. When I was done crying, my mom told me, “He doesn’t know what he’s lost.” My point is that if I have a good friendship with a person, they will listen to me and always tell me something to make me feel better when I’m down.

Next, my mom gave really good advice. Sometimes, I should have taken her advice more than I did. Then, I wouldn’t have gotten into some of the stupid stuff I did, like quitting school. For example, my mom was always saying, “Baby girl, you need to live life to the fullest.” But, I look at her and she didn’t, so I didn’t really listen to that, until I was 20 years old. Even then, I didn’t really know what she meant. After I started my class, I realized she was talking about doing everything you could to have a good and fun life. So, I guess what I’m trying to say, is that whether or not you take the good advice, a lot of the times they’re

just trying to make you think about how you could better the situation, whatever that might be. If you have a good friendship with someone, they won't give you bad advice.



April Moomaw

Finally, my mom was always honest with me, even when I didn't want her to be. A good friendship with someone is being able to tell them the truth without them getting mad, because most people in a good friendship can understand that you're not trying to be mean or hurtful. They don't want you to find out later that there was something that they wanted to say and were too scared to say something to you, because you might get mad or hurt. For example, one of my old friends came over to my house to let my mom know that she was dating one of my old boyfriends, so my mom

could tell me. My mom didn't want to tell me because she knew it would hurt me. She did tell me because she knew that if I found out later, and she hadn't told me, that I would be mad. My point is, sometimes you have to tell a friend something that they don't want to hear, no matter how much it hurts. In a friendship, I think that I'd rather be told the truth than a lie to spare my feelings.

In conclusion, friendship is important to me. A good friendship involves being a good listener, giving good advice, and always being honest. A good friendship is very important in life because without a friend, life would be lonely. Friends are what make life so special.

April Moomaw
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

Lost and Found

My name is Bill Skaggs. This is a little about my life. When I was young, I had a best friend. He guided me and loved me. Then I lost sight of my friend. I was lost, searching for my friend in all the wrong places; drugs, alcohol and women.



Bill Skaggs

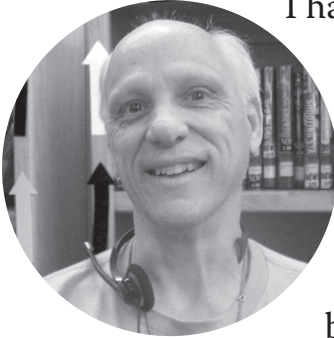
For about thirty years, I couldn't find my friend. I wound up in the middle of the Las Vegas desert with nothing. There he found me and changed my life. He answered the questions that hounded me. And, he gave me hope.

My best friend walks with me every day. He leads me when I let him. And when I fall, he picks me up. I hope you have a good friend,

too. By the way, my friend's name is Jesus. I hope you know him.

Bill Skaggs
Pushmataha County Literacy Council

All My Friends



Carl Haugh

I have met quite a few friends while I have been in the literacy program. I have met friends through the book club and going to conferences.

I have made a friend in my tutor. The other student he tutors with me is a friend. We help one another in our reading lessons.

I am grateful for the friends in my life and for the support I have received. My pastor, youth

director, and my church have helped support me, too.

I believe in helping others, too. I like to do yard work and help at church. I also like to help someone else with their problems. It is all about being a friend.

Carl Haugh
Pottawatomie County Literacy Program

Friendship

Hello, my name is Catherine Stiver, and I am from Malaysia. I came to the United States on January 27, 1995.

My husband and I got married on January 31, 1995, and then our son was born. His name is Royston J. Stiver. I am very proud of him. He's a precious son. My husband and I didn't have much, but we were a very happy family and we loved each other very much. I was a stay

at home mom and I loved to stay at home and take care of my son. I enjoyed every minute of it!

I didn't drive, so I depended on my husband. I couldn't even write a check to pay the bills. My husband was a good man and very loving and caring. I was so lucky to have a man so caring and loving. I loved him very much and miss him deeply. My life changed when he passed away on July 29, 2007. He was my best friend. The hardest thing was, I didn't know how to drive and I didn't know a lot about everything, but thank God I got all the love and support from friends and family. I am grateful. So now, I have no choice at all, I have to take all the responsibilities, and it is very hard. My son and I are so lucky and blessed. Everybody is there for us to help. So thank GOD for all the blessings.

I told myself I have to do something for myself and my son. I have to go to the driving school to learn how to drive. I also needed citizenship. I got my license and citizenship in 2008. Thank God everything worked out! I am very proud of myself. I am very thankful because my friends and family were there for us during this difficult time.

I can never repay them back. But we keep our friendship stronger and closer. My son and I are so blessed, surrounded by good people. My friendship with each of them is so special, and I am thankful to each and every one of them for their love and friendship.

Catherine Stiver
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

I have a friend. Her name is Julie. She is a very good friend to me. We have known each other about 8 years. I can talk to her about almost anything. I'm so blessed to have her.

Chong-Cha Factor
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

My name is Concepcion Salcido, and I was



Concepcion Salcido

born in Mexico. My parents had twelve children, and I was the last. My first name was chosen because it is my father's name.

When I was a child, I enjoyed going to my Grandma's house on Sunday and working with my brothers and sisters. A favorite memory of

my childhood is going to the fair. My favorite subjects in school were math and P.E.

My family has been in Oklahoma since 2000. The things I want for my children are for them to be good Christians, and to have good careers. I like the English classes because I can learn the language and I have some time with my friend. She is my favorite tutor because she is a good teacher and friend. The funniest English mistake I ever made was one time in the grocery store. I wanted to buy some pork meat, but I asked for “pork beef,” because I thought beef was the word for meat.

Concepcion Salcido
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

What a True Friend Is

A true friend is someone who knows you for you. They keep it real; they always have your

back. They don't play games. They are there for all your ups and downs. I know someone like that; she is my best friend, even



Dechelle Jeans

though she is eleven years younger than me. She is my lil' sis. I met her about three and a half years ago. I helped her out of a bad situation. She needed a place to stay and I let her move in with me and my family. Within a month or two, we were always together. She saw me at my worst and I saw her at her worst. She helped me deal with hard times and I helped her with her hard times. We are so much alike. We both know how it feels to lose a brother. I lost my brother sixteen years ago and she lost hers one year ago. We both know what it is like to be pregnant. I have two kids and she had her first August 28, and I had

my second one January 26th, just six months apart. I help her with her kids and she does the same. I couldn't ask for a better friend. She means so much to me. She will drive me to see my special someone who lives about an hour and a half away. She is kind, fun, true, and a lovely person whose smile can warm up a room; and her laughter is contagious. In one word, she is amazing, and I love her so much. Thank you for everything, Sis.

Dechelle Jeans
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

A friendship is a strong bond between two people that is not like anything else. When one friend is in need, the other is there to help or support them in whatever they do. If one person falls, the other is there to pick their friend up.

As a friend in a friendship, you must be a positive person and uplifting to one another. That way, the other person knows that you are there for them and that you will help. It makes them feel loved and important, and that they have a life line if need be.

I, myself, have a friendship that is like that. We are very close and supportive of each other. It is someone I can call anytime. We are there for one another and we can tell each other anything. We don't worry about the things we tell each other. We support each other in ways no one else will.

My friend and I care for each other. This makes our friendship stronger. Friendship is a good thing to have with one or more people, and having a friend is a nice thing in your life.

It can make you a stronger person and stronger in life.

Dewey Jernigan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

The Life of Friendship

Friendship is a very important thing to have. Friendship is a relationship between two beings that are trustworthy. They are always there for each other for advice or directions. They have to be able to offer good advice and take good advice. They have to be someone you can count on, and someone you can rely on when you need a helping hand at any hour, day or night.

You can tell something to a friend and not worry about them repeating it to anyone. Trust is the main key in a friendship. They have to be able to trust you also. They have

to be able to give love, accept love, and share love. They have to be able to show respect and accept respect in return. Friendship can be with anyone, even with a family member or a pet. Sometimes a pet can make you think for yourself and solve the problem in your mind.

Friendship is where you can count on a friend at all times. They are there for you when you need a person to talk to. They provide a shoulder to cry on when struggling through rough obstacles in life. They are there to give you advice and guide you to take the right path. Friendship is something that lasts a life-time, through all troubles and worries. Friendship is where you can always contact them for emergencies or any other complications.

It helps if a friend is intelligent and knowledgeable in current fads and customs. They can give you pointers on the latest fashion and the most current clothing as well. You

can ask them if what you're wearing suits your personality or character. A friend with a sense of humor is also good to have. They can always make you laugh and have a good time, even when feeling depressed or having a bad day. They can tell you jokes or just be silly to make you happy and have a smile



Elizabeth Johnson

on your face. A friend with the same interest is always important. You can talk about and discuss the same subjects. You won't feel out of place or awkward in doing so.

Friendship is a very important thing to have in life. It is important to have a friend that you can count on and rely on at all times. A friend can be there for you through hard times and through struggles. A friend can guide you to take the right path in life, give you good ad-

vice, and help you make the right decisions. A friend can also be there to help you choose the latest clothing and let you know whether the particle of clothing is “you” or not. A friend with a good sense of humor is always good to have. They can always make you smile and leave you knowing that they love you and are always there for you. A friend is someone that is equal to your values and knows you will be a good friend in return. Friendship is something that lasts a life-time, and that’s what makes it a life of friendship.

Elizabeth Johnson
Norman Adult Learning Center

Emmanuel’s Smile

What a beautiful day! I never will forget that day in May, 2008. I found a friend who was so concerned with my problem of reading that she helped to change my life. This strong

friend of mine, being my best friend, Miss Olive, said time and time again, “Let’s get this taken care of. I’m proud of you. You’re intelligent. Don’t be scared of reading.” Then, I said to myself softly that if this woman can believe in me, who am I to say no? Then, I took a deep breath in and out about five times, stood, and shook my head. I wiped my eyes because tears were running down uncontrollably like a pump without control. I want you guys to know that a man or woman who doesn’t know how to read and write is like a blind person.

Miss Olive first took me to a place which charged a lot of money and could only see me two times a week. We knew my learning to read might take a long time, so we needed to look elsewhere. Then, the lady at the service suggested another place. Yes, I remember the first day I came to 27 East 15th Street, a place called Project Read. I met a woman called

Miss Mary. She was the boss there. I said hello, and she said hi. She asked my name. I said, "Call me Emmanuel." Then, she asked how could she help me. I looked at her. She had an open, friendly face. I began my story. I explained that I couldn't read or write. I couldn't go to school because in Nigeria, where I am from, my father married six wives and had many children. I was one of the youngest. I never got the chance to go to school.

Miss Mary looked into my eyes. I was wondering why she stared at me. She spoke to me, softly, shyly. I tried to imagine what she was thinking about this big, black man about seven feet tall, a nice gentle man with brown eyes. There was no smile in those eyes. She said, "I'm so sorry." This woman thought again how she could bring back that smile that was missing.

I found myself in a place that looked like a school. Mary introduced me in the class. I saw three chairs, two tables, and a computer. She put me in the middle at the computer. I started to work on this computer, learning to read. It was the first time I had ever been in a classroom. Now, I have read books about Junkyard Dan (Dried Blood, Money for Nothing, Gun in the Back, Stuffed Animal, and others) as well as a book about Abraham Lincoln. I work with a tutor now (Miss Linda) and do worksheets and take tests. I have learned a lot about America, such as prohibition times, Rosa Parks, soldiers in Iraq, and cars. Since I have started to read, I can go to the gas station and buy gas without guessing. I can help my daughter in the fourth grade with her homework. I can read street signs.

So for this short time I have been in school, I have learned a lot. I encourage every child,

man, or woman to go to school, and for parents to send their children to school. When I go out of my journey of illiteracy, I would like to help other people who are having this kind of a problem. I am proud of myself. Only a dumb person says it is not important to read or write.

If you have this opportunity to take the bull by the horns, don't worry how long it takes for a man or woman. You can do it. I am doing it. My smile is back.

Emmanuel Njike
Project READ, Edmond

Friendship

I have had a friend since I was a child. Her name is Olga. She is my best friend since 1980, but she lives in Aguascalientes, Mexico. I miss her, but we get in touch by telephone

and when I go to Mexico. I feel emotional because I can see my best friend.

And now in the United States, I have two best friends. They are Sarai and Sofia, and I'm happy to live here.

Gloria Vazquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

What is Friendship?

Friendship is very important. I believe that friendship can start with yourself, your family, other people, and books. Learning about being a friend will lead to success and happiness.

First, a person has to be a friend to himself or herself. You have to know and like yourself.

Everyone has things to improve, and reading really brings learning and understanding.

For example, I had a drinking and smoking problem years ago. I knew that I could not

handle alcohol and cigarettes as they had a hold on me and covered up the real me.

Thanks to my dad Frank Wilson, Jr., Dr. David



Harold Wilson

Davis of the Taliaferro Mental Health Clinic, and Alcoholics

Anonymous, I stopped drinking and smoking.

I realized that I needed

to take care of myself.

Next, family members are a great support and can be your best friends for all your life. I am thankful for my mom Sarah Wilson, my dad, and my two brothers Frank and Bruce. The oldest brother died three years ago, due to Hodgkin's disease, and I really do miss him. I am grateful for his friendship and what he taught me. These discussions and lessons will not be forgotten. People need to value their family before it's too late.

Other people or acquaintances can be good friends. I was fortunate to be in an Air Force military family, and we moved to many states and countries. It is so interesting to learn from people of all ages and cultures.

Finally, a book can also be your best friend. I am enjoying reading. I am spending time at the Altus Public Library where I am spending time with my tutor, Marjorie Daniels. That time has helped me progress in reading, spelling, and writing. All the reading helps me enjoy life and things around me more.

Friendship can be found and cherished in yourself, your family, other people, and in books.

Harold Wilson
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Friendship

Friendship is like your life. You should be able to trust and believe in friends. If you cannot believe or trust in them, I would not call them friends. Friendship is something you were born with. It is your choice as to what kind of a friend you want to be. You can be a good friend or a bad one. Some people turn their backs on you, which means that they were not your friend to begin with.

Friends stand by you on everything. This could be even when you get into trouble. They will help you through every hard time and again through every easy time. Friends are someone that should hold your hand and keep you going, even when you want to give up. When you are down and out, a friend will be there to hold you up. If you don't let your friends make bad choices, then you can call yourself a true friend.

It is important to keep in touch with your friends throughout your life. Being a member of a circle of friends makes one feel good about themselves.

Friendship is like being an acquaintance. You talk, hang out, and do fun things with friends. You go to the movies, the mall, and other fun things. You respect them and they respect you. They treat you better than family because you can pick your friends, but you cannot pick your family.

Friendship is an amazing feeling. You know you have someone to talk to or even to cry to. I know when I talk or cry to my friends, they help me out. It feels good when you talk to someone about your problems. When you talk to someone about the way you feel, and you get a lot of things off your chest, it makes you feel better knowing someone does care.

A good friend won't let you down or tell everyone else your problems.

She is like my sister.

Heather Cligan
Norman Adult Learning Center

Friendship

I have a best friend, Katie, who I can trust with anything I say. She is a friend who I can tell all of my favorite secrets. I can also talk to her and she gives me some advice on certain things. Katie is a friend I can visit when I want to. We can go shopping together, go to movies, and go out to eat.

Holly Herron
Ardmore Literacy Council

Friendship

God blessed me with the best friend a person could ever have. From the first time we met in kindergarten, lifetime friends were born. Even as we went in different directions in life, we always found time to hang out. When he graduated, and I didn't, I was very bummed out. I thank the Lord for him showing up and making me go with our walking graduating class. He said that I was still a part of the group. That, I will never forget.

To be honest, he is the only reason that I'm still on this earth. He proved to me that anything you put your mind to can be accomplished. He wanted the girl, the job, and the money, so he went for it and got it. For thirty years, he walked the walk and talked the talk.

In 2005, he was to be my best man.

Unfortunately, that never happened. Late



James Kasper

Thanksgiving night, he was gunned down. The call came in around 2:15 a.m. for me to identify my best friend.

Since that day, my life has been changed forever. At the funeral home, I really couldn't wait for him to pop up and say, "The joke's on you!" Of course, that didn't happen either. I shed many tears and said my good-byes. Then I laid my friend to rest on what seemed to be the coldest day I ever had to endure.

It saddens me that bad things happen to good people. He wasn't a gangbanger or a criminal type. My best friend was a journeyman plumber, well on his way to success. I will never forget, or let anyone forget for that matter, how good of a man he was. Rest in peace, Old Friend, and thank you for looking

down on me every day! Christopher S. Moore, the heavens are so lucky to be graced by your presence. In your memory, I will walk tall and proud for both of us.

It has been five years now, and we still kick it in my dreams. In life and death, he is my best friend. I am inspired everyday to do bigger and better things because of this person. This is how I sum up true friendship!

James Kasper
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Haiku

White, brown cat playing
He runs everywhere I go
Following my legs.

Jen Xuan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Family and Friends Are Valuable



Julia Pawpa

Hello. My name is Julia and I was born in El Reno, Oklahoma. When I was born, the nurses gave me my name because my mother was already passed away. I have a good family now. Some of the fun things we do together are go to Red Rock Canyon and Roman Nose and Foss Lake. We also went to Colorado for a vacation and went hiking and cooked outside and went shopping. We really had fun.

I like to go to church and read the Bible and go sing for the people that are in the nursing homes. They really seem to like that, and

always ask if we are coming back; I always say yes. It puts a big smile on their faces.

At the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, I am on the board of directors as a student representative. I have attended four OLC state conferences and enjoyed them very much. The tutors at WOLC have become my friends. They have helped me in a lot of ways, including tutoring me for my driver's license and helping me read better so I could study for my certified nursing assistant exam. I passed and got CNA certification.

I have worked at several retirement centers which I enjoy, especially making friends with the residents and my co-workers. I am glad I have friends. It is fun doing things together. My friend Brenda was at the WOLC Cinco de Mayo Picnic, and I took her to her house afterward. My friend Frances and I like to go out to eat breakfast together. My dad goes

with us sometimes, because breakfast is his favorite meal of the day.

Family and friends are valuable and mean a lot to me.

Julia Pawpa

Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Friendship

I have had a friend for twenty-three years. She is a good friend. We studied in elementary, middle, and high school together. Later, we went to different colleges and I came here to the United States. But always, year to year, we continue with our communication by phone and e-mail. This friendship is beautiful because it has existed throughout the years.

Karem Vargas

OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Story About Friendships

My name is Katrina Mae Flaming. I was born in Weatherford on a hot day in June, 1970. My parents are Orville and Johanna, and they are among my best friends. I have many friends, and this makes me happy. I am also a friend and help others as much as I can.

When I was younger, my special friends were my Barbie dolls, which I carried around and dressed up and played with. Also, I had some parakeets named Boomer and Sooner. When they died, I got some more. I called them Flipper and Flapper.

Some of my friends are from Alan Markum Training Center. Their names are Andi, Brenda, Martha, and Hilda. We laugh and talk and work together. They have even nicknamed me “Giggles” because I giggle so much.



Katrina Mae Flaming

At Trinity Baptist Church, some of my best friends are the first and second graders that I teach during Sunday school. They like me and I like to teach them. I also like the people that I work with three days a week at the church childcare center.

Jan, from the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, is my reading tutor and is also a good friend. We meet at the library every Thursday afternoon.

I enjoy having my own apartment and doing my own shopping and cooking. I especially like macaroni and cheese. Mandy helps me with my financial records and other things that I need. My parents also help me. They live only three blocks from my apartment, so we are together a lot.

My family is very dear to me, and my nephews and nieces are some of my sweet friends. I enjoy all my friends. Friendship is one of the biggest blessings I have in life.

Katrina Mae Flaming
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Friendship

In my eyes friendship means you have to be trustworthy, loyal and have companionship. In my experience in life and trying to find a true friend, these three things are the main things a friendship needs. Friendship is such a beautiful part of life. I believe everyone needs a friend in order to get through the hard times or to just have fun!

First of all, a true friend needs to be trustworthy. For example, if I'm going to tell them something personal about my life, I expect

them to keep that to themselves. I know that I'm a trustworthy friend and I treat my friends as I would want to be treated. I love how I can be trusted and know that my friend is trustworthy. Trustworthiness is not only about being true to a real friend, but you're also true to yourself as well.

On another note, the second thing that matters to me in a friend is loyalty. In order for a true friend to be loyal, they need to be there for you—through the rain, all the way until the sun shines. You cannot expect loyalty to just happen in a friendship. I believe that you have to work to have that kind of quality in a friendship. Friends are a main part in my life, and I respect my true friends for being loyal to our friendship. I remember one time, if it were not for my friends, I would have been homeless. So, I'm very thankful that they were always there for me.

Lastly, the third quality that matters in a friendship is companionship. In order for this to be true, you should have some kind of connection. For example, you choose



Kylie Hoover

a mate because you enjoy their company just like in a friendship. My friend and I are compatible because we both have children and we always have fun and enjoy the little things, like just watching the kids play in the backyard.

In conclusion, the three qualities that matter in a friendship in my opinion are trustworthiness, loyalty, and companionship. A friendship has to be built on something, and it should be built on these three things. Anyone that is looking for a friend should look for those qualities. Through all of the rough times in life, I don't think I could have gotten

through all of them without the true friends that I've had on this big world. A real friend is someone who sticks closer than a brother.

Kylie Hoover
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

My Best Friend Alicia

Alicia Martinez is my best friend. She lives in Guthrie, Oklahoma. I met her in 1997 at church. She helps me all the time. She interprets for me at the doctor's. Everything I need, she does for me.

She has a good family—two married daughters and a son. She is a good single mother. Every day, she walks two or three miles a day very fast. She is in very good health, but soon she needs to have a hip operation.

She likes to cook. She makes great cookies and delicious tamales, as well as many other Mexican foods.

She is a nice friend to have. I am so happy Alicia is my friend. Because she has been so helpful to me, I want to help her all I can when she has her hip surgery at the hospital.

Luz Elena Zepeda
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

“Charlie Parker”

In life, some people make a difference with good actions and kind hearts. This is my history about how my friend, Marcos Guridy, was a lightning point in the darkness. In 1991, I began the university and it was there, in the same year, when I met him, “Marcos.” From that moment, he and I were always together at the university. I remember that he never

called me Manuel; he always called me by a nickname I don't know how he got, "Charlie Boy." He was always happy and smiling. A few days before, I had started calling him Charlie Parker for a cartoon hero, Spiderman (Peter Parker). I thought Charlie sounded better than Peter, and he called me Charlie Boy.

When my grandfather died in 1998, Marcos told me, "Don't be sad. Your grandfather is not gone because his memories and knowledge are still with you. His body is gone, but all the ideas he taught you are still alive in your mind, and you can transfer that to your sons. That is a way a man can live forever – transferring memories and knowledge from one generation to another."

One of the funny things that I remember about his family, is that his father and his brother all had the same name, Marcos— Marcos Aurelio, Marcos Augusto, Marcos

Antonio and Marcos Antonio (son). Even the grandfather was named Marcos.

One day, the last day to register for my last semester in the university, I did not have the money to register. On that day in the afternoon, Marcos called me and said, “Hey Charlie Boy, I didn’t see you at the university. What’s up?”

I said, “Sorry, Charlie Boy could not get the money for my registration. Maybe I can get it for the next semester.”

Marcos said, “Why didn’t you call me? You can’t lose your last semester. We are supposed to graduate together. We have had three years together and now that we are in the last curve of this race, you are going to let me take it alone. I can’t permit that. Let’s meet tomorrow morning in the university at 8:00 o’clock.”

I told him, “The last chance to get the registration was today,” and that they wouldn’t register anyone tomorrow. “Besides, I don’t have the money.”

He told me, “You only have to be there at 8:00 o’clock. I will go get the money and I will go get your registration. You call me ‘Charlie Parker’ and I am going to show you why. See you tomorrow.” The next day at 8:00 o’clock, we met at the university and went to talk with the manager in charge of the registration department. The registrar said that he was sorry, but only one man can open the registration process after it has closed, the general director. When we left, I said, “Thanks, but it is impossible. You heard the manager.”

His response was, “Nothing is impossible! Let’s go talk with the director.” When we were in the director’s office, the secretary said that he was in a meeting and, after that, he had a

conference. She said that he doesn't have time to see us that day. She looked at his schedule and said that she could make an appointment for the next Friday. My friend explained to her all my problems and that we couldn't wait. She said, "Okay, take a seat over there, and when he finishes the meeting, I will go see what I can do."

We sat for more than two hours. At 11:40 he finished the meeting and was ready to leave for his conference. The secretary told us to go inside his office quickly because he only had two minutes. We walked inside and I was nervous. My friend said to him, "This is my friend, Charlie Boy, sorry, Manuel Beltre. He lost his registration yesterday because he didn't have any money, but we got the money now. He went to register but we were told you were the only person who could open registration."



Manuel Beltre

He said, “I don’t have time to do that right now.

Why doesn’t he wait until next semester?”

My friend said,

“Because this is gonna be his last semester, because he and I made a deal that we would graduate together.”

The director called the secretary and told her to make a memo to the registration manager and tell him, “I approve him opening registration for Mr. Manuel Beltre, and only Mr. Beltre.” We went back to the registration office and I got my registration for my last regular semester.

A few months later, we were taking the last course in the engineering program. We had class Tuesday and Thursday. I remember that Thursday like it was yesterday. I remember

that Guridy didn't come to class, and when the class finished, I called his mother's house but nobody answered the phone. The next day, Friday, I called his work and somebody told me that Guridy had an accident the night before and died in the hospital. I couldn't believe it, I was in shock. I said, "Are you sure?"

He said, "Yes. I wouldn't joke about something like that." I never cried like that in my life. After his funeral, I didn't want to go back to class. I couldn't be there without thinking of my friend, who always called me Charlie Boy, and about our deal to graduate together. I missed a couple of classes. One day, another friend, Jesus Soriano, came to my house to talk to me.

"Manuel, I know that Guridy was your best friend and I can understand you, but I think that he would want you to get your degree. You have to finish your career for you and for

him. You can be sure that, in heaven, that is what he wants. This day, his body isn't here, but his soul is here with you, saying yes.

Remember what you learned from him. In that moment, I remembered when my grandfather died, and the words Guridy told me: "Your grandfather died, but his knowledge is going to be with you and you can transfer it to your sons. That is the way a man can live forever."

The day of my graduation, when I was getting my certificate, I turned my head and looked at the audience, and I saw him smiling like he did all the time that we were together at the university, and that is the way I remember him, smiling.

Manuel Beltre
Ardmore Literacy Council

Friendship

Friendship means, to me, the person I share happiness and sadness with. It is a treasure because I have the same feelings as she does.

Maria Reynoso
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

Friendship is a friendly feeling or action between friends. Friendship means a whole lot more to me.

When you are more than nine thousand miles from home, and do not speak the local language, you need a friend.

This friend should be a close relative that you can share your day to day problems and joys with; or someone who will give you honest or helpful advice.

A friend gave me the phone number for the Midwest City Library, where the English as a Second Language class was. For her help, I will always be thankful.

Since joining the class, I have met the teacher and students. All have been helpful in my learning English in one way or another. I hope to be able to return this help by helping others to learn English.

By the end of the course, I hope to have friendships that will last for ever.

Marlina Taylor
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

When I first walked into the doors of OIC, I was scared to DEATH! This was in April 2009, and my goal was and still is to earn my GED. Looking back over this short time, I can still

clearly recall the tremendous feeling of fear that seemed to be running throughout my entire body. The emotion of fear can be



Mary Helms

so strong and tense that it can make you question yourself. I stopped and said to myself, “You can do this. You can make it.” I looked around and saw all the other girls that struggled like I did, so I decided to get to know them and find out why they were here and to see how they felt. I would have never guessed there were a lot of adult learners that were a lot like me. After a while, we got to know each other and we talked about the struggles we had in school and what we were here for. I always thought I was the only one that couldn’t do a lot of the math and reading. I got over my shyness and became friends with them. Even

though some have come, and some have gone, we are all still learning.

Friends can help you through a lot when you are having problems. I can truly say that if I hadn't made friends here that would help me stay with it, be there if I needed help, and keep me focused, then I probably wouldn't be where I am today. It is always nice knowing that friends are there to help. I don't think I would still be here at OIC without them.

As I was growing up, I was very shy and did not do very well with others or have very many friends. I was always being teased or put-down, therefore I would just keep to myself. I just kept saying they were right. I thought, "I can't do this. I want to give up. This is stupid. I can't learn anything, so why be here?" So here I am at the age of twenty-six still learning what I need to learn to bring up my scores. I have made a lot of friends and I

would gladly say they are the best. If someone came to me and asked me for advice, I would tell them that friendship is important and so is learning. So stay focused, make friends, and don't be afraid to ask for help. There will always be someone there to help. If I can do it and make friends, anyone can.

Mary Helms
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

My name is Moises Eliab Inestroza. I was born in Nicaragua in 1987. I have three brothers and four sisters. I grew up with my grandparents. My parents separated when I was one year old. I graduated from elementary school in 2000, and in 2005 from high school. Then I went to study in Honduras in a Christian trade school, and I graduated in 2008 earning a degree as a computer technician. When

I started to study in Honduras, it was very difficult for me at school because I did not know anyone or have any friends. Soon I got to know friends who were very supportive and gave me their friendship. In Honduras, I met Torrey. On March 3, 2010, I came to the USA, and two days after, I married Torrey.

Moises Eliab Inestroza
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Sisters Are My Friends

I have been lucky to have sisters. We are very close and know about being friends to each other and our families. I am thankful to be blessed with sisters.

I have five sisters. Their names are Gabriela, Carmen, Cecilia, Lorena, and Susana. The oldest is Gabriela, who is 37. The second sister is Carmen, who is 32. Next is Cecilia, and

she is 30. Lorena is 28 years old. My twin sister Susana and I are both 26 years old. My mother and father had six girls within eleven



Noelia Cuellar

years of each other when we were growing up in Mexico.

Since we are Hispanic, our home language has been Spanish. Now we sisters all live in different parts of the United States, but our father still lives in Mexico. We girls finished school in Mexico where we had some English classes. My sisters love to visit together and spend hours talking together. We can say some English, but are learning more. Carmen, Susanna, and I are being tutored by a volunteer with the Great Plains Literacy Council. Our classroom is at the First Baptist Church in Altus.

I can depend on my sisters to help me. At my work and at home, we sisters help each other out in many ways. It might be by watching each other's children or shopping together.

These are just some ways that I love my sisters as my best friends.

Noelia Cuellar
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Friendships I've Made in English Class

Hello, my name is Ofelia Lopez.

I'm currently going to "Ingles Without Barriers" classes with my two kids, Sabastien and Esteban. Mercedes is the teacher. She explains the lessons very well. Sometimes, Jan watches my children while I'm in class. I enjoy being in the class and making friends with the other students and Jan, Pat, and Roberta.

One of the other ladies brings her baby to class, too. We meet at the First United Methodist Church in Weatherford. We have



Ofelia Lopez

a nice room to meet in and we are very grateful to Pat Penner, who is Educational Director there, for scheduling the room and providing the DVD player for us.

I've learned many things I didn't know before, but there are still many things that are hard for me to understand. I really hope to learn fast, so I can get a good job and be able to help my kids with their homework. I'm encouraging my husband to attend English classes with me, so he can do better at work.

I'm really thankful to everyone that has helped me improve my reading skills, because it's something really important for me to improve

my future. The friendships I have made help me feel part of a group.

Ofelia Lopez
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Great Friends

My name is Pamela Johnson. I moved to Oklahoma five years ago from Louisiana, and now I wouldn't want to live anywhere



Pamela Johnson

else. I am now happy to call Oklahoma home. I started attending OIC last April, and that was the smartest thing I have ever done, not just for learning, but for the great people I have met—people I call friends. Some of them have left, but I still think about them a lot. However, the people that I truly like calling friends are the staff at OIC, mainly my

instructor. She is always there when I need help with a problem on any subject. When she is done, I am able to understand how the problem is supposed to be worked out. She has even helped me build my confidence up in myself. I used to look down on myself and believe I could never achieve anything at all. But now, I know different. I know that I can achieve anything if I work hard at it. I look forward to achieving my goals in life, even though I will have to leave great friends. I enjoy helping them achieve their goals also. I know once I am doing what I want to do in my life, which is photography, the friends that I made at OIC and the staff will stay in my memory forever. I have so much respect for the women who I call good friends, not just because we are there for the same reason,

but because that is how I see them. I feel so blessed that I know them all.

Pamela Johnson
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

I Miss the City



Paula Watson

I didn't want to move from the city to the country. I do not like it because it's too quiet out here. There is traffic in the city and places to go. I like to go out to eat Mexican food with my cousin Paula. Our names are the same. We have fun together. We go to visit her mom. Sometimes, I go to Little Cussetah Indian Church with her. She is my H.T.S. helper. Since Kelly has been tutoring me, I've been doing a lot better in my reading. I read

more books at home now. I like to go to reading class at the library annex.

Paula Jan Watson
Creek County Literacy Program

Friendship

There are many reasons I believe friends are important in a persons' life. Things I value more than anything are: companionship, spirituality, and loyalty at all times.

I've gone fishing without my friend; it's not the same without his companionship. When I take a friend, my time is so much more enjoyable...the fishing is much better too! That way, I've got someone to put bait on my hook and help tell some whopper stories!

Most of my friends are spiritual leaders in life. Their hearts are made of gold. I'm never alone at anytime of life because I'm always in their

prayers, and they are in mine. Their spirituality leads them to positive living. For example,



Raymond Beets

most of my friends come from troubled homes, but have managed to rely on their faith to get them through life.

This life we call a journey is full of change. It is important to know where your friends are in your life. Loyal friends will help you through the voyage of life!

Have you ever lost a close friend? Due to changes in life, I once lost a close friend, and felt all alone in life. It was like a cold November rain with no place to go.

In conclusion, friendships are always to be treasured, if you have a friendship that contains companionship, spirituality, and loyalty,

then you have found true joy, so put your heart and soul into it and hold on tight!

Raymond Beets
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

Friendship

My name is Rosario Elvira Vaca. Everyone calls me Elvira. I am from Ecuador. I am 78 years old. I am happy living in Bartlesville, OK.

I have nine children, four daughters and five sons. I have 13 grandchildren and two great granddaughters.

One son is in the military in Ecuador. One son is in France. One son and one daughter are in Switzerland. Two sons and one daughter are in Ecuador. One daughter lives in Tulsa, OK and one lives in Bartlesville, OK.

I go to school to learn English. In this class, I have many friends. I love them like they are my family. I started learning English only three years ago. Now, my teacher understands me when I talk. I can talk to people in the store and in my class.

I also have a tutor from the Literacy Council who helps me with my English once a week. I like my tutor very much. She and I talk together. She helps me say words and use them correctly. I also work on Rosetta Stone on the computer at the library.

If you can't speak English, you need to go to an English class and get a tutor. If I can learn English at 78 years old, you can too.

Friendship means to me like a nice river, peaceful and quiet, pure and clear. When you have a true friend, it is a gift from God. It is a

divine blessing for everyone who has a good spirit.

My best friend is God. He never fails me and He is always there for me. I have been a friend to everyone who needs me in their bad times, with a lot of love and honesty.

Rosario Elvira Vaca
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Friendship Is ...

Friendship is such an important thing to have in your life. To me, a friend is someone who is very loyal, honest, and always caring. Everybody could use a true friend in their life, and it is very nice to be able to have someone to count on when you need them.

First, being a loyal friend is important in life. You need someone who's a true friend. Whenever you tell them something in con-

fidence, they should keep it to themselves. For example, I told a friend about a serious problem that I was going through, and she went around telling everybody about it, and it



Sandy Dees

upset me very much. I found out very quickly that person wasn't my friend.

Secondly, you should have a friend that is honest with you in all circumstances. Honest people are good to have around because they are usually truthful with you no matter what. It is really nice to be friends with honest people, and if you need real advice from them, they will be honest with you. For instance, one time I was wanting to start dating a guy, and I asked my friend to give me her honest opinion about the guy, and she was very honest with me, so I didn't pursue him anymore.

Thirdly, you should always be caring to your friends. Maybe your friend doesn't get shown care, so it's your job to show them. They should do the same for you. Caring can be displayed in many ways. For instance, friends take time to check on you when you are sick, they call to wish you a happy birthday, and they share in your joys and your sorrows.

So in conclusion, true friends are very loyal, honest, and always caring. If you possess these qualities, you will make great friends and have friends forever.

Sandy Dees
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

Friendship

Friendship is a valued treasure all people need in their life. Friendship should be about being

able to confide in someone, being able to trust someone and being a companion to someone.



Sherry Lynn

First, a friend is someone who will be there, someone to confide in, and someone who will not share your deepest secrets. A true friend helps you to feel safe in knowing that they will never share secrets with any other person, and that I would do the same for them.

Secondly, a friend is someone that I can trust, to be a shoulder to lean on when things aren't going so well in life. I know that our trust is equal, having trust in them as well as them trusting me. Friends should be able to tell each other things and know they will never go any further than the two of us.

Thirdly, a friend is a great gift of companionship, having a companion to do fun things with. My friend and I like to go to garage sales. We have at least one day a week that we like to call our day. We can get together, just the two of us, and talk and laugh about how the week has been. We often like to get together just to enjoy one another's company. Having a companion is a much needed thing in my life.

In conclusion, friendship is something that I could not do without. It is a gift that truly is valued and should be something that everyone needs throughout their life. I need my friend to confide in, to trust, and to share companionship with. I couldn't imagine life without my dear friend.

Sherry Lynn
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

I Miss My Best Friend

My best friend is Birki. I met her twenty-eight years ago in Ethiopia when I was in high school. She is married with two kids and still lives in Ethiopia. She is around my age. We used to go to church together and spent a lot of time together.

When I lived back home, she was a good advisor, just like a family member even though we did not live together. When I had a problem, she always gave me good advice.

She made good strong coffee that we all loved to drink. I can't forget that she was a special cook and made all my favorite Ethiopian foods. Another thing I loved about her was that she was very honest. Everybody could trust her.

Birki was a beautiful woman even though she did not wear any makeup. Her favorite clothes

were the national attire. She always looked so nice.

I miss Birki so much, the same way I miss my family. Someday, Birki and I will see each other again. I will be so happy to see her. We will have a lot of things to talk about.

Shewaye Tefera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Haiku

Sitting bird in tree

Dude standing under the tree

Watching the small bird

Shewaye Tefera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Best Friend is a Four-Legged Dog

I have been living with friends from my



Shirley Rebolo

church for three months and had visited there often in the past. They have four dogs, and one of them, Sherman, has become

my best friend. He is small and has black hair, a long tail, and small ears. He likes everyone that comes to the house.

One night when I was asleep, Sherman got on my bed and wanted to get under the blanket. He has slept with me ever since. Sometimes, when he doesn't want to get under the blanket, he will hide his ball under things. He cannot get it out. I have to get up to get it out for him.

My little friend washes my face all the time.
He steals food off my plate if I am not looking.
He cries if I do not give him some of my food
when I am eating.

He is able to let me know what he wants. He
looks at me and barks if I am not looking at
him. He will put his ball in his water bowl or
his food bowl when he wants it filled. When
he wants to go outside, he goes to the front
door to go out in the fenced front yard. He
never has accidents in the house. He loves to
chase the birds, cats, and other dogs that are
in the yard or come by the house.

His favorite thing to do is to play ball. When
he wants to play, he drops the ball on my feet.
We play until he gets tired. Then he gets up in
my lap to take a nap.

Sherman, my four legged best friend, has brought a lot of joy into my life.

Shirley Rebolo
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Friendship

To me, a friend is someone that comes in my mind when I don't feel good. When it rains, or when I worry about my children, or I'm just feeling bad without a special reason, someone comes to my mind and I can talk with her and feel better.

So, friendship means, to me, having a special person like that and becoming a special person to someone.

Sookwon Yi
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

My Best Friend

Friendship means to me: respecting, taking care of each other, being there in the good times and the bad, a shoulder to cry on, someone who gives you advice in difficult situations.

My best friend is my daughter. She is beautiful both inside and out. She's always there for me, loving me and taking care of me. We do a lot of things together and have a fun time when we go on vacation trips. She's great.

One day, I got sick and we didn't know what was wrong, but I didn't feel very well. She took me to the hospital and then took care of me until I got well. We take care of each other. She helps me with the expenses and with cleaning at home, too.

If you have a very good friend, you are lucky and need to take care of this friendship be-

cause you are blessed. Always remember that God has blessed you with this friend. I pray and give thanks to God everyday for my daughter; my best friend.

Soraida Mariquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friendship

Friendship: I was twenty six years old when I found out what true friendship was all about. After a twelve year relationship, two children, and one on the way, I became a lost person. I was now a single mom with all the responsibilities to handle alone. This happened because the man in my life, that I thought would love me forever, just left. No warning, no good-bye, no nothing—just gone.

I became a single mom with no friends or family to go to for advice or help. Until this

happened, I had never been alone. For the past twelve years, I had my family, the children's dad, his family, and a few friends that we had made together. When our relationship ended, so did all of the so called "friends" that we had made together. His family was not the family oriented type, so there was not much contact with them. They were not interested in their grandchildren.

A few weeks later, things got worse. My younger sister was diagnosed with cancer, which meant that my mom and my sister had to relocate so that my sister could get the treatment she needed.

This is how I came to find myself living independently for the first time ever! I was four months pregnant with my third and final child, with no job, no transportation, and no idea of what I was going to do, and how I was going to provide for my family.

With no friends, no family, and no help, I did the only thing I knew to do. I signed up for state assistance. This proved to be a real blessing. They helped me pay my rent and utilities, and with the cash allowance I received every month, I was able to buy diapers and the other necessities that we needed.

After the birth of my daughter, I thought I would get a job, but I was offered the chance to go back to school and earn my GED. I jumped at the chance. It meant that I could get a better job and provide a better life for my family.

My first day to attend class, I met the lady that, still to this day, is a best friend. She is and always will be my true blue friend. She had 2 little girls, and as our friendship grew, so did the girls friendship. We understood each other's situations and problems. There were times, that before I could say what I was

thinking, she would say it first. She said that she knows what I am thinking just by the look on my face. There are many different reasons why she is so dear to me, but the most important one is that God put her in my life at the exact time and place that I needed her the most.

She helped me realize that I can do anything that I want and be anything that I want. I know now that I have a purpose, and I can go in any direction I choose. She taught me that it was OK to be scared, and that true friends can figure these things out together. She assured me that I would always have a place in her heart, and I know she will always be in my heart. She is closer than a sister could be to me.

When I look deep within my heart, and I find that spot that makes me smile, at the same time, a tear will come to my eyes. I am thank-

ful that there is a spot filled with the love for my dearest friend, because she is so precious to me. Misty is the one who showed me what friendship is truly all about.

Stacie Prater
Norman Adult Learning Center

Friendships

Friendships are an important factor in forming a powerful foundation that good relationships are built upon. My best friend has been with me through some rough times in my young adult life. In many situations, when we needed each other the most, we have helped each other.

She has never judged me or made me feel ashamed of any past mistakes. She listens to me when I am upset, angry, sad, and happy. She offers great advice, listens, and is support-

ive. Encouraging me to learn from life's trials and tribulations is something that has always worked in our relationship. She is always there for me when I am having a bad day, and to tell me to never give up, or that it will be okay. Just by saying those words, I know I can get through any obstacles that I have.

I return the favor to her by being a shoulder to cry on, someone to confide in when she has a problem, and a person she turns to in times of joy and laughter. We share common interests and beliefs. To have a friend, you have to be a friend is what my grandmother and life has taught me. Through my experiences, I've learned this is true.

A friend is someone you can depend on to be there when life throws you curveballs, and to give and receive support, love, honesty, guidance, understanding, compassion, strength, and firmness. Friendships are important to a

marriage, the relationship between siblings, and your parents. The support of friends is an important part of being successful in life.

Tai Jackson
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Earth Angels

My name is Teresa Rodriguez. I am married and have two girls. While I was living in Wichita, Kansas, one day I met Elena Lopez at church. One week after I met her, she had surgery and I went to visit her at the hospital. When she was recovering, my kids and I went to her house and she asked me about my husband. I told her about his poor health. She told me her daughter was a doctor, and her daughter asked me what's wrong with him. I explained to her that my husband had bacteria in his head and left ear, and told her his doctor had explained that surgery was not possi-

ble, because it could leave him disabled or kill him. The Dr. had told me he might not live much longer.

After I explained to Dr. Ruiz, a family doctor,



what was wrong with him, Teresa Rodriguez she told me if I could bring her his medical records, she would read the records. She told me that she needed to go to an interview for her work, but when she came back, she told me about Dr. Dempewolfe, who is a specialist in ear, nose and throat. She said this doctor could help my husband, but only if we moved from Wichita, Kansas to Ardmore, Oklahoma. I asked Dr. Ruiz, “When should we move?” She said, “Very soon. But, you need to talk to your husband.”

When my husband came back from work, I told him, “We are going to move to Oklahoma.”

He said, “Okay.”

When we came to Ardmore, I loved it here because it reminded me of Mexico – trees everywhere. When I decided to move, I did not think about where we were going to live or where we were going to work. I did not think about anything like that. I only thought my husband would be okay.

We moved on June 10, 2005. When we came here, we lived with Dr. Ruiz and Elena for nine months. They paid all the bills and they did not charge for anything. We started to work, and when my husband had the surgery, Elena helped me with my kids and my husband, because I was working. When he felt better,

he started to work, save money, and look for apartments to rent.

Now my husband is fine, everything is fine. I want to say thank you to Dr. Ruiz, Dr. Fernandes, and Dr. Dempewolfe for all they did for my husband. Dr. Fernandes was the boyfriend of Dr. Ruiz and he agreed to do the anesthesia for free. Dr. Dempewolfe also did not charge for the surgery. Especially I want to thank Elena for all the advice and support she provided. Now, I am not waiting to see the angels in spirit, because the angels are here on earth.

Teresa Rodriguez
Ardmore Literacy Council

Odyssey

The life of every man contains different paths throughout his life. I never thought to be far

away from my family, but near to my dreams.



Ulises Castillo

When I was in Mexico, my mind always thought about the future or about planning my life. How I could finish my career

and do it with honor was something I often thought about.

Now I know that it is just a step, one of a thousand steps in the life of every human being. Many careers are like a life. It isn't just about the knowledge you gain in school. Life is more important than school, especially when you're alone in a different culture. Who teaches about life? You can learn some things from teachers and fathers, but from my own perspective, you make your own way through problems by putting yourself in the action on the field.

I have found that one good friend on the field, though, can make the difference between fighting alone; and rather than die fighting—winning! In my situation, I have had many experiences in a short time. Thanks, though, to God and my loyal friend Jose Rivera, my experiences have been successful. Jose has helped me to get more experience and to succeed. With his help, I hope to speak, write and think like a successful person in this culture. And, I want to be a great human being at the end of the journey.

Ulises Castillo
Ardmore Literacy Council

Friends Until the End

I met Sylvia in junior high. Although she was in the seventh grade and I was in the eighth, we had the same teachers and became very good friends. In fact, Sylvia was one of my

best friends ever. Sylvia, our friend Teresa, and I always hung out before school, at lunch, after school, and on weekends. When we



Vicky Patterson

were not together, we were always on the phone talking to each other. We competed in Special Olympics together, where we

played basketball and ran track. Sylvia would always be part of our team, but she had a weak heart and couldn't always play. She was sick a lot because of kidney problems.

For my seventeenth birthday, I wanted Sylvia to be part of my party; but because of her health there was not much she could do.

My mom and dad told me I could invite five friends to my party, and Sylvia was the first one I invited. I knew the date and time of my party, and that we would be picking up

my friends. What I didn't know was that my parents had rented a limousine so it would be easier for Sylvia to participate. The limo went from house to house to pick up my friends. The limo driver had the radio on, and as we drove around, we all started singing. We had lots of laughs and a really good time. We picked up pizza and ate while we drove around town. When we finished the pizza, we went to a Sonic drive through window and ordered ice cream. Being able to spend this time with my good friends made this the best birthday I ever had.

My birthday was in February, and over the next several months, Sylvia's health got worse. In December of that same year, at the age of fifteen, Sylvia died over Christmas break. That was ten years ago and I still miss her and think about her. Every year on her birthday and

Memorial Day, I go visit her at the cemetery.
We were friends until the end and longer.

Vicky Lynn Patterson
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Friendship

I have had a friend for five years. She is sweet.
We like to walk and think about having a
friend for such a long time. We are happy, and
play and smile together. We have a good rela-
tionship.

Yolanda Teos
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Friends

My best friends are good listeners, always
loving, and extremely caring. It is very nice
to have them. Everyone needs to have a best
friend in their life. If you don't, you don't

know what you're missing in your life.

First, my best friends are good listeners to me. If I need to talk about something, they



Yvette Pendergrass

are always there for me. For example, if I am having a guy problem, they listen first, then they will give their opinion on the guy problem I am having. It helps to have best friends who are great listeners in my life. I am so grateful to have them. They mean a lot to me because they are such good listeners.

Secondly, my best friends are always loving. They always give their love no matter what. They are always loving to my kids because they treat them like their own kids. They are always loving to me. For example, if I need them to babysit for me, they will. Without

asking a question, they just do. This kind of sacrifice is what true friendship is all about.

Thirdly, my best friends are extremely caring. They care about my kids and me. For example, if my kids are sick, they want to be there for them. They always call and ask how the kids are. They are extremely caring to me because they will call and ask how my day went, or how I am feeling. They are so caring because they will take time out of their busy days just to call. That's why I love my best friends so much, because of their caring ways.

In conclusion, my best friends are good listeners, always loving, and extremely caring. You will learn that it is such joy to have best friends in your life. I would recommend that everyone should have a best friend.

Yvette Pendergrass
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

Possibilities

Possibilities through Sacrifice

Alberto's Story

My name is Alberto. I came here seven years ago. I left everything behind in Mexico in hopes of giving my family a better future. Not everything has been easy, but together, we always make it work.



I'm happy to know that my kids will have the opportunity to have a good future, and that possibility makes all the sacrifices I've made worth it. I am working hard to make this happen.

Finally I would like to say thank you to Roberta and the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition for providing me with books and allowing me to be part of this good

English program. My English is improving every day. My wife and children speak English very well and they even help translate.

Alberto
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Possibilities

My name is Alicia Burdett. I am attending Community Literacy Centers to get help on my reading, math, and spelling, so I can make a better life for my kids. When I was in high school, I needed to know how to read a lot of stuff like math questions, spelling, reading music and to type on a computer.

Now, I can read a lot better than I could when I was in high school. Reading is helping me out with my schoolwork because I can understand what I read now. Now, I can do my math problems and I can spell words. I would never

try to spell when I was in high school. My kids love it when I read to them and it makes me happy to see my kids into reading, because when I was little, I hated to read. I don't want my kids to hate to read. That is why I read to them, so they will like it when they get bigger. When I learn as much as I can from CLC, I want to go back to school so I can become a massage therapist, so I can help people.

I am very thankful for CLC, because if I did not go there I probably would not be able to read, spell or do the math I am doing now. As I continue to learn to read, I will make a better life for myself and my kids. I thank everybody who helps me with the stuff I need to know for my kid's futures.

Alicia Burdett
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., Oklahoma City

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of being able to move back home or get my GED. Also, I never thought I could ever get the chance to become a nurse. Now, many possibilities have opened to me.



Alicia J. Walter

Before now, there was little chance of me ever moving back to my hometown of Oklahoma City. When my sister and I were younger, we moved to Arlington, Texas. Our parents said that we would never move back to Oklahoma. Different events led me to believe this was true. About a year later, my father lost his job, which led us back to moving back to our one and true home. With us living here now, we get to be near our cousins, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren.

Now that I am near a school that has adult learning classes, I can finally earn my GED. Being able to earn this will be one of the greatest accomplishments that I could ever achieve.

Earning a GED will open the door to endless possibilities to better my life in my future, and it will allow me to grow as a person. It will open up the chance for me to become a nurse. This has been a dream of mine for many years. Becoming a nurse means I will be able to help others to grow and see their own future, too. Hopefully, they will get some of the same opportunity I have been granted, or even more. Before now, the possibility of moving home, earning a GED, or becoming a nurse never seemed to be a possibility for me. Now that I have had the chance to make all of this hap-

pen for me, I will do all in my power to keep it.

Alicia J. Walter
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Believe in Yourself

I never knew I really had a choice or any possibilities of becoming anything, really, until I started the adult literacy program. I was known as the shy, dumb, and stupid one in school; I only was able to read at a third grade level and was always passed on because I was never in any trouble or bugged anyone. I never thought about college or anything. I joined the program about 6 or 7 years ago. Once I made the move of starting this program, my world started changing before my eyes. The literacy office and my tutor believed in me, which made me want to believe in myself. I started improving my reading level, which

made me want to start to have goals. Why not try college, why not try having a good job, having nice things, living on my own?

As I became better in my reading level and was able to read at a 12th grade level, I went to college, and you will never believe what happened. I made honor roll, which I had never done in my life. Then I thought, why not try for a better job; and because of my reading skills, I sit in my own office today as the purchasing clerk for the Utica Park Clinics. I have to take care of the needs of over 33 clinics and hundreds of doctors.

I just bought a car for the first time and was able to follow all the paper work and read it. I would have never thought that I would even love to read and enjoy it, or realize that just by learning to read, it would have changed my life. I'm doing things in my life that a few years ago I could only dream. I will always be thank-

ful to my tutors and the literacy office for taking a chance on me and encouraging me when I wanted to give up. Because of their help, my life will never be the same.

Thanks.

Amy Cooper
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Possibilities for the Future

My name is Andrea Rojas and I am from Mexico. I came to this wonderful country in 1999 looking for great opportunities to start a new life with my two children and my parents. We settled in Altus, Oklahoma.

As soon as I started looking for a job, I noticed that finding a job would be hard without speaking proper English. Regardless, I found a position in a local restaurant. However, I still needed to learn English to help me at my job,



Andrea Rojas

and with my children
in their school work.

I was glad to have
several possibilities of
places to learn more
English. I went to an

English as a Second Language class at Booker Learning Center. They helped me a lot with my English skills. Today, I'm able to write and read moderate English, but I still needed to speak fluently. I asked for help with the Great Plains Literacy Council, and they found great and eager tutors for me. They have taken me under their wings and started teaching me the English language. I want to give special thanks and gratefulness to Aleida Burchett and Willie Sims for their effort to help me accomplish my goals.

Andrea Rojas
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Possibilities

First of all, I'm Anthony. I am writing this to show how I feel about getting my GED. I took classes before, but I moved away to another town. I am very excited about getting my GED. This is something I have been waiting for a long time. My family is going to celebrate for me once I have it. We are going to have a big dinner with all the family at my house.

Anthony
Duncan Area Literacy Council

The Opportunity and Challenge of Literacy

My name is Benjamin Galindo, and I want to talk to you about me and the literacy program, which has been so beneficial in helping me to pursue my goal of making a better life for me

and my family. This my second time to write a story for the student book.



Ben Galindo

I am married to Bertha and we have two children, Sebastian and Alison, whom we love very much. We want the best life possible for them. That's why we are trying to learn English in the United States.

Now that I know more English words, I can communicate with others, and people understand me much better. That makes me feel very good. It is not easy learning another language. But with the literacy program, it makes it much easier on me. I want to thank the literacy program and my tutor, Wendell, for helping me with my goal and purpose. It also helps me in my job as a mechanic.

This is a great time for anyone who needs help writing and reading English, and for anyone who wants to take the challenge of learning a second language.

Also, I want to thank the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy tutors and the First United Methodist Church for providing the Wednesday evening meal and the ESL class. Thank you for the effort, dedication, and devotion to the English learners.

Benjamin Galindo
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

The Possibilities That Come From Reading

For the past year and a half, I have been a student with the Great Plains Literacy Council at Altus. I go every Tuesday morning to meet with my tutor Jackie Henson. I am thankful

for her and my sister Krishaunda helping me. I am learning that reading is helping me in many ways.

Now that I can read better, I am happier. It makes me feel better about myself. I have learned more about what goes on around me in this town. The newspaper comics are some of my favorite readings. They make me laugh.

Reading also gives me a way to keep in touch with my family that does not live close to me. Every time I get a letter in the mail, I smile to myself because I can read it without a lot of help. My 23-year-old brother writes to me quite a bit. I like reading his letters so much, so I try to write back in return. I tell him about what I am getting to do.

I am able to send text messages on my phone now. My dad taught me to text my family. I do short text messages to my dad in Oklahoma

City and to my sister in Altus.

I love that I can go to a store and look at movies and CDs. Now, I read the titles of the



Brittney Shelton

new releases all by myself before I buy one. Reading also has helped me with other shopping, like buying food and reading the labels. In short, I am a lot happier now that I am learning to read!

Brittney Shelton
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Possibilities

At first, I was afraid to enroll in this class, but now I'm happy I did. The reason I was afraid to enroll in this class was school and friends. I didn't have a future if I stayed in public school.

I left school to come to this class, and it was the best thing I ever did for myself.

The reason I didn't want to quit school was that I have a lot of friends still there. I played sports and other stuff. I saw the kids that quit school to get their GED and I didn't like it.

I thought they were bad kids, always in trouble, and they had no friends. I didn't want my friends to turn their backs on me for quitting school, and they didn't.

If I were to stay in school, I would have been kicked out for grades and credits. I didn't even try to do my work in class. I looked at school like it was a place to hang out, play my sports, and get in trouble.

I left school to attend this GED program and I'm happy I did. I have good grades and I made new friends. I'm almost ready to take the GED test. I was wrong about the GED

program and the people who quit school to take it. I don't think it's a bad choice at all, or at least it wasn't for me. It was the best thing for me.

Cameron Cassell
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

English Language Has Possibilities for Me

When I came from Mexico, I only knew Spanish. I did not know the English language. In school in Mexico, I finished 9th grade. The ABCs were taught, but I did not know the sounds of the letters or how to sound out words.

It is possible to learn English as a second language. I married Gerardo (Jerry) Figueroa from Altus, Oklahoma. He is Hispanic and grew up in the United States, so he could



Carmen Figueroa

speak, read and write English, but he didn't know Spanish. He has taught me a lot of English, but he is trying to learn Spanish and wants me to speak in Spanish when he is around me. So, it is hard for me to practice English with him.

Thanks to a volunteer from the First Baptist Church and a tutor from the Great Plains Literacy Council, I am studying English lessons. Currently, I am studying with my two sisters and our literacy tutor every Tuesday afternoon. We are studying the Laubach Book 1 materials.

Another reason English is important to me, is to help my two children learn at school and see possibilities for them. Our four year old son Nathan is in pre-school, and our seven

year old son Jonathan is in the first grade. Our children will be fortunate to be able to know both English and Spanish. I want my boys to learn and do well at school. I try to help them with reading and their homework, but sometimes it is hard for me to understand. Reading with them every day is what I try to do.

Learning English gives me and my family more possibilities. I want to continue learning.

Carmen Figueroa
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Possibilities

At first, I was afraid to make the call to the Literacy Program, but now I'm proud of the day I enrolled in GED classes for a better life. Everybody must fall sometimes, but you've got to pick yourself back up. I want to help

open possibilities for my child so she can go to college, and I want to go to college, too. I have my mother encouraging me as I make a life for myself, and the Literacy Program encourages me, too. It's not just a program; they want to help you to better your life and your child's life.

When I finish, I'm going to walk with my head up high because I've achieved my goals. My goals are to work in nursing assistance and phlebotomy. I made a promise to myself that nothing would stop me from doing what I've got to do. My teachers, Miss Janet and Miss Lindee, want to see the class move forward, and I thank them so much for that and for helping me. They want to help me, but I must also want to help myself. They made a good choice to open this class, but the thing is,

you've got to want to learn. It's never too late,
and you're never too old to learn new things.

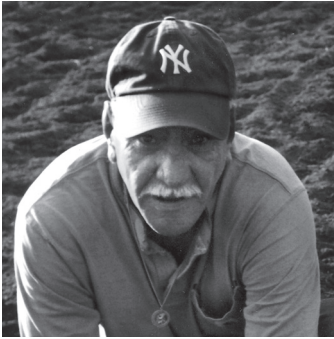
Charmayne Young
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Possibilities!

Possibilities! What a wonderful word. I would never have thought that I had choices to establish the knowledge so that I could learn how to read and develop my English speaking skills. Now, I know through determination and hard work, anything I choose to do is possible.

It has been one and a half years that I have been in the Miami Public Library Literacy Program. My tutor, Mrs. Stinson, has taught me word attack skills, and I have read numerous books from cover to cover for the first time in my life. I have learned to write book

reports, and my spelling is getting better as I go along. Now, I am learning to do research on computers. Every week, my tutor gives me



Chico Flores

one topic to investigate and research at home on my computer. My topics have been Louis Braille, the Eiffel Tower, the beginning

of television, Mother's Day, linsey-woolsey and Ivory Soap. It was so easy and interesting that I could not get off the computer!

This past year and a half, I have grown and have more confidence than I ever dreamed possible. I have now started to do scripture readings in front of my church congregation on Sundays, and I have given two motivational speeches. I enjoy all of the charity work that I am involved with in my community. I am a third degree Knight of Columbus, and

my dream is to be the first Hispanic Grand Knight!

I am 56 years old, and now I am getting ready to enroll in Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, Oklahoma for the fall of 2010!

Chico Flores
Miami Area Literacy Council

Continuing the Journey

My name is Danielle Morris. Last year, I wrote a story about myself and it was published in *Celebrating Our Journey, Volume 5*. That was a big accomplishment for me. Something I wasn't sure I would ever be able to do. It was something that I have always wanted and still want to be able to do. Just sit down and write a story, just sit down and read a story.

I have made a lot of progress since last year. I have worked very hard. Some people don't realize how not being able to read affects your daily life. Little things that people do without



Danielle Morris

thinking are hard for me; getting a driver's license, reading road signs, reading recipes, picking a greeting card, instructions on

bottles of the chemicals I work with. I have to have my Mom help me send a text message. I am getting better at all of these things.

I have moved from children's books to young adult. I have also written a children's story. I added it to the folder of stories I have written with each lesson we do. At the age of 35, I feel better about myself. Knowing how to read

better makes it easier for me to do a lot more things.

Danielle Morris
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Possibilities

At first, I was afraid to enroll in this class because I thought I was too old to go back to school. Now, I am glad that I did. Once I relaxed, it became easier and actually fun. I am finding out that I know more than I thought I did. I now have the confidence to try and do something. My goal is to get my GED diploma.

This class and Ms. Pam have inspired me to strive for bigger and better things. There have been a few times when I was actually proud of myself for getting the right answer to a question. That is a great feeling. Although I am still

struggling in some subject areas, I know that I am improving. With more practice and study, I can and will prevail.

Now, I am no longer afraid of school, nor do I feel out of place because of my age. As it turns out, I am not the oldest student in the class, nor am I the only one struggling. Everyone makes each other feel welcome and comfortable and no one makes me feel dumb. This gives me pride in myself and what I am able to do.

I would like to say a special thanks to Ms. Pam. Thanks for believing in me. She gave me the confidence to do this, and continues to give me the know-how so I can follow through and get my GED. For this, I will be forever grateful.

Donna Bentley
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Possibilities

Before now, I had never thought about the possibilities of the world and things that could change my life in just one way. There was a possibility that I could go on a field trip with the law enforcement class to Oklahoma City. This trip was actually a law enforcement competition. I thought it could be fun.

Yesterday, the instructor, Mr. Graham, had asked me if I wanted to go, which I did. At first, he told me I had a grade of a D and couldn't go. I thought I actually had an A in the class. Then he called me into his office to tell me I could go on the trip. I was very happy.

The trip was important to me because I really like law enforcement. I want to be a police officer someday.

Before this day, I had never thought about the possibility of the world and things that could change my life in just one way. I wanted the opportunity to go on this field trip because law enforcement is important to me. I wanted the competition experience in law enforcement because I want to be a police officer someday.

Ezekiel Huzarski
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of spending more time with my husband. When he comes home from driving his truck, I have always made a list of things that he has to do. But this time it will be different. I'm not going to make a list this time.

I'm going to do the things by myself, so when he comes, I'm going to invite him to walk at the park. We are going to the movies, or maybe we can go to the zoo with my daughter. It is not fair for him to come home to take days off, but find he has to work instead.

Elia Escalera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

No Matter the Obstacle, I'm Not Giving Up!

My name is Elia Perez. I am from Oklahoma City, OK; born and raised. I have two daughters. One of my girls has finished high school and is working for a loan company. My other daughter is eight years old and is in second grade. I always had the desire to return to school, but as a young single mother, I needed to be the provider of my household. I had to

put my education on hold so I could get a job. I started working at a printing shop. Things were going good for a couple of years. I had my own place, a vehicle, and everything else I needed to raise my girls. Then things changed. The company closed and I was without a job. I then started working through temporary agencies just so we could make ends meet. This went on for a few more years. Later, I was able to get another job at a different printing shop. I worked there for four years. At this time, I knew I needed more skills in measurement. I was dealing with trimming paper to different sizes to make books, and it was a little difficult. I later quit this job because of personal problems. Once again, I was without work. When my oldest daughter finished school and moved out on her own, she got a good paying job with benefits and the opportunity of advancement. I felt that now, it was

my time to focus on my education. I knew I needed more skills and now that I had only one child to take care of, it was the right time. While my youngest would be in school, I would be able to go and study as well.



Elia Perez

I was able to attend Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), where I am proceeding with my education to get my GED. From the time I started until now, one thing or another has come my way and has tried to hinder me getting my education. For example, shortly after coming to the program, I found out things about myself that were barriers to my education. I need glasses, I have a learning disability, I need group work and individual instruction to understand subjects, and I have Visual Stress Syndrome. Because of my needs

and style of learning, I had to advocate for myself to get my needs met. This was a long, stressful, and frustrating process. However, I am doing well and my needs are being met. Later, transportation was an issue and I had to start taking the Metro transit. Because of this, I had to learn how to read the bus schedule. I also had to catch one bus after another just to get me where I needed to go. I ended up having to take 6 busses per day to get back and forth to my child's day care, to school, and to home. I had to get used to spending around three to four hours a day just for transportation.

Then, if this was not enough, I had a medical set-back. I was having back issues and found out I had two bulging discs. After months and months of pain, I was placed on half days per doctor's orders. Later, I had surgery and was out for weeks. It was difficult to come back

after surgery, but I made the choice to stick it out. Sitting all day and walking up and down stairs has been very painful, and sometimes my legs feel heavy while walking. Some days I feel I just want to be home, but I push myself to come. Now, I am balancing physical therapy twice a week. But I can say that I am not giving up! I am still holding on! There is such desire and determination in me that I thank God for renewing my strength daily. God has been with me through it all.

I am grateful for a second chance to come back to school. Now, I am able to learn and help my younger child with homework, and one day she will also finish school as well. My youngest wants to see me finish school. That makes her very happy to know that we have something to look forward to every day. Coming back to school has helped both of us stay focused and bonds us closer together.

I now realize that I am a strong person who can and will succeed. My obstacles have taught me patience. I have grown stronger because of them. Although sometimes it is a struggle, I enjoy coming to school now. I am learning a lot. I have met nice people and I get to work in groups with them. I also get to work with several tutors throughout the week. I find it very exciting when other students and I are able to interact and learn with each other. It is a support group that encourages me.

I made the choice to go back to school and I am sticking with it. I will tell you that if you have the desire to return, don't give up. Keep pressing forward; nothing is impossible. Just stick with it. One day our turn will come, and we will also receive the GED. Good luck to all.

Possibilities of Learning

Hi, my name is Eloisa Galindo. This is my third year to write a story for the student book *Celebrating Our Journey*.



Eloisa Galindo

I have a very nice husband that I love very much. We have been married for fifteen years. We have three children, two boys and one girl. Their names are: Jesus, Ado, and Marylin. They are my life.

We moved from Mexico to Weatherford, Oklahoma nine years ago. We are happy to be living in Weatherford, Oklahoma, but we miss our family very much. I would be very happy to see my Mom more often.

I started with the classes of English in 2003. Learning English is so hard for me because

I work out of my house. I need more time to study English. I'm attending three English classes a week. I need to learn more English for the possibility of a better job, and I would like to start with the GED classes in September. There are many possibilities for my life as I learn more English.

I give thanks to God for the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Program. I give a special thanks to Roberta Slagell and everyone who makes this program available to students who need it. I especially like my current tutor, Virginia McCarthey, who is so dependable to help me. I'm on the WOLC Board of Directors as a student representative, and I like to attend the meetings. Last year, Mercedes and I went to the Oklahoma City Leadership Conference called "Reach for the Stars." I liked it a lot because we were with other students all day. It was very important because they

gave us a certificate. There are many possibilities to improve my life and my children's lives as I continue to go to class and learn more English, and perhaps get my GED.

A couple of days ago on the fifth of May, we had a party at the park. Angelica and I helped Mercedes make a piñata. We had so much fun making the piñata. The teachers, Roberta and Virginia, hit the piñata, but Jan didn't hit the piñata. I do not know why, but it's OK I love the teachers—they are so dear.

Eloisa Galindo
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Possibilities in the United States

The United States of America has provided many good possibilities for me. For you see, I am a married Hispanic man who owns my

own house and a 70-acre farm. But these kinds of possibilities came with determination, self-control, hard work, time, and a desire for a better life.

In 1984, I came to Altus, Oklahoma as a 16-year-old immigrant from Mexico with my uncle. We wanted better jobs than what our country provided. We worked as farm laborers, irrigating cotton and chopping the weeds.

Later, I worked at two meat-packing businesses in Vernon, Texas and Altus. By being willing to learn how to do different kinds of work, I know how to prepare ham, bologna, corn-dogs, and bacon in assembly-line production. I worked hard to save my money through the 18 years of that kind of work. I also have done some work in the oil fields in Oklahoma, and learned a lot about that kind of employment.

I soon realized that hard work is not the only benefit of being in the United States. I began studying how to become an American citizen.

In 1997, I was very proud of passing the requirements. Being a US citizen was such a wonderful possibility.



Everardo Nunez

After helping some area farmers, I grew to love the land and dreamed of owning my own farm land. That became more than a possibility when I purchased 70 acres of grassland and some Angus cattle in 1999. More responsibility and hard work came with this new possibility of being a farmer.

One of the greatest possibilities is being happy in one's life. I know my marriage of 13 years has been a major part of my happiness and success in life. I am very thankful for my wife

Rosa, who is also a literacy student and has Teddie Brookman as her tutor with the Great Plains Literacy Council.

As I look back on my 42 years of life, I realize that many possibilities and opportunities have come my way because I have wanted a better, productive life. That's why I am now learning to read and speak better English with help from my tutor Hector Trevino through the Great Plains Literacy Council. Reading opens so many more possibilities.

Everardo Nunez
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Unlimited Possibilities

My name is Frances Alexander and I have been married for 48 years. I am 67 years old and have 3 girls. I am attending Literacy Link to learn how to read. I want to learn how to

read and write. I want to read the Bible, newspapers and mail. I have a very nice teacher and she has a lot of patience with me. Even though I struggled in school and I did not understand some of the work, I ended up attending through my junior year. To tell the truth, I think the school passed me even though I was not ready.



Frances Alexander

Now, I can read better and I am proud of myself for taking that big step. I would tell others like me not to be afraid to take that step and find a program to help them learn more. I am now reading better, spelling better and I am writing stories. This program has made it possible for me to read every day things I couldn't read before. I can now recognize words so that I am better at reading magazines, menus,

the Bible, and books to the kids. I can fill out forms, read billboard signs, and notes from school.

I can now read much better than I did before I came to the program, but I still have a way to go. I plan to stay until I am comfortable with my reading skills. I hope that someone who reads this will realize that it is never too late to attend school, and that they will have the courage to follow their dreams to a better life.

Frances Alexander
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Hope

I like to go to conferences. I always learn something new.

I went to the Adult Learner Conference in Oklahoma City. We heard different speakers talk about literacy. One man flew on an air-

plane from California to talk to us about his problem with dyslexia. I thought to myself, if he can learn with his problem, I can learn.



Glenda Jones

At the conference in Norman, one woman in a wheelchair received an award. Later, when I talked to her, I said, “You give me great hope. If you can learn at your age, I can learn, too.”

Glenda Jones
Pottawatomie County Literacy Program, Shawnee

Learning English Is Very Important

Learning to speak, read, and write in English is very important to me because I don't need somebody to translate everything for me everywhere.



I am proud of myself because I can understand reading more, and I learn more when reading than talking.

Graciela De La Cruz

I first read simple little books that are now too easy for me. So I am reading great books—*The Old Man and the Sea* and *Of Mice and Men*, by Hemingway and Steinbeck—and one I loved, *Everything I Ever Wanted*. I was crying so much when I read it.

I tell my friends to study, learn, and try because it's very important. They need to learn how to help their children in homework, and to know about communication from schools, the health department, and other places—about any important issues.

I want to take my classes to get my GED someday because I need to get a better job in the future and set an example for everybody.

Graciela De La Cruz
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

The Opportunities of Learning English

My name is Graciela Ramos. I have three daughters; Teresa, Itzayana and Graciela. My husband's name is Jesus. It's been three years since we arrived in Weatherford. We like it here even though we've had some hard times. Many people have shared things with us, like furniture and food, and we thank them.

We started English classes at the Catholic Church with Ruth and Roberta in 2007 and are now at the "Ingles Without Barriers" class

at the Methodist Church, which is provided by WOLC.

My daughters are doing so much better in school now that they know the language. It's been hard for all of us to adapt to the language since it is totally different from what we were used to.

I want to thank everyone for all the opportunities I have received that have helped me go forward and improve my life and the life of my family. I have a job doing housekeeping. It is hard work and I get very tired, but I want to make a better life for my children, so I keep going every day.

I also want to thank the tutors I have had since 2007, including Opal Crall. Mrs. Dorothy Fry is my tutor now and I'm grateful

for all her patience, and for the opportunity she has given me to learn English.

Graciela Ramos
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Literacy Gives Possibilities

I am from Mexico. I came to America in 2005 so I can find a new opportunity for my husband, Gerardo Lerma, and three children, ages 14, 11 and 3. Coming to United States of America has helped us.



Guadalupe Rojas

There are better opportunities at my children's school here in Altus. I thank God for the help the school has given my children, especially my older son and my daughter, who both have a problem with their eyes called Nystagmus. It

is a rapid involuntary movement of the eyes. The teachers have provided large print books and large screen computers and keyboards to help them see their work at school.

My goal in America is to learn the English language and be able to succeed in this country, even though I do not know English very well. I have kept a job at a restaurant as a cook for five years. My two sisters also help me at this job. I have to read English to know what the labels and recipes say.

I also thank the Great Plains Literacy Council at the Altus Public Library for giving me the opportunity to learn English. I thank Mrs. Aleida Burchett and Mr. Willie Sims for being so patient and teaching me more English every week. I am very grateful for all these possibilities.

Guadalupe Rojas
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

I Thank God for the Possibilities of Learning English

This year I have many things to thank God for, and even though I've had many struggles due to the economy, I feel blessed to be here today. Little by little, my family and I have been able to get through difficult times together.



Isabel Galindo

One of my daughters is still in Mexico. But I believe God takes care of her and is always watching over us and her. Thanks to all the technology, I'm able to see her and talk to her on the computer, so it makes it easier for us being here. I still miss her and get lonely for her.

I'm very grateful to all the people in this country that still believe in equality, but, of course, not everyone thinks the same. I personally think that we are all equal, and skin color shouldn't matter since God loves us all the same.

I want to thank Roberta and Mercedes, because they are always encouraging me to keep trying and not give up, and always making me feel like I have someone to count on and always be there for me.

I have been going to class this past year and I hope to continue when school begins again.

Isabel Galindo
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

The Great Possibilities of Being a Mother

Today, it has been exactly five months since I had the most wonderful experience in my life; the experience of becoming a mom.



Ivana Pinion

It's hard to describe, but once you become a mother, you realize you are willing to do anything for that baby. I always thought that was just what moms say, but now I know it's really true.

I'm practicing my English, so that when my baby grows up, he can be proud of me, and I'll be able to help him with school. It's also important for me that he grows up speaking two languages. My husband and I both know that there are many possibilities for our son in the

US, and we are thankful for this fact. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity and the materials to learn English.

Ivana Piñon
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Possibilities

Hi! My name is Jeffrey Hunt, but my friends call me Jeff. As first I was embarrassed to make the call to the Literacy Link and admit that I could not read. But, I am so grateful that I did. Learning to read will open the door to greater possibilities for me and my family.

I was born in the Commonwealth of Virginia. You may wonder why I ended up 1,200 miles away from home. My fiancée, Terri, was transferred to Oklahoma and I came out here to be with her. Also, I felt that I needed a change,

even though my family did not want me to leave Virginia.

One of the reasons my family (my mother and children) didn't want me to move so far away from home is because I could not read well. I also have dyslexia. So, they were afraid for me. But they knew I wanted to come. I also felt that I needed to make a change. If I learn to read well, I don't think they will worry about me so much. So, I decided to try Literacy Link to learn to read well. My fiancée helped me get signed up.

When I lived in Virginia, I worked as a heavy equipment operator for the City of Newport News. I mostly operated backhoe and front loader machines. When I moved to Oklahoma City in September of last year, I did not think I would have trouble finding a job. However, it has taken me seven months. But I am happy

to report that I finally have a job with a construction company.

I must not forget to tell you about my twin girls. I am very proud of them. They are sixteen, going on seventeen years old. They want to come to Oklahoma to visit me. Now that I have a job, I can start saving for their plane tickets. I have missed them and look forward to spending some time with them soon.

Like all the other good Oklahomans I have met, the people at Literacy Link have made me feel at home. My tutor has helped me a lot. I am reading better all the time. "Thank you, Ms. Margarette." "And thank you, too, John, for introducing us." As long as I keep improving, I think I will be just fine in Oklahoma. With the people at Literacy Link to help me, I'm sure I will keep improving at reading.

I have several hobbies. Drawing is one of them. Wood carving and wood burning are hobbies also; I like putting models together and I like to read!

Learning to read will help me in my job, my hobbies and in every part of my life. The possibilities are endless.

Jeffrey Hunt
Literacy Link, Midwest City

My Class Experience ...

At first, I was afraid to enroll in this class, but now I'm excited every day to come to class. I have made good friends, increased my self esteem, and I am achieving important goals I have always wanted in my life. All of the things I get in class are so different and helpful, but they are all helping me become a better person.

First, I've grown really close to some of the people in class. There is one person who I would call a really good friend; we do a lot together. We often go to the movies, love to shop, and most of all just enjoy sitting around the house spending time together. We both have kids who get along quite well, so it's like having a whole new family. We just fit together!

Next, I just love coming to class. It does something for me! It gives me that boost of self esteem that I need. I was one who had no self esteem, but the class has made me different. It's like a high just knowing that I'm bettering myself. There are times when I feel like a kid again, but then I come around and know that I'm not, and there's work to be done, and that I'm here for an important reason.

Finally, I'm going to do something I thought I would never do ... finish school!

When I was in my teens, all was going well, then ... BAM ... right in my face, I was a mommy. I had to drop out of school and care for a baby! Well, like I said, I was in my teens, so, in my mind, caring for a baby was staying home and “trying” to be a good mommy. I had a good family who had good jobs to help care for us because I was still a baby myself. I couldn’t get a job, and then I grew up and still couldn’t get a good job. I’ve learned over



Jennifer Edwards

the years that without a high school diploma or GED, you can’t get very far in life. I quit school because of my baby, but now I’m going back to school because of my babies!

In conclusion, I enrolled in class to better my life, but at first I was afraid and wasn’t sure I could do it. Now, every day is more exciting!

I've made really good friends; have got a lot of self esteem—more than I've ever had in my life. I have really accomplished a lot by coming to this class— not only for myself, but for the most important people in my life ... my kids!

Jennifer Edwards
Chickasha Adult Learning Center

Fight for your Dreams

It was ten years ago, in the evening, when I first began this adventure in my life. I didn't have any idea where I was going or how to get there, but I had a strong spirit in me to succeed. My first challenge was the language. It was different from mine. I was in high school in my own country, but for only one year. In that short time, there was not much opportunity to speak English. But then I started to take English class and, little by little, I understood more and more.

In this essay, I want to say thank you to all the teachers I have had, and thank you to the teachers I have today. They have helped not only me, but others too.



I think one of the very best Jose Rivera

ways to learn the best values in life is to be part of a family working hard, where everyone is striving to achieve the same goal. In my own mind, when you want to do something positive and good for yourself and your family, you can do it by working together with a strong spirit to succeed.

Jose Rivera
Ardmore Literacy Council

Possibilities

At first, I was afraid to enroll in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. As a matter of fact, I was scared to death! Looking back, I realized I had already thrown a major opportunity right out the window. 2004 was the year I was supposed to graduate from high school. I attended all of my classes and made good grades. As a matter of fact, I was an honor roll student. Yet, I failed to graduate. I quit a few months before graduation because I moved out of state and got married.

Over the course of the next few years, I spent my time as a housewife raising five children. School was not a priority for me at this time. There is no doubt that my kids kept me very busy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Being able to devote this quality time, guiding and nurturing my young ones during their development, was truly a blessing for me and

my children. But my marriage did not work out and I was left to raise my family as a single mother. I moved back to live closer to family and went to get help from DHS



Josefina Alvarado

(Department of Human Services). This gave me the opportunity to go back to school and get my education. I could not afford to let another opportunity pass. I still needed my high school diploma. All of the possibilities in having a better life depended on returning to school to get my GED. Facing my fears, I made a decision to enroll in OIC in Oklahoma City, OK. When I noticed how the teachers and students always showed me respect and encouraged me to continue in my studies, I

knew that I had made the right decision to come to OIC.

Josefina Alvarado
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Oklahoma City

Life Changing Choices; Not Just a Thought

A few months back while looking through the help wanted ads in the newspaper, I found that most, if not all, the jobs required a high school diploma or a GED to even apply for the job. That is when I realized that I had to make some really important life changing choices. I had considered going back to school and getting my GED; but up to this point, that is all it was—just a thought.

I had quit school in the ninth grade; therefore, I never took algebra, geometry, or trigonometry. Due to the lack of instruction, I found

it difficult to help my eighth grade daughter, Courtney, with her math homework. I would have to either call one of my older daughters, or my sister, and have one of them help her. This was something I didn't like having to do. Therefore, by taking classes to move toward getting my GED, I hoped that one day I could help her all on my own. I also wanted to know that I could look forward to looking in the newspaper at the want ads, and know that the sky was the limit. There wouldn't be any reason why I couldn't apply for a job that I wanted, instead of feeling like I had to settle for the job I already had.

The first step was the biggest of all: signing-up and making the commitment to apply myself with the intent to see it through from start to finish. This was something that I needed to do, not just for myself, but for my children. I wanted to show them that no matter how old

they are, if they want something badly enough in life, all they have to do is apply themselves to get it.

In the end, I am looking forward to the satisfaction of knowing that I have completed something that meant so much to me. My children can look at me and be able to see that I meant what I said. I once told them, “You are the only person who can keep your dreams from becoming a reality. The stars are the limit, and all you have to do is reach out and grab what you want.” This, and the fact of having that GED diploma in my hand, I know that there can never be as good of a feeling as that! I will always know that if I hadn’t made that choice that day, I would never be able to experience all the wonderful things that I have to look forward to in the future.

Juanita Louise Hennessee
Duncan Adult Learning Center

Possibilities

Before now I never thought about the possibility of living in the USA. I am from China, but my husband is from the USA. So I moved to the USA, but my English is very poor. I need to study hard.

Junyue Li
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of getting the job of a radio personality here in Oklahoma, or in the States, as I had done in Japan; but last Thursday, Mrs. Elder, my teacher, told me I could have the possibility to get that kind of job, or to apply at least. It means a lot to me. It has really encouraged me. I appreciate it.

So, I would like to try to get the radio job, or also to try to get a job teaching Japanese—one day! Sooner or later!

I feel that I can start to do anything if I really want to and if I work hard. I think everybody has the possibility to try something new!

Kaora Burkhalter

OSCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of living in the USA. I never had been here before. Now, I know Oklahoma City and I think it would be a very good place to live with my family.

Oklahoma City is a very nice city. The traffic is quiet and it has good restaurants, supermarkets, schools, and, also, the people are very friendly.

Maybe in the future I can come back here

with my husband and build my life like an American citizen.

Karina Flores
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Becoming a United States Citizen

Two weeks ago, I passed my citizenship test. I was so excited! I studied to pass the test for more than half a year every day. Every week, my tutor would help me study. She explained all the strange words for me. She explained all of the sentences for me and let me know about the meaning of the question so I could remember it in an easier way. I really appreciate Mrs. Carol. I passed my test because of her, and I want to thank her very much.

Becoming a U.S. citizen has a lot of meaning for me. My Mom's dream was for me to be-

come a U.S. citizen. My Mom missed a chance to come to the U.S. and it made her sad. Every day she dreamed of coming here. As her



Katie Yu

daughter, I want to finish her dream. I want to see my parents all of the time. Now that I'm an American citizen, I can bring my Dad over

here to the United States. I lost my Mom to lung cancer last year. When they found out, it was too late to save her. I went back to China and stayed with her the last two months of her life. My family is shaken. My Grandmother and Grandfather feel so sad. I cry and cry every day and I don't want to stay home by myself. I go out with friends sometimes so I can stop thinking too much about my parents. Because I have a family here, I can't stay in China too long. I want to take care of my Dad

and young sister. I have a two year old son who needs me, so what can I do? Should I stay in China or come back to the United States? That is too hard to decide. Finally, I came back to the U.S. in February 2008.

My sister told me she wants to come here to go to school. She wants to live with me, so in January 2009, I applied to become a U.S. citizen. I can't wait to take my oath. Whenever I get my U.S. passport, I can apply for them to come here. I think it will be a long wait for them to come here.

My little boy is a trouble maker and he makes me tired every day. I have a job right now, so he goes to childcare. He doesn't like it and cries every day. It hurts my heart when I hear him cry. He's been in day care for a month and he's getting better and better, but I know he doesn't want to go over there. He doesn't speak English so he can't understand what

they are saying. That's the problem. Every time I ask him in Chinese, "Do you want to go to school?" his answer would be no. I would like to be able to just stay home and watch TV or play with my son. I don't know how to get my son to like childcare. It just gives me a headache.

Going to childcare has changed my son. He's getting worse and worse. Before, he listened to me when I told him to get something for me, but now he won't. It all depends on his mood. I'm so worried about him. I just hope when he gets used to childcare, he'll change back.

I'll continue to study English, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity that Literacy Link provides for me.

Katie Yu
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Possibilities

At one time, I was unsure and lost in my life, wondering if there was anything else for me out there. When I made the decision to call Project READ, a door opened right up. It was perfect timing and I am so glad I called. Now, I am on my way to a better future for my daughter and me. I am almost halfway to getting my GED so I can enroll in school to better my future, and it is an amazing feeling. The courage it took to make that call was all worth it.

Kelly Ballinger
Project READ, Edmond

U.S. Citizenship Gives Me Possibilities

I left Vietnam five years ago and came to the United States. I applied for citizenship as soon

as possible because I love this nation. Here, I have the freedom to travel to Oklahoma City,



Kim Nguyen

or even Dallas, without having to go to the courthouse to show my identification and tell how long I will stay.

I also love America because it is easier to find a job. I was trained in Atlanta to do manicures. When I moved to Weatherford to be near relatives, I got a good job at Royal Nails. My boss and my customers are very nice and they pay me well.

I'm excited to become a U.S. citizen so that I can vote for the U.S. president. In Vietnam, we were only allowed to vote for the officials in our village.

When I become a citizen, I need only to obey the laws and work hard. Then I can have the possibility of a happy life.

Kim Nguyen
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Opportunities That Have Helped Me

Several years ago, I was given the opportunity to improve my reading skills through a reading tutor from Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition in Clinton. Now, I have a tutor from Weatherford. We meet at the public library with two other students. My tutor says I print beautifully, but I need to read better. In high school, I had the good opportunity to have special classes and teachers. And although I have a high school diploma, I still need reading help to improve my life.



Leandrea "Andi" Stehr

For instance, it is hard for me to fill out a job application and to read the newspaper. Also, when I go shopping, I need help to read the prices and save money by buying things on sale. Counting change, and division and multiplication, have always been difficult for me. But, I'm glad I had the opportunity to graduate from Clinton High School. I graduated 10 years ago and I'm looking forward to my class reunion soon.

Another thing I'm thankful for is the opportunity to work at Alan Markum Center and earn some money. I especially enjoy doing recycling and working in the thrift store. Every day, I look forward to being with my friends at the center, and working and eating lunch with them. We laugh and joke and have a lot of fun.

I like opportunities to have fun. I really enjoyed the afternoon that WOLC had the Cinco de Mayo celebration at the park. We had hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad and brownies. One of the Spanish ladies brought a piñata, and we all had fun trying to hit it and get the treats inside.

The opportunity to visit my grandmother in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma is something I really enjoy and treasure, because she loves me and always buys me things, and is a wonderful cook. She cooks food that she knows I like. I love her. She just had knee surgery and I hope and pray that she gets better soon.

So, I am grateful for all of the good opportunities which I have had in life, especially the ones which help me learn reading and math,

and I hope to take advantage of any more that come to me.

Leandra Stehr
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Possibilities

My name is Lucia Martinez. I am from



Lucia Martinez

Mexico. I have lived in Weatherford for 18 years. I have one son, Ivan. He is 17 years old and is a junior in high school. I live with my father, mother, brother, and son. I have 2 sisters and 4 brothers. I worked at the Mark Restaurant for 12 years. Now, I work at Lucille's Restaurant. At home, I enjoy baking

cakes and other desserts. My goal is to speak and read English better.

Lucia Martinez
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of living in Oklahoma City because I was living in Houston, TX. But for my work, I had to change my residence.

Manuel Tello
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

A Better Life

I have a good tutor. She teaches me to read and understand the words. I like my reading time with her. She will explain the words to me when I don't understand. I would like to

learn more new words with her and read very good, better than I do now.

With her help, I have my Application for naturalization filled out. In two more weeks, I will have the money saved. We are studying for my civics test. I feel scared about my English test, but I think I can do it.

I would like to get my GED. I know I will have to work hard on it. I want to get a better paying job because I have four boys to support and make sure they get a better education than I did!

Maria Nichols
Miami Area Literacy Council

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of having my family in this country, but right now they are here, and I feel happy for

them because they have more opportunities than in Mexico.

Maria Salgado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Our Family's Hopes and Dreams

Our names are Mario and Nina Banda. We came to Weatherford six months ago from Durango, Mexico with our two grown children, Andrea Guadalupe Banda Arrieta and Moises Omor Banda Arrieta.

We had an opportunity for employment and a place to live. Our entire family has the same aspirations of a prosperous life in the United States.

Life in Mexico was ordinary most of the time. However, poverty is still around, making times difficult. Life in Weatherford is better



Mario and Nina Banda

and tranquil. While In Mexico, we enjoyed traditional music, food, fiestas, and family gatherings.

Camping and fishing are Mario's favorite pastimes, while swimming and walking for exercise are Nina's favorite pastimes. Mario had no job title in Mexico, but Nina was a secretary.

English language can open many doors. We are eager to learn. The more knowledge you have means a better future. We learned about the literacy link from friends where we work.

We meet with our tutor, Rebecca Hightower. We appreciate her because she understands us and also speaks Spanish. She is available for tutoring when we have free time.

We would like to thank Roberta Slagell for all she has done, and to everyone involved in the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition who make this program happen.

Mario and Nina Banda
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

My High School Days

I liked high school. My favorite subjects were driver's education, physical education, math, and auto mechanics. I went to Picher Cardin High School. It was a two story building that had been torn down and a new building was built. We had to walk to the grade school cafeteria for lunch. The meals seemed to be home-cooked. Sometimes, I went back for seconds. Lunch was my favorite part of the day. I went to school every day unless I had to have some surgery. I had several surgical procedures while in school.

I liked driver's education because the teacher helped me so much. She would sit beside me as I worked on the materials I needed to learn to pass the test. She helped me do the reading so I could pass the test. She had practice tests that helped me prepare for the real test. She came with me when I took the test in Miami and read the test to me. I gave her the answers. We practiced driving, three students at a time. Each of us had a turn to drive. Once, we drove on icy roads and the teacher was very careful to help us stay out of the ditch. I was a good driver. When I took the driving part of the test, it was just the police officer and me. I did not pass the first time. The officer told my parents I did a good job, but I was too slow. The second time, I passed. The officer told my parents I did a very good job. I still have my driver's license.

I liked physical education because it helped me keep my weight down. Weight lifting was one of my favorite parts. They let me go in the weight lifting room after school. I enjoyed that because I had a friend that did this with me. I also like doing exercises because it helped keep my weight down. I always was a little overweight. At that time in school, I weighed 180 pounds.

I liked math class because we did times tables and division. Some of this was easy, but some of it was very hard. We had to copy problems off the chalk board before we could start figuring them out. I liked the ones I could do with no help. Often, I got help to do the ones I could not understand.

I liked auto mechanics class because we worked on cars. I liked working in the tool room and handing out tools. This gave me a chance to learn all the tools and their sizes.

We had to clean all tools before we hung them on the rack. This was easy. It was hard when we had to sit in the class and take tests or draw pictures of auto parts. We worked in the auto class three hours a day.

Once, I almost got in a fight because I told the truth. Some of the boys picked on me and our teacher stopped it. She told the boys if we fought, we had to walk around holding hands all day. They did not want to be seen doing that, so they left me alone.

As you can see, I liked school and especially enjoyed certain subjects. It's a long time ago, but some of it, I remember like it was yesterday. And now, here I am at age 46, back in school in the literacy program with my tutor Leroy Hall and still enjoying school!

Mark Murray
Miami Area Literacy Council

Possibilities

My name is Martha Robertson and I am in Ms. Barbara's homeroom class. Ever since I have been here, I have learned to read better. For example, I have learned to break the word apart and put it back together. Before I came to C.L.C., I couldn't read or write. Growing up, I tried to teach myself how to read and couldn't. It was too hard for me to do on my own. After coming here, my reading and writing have improved. I feel a sense of accomplishment. Before, I had trouble reading the bus schedules; now I don't have to wait long periods of time. I had difficulty communicating and expressing myself. I would get frustrated and sometimes get into arguments. Now, I am even cooking better. And that lets

me know that time and effort make a big difference.

Martha Robertson
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., Oklahoma City

Taking the Challenge!

Hello! I am Rosy Salinas, of Mexican decent, born in the state of Coahuila, Mexico. I am 44 years old and live in Altus, Oklahoma. I am married and have five children. Currently, I am trying to study English, because, in reality, I think it is very necessary to advance in life and to progress in this nation. I believe that as people of this nation we should live daily with goals to better ourselves and our lives. We can be better citizens, better neighbors, better parents and better students. Together we can learn from each other, whatever our lives are.

Since I started in this literacy program and study English, I am realizing that it is not easy. I start doubting myself, telling myself I can't do this anymore.

But I also know that when you put in effort and want to do it with enthusiasm, you can succeed.



Martha Rosa Salinas

When I see other people who have learned the English language without anyone helping them to read or write, I am motivated to learn. If they learned it on their own without any help from tutors, I can do it better with someone helping me. I get very motivated thinking of this. I want to tell you that I will take this opportunity and do my very best. I like to study with other people, maybe two or three others. In a small group, there is less

distraction, more individual help, and students help one another.

I want to thank my tutor, Elsa L. Garcia, for the patience and attention she gives to all of us. I want to thank her for her time and her effort in making the lessons interesting and not a waste of time. For the remaining years that God will give me, I will always remember her as someone really special.

I want to thank the Great Plains Literacy Council for this great opportunity. I am very grateful. I will definitely take this commitment and complete my goal to learn to speak and write English. Believe me, this is a very difficult challenge for me, but not impossible!

Martha Rosa Salinas
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Possibilities

Before I learned to read, I felt sad. But now that I can read, many possibilities have opened up for me.



Mary Barnes

Now, on Wednesday nights, I read a few verses of the Bible in front of a lot of people. Now, I have the power to learn lots more from the Bible.

Now, when I read street signs and get them right, my husband cheers me on! I recently drove to Fort Worth to visit my nephew, and when I got close to town, everyone in the car was asleep. My nephew had told me earlier how to get to his street and I found the address to his street, but was one block away from his house. But I found it all by myself.

Now, I can write checks, and on February 20, 2010, I wrote my first check all by myself. I didn't know how to spell the words, so I remembered one of my old workbooks showed the amounts, and I used that book to help me with the spelling.

Now, when looking for different things that I want from the grocery store, like cans of beans or potatoes, I sound out the words.

Now, I can go to the grocery store by myself. Don't you think that is good?

Now, I can go to a restaurant and order for myself. The other day I went to Furr's Cafeteria and I looked at the menu and ordered myself a plate of baby back ribs, a baked potato, okra, and coffee, all by myself!

Now, I'm not saying it wasn't hard, but learning to sound out words helped me a lot. So

that is why I say, “Possibilities is where I’m at right now.”

Now, I can travel through books. I have traveled with Jane Eyre from the time she was a little girl until the time she got married and had a baby. Now, I know about Jane Eyre, and if you ever read *Jane Eyre*, her life will be yours.

When you learn to read and learn to understand this world of ours and how it works, then, and only then, will you feel alive and worth every penny. Now, it is almost to the end of my story and I want to tell everyone who does not know how to read to find a place that will help them, one on one, and start right there.

Now that I can read, I am much happier.

Mary Barnes
Creek County Literacy Program

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibility of coming here and knowing many interesting people. I'm learning about their culture, religion, and finding a future here in the U.S.A.

Miguel Gamonal
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Possibilities

I was a little afraid to enroll in this class, but now I'm very happy to come because I'm learning very much and I'm getting over my fears when I practice English, and, too, I have new friends here. My parents and the teacher are very friendly and I'm learning a lot of the culture of the United States. I like the people of this country because they helped me when I couldn't say anything.

Now, I can watch more programs and movies on T.V. and I can understand a lot. I want to speak English because I want to go to the college. I like very much to study.

Nancy Lopez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Possibilities for Me and My Family

I am from Mexico and I came to America in February 2004. I am a single mom of three children. They go to the Altus Schools and they talk in English very well. I am trying to learn English by going to the morning Adult Education School on Mondays through Thursdays at Booker Learning Center in Altus, Oklahoma.

On Thursdays and Fridays, my two sisters and I attend literacy classes for tutoring at

the Great Plains Literacy Council in the Altus Public Library. I am learning English with the “Crossroad Café” materials with my tutor. The



Norma Rojas

literacy class at Altus Public Library helps me because I try to talk in English more and more.

I love to live here and have a job. I work very hard at a restaurant to help support my family. Because of my job, I can buy things for my children. I like the opportunity to use the computer, video games and electronic things. In my country, I cannot, because the money is only to buy food and basic things. It is hard there.

I also like America because of the possibilities for my children. Here we have a better school system for my children. In Mexico, they do not learn English because it is very expensive.

Now, I have my own home. It is very small and old, but it belongs to me. I hope I can buy another one that is more comfortable. I like to live here because it is safer for me and for my children.

I believe that I have the possibilities to work very hard to help me accomplish my goals.

Norma Rojas
Great Plains Literacy Council/Altus Adult Education

The Wonderful Possibilities of Living in Oklahoma and Learning English

My name is Nubia Ramos. I was born May 4, 1984 in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. I have lived in Weatherford eight months. My husband and I have twin boys 1 ½ years old. Their names are Leonaredo and Jesus.

My memories of growing up in Mexico are in a special place in my mind. My family enjoyed



Nubia Ramos

picnics, the taste of fruit flavored raspas, Mexican music, and piñatas on special occasions. However, hardship and poverty

were everywhere.

We came to Weatherford for a better life. People here are so nice. Life here is tranquil.

Our hopes and dreams are to have more opportunities and a good education for our children. Learning English, I will be able to communicate not only for myself but also for my family. Later I would like to work.

I have been meeting with my tutor, Rebecca Hightower, since September of 2009. I have learned to read and speak English better. I like

my tutor because she can speak Spanish and understands me.

I am thankful for the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition program; and a special thanks to Roberta Slagell and everyone who makes this happen, especially to my tutor Rebecca.

Nubia Ramos
Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Omar's Story

Taking Advantage of All the Opportunities

My name is Omar Banda. My first name is really Moises, but it is easier just to call me Omar. I am 21 years old. My Father, Mother, and I came to Weatherford six months ago from Durango Mexico. My sister still lives there. I plan to go back to Mexico to finish my

education, because it is much cheaper there than here in the United States.



Omar Banda

My family and I want to say thanks to the Westcentral Literacy Coalition for all that they do to help students learn English. There are many good tutors. This service opens the door to a world of good opportunities to anyone who is willing to work hard, learn a second language, and make a better life for themselves and their families. Even though I studied English in Mexico, I am learning a lot more good English here. Rebecca Hightower, who volunteers for the Literacy Coalition, is teaching my parents, Mario and Nina. She is bilingual, so this helps them to understand the lesson instructions.

I am working at Casa Soto Restaurant now, but after I complete my education, I will be able to get a better job. I enjoy listening to music, playing musical instruments and singing. When Roberta tutors us, sometimes we sing a little song when a student does a good job in the lessons.

I like the Internet, and I read a lot about sound design and music theory. I love music and the arts. They are very important to me. My goal in life is to take advantage of every opportunity to become educated, and establish a career in music and singing.

Omar Banda

Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

My History

This history started when I was 13 years old, and my parents died. That is when my

older brother decided to come to America. Everything changed when that happened. Before that, my dream was go to college; but after my parents died, I couldn't do that. I started to think about how I could join my brother in America. I said, I must finish school, and I must find a way to go America. Later, I finished school, and I came to America, and everything about my life started to change. I have lived in Oklahoma City for 6 years. I love this city because it gave me the opportunity for my life to be changed, especially when I came to know Jesus as if he were like my father and my mother. He is my everything, and now I don't have everything that I dreamed of having. However, I have everything that God dreamed of me having.

Pablo Cifuentes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

The Possibilities of Space Travel

Someday, when the possibilities of space travel happen, I would like to be able to accompany the space travelers out in the void of space. There are vast quantities of matter that are thinly spread out in space. These are smaller than any vacuum space on earth. On an average, there are less than 20 atoms per cubic inch of space. This material, which seems unimportant, makes up 10% of visible mass to make up 20 billion suns. The density is estimated to reach 800 atoms per cubic inch with an average temperature as low as -300 F. In other areas of space, the temperature can reach a staggering 2,000,000 F.

The Orion nebula glows due to stars within it, and other parts reflect the light of stars to one side, and there are other regions, like the dark

brooding Horsehead nebula, which blocks out light of all the stars around it.

Hydrogen will glow a distinctive red, and one of the heavier elements, such as oxygen, will glow a distinctive green. The colors will not be seen by space traverse, because these colors are only done with computers. Also, when we travel in space, we will encounter dust clouds made up of grains of rock and ice. The dust is 1% of the mass, but it can still block out any light.

As the day gets closer to space travel for the people of the earth, I am looking forward to taking an adventurous journey into space.

Pamela Davis
Norman Adult Learning Center

Possibilities

Hello, my name is Paula Olcaytore. I came to this country in 1978. I start to work with Jewish people in New Jersey. We lived there for three months, then we moved to New York.

I found a new job hard, but GOD was help to me. I met my husband. He was very friendly. We start to talk and became more friendly. About one year later, we married, and after 5 months, I got pregnant. When come 9 months, my son was born. I got sick from nerves. My husband took me to the hospital. I was one week inside the hospital.

We had a lot of problems, but GOD is big. Little by little, I get up. When my son was going to school, I started to work in New Jersey. My husband helped me take care of my son. We were happy. We teach our son in good

ways. Now he is going to college. He wants to study to be an engineer. I'm happy.

I was going to school in New York. Now I'm going to ESL class in Midwest City Library. After my husband died, I was feeling very bad, but I pray to GOD a lot. He gives a lot of peace, and little by little, I feel good. Now, I'm alright.

Paula Olcaytore
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

Spirit in the Wind in Autumn

Autumn leaves are falling like rain as I
look out the window.

I realize life will not be the same. All I
can do is think of you,

And, while I miss your presence, a joy
that I can no longer hold.

I know that the memory I have of you
will always unfold.

What a beautiful sunny day it is!

Here on earth,

but in all of the earth's beauty

it could not stop tear drops coming
from the depths of my heart and soul.

So I must adjust to this change in time,
but how our lives intertwined will al-
ways be, no matter the time.

I wish you could see the leaves coming
down like a shower of rain.

The real you lifted up and moved with
the wind, you are spirit!

Oh how beautiful you are. I do not
choose to let you go,

but I must let you blow with the wind,
until I catch up.

It's calming down now; the leaves have
stopped blowing;
but in just a little while,
another wind will blow.

Priscilla Caldwell
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Possibilities

Before now, I never thought about the possibilities of completing my education. Now, I am glad I have that opportunity. I have learned so much since I have been here, like math, science, and social studies. These are things I would not have learned by not taking this class.

If anyone asks me if joining this GED class is a good idea, I would say yes. It will change your life and help you get a better job of taking care

of yourself. Or, if you have a family, you can provide a better life for them.

I would definitely say this class is the smartest thing I have done in my life. It would have been so hard to find a job without an education. It would be hard to support yourself, let alone a family.

At first, I was afraid to join this GED class because I thought I would be laughed at and be made fun of. But I have met a lot of friends in this class, and I'm glad I met them. If I need help or some of them need help, we always help each other. My Mom could never be more proud of me because she knows that now I can do something with my life.

Reed Boomer
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

I Was Proud of Myself

I was proud of myself when I decided to go back to school in order to make a future for me and for my son.

My choices all began September 5, 2007, the day my son was born. I decided to stay in school and graduate; unfortunately, that didn't happen because my son stayed sick often, so I didn't get to spend much time at school. Then, as he got older, I sat and told myself, for the sake of my child, I must continue my education. I decided to go back to school so that I could get my GED and make something of myself.

I was a junior in high school when I conceived my child. I attended Will Rogers High School. At the time, I was seventeen years old and just a baby myself, but it didn't take much for me to figure out what I wanted out of life.

My senior year, I attended the Margaret Hudson Program. Margaret Hudson was a school for young girls who were pregnant or already had children. I dropped out my senior year. I didn't want to, but I had to in order to take care of my baby. He stayed sick often, and we were always back and forth at the hospital. Even though my baby had asthma, heart problems, and pneumonia, and I dropped out, it didn't stop anything because I had the drive to be something in life.

As my son got older, he got healthier. I went back to school. I was a go-getter and an achiever. I was smart and wanted more. My mother would always tell me, "Taught sense is better than told." I never knew what my mother meant until I had a child of my own. She always told me that I was smart, beautiful, bright, and intelligent. Everything my mother ever told me was because she loved me and

wanted more for me. Even when my baby was born, she told me to believe in myself and that I could achieve anything with my son.

Da'marion is my world, my everything. He opened my eyes at the age of seventeen. My son showed me that there were things waiting for me if I believed, so everything I do is for my son. He's a blessing and I want the best for him. I'm proud of myself because I didn't give up hope. No matter how hard it got for me, I kept on pushing, and I'm still getting my education with my son. I'm thankful for all of my blessings.

Romeshia Brothers
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Possibilities

The possibilities in getting my GED and going to college are endless. Believing in all possibil-

ities in everything I do, and everything in the future, is important to me. The possibilities in getting my GED and going to college are great. I'm going to tell you why it's great and how it will help me become a better person.

One of the greatest possibilities of going to college is to be successful in the future. My future means everything to me because, when you have a future, you have it all. The other possibility is to further my education. Out of everything I want, I really want a better education.

My other dream is to pass my GED test. If someone asked me what do I want in life besides going to college, it would be to get my GED. I want it so bad, I just want to pass. The possibility of the GED is it will help me to get a really good job that will support me.

You asked for my possibilities in life. It's college and getting my GED.

Samantha Harjo
Pauls Valley Adult Learning Center

Possibilities for my Life

I was proud of myself when I decided to go back to school. I realized that it was going to help me have a better life for myself and my children. I hope by doing this that I will be able to set a good example for my children, and encourage others of the possibilities you can reach by completing your education.

I am a parent, and it is hard to go back to school when you have so many responsibilities. But by attending classes, I can show my children how much easier it would be to stay in school, and show other people that to stay in school would be the wisest choice, rather

than to drop out. I am hoping that by going back to school, the possibilities for my life will increase. I will be able to get a good job to support and take care of my family. By taking advantage of the possibilities that open for me, I will be able to show others that they too can go back to school and open up a world of possibilities for themselves. One of the hardest things about going back to school, when you have children, is leaving them in day care. When you quit school and stay out for a long time, you forget what you have learned, and then you have to relearn it so that you can get your GED. It is harder the second time than it was when you were in school.

If I can show anyone the possibilities of what they can do, then maybe just one or two peo-

ple will go back to school, and my children will learn from my mistake and stay in school.

Sherrie Jesuit
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

I Was Proud of Myself When I ...

In 2006, at the age of 58, I was tested and



Terry Terflinger

found out I only had a 3rd grade education. I moved to Oklahoma, and my daughter saw an advertisement about the Literacy

Program at the Bartlesville Public Library.

My daughter and I met with the Literacy Coordinator, who tested me and assigned me a tutor. I have been working with a great tutor for about a year now. We meet twice a week

for two hours each session. I have made it a priority in my life to work on this. It's very hard because I taught myself phonetically, and now I have to re-program my brain. My test levels have improved, and I am able to read much more than I was before. I can pick up the newspaper and read it. For the first time in my whole life, I read a book from cover to cover. For the first time in my whole life, I completed crossword puzzles. I enjoy it very much and receive encouragement at the library and from friends and family. I feel like someone who couldn't see, but now has glasses. It's opened up a whole new world to me.

Terry Terflinger
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Possibilities

Hello, my name is Trung. I am from Vietnam. I am married and have three children, two

girls and one boy. I arrived in the United States on December 3rd, 1996. I lived in Newalla about one and a half years, then I moved to Del City. I work at Midwest Trophy Manufacture. I started work in January 1997. I have worked for that company for thirteen years.

Let me tell you my story. I was a teenager in the 1970's. I lived with my sister in Vietnam. My parents were dead. When I was twenty-three, I got a job at Electric City in Vietnam. It was going to be a big company and make a lot of money, but I came to the United States. My sister left Vietnam in 1975 and came to the United States, then she sponsored our family. After six years, all my family became United States citizens. I have three sisters. Two live in Georgia, and one sister lives in Oklahoma.

Many years passed and I did not speak English well. I never went back to my Electric City,

but I am happy with the things that I have today. I am learning to be an engineer. They think that I am the best experienced worker.

When I think back sometimes, I am not very happy. I must not think like that, it makes me sad. I will study very hard.

When I graduate from Metro Tech School, I will get a better job. Then it will be possible for me to take better care of my family.

Trung
OCCC Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City

I Shall Be Able

Three months ago, I started going to the literacy program at the Midwest City library. I used this program four years ago, although, after a pregnancy I couldn't continue my lessons. My first tutor in this program was Mrs. Tula Fessenden. She was really nice and kind.

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
Literacy Resource Office at 1-800-522-8116



INSTITUTE *of*
Museum and Library
SERVICES

Oklahoma *of*
Department
Libraries

This project was made possible by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and
the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

We had been working on English together for



Ziba Tagmir

a few months. I still call her sometimes. She helped me to improve reading and writing. I never forget her and she will always

be in my heart.

My second tutor is Mr. Ken Brunsman. He always encourages me with this sentence: “You are bright!” He is the one of the best teachers that I have met in my whole life. He helps me to pronounce correctly the letters “W” and “V” sounds. He knows how to teach very well. I have had two great teachers who help me a lot and improve my English.

I felt like a fish out of water before, but after coming to this program, I feel quite comfortable talking to people. My wish is to improve my pronunciation, reading, comprehension,

and become better at writing, spelling, and especially speaking better English.

I know that I am a beginner in this way, but if I want to learn, I shall be able. In conclusion, thanks to the teachers who help the people like me who need their help. Thank you, Mrs. Tula Fessenden. Thank you to Mr. Ken Brunsman. And especially, thanks to John Amicon, head of Literacy Link.

Ziba Tagmir
Literacy Link, Midwest City