

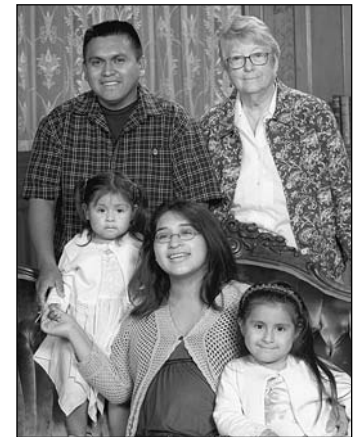
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Different Worlds Many Voices

**Student
Writings**

07



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Different Worlds Many Voices 2007 is dedicated to the tutors and teachers of Marin Literacy Program in appreciation of the encouragement and support they provide to their adult learners. They generously contribute time, energy and expertise to help their students learn new skills in order to provide better lives for themselves and their families.

Our special thanks to Paul Kagawa, Paul Kirchner, Sandi Cohn and Rosalyn Miller for their beautiful photographs.



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Foreword

It is with great pride that we present *Different Worlds Many Voices 2007*, our sixteenth annual volume of writings by adult students of the Marin Literacy Program (MLP).

MLP adult students are a microcosm of the diverse world in which we live. They range in age from 18 to 94. Their homelands include the U.S., China, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Viet Nam, Colombia, Bulgaria, Peru, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Jamaica, Brazil, Guatemala, Poland, Tibet, Laos and Argentina. They are parents, poets, housekeepers, engineers, teachers, chefs, beauticians, inmates, business owners and school aides, and are employed in hospitals, hotels, restaurants, ranches and creameries, to name just a few. Their homes are in San Rafael, Novato, Point Reyes Station, San Quentin, and every imaginable corner of Marin.

Whatever their origins, occupations and domiciles, our students are united by the common desire to improve their lives and make positive and lasting contributions to their community and families, and by a willingness to take on the difficult and frequently daunting task of becoming proficient in reading and writing in English.

Depending on individual needs, students may work in one-to-one sessions with adult literacy tutors, may learn reading and parenting skills in family literacy workshops and in classes at Marin County Jail, or prepare for GED exams in West Marin classes or through San Quentin's Project R.E.A.C.H.

This year's writings are grouped by project, in order to better showcase the variety of approaches that we offer MLP students through our Adult, Family, Inmate, and West Marin Literacy Services, and to introduce the outreach services provided by the F.L.A.G.ship bus.

It is our hope that the following pages will provide a sampling of the lives of our students and a celebration of the accomplishments of our diverse MLP family. Thank you for joining us.

The published authors invite you to enjoy their writings and share them with family, friends and business associates. We are happy to provide additional copies upon request.

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MLP Projects-at-a-Glance

Adult Literacy Services

ALS volunteers serve Marin residents over 16, helping them to improve their reading and writing skills in one-to-one or small group tutoring sessions, book clubs and workshops.

Family Literacy Services

FLS parents and caregivers responsible for children under five help to develop their children's literacy skills by improving their own in tutoring sessions, workshops and storytimes.

Inmate Literacy Services

Through trained inmate tutors and community volunteers, ILS serves inmates at Marin County Jail and San Quentin State Prison with instruction in reading, writing and parenting.

West Marin Literacy Services

WMLS offers second language learners in West Marin English instruction and preparation for both the GED and citizenship, as well as family literacy services.

F.L.A.G.ship Services

Caregivers and children under five, living in isolated rural and underserved areas and not attending preschool, develop school readiness skills onboard the F.L.A.G.ship bus (*Families Learning And Growing*).



Adult Literacy Services



The writing of Adult Literacy Services students demonstrates how skilled our tutors are in helping learners set their own goals and in developing plans to help them achieve those goals. Much of the writing in this section was produced by two groups, led by the same tutor, where students kept weekly journals from which they read in class. As integral as reading, writing was presented as a necessary element to being literate. Consequently, student writing improved. We are proud to share it with you in these pages.

Thank you to all our dedicated and inspirational tutors and learners, who make this program so great!

– Glenda Logie, ALS Coordinator

Nothing is Impossible

Gloria G

I lived in small town with beautiful narrow streets in Guatemala. We lived in tiny house with dirt floor. My house was made of mud brick with no electricity. I went to school without shoes – when you were little you enjoy what you have.

My mother was a single mother. She took care of my brothers, my sister and me and washed clothes by hand at the river for a living. Because she didn't know how to read and write she sent us to school to learn how to read and write. For her experience, she said, "I want you to go to school. I don't want you to be ignorant." I graduated for Commercial Secretary School and gave my diploma to my mother for the hard work she did.

I came to the U.S. for a good reason like all immigrants. I want better life for me and my family, better house in Guatemala for my mom, able to help my mom in any situation, finish my GED, help my kids with their own education, get a job helping others.

After I had my kids, I was trapped in my situation – taking care of them and working. I couldn't see the route to education but I knew it was there. If you stop education, keep it in your mind and continue later when you have the time. Find somebody or some program that will help you with your goals. I did it – you can do it too!

Gloria and I have been working together for a year. We have focused on enhancing her reading skills and the mechanics of writing. Gloria demonstrates remarkable determination in all that she undertakes. She currently balances two jobs, classes at College of Marin, single-parenting three children and her reading/writing commitments with the Marin Literacy Program. Having successfully submitted articles to the MLP newsletters earlier this year, Gloria seized the opportunity to write her story for this compilation. Her next goal is to attain her GED and I am certain she'll achieve it.

Tracey Rose, ALS Tutor

Miracle of Life

Beatriz G

One little person who is the most important in my life, my son. He is the one who encourages me in my learning English struggle.

My husband, Mario, and I wanted a baby for 4 years. Those years were very hard. We took a lot of medicines, treatments, and exams until finally on February 5, 2004, my doctor gave me good news. One little thing was growing in my body; yes, I was pregnant. We always remember that day.

When my doctor gave the notice that it was going to be a boy, Mario and me started to look for a name. We had a lot of choices but we decided for one name that we found in the Bible. The name was Moises. We read his history and we liked it a lot.

Long time ago in Egypt, the pharaoh was very cruel. One day he decided that all the newborn baby boys should be killed. One woman had a baby boy. She couldn't let him killed. She made a basket and put the baby inside. Later the basket was placed in the river. The pharaoh's daughter was in the river and saw the basket. When the princess saw the baby crying she felt very sorry for him and said, "This baby shall live." She called him Moises, a name which meant, "Saved from the water."

I chose Moises name for my son because he was brought in my life like a miracle. He is my happiness. Thank God for giving me this wonderful child.

As an advocate of the Marin Literacy Program, Beatriz has been recruiting learners where she lives (husband, sister-in-law, neighbor) and works (co-aides at the Montessori school). Her son Moises is growing up to be bilingual.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

How to Read a Big Book

Helen W

Reading is my favorite habit, especially autobiography. Bill Clinton is one of the famous persons in the world because he was president of the United States. I borrowed *My Life*, written by Bill Clinton, from a library. It was such a big book which included 55 chapters and in total more than 1,500 pages. At the beginning I found there were many new words in every page. For a whole week I only read four pages. I spent a lot of time for looking up dictionary.

Fortunately, I joined a MLP group with a great tutor whose name is Harriet Marriner. She is very nice and patient to every student. "How to read a book?" I brought this question to her. She told me there are two ways to do it: If you couldn't get through when you are reading, one way is to skip the difficult words or sentences, even a paragraph, then read the next one directly; you can back to read the skipped one later if you found something you didn't know. The other way is that you can look for pictures in the book. They will help you for understanding sometimes. I tried to read the book in these two ways; it was really helpful, now I can read two chapters a week. I'm happy and not afraid of big books anymore.

Helen is a cheerful, goodhearted, and enthusiastic student of English, who has been with the Marin Literacy Program for over two years and two tutors. She is a hardworking reader and writer, who composes thoughtful, interesting journal entries each week.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

The Root of Iranian Noruz

Hamid N

Aurora, the ancient Roman goddess of dawn, by her gilded rays like diamond spears, was breaking with streaks across the night's sky. One by one nocturnal stars, like a defeated army's soldiers, disappeared. However, Venue, the last of the night's stars, named for an ancient Italian goddess of gardens and spring, prayed to God for all our farms and farmers. And Iranian prophet "Zardohosht" aims for three fundamentals: things good, saying good, and acting good.

The time when the sun crosses the plane of the earth's equator; making night symbol of darkness and day symbol of light, of equal length, gives either the vernal or autumnal equinox. I guess because of the equality seen between day and night, our ancestors, being inspired, chose for the beginning of their new year the Vernal equinox. So for centuries, the New Year's celebrations began the Vernal Equinox. There has been a national feast.

Then was heard the crow's cock-a-doodle-do and the cow's clamor to be milked. The morning breeze was gently blowing to awaken all trees from hibernal sleep. The sweet singing nightingale was singing over its beloved flower.

Gradually, people are leaving their homes, but not to work, but rather for the way of fun and for the sake of amusement.

Yes, today is the last of thirteen days of celebration, and Iranian National Feast.

Hamid is a native of Iran. He has for many years admired American democracy and the ideals for which he believed the United States stood. In his country he was an agricultural engineer and later a lawyer. He sent his children to American universities to be educated. A number of his children and grandchildren are American citizens. Despite his advanced years, Hamid impresses me with his eagerness to learn.

Jane McColgan, ALS Tutor

Turning Red

Takatoshi T

Have you ever had an unforgettable experience like you get embarrassed and want to vanish right away? I had one which I want to forget forever.

When I came to the U.S. for the first time, I didn't know much English and had a hard time communicating. The Japanese language is very different, especially "L" and "R" are very difficult to pronounce for Japanese speakers, and "C" sounds, we mostly pronounce as "K" sounds. When I was an E.S.L. student, in my reading class, I was supposed to read a sentence in front of people. The sentence was "She was facing..." but I said, "She was fu...ng" in a loud voice. Sometime I still remember it and my face turns red.

Even though he works seven days a week to support his family while learning the restaurant business, Taka still has time to consider improving his English. He is especially adept at maintaining his sense of humor and enlivens our Tuesday afternoon meetings.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

Invisible Wall

Sarah C

Western people are open and talkative. Eastern people are usually conservative and shy. I am an immigrant from China; my culture grew deeply in me. Now, I am learning to adopt a new culture in my middle age. It seems an invisible wall blocks me.

I was taught the opposite of American. People in America are encouraged to speak from childhood, so they have a strong sense to give opinions. In contrast, kids in my native country were considered impolite if we talked too much.

When I attended school in China, students were quiet. Teachers taught and students listened. We wouldn't talk unless teachers needed us. When I went to City College of San Francisco, students were so free giving opinions and asking questions. Teachers wouldn't mind being interrupted. Students wouldn't feel embarrassed if their opinions didn't make sense or questions they answered were wrong. I was surprised by the ways of teaching and learning. Also, I felt nervous and my brain became blank if I had to talk, or if the teachers said, "What do you think?" I always sat in the classroom silently. After awhile, I had a horrible feeling I didn't belong in class even though I sat there every day.

I didn't have confidence to talk. It was just as Maxine Hong Kingston wrote in *Silence*: "It was when I found out I had to talk that school became misery, that the silence became a misery. I did not speak and felt bad each time that I did not speak." It was my same feeling.

Many years passed since I have been living in the USA. I am continuously improving by hard working and my tutor's encouragement. My fear of talking is not as strong as before. Now, I assume I am walking on the middle of the invisible wall. It's difficult to stride over it, but I will try my best.

While searching for a job as a paraprofessional in Marin County, Sarah is studying English as hard as she can. Recently she passed the county employment exam with above-average scores in English usage, writing, and math. Sarah has "discovered" the writer Amy Tan, whose novels she is reading rapidly.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

My First Christmas in the United States

Julia M

I arrived here just before Christmas.

Two years ago everything was different for me. I remember when my niece, Kamila, was writing a letter to Santa Claus. She asked me, "Do you want to write to him? It's not only for children; you can do it," she said. I smiled. Then I said, "yes." We wrote a letter to Santa Claus. I said to Santa Claus: I'm new in the United States. I want to speak and write English very well. I feel sad because when somebody says something, I don't understand. They speak so fast. I came here with little knowledge of English.

I thought that was fun, but we received an answer from Santa. For me it was a big surprise! I thought it was a game, but it was real. He wrote to me about the Marin Literacy Program. So my best gift was to be a MLP student and to have Rachel as my English tutor. I think gifts are not always material things.

I wanted to have my first Christmas here with my godmother because when I was a child, she brought me love, clothes, good advice and toys. Every Christmas she traveled to Peru. I remember when she said the most important for me is to have a united family. I have special memories about her. For example, I have kept an artificial tree for 38 years that my godmother gave me.

I enjoyed my first Christmas here with my sisters.

After two years of learning English, Julia's improvements in her use of the language are evident in the lively conversations we have every time we meet. Many of her short-term goals have been met, including owning a car. Her new independence has allowed her to attend an additional ESL class in Napa near her new job. She continues to pursue her dream of owning a daycare center. I enjoy watching her meet her goals and learning more about her life through stories she writes for her ESL classes. This is a good example of how much she enjoys writing the stories.

Rachel Dent, ALS Tutor

Volunteer in the USA

Etsuko H

I have just started volunteer work that takes care of animals. Before I came to the USA, I'd never thought about joining volunteer work. In my country, there must be a lot of volunteer work. To tell a truth, I don't know much about that. But my father-in-law worked in parks planting trees, and my aunt works in a hospital to help nurses as a volunteer. However both of them started work after their retirement. So, I thought that volunteer work is for retirement people. While I've been living in the USA for one year, I became aware there are lots of kinds of work from small to big things, and so many people join these events. To my surprise, a lot of teenagers participate. What a good thing it is!

According to a Japanese book called *Volunteer Work in 2006*, 32% of American students have worked as volunteers. Compare with Japanese students who have worked only 5% in the same time. I think that ratio isn't only students. Fortunately the book said, "the volunteer population in Japan is increasing every year." So, our Japanese lifestyle is changing little by little. Now, I enjoy volunteer work. But sometimes, I'm not comfortable because of my language problem. I want to understand English and speak well seriously.

Because Etsuko had classes in English in Japan, she has considerable knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. She is now working hard on her pronunciation and her understanding of spoken English. I look forward to the time we spend every week conversing on many subjects.

Milly Oppenheimer, ALS Tutor

My Family

Mitsunori K

I appreciate my wife, Utako, and we have beautiful twin babies, Mako and Yuki. Utako was very strong. I wasn't in Japan; I just called her. I wish I could have been there because I was so proud of her. When I saw the babies the first time, they were in the incubator. They were very small, about 2 pounds, but we believe that they'll be healthy.

Right now they can walk; they can play like the other children; we are so happy about these things.

Nori wants to learn as much English as he can, both in reading and conversation. Right now he is studying diligently for his citizenship exam, which he expects to take soon. He tries speaking English with patrons of the Michelin-starred restaurant where he works as the sushi chef, and plans to open his own restaurant in the next few years.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

When I Arrived in the United States

Sung-Hee K

When I arrived in the United States, shopping was very inconvenient. In Korea, I can buy everything in one market. Here the shopping center was separated into a few kinds of markets (for example, grocery store, clothing, office materials, shoe shop, and toy store). So I would have to go here and there with my two children. But most of all, homesickness was difficult to endure.

Of course, big cities have many kinds of high buildings. Durham, North Carolina, where I arrived, has very low and wide buildings. I was surprised at the sight. After time went by, I realized that high buildings are not necessary because land is very available.

There were many kinds of green areas and big trees were very beautiful. I could see rabbits, squirrels, snakes and sometimes deer around my house.

Another shocking thing was that I could take a shower only in the bath bowl and I could not use bath water to clean the bathroom floor. (It meant that I could not pour the basket water to clean the floor.)

But people were very nice and smiled at my family and they wanted to obey the laws and rules. Above all, American people like children so much and have good laws for protecting children. There are many public libraries and they have many kinds of books and programs for children.

Sung-Hee is part of a group of Korean women whose husbands are studying in this country while their wives care for their families. One of their early class assignments was to write about their first impressions of coming to this country, and then what surprised and pleased them once they had been here for a while. This story tells us what affected her the most.

Barb Barwood, ALS Group Tutor

Kazok (Family)

Jessica C

I prefer to spend time with my family because we don't have much time to get together. My son is in college; my daughter is busy for senior year in high school. She spends time more with her friends and working at Starbucks Coffee Shop for part-time. She is really happy to work at the coffee shop. She spends money for her shopping and beauty shop, saving for college. Now she is waiting for college admissions.

Whenever my son comes home we have dinner together; go to movies together; or play basketball together. When my children were young I thought we had a lot of time to get together; but time goes fast. The best thing is when my daughter plays piano, my son plays guitar, and we sing together. In August my daughter is going away to college. My plan is to have family vacations as much as possible.

Recently Jessica and her family traveled to southern California to see UCLA, one of the universities her daughter might attend next year. Jessica's wish is to email her son and daughter in English while they are away from home.

Harriet Marriner, ALS Novato Group Tutor

My Story of Victory

Maria F

In 2001, my daughter and I came from Brazil to the U.S.A. for a better future. Here, my daughter has opportunities to study, work, and she is an intelligent girl who has finished all of high school in three years, speaking four languages. Now she is in college and lives with me. She plans to major in Communications with an emphasis in International Relations. I had many troubles, but God helped me achieve great victories. I'm a single mother. My daughter never saw her father. But God is a good father. This country for us is a blessing from God. Here, the people are beautiful, kind, polite, and everybody helps each other.

My childhood was very poor. My father never paid for one lunch in the school and the school didn't give anything to students to eat. I lived with a family that didn't pay me for my job in the house. I didn't have any money.

I missed my mom, who lived at the farm, abused and sad. I can't change her life. I was disappointed and every day I told myself, "One day I'll become an independent woman." Now I'm in the U.S.A. Much later, my dreams came true. I'll never forget my past and how much I increased my mom's suffering by leaving. But she knew I loved her so much and I did everything that I could. And I changed my daughter's future. She has a world full of happiness, kindness, love, and freedom.

Maria has lived through many hardships and has emerged a brave, strong woman. Always on time, with a beautiful smile and impeccably dressed, she approaches each lesson with a fierce determination to perfect her English. She is extremely proud of her daughter and I am equally proud of her.

Leslie Van Dyke, ALS Tutor

I Came to the U.S. for My Granddaughter

Ghodsieh T

I came to the U.S. because my daughter was pregnant and she needed me. Two years before, I had come to the U.S. for a visit with my children and my family. But 11 years ago I came back and stayed until now. I am so happy because I saw my granddaughter growing up.

After I was in the U.S. for awhile, I decided, and my children recommended, that I stay and they said, "You can get ready for a new life." I started my new life with a small and comfortable house for myself. I enjoy seeing my granddaughter and my children and also my family. I have two daughters; one who lives in Washington D.C. and the other in San Francisco with my granddaughter and her husband. I am so glad for my daughters because they are both very successful. I found new friends in the U.S., Persian and American. One of them is Ms. Pat. She is a responsible and kind lady and also she is my tutor and my best friend.

Ghodsieh is from Iran and made her home in the United States in 1994. Her first language is Farsi and she is now making great progress in improving her English. Ghodsieh became a U. S. citizen in 2006. She is one of the best cooks that I know, always ready with a cup of tea and a variety of delectables. In fact her friends refer to her home as "Ghodsieh's Restaurant." I look forward to our weekly meetings and enjoy her friendly hospitality and sense of humor.

Patrice (Pat) Dowd, ALS Tutor

My Marin Literacy Program Tutor

Penny S

My MLP Tutor is Gayle Hannigan who is very important to me in three aspects. First of all, she is really helpful. I moved to San Rafael in August of 2002, and I rented an apartment. I found that some of the facilities were out of order. For instance, the window frame was broken. The light on the stove did not show the on and off signal. I asked the apartment manager to fix them but she did not understand me. The manager is so busy that she could not come to check my apartment. Luckily, Gayle taught me how to talk to her. My problems were settled.

Besides, Gayle helps me to get back my confidence. I have been studying English and used it at my work for over ten years in my native city, Hong Kong, China. I thought my English was good enough to communicate with others. In fact, I speak broken English with a strong accent, and it hurts me a lot. Gayle helps me to correct my pronunciation. Right now, when I am speaking, people understand more than before. I will keep on studying until I speak fluently.

Finally, Gayle helps me to become involved in the local community. As my English improved, I found a job and made friends with others. I hope the Marin Literacy Program keeps going, so that other newcomers can share the benefit I have received from the program.

Penny moved to San Rafael from Hong Kong in August, 2002. She joined the Marin Literacy Program in 2003, hoping to improve her spoken English and find work. Since we began working together, her pronunciation has improved and she has found a job.

Gayle Hannigan, ALS Tutor

Differences

Ruby W

As a new immigrant from China I have been noticing the cultural differences between two countries in four years, especially the different ways to get along with animals. The first problem for me is the language barrier. Some things happened that embarrassed me due to my English pronunciation. Once I told a waiter in a restaurant after lunch, "I want the bill." He was confused and asked, "How many bottles of beer?" Now I get help from Marin Literacy Program. My tutor and I share each other's cultures and spend a lot of happy time together. My English speaking is improving.

Another difference is what I admired as I see how the people here to get along with animals nicely. The birds, deer and turkey walk around the neighborhood in Marin areas. I remember when I was about ten in China. I couldn't protect my white rooster. I helped him grow into a handsome one with white feathers and red magnificent comb on his head. He is strong and always raises his head showing dignity. He walked around in front of the door of our house and attracted neighbor's hens. But he sometimes chased and attacked colorful women and children who passed by the door. A woman next to our house complained to my father and suggested that he should be killed. I protested and tried to hide him, but he could fly out and still "commit crime." There were more complaints and father decided to kill him. I threw him onto the roof of the house while my father was looking for him. He escaped from his first execution. But finally weeks later he was killed when I was not at home.

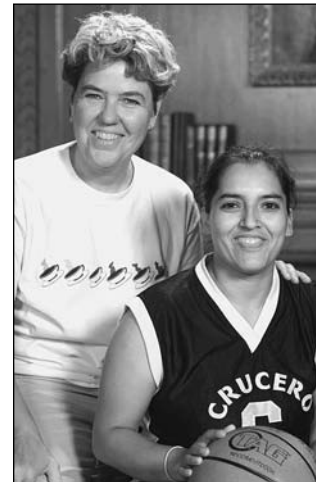
The American culture is very nice for animals. Sharing different cultures enriches my life.

I look forward every week to my time with Ruby who knows China well through travels with her job there in telecommunication. Her field here is early childhood education. Good English is necessary for advancement and she works hard to improve. She constantly amazes me with her quick intelligence and lively sense of humor. We often compare differences in our native cultures.

Donna Lowe, ALS Tutor



Family Literacy Services



“The world is made of stories not atoms,” writes Muriel Rukeyser in one of my favorite quotes. Stories have the power to heal, the power to reach others and to change our perceptions. Stories have the power to open our hearts, to allow us to share laughter and tears with one another. These stories from the students of Family Literacy Services do just that. They speak to us of the memories that they carry with them, of the hopes and challenges they face. They speak to us of courage and joy.

We have the ultimate pleasure in Family Literacy Services of reaching two generations at once by empowering our students to be their child's first and most important teacher. Our dedicated tutors have formed deep and lasting relationships with the students and their families, and are active in attending storytimes and workshops with their students. Students qualify for Family Literacy Services by having at least one child below the age of 5 years. This is a busy time for students as they raise their children and work hard to pay their bills. Each one of them is often working against difficult odds to create the best life that they can for his or her family. As busy as they are, FLS students have found the time to share their stories with you. I hope you will enjoy them as much as I have.

Sandi Cohn, FLS Coordinator

The Importance of Reading Books

Alma and Dennis L

Each week, Ana, the Head Start teacher, gave us a book bag of different titled books. We read with our children every day – morning, afternoon and before their bedtime – and if we didn't read, they didn't go to sleep.

One day Alma read *Good Night Gorilla*, then told them the story. Then Alma Jr. read the story in her own words. She decided to do a play at home with the toys and mommy was the zoo keeper, but when her daddy came home she changed the plan. Mommy was the wife, she was the gorilla, her little sister was Mousy, and daddy was the zoo keeper.

We told Sandi about the play and she asked if we could do it at storytime at the library to show the other parents that you can have fun while you read books to your children and let them use their imagination.

Three months later Dennis got time off. At the library we were nervous but happy. It is different when you do it at home. At home it's more fun because we change it and say funny things.

Thank you to all the Teachers of the Marin Literacy Program, and specially to Miss Milly, who always finds time to help us learn English.

Thank you also to Miss Ana for all her help and Miss Sandi for giving us this opportunity to explain to you all, the importance of reading books to our children.

Alma is an attentive member of my class of Head Start mothers, helpful to other students when necessary, and sometimes translating for me. Dennis has participated with the group, although work prevented him from attending regularly. Both parents are very concerned with their daughters' well-being and opportunities for learning.

Milly Oppenheimer, FLS Group Tutor

Under The Persimmon Tree

Hyoung Jun K 형준김

I grew up in a small rural village where my family clan has been living hundreds of years. The area where I had lived in childhood is mountainous and has a wide river. My family had made a living from farming in the field.

In summer I used to go to the river to swim. I had a lot of fun catching fish, clams, and marsh snails in the shallow spots, playing baseball on the sand field, building a sand house which I dug a waterway around.

I built a fireplace with my friends on the riverbank in winter. We picked branches and cut pine trees from the mountain. After soaking our bodies with ice and snow in the river, we set a fire, burned woods and warmed up ourselves. If a friend brought potatoes, sweet potatoes, or chestnuts, I would not regret that it was the last day of my life.

Sometimes I dream that one day I will lay down under the persimmon tree again. It covered my house completely and cooled it down from the sizzling sunshine. In a dream, when I was a boy, I lifted myself up to the sky, rode a white puffy cloud, and flew all over the world with amusement and amazement. In my thirties I would like to go back to my home, lay myself down under the persimmon tree, and look up in the same sky again.

Jun, a Korean, is my only Asian student in 18 years of tutoring. His beautiful handwriting to me resembles Chinese or Japanese, but Jun tells me that Korean is phonetic while other the other languages are not. All the same, I marvel at how much English he has learned in his five years here. He even knows the past participles of our irregular verbs — like sink, sank, sunk. As to the meaning of what he reads, he's way ahead of me when we do the current events test in the Sunday Insight section of the Chronicle. Now we're working on pronunciation and a few more of the abstruse English constructions.

Jun is a student at the Presbyterian Seminary and he aims for a parish in the U.S. someday. When that happens, he will be a gentle and compassionate leader of his flock and a credit to his adopted country.

Joan Hopper, FLS Tutor

A Sad Story About Immigration Raids

Ana L

When I come to this country I was only 12 years old. I remember when I cross the border. I thought it was the right way to come. When I grew up I know I was so ignorant and I know I need a visa. But it was my mom and father making this choice for us and we don't know, like many kids coming into this country even littler than 12, even babies. When we get to be adults we know it is illegal and we want to be legal.

I was in my home when I heard about immigration come and I was just so scared about it. And then I see the news on the television. When I see how the immigration came inside of the Canal Area and don't even give time to put clothes on, I feel really bad. When I see all the kids crying because I know some people, my friends. I know how they go out to bring the kids to school and come home to get their lunches and immigration came and took them. I am just so sad about it. When the kids came home from school nobody was there. They knock and nobody. They start to cry they was so scared and they run to neighbors. They don't want to go anymore to the school. They was really afraid.

I would tell to the senator or the government, I don't know who is the one, to stop taking people away and instead giving us some opportunity to be legal in this country. I am not talking for me but for all the people hiding and are afraid to come back to their home, for those families separated from their kids and the husbands taken from the wives. Who is gonna support those kids because probably the father is the only one who works. Who will pay the rent and the bills? We're living in this country because we need better opportunities. We are not criminals. We're coming here to work and we work hard. We are good workers.

Ana is one of my students at Head Start in Novato. She is the mother of three young children. She is an inspiration to me as a mother because she always shows such patience and love toward her children. I have been lucky to have her as a student in my classroom where she acted as my translator on many occasions. I look forward to seeing what she will do in her community in the future.

Nicki Richesin, FLS Group Tutor

My Little Private Doctor

Nghi T

He who named Allen Lhong four years old, is very kind, cute, and sweet. Although he is young, he treats my sickness with experience. Whenever I got sick, he would rush to the shelf to take his doctor set, in order to give me check, such as blood pressure, thermometer, a shot and medicine. While he was giving me a shot, I pretended to cry. After that moment, he would hugged and patted my shoulder and say, "Mom, don't cry! It would not hurt you."

Sometimes [when] he bumped my head, nose, or mouth or somewhere else, while we were playing, he would bandaged me and kissed me until I said, "I am ok!" When I was in my bed, he would cover me with a blanket. Therefore I feel healthy, wealthy, happy and safe, because wherever I go or stay my doctor will be with me and take care of me. I am proud and lucky of having him. If he becomes a doctor, I am sure he will be a very good, kind, and warm one.

Nghi is one my students with the Families For Literacy program at Head Start in Novato. From the first moment I met Nghi, I thought she seemed shy, but I noticed an intensity and focus in her, as well. I have greatly enjoyed teaching my students with Head Start. They are enthusiastic learners and always interested in challenging themselves. Nghi is no exception. She has shown a natural talent for writing with imagination and poetic feeling. I have been delighted by her stories!

Nicki Richesin, FLS Group Tutor

A Sad Day

Ana R

I have only sad stories today.

Friday, I called my sister in El Salvador. Her husband is sick. His kidneys aren't functioning.

My brother in Washington DC had an ulcer operation.

When I hung up my leg began to hurt. It's hurt for days now.

I think I have to go see my brother but I don't have money or time. You know I haven't seen him for 14 years. I miss him.

Ana is a happy, capable, caring person. She is Felipe's wife and they are parents of three daughters, but troubles and cares and worries come to us all. I am happy to have such an open, honest student and friend.

Carla Thomas, FLS Tutor

In Our Heart

Martha J

Once upon a time there was a family from Mexico who wanted to give the best to their children. Unfortunately, the father died in May, 2004. He was the best father in the whole world. He was so happy having his family with him on the last moments of his life.

Then the mother was in charge. She teach to her children how to live in this hard world. One thing she said, it's not the way you see it. It's how you lived it. Also she said, there is two way "right or wrong," pick your choice. Life depends on you.

She was a student from Marin Literacy Program. She was so happy to learn English. She got a great tutor who encourage her to write a story. She did it in 2005 and was so proud of herself. She only finished 3rd grade so this was a big project for her. Her children were proud of her too.

When she got sick I felt badly also because I wanted to help her, but I couldn't help her feel better. My family and I got a lot of support from doctors and friends. When we came back home from hospital she was with a terminal disease. We used to say, doctors are wrong, you will be fine. We tried everything to cure her, but she always said it's on God's hand now. If he wants me to stay I'll stay, but I don't want you to be worried, I will be fine. She was very positive. She always made fun of her symptoms. She never complain at anything. She was my model. She said cancer is not your enemy it's your friend. It all depends how you see it.

The night fell and now she is gone. We all going to miss her a lot, but in our heart she always gonna be there. May peace be with her until we meet again. She die on January 2007.

Martha is a devoted wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend, and I am honored to have worked with her for several years. The program is also lucky to have her working in the office, helping learners get the most from their experience with MLP. She is working hard to become a physician's assistant, a calling she realized after taking such good care of her wonderful mother.

Michele Baroody, FLS Tutor

Learning to See

Rosario P

I came to the USA in 1999. Once here I felt like I couldn't see because I didn't know the city, I didn't have friends and I didn't speak English. I just wanted to work, make some money and then go back to my country, Guatemala. My brothers and my sister wanted me to go to high school but I told them I didn't need that because very soon I would leave. I started work and realized then that I needed to learn English because if you speak English you can find a better job, make more money and talk with people. Also, when you don't speak English you can get taken advantage of.

For example, I worked one day for a lady cleaning houses. She thought I didn't understand any English. She said to the homeowner she would charge \$125.00 to clean her house. Then she turned to me and said she would pay me \$7.00/hour and I had to clean the house in 2 hours because the owner didn't want to pay very much. I never worked for her again.

Now I've been here for 7 years. I went to school and took an English class and found a better job but I still feel I need to learn more. I would like to get my GED and go to college to be an elementary school teacher.

One day at work a customer told me about MLP. I came to the library and met with Glenda. She helped me find a tutor. Now I have my tutor and she helps me a lot. She helps me with English and she is also my friend. I feel she will help me get my GED.

Rosario is an exuberant mother of two little boys. She is a motivated student and has progressed significantly since we started working together in October 2006. She is a warm and generous person.

Brooke Jackson, FLS Tutor

Alma's Basketball Story

Alma M

The first time I played basketball was like 8 years ago. I went to the park to play for my self and I met some girls there and we started playing in the afternoon. One day, one of the girls asked me if I want to play on the team, so we started [to] play on the woman's team. I was so nervous the first time. But I really like it and I still play.

I see I'm playing in the gym with another team running and having fun. It's my favorite sport and I like it because you can do your exercise in the same time you have fun. I like the basketball uniform too. My favorite color is purple and yellow, same as the Lakers. It's my favorite team and also I like to watch them how they play. I wish one day I can play like them. But the difference is I'm a woman they are men. But I think this is not a problem. I can play faster and run on the court and shoot. I know I'm short but I can shoot.

I like to hear my name and all the people are happy and the game is so exciting. I know sometimes I can't play all the game because we are more than five players so we need to let the other girls to play too. Sometimes when I'm on the bench I feel like go in but I know the other girls need to play too. When we lose I feel sad but when we win we feel so happy. I have like 8 trophies in my house. When I look at them I feel so happy and I remember the time when I was playing it was so exciting. I feel like go play right now!

Alma is really quite amazing. She has had a very difficult life, yet her spirit is so bright and shiny, and her determination to keep growing and learning is a joy to be around. Besides getting up every morning at 4 am to work full time, she is raising a her wonderful 6 year old daughter, Jessica, taking computer classes, studying English AND playing on a woman's basketball team. The fact that she is under 5 ft. tall, a 28-year-old woman from Guatemala, and plays basketball at all is incredible...if you ask me! Her passion for the game is merely a reflection and testament to her spirit. I feel honored to know her.

Romney Lange, FLS Tutor

My Craving

Laura G

I remember when I went to my mama's house. I was pregnant and ready to have the baby. When my mama came into the kitchen it was late. She asked me if I was ready to go to sleep. I told my mama that I want rice pudding. She said I think that it is too late for the rice pudding and I waited in the living room. Then I heard noises in the kitchen and that she was making my rice pudding. And she was. And when it was ready it smelled like vanilla. It came to be a problem. I burned my tongue because I didn't wait enough time! I learned my lesson!

Recipe for Arroz con Leche (Rice Pudding)

for 4 people

Boil 2 cups water.

Add 1 small bowl of rice.

Boil for 8 mins and turn down to Low until the water is gone.

Pour in 4 cups milk.

Cook slowly for 20 mins.

Stir all the time.

Then put small spoon of cinnamon and a half cup of sugar.

Serve warm or cold.

Laura and I have been working together for several years now and I can see that she is making progress. I have always admired her determination and persistence, even when life is difficult for her. We went to a storytime at the library, and Laura brought rice pudding. It was delicious with cinnamon and vanilla. It reminded her of this story about a past experience with rice pudding. When Sandi read it aloud at the storytime, everyone applauded. Now we can share it with you.

Beth Galleto, FLS Tutor

A Miracle that Changed My Life

Elizabeth M

My name is Elizabeth. I'm 25 years old, I have a girl and her name is Isabella. She was born on February 3, 2006. She is beautiful, has beautiful black eyes, black hair and white skin. She is very active. She enjoys playing with her dad and always is smiling. When we go outside she likes to see the people and she smiles at them. She likes to hug the babies and play with them.

I always say, "Thank you God" for Isabella. I don't believe still how Isabella grew in my womb and now she is so big. It's a miracle. All the time I both enjoy watching her play and playing with her. It's incredible how she is growing day by day. In the morning when I wake up I like to see and caress her face. When she is sick, I am sad and afraid because I don't like to see that she is suffering.

She came to change my life. She is the motor of my life, because when I want to do something, first I have to think about her. Isabella is everything for me.

I have been working with my learner, Elizabeth, since March 3, 2007. She is a delightful young woman of twenty-five, born in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico, to a family of ten children. She and her fraternal twin sister, Yvette, are seventh in the birth order.

Elizabeth fell in love with her best friend, Eduardo, a close family friend. After partially completing a tourism course in Hermosillo, she married Eduardo, moved to this country and gave birth to the subject of this heartfelt essay. Her pride in her baby mirrors my pride in her!

Barbara Wilson, FLS Tutor

The Most Interesting and Exciting Experience in My Life

Flor M

To be a mom is the most interesting and exciting experience in a woman's life to me. In my life, it is the third opportunity to have a baby in my family. This makes me feel so happy, but sometimes when I feel the pregnancy symptoms (like fatigue, headache, back pain, nausea, depression, etc.), I feel a little sad. My medicine is when I think about the day when my baby will come and how happy my husband, my kids, and I will be. To have him at home with all of our family and the things kids do when they are little. This is only one of my reasons to be happy. Having all of these changes in my life and in my body. I think all women who really want to have a baby will feel this way too.

With my third pregnancy, I feel better than the first two times because I think I'm better prepared. I have more experience with kids and also my entire life is more relaxed now. I have a really nice family with my husband and two sons. They are very excited about the new baby in the family. My older son, Erick, wants to take CPR classes just to be prepared to help with the baby. Julian is the baby's name. My friends have helped me too. My clients in my work have given me clothes and stuff for the baby. I hope everything will be okay when the baby will be born. We will be so happy to have a new member in our family.

Flor is my friend, my student, and my inspiration. She is a wonderful mother to her three sons, Erick, Jonathan, and Julian. Over the past five years I've known Flor, she has continued to amaze me with her resourcefulness and determination. She has worked very hard to learn English, to support and encourage her sons in school, and provide a happy home for her family. How could I have known, when I completed my tutor training, that I would be so fortunate as to make such an incredible friend!

Nicki Richesin, FLS Tutor

Semana Santa/Easter

Raquel S

Semana Santa is the Mexican celebration of Easter: On Semana Santa I take time to remember some of my family's traditions in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where I grew up

On Semana Santa, we eat special foods like "guansoncles" and "torejas" for dessert. I remember when my neighbor would come and sell the guansoncles to my mom. Everyone would come early to buy the guansoncles to make a special dish for Semana Santa. I cannot get guansoncles here in this country.

For dessert, we made toreyas which is bread with eggs and brown sugar: I make this for my sons on Sundays and sometimes they help me to cook.

During Semana Santa, we do not clean or cook for 12 hours. We also fast for 24 hours. You have a choice whether to fast or not. I remember choosing to fast when I was 17 years old. It was difficult because my mind and body was not prepared for as long as 24 hours. I could only do it for 7 hours. It was a hard experience to fast because my body and mind was blocked and said, "Hungry, hungry, hungry."

We don't say words during this time but we petition and ask for help. I remember my grandfather and father going to church to petition for solutions to problems in my family and things got better.

Raquel has been in Family Literacy for almost two years. She has learned to read and write in English and can speak English quite well. She especially enjoys reading and sharing books with her sons and the children she cares for. We often use the stories we read as "teachable" moments and use the words or vocabulary as "mini English lessons." Even though Raquel is quite busy with work and family life, I know she makes a conscious effort every day to read so she may improve on her English skills. As her tutor, I could not have wished for a more wonderful and motivated student. We have shared many stories and memories throughout our tutoring sessions. This story about "Semana Santa" came about as we shared our own family Easter traditions.

Emilie Albertoli, FLS Tutor

The Importance of English

Yaneth A

When I came here I never think of the importance to speak English. But one month later I made application for work. At work he asked, "Do you speak English?" When I said, "No," he said, "Oh, I need somebody to speak English." So I see the importance to learn English.

When I visit the doctor it is more difficult. She needs to know what symptoms I have. When I tell her what happened it is more easy for her to know what is my problem. Then there is the prescription. It is important to read all the information because sometimes you have a reaction to the medicine that is not good for you.

When my baby was one year old the doctor prescribed one teaspoon 3x's a day but the pharmacist wrote take three teaspoons 3x's a day. I called the doctor again and asked, "Did you say three teaspoons or one teaspoon 3x's a day?" She was surprised and said to me, "You are a good mother."

Yaneth is indeed a good mother. Her baby had serious health problems that required three surgeries. Despite language barriers, Yaneth was able to secure bloodless transfusion surgeries for her daughter.

Carla Thomas, FLS Tutor

My Story

Nancy G

On July 13, 1998, I crossed the Mexico-USA Border for the first time. The air in our new mini-van was hot and humid. My cousin was excited to be returning to the USA, but I was sad to be leaving Mexico. I was afraid of leaving everything I knew. I didn't speak English or understand the culture.

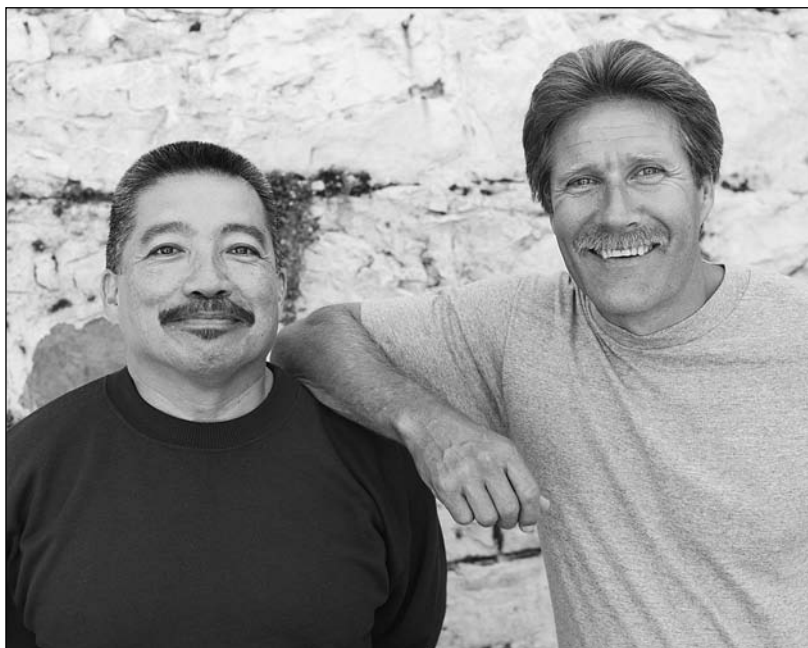
That Christmas, I had a party at my house. My cousin came with two friends that didn't have family in the USA. My cousin tried to set me up with his friend, but I liked his friend's brother, Bernardo, better. That night at the party, Bernardo asked me if he could pick me up after work the next day. A few days later, Bernardo took me to a New Year's Party. That night we got a chance to know each other better. The next thirty days, we went out every day. After a month, Bernardo proposed to me. We married and a few years later we had our first child. Michelle is now five years old and our second daughter, Donna, is three years old.

After nine years in the USA, I speak English better and I understand the culture better. Now, my daughters are in school and we are learning English together.

I'm very proud of my daughters. My family is the most important thing in my life. I want to say thank you to my tutor, Nicole, and the Marin Literacy Program. Thank you for everything.

Nancy, twenty-five years old, came to the U.S. from Mexico nine years ago. She lives in Novato with her father, husband, and two daughters. Her goal with the Marin Literacy Program was to improve her spoken English and reading comprehension. Her written story is a huge success.

Nicole Calmels, FLS Tutor



Inmate Literacy Services



In this section of *Different Worlds Many Voices 2007*, you will read writings by incarcerated men and women. Marin County Jail men participated in a weekly writing class and the women were part of a weekly group tutoring session. Both groups are open entry, open exit, and the turnover is high – some students remain for only a few sessions. One writer participated in the M.O.T.H.E.R.S. Program, which offers family literacy classes twice a week at the jail.

San Quentin State Prison writers are all students in Project R.E.A.C.H. (Reach for Education, Achievement and Change with Help). Trained inmate tutors are available to students at regular weekly sessions, as well as throughout the week at a variety of locations within the prison. The extraordinary dedication and skill of ILS tutors and teachers and Project R.E.A.C.H. inmate tutors is surely evident in the sincere and heartfelt writing that their students have produced and contributed to this book. Many thanks.

– Jane Curtis, ILS Coordinator

I Can Be a Tough Student

Jason G

I grew up in and out of group homes from age eight through nineteen. I did well in school until my junior year. That is when I began to see my grades declining and my attention span shorten by a lot. I had trouble focusing during tests and was often frustrated. I would throw my tests across the classroom. I just couldn't focus at all.

Then I got a job as a student office assistant and was out of class early. That didn't help. My grades got worse, and I finally quit in order to focus on my school work.

I dropped out of Alicanté School when I was nineteen and never returned. I tried to attend adult education in Woodland, but I still couldn't focus. I still had my job at the movie theatre, but I was collecting knives instead of saving my money. I was caught by group home staff and asked to leave. That is what started my homelessness and my criminal career.

I will leave here in September with my G.E.D. My tutor is helping me with my math so I can pass the test. I owe him a big thanks for all of his help and support. I know I can be a tough student. His patience is appreciated. I will do my very best to learn from this and not return to prison.

I've only been working with Jason for a very short time. His dedication to the G.E.D. Program is strong. He is working toward his G.E.D., and I feel he will pass on his first try.

Robert Coté, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor

Education Is as Important as the Meals of Everyday

Alberto M

I am from Veracruz, Mexico. There my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and I planted orange, mango, and coconut trees. Also, we sowed rice, beans, corn, yucca, and sweet potatoes. As a result of working about twenty years in the country field ranchos, I never went to school. However, when I went to live in a small town, I learned how to drive trucks.

In 1990, I met a person who offered me a job to drive a bus from Tijuana to Los Angeles, CA. Unfortunately, I was arrested a week later, and, finally, I ended up in California State Prison. Here in prison, I have understood that education is as important as the meals of everyday. Therefore, I am trying to learn to read, write, and speak English, because I want to get better communication with everybody.

I have been attending Free to Succeed. Moreover, a few months ago, I was enrolled in Project REACH classes. There I have found amazing help from Ms. Nan, Red (Rojo), and other wonderful teachers! Their extraordinary teachings have been doing remarkable changes in my life: now I can read, write, speak and understand English better than I did.

To all of you, thanks so much!

Alberto has overcome quite a number obstacles in his quest for an education. He's a fast learner and totally focused on absorbing as much as possible. He is also genuinely grateful for the chance to attend class, and we really enjoy seeing his dedication and progress.

Robert (Rojo) Frye, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor
Nan Sincero, ILS Tutor

Overcoming the Shame of Not Being Able to Read

Dictated by Bill K

My name is Bill K. I got myself into trouble and got myself into San Quentin State Prison. When I got here, I did not know how to read and write. A very special door has opened. I started going to school to learn how to read and write. I'm still here a year and half later. In December of 2005 I wrote a letter for the very first time to my sisters Donna and Mary, along with one to my mother.

After she received the letter, I spoke to my sister on the phone and she asked me who wrote the letter. I told her I did, but that I had help spelling a few words. The phone went silent.

My sister said, "You are in prison, but do you realize the door that just opened?"

"Yes," I replied, "and I open that door every night."

She told me that she would treasure the letter for the rest of her life.

It feels so good when I can come to class and read books that I could never read before. Learning to read has been the most emotional journey of my life; everyday I feel thankful for this gift. What I hope is that some day I will be able to sit with someone, like myself, and I will be able to help them learn to read. That is my dream.

Bill has been working hard on his reading and writing skills. Not only does he attend REACH once a week, he also participates in other educational classes. He is learning to write letters to his sisters and mother. He is very dedicated and an inspiration to others.

Carolyn Hardee, ILS Tutor

Beautiful Dream

Oscar B

One day I was alone in front of the ocean, seated on a rock. I was sad and tired. I fell in a deep sleep and I dream that a big white bird come to me and invite me to fly. I jump on his back and the giant bird begins to fly higher and higher until we reach the clouds. I could smell the fresh air and feel the breeze of the clouds touching my skin. The bird fly higher and higher and I could see how splendid is the horizon – separating the sky from the ocean. I see the rainbow crossing the sky, and we pass under the rainbow. I see the deep blue sea and the green big forest. It was a beautiful sunshine day. I see how beautiful the world is.

Oscar comes from a big family; he is the youngest of seven brothers. He is 37 years old, born in Colima, Mexico, and has lived in San Francisco for twenty years. He loves exercise and working out. His favorite sports are boxing and soccer.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

Reflection

Carl K

Another birthday . . . spent away –
Wonder when I'll get home one day.

My family misses me . . . and I miss them.
I will get home one day – but when?

I toss and turn as I lay in my cell –
Hoping that this is the last time I come to jail.

Carl is 34 years old, still single, with no children. His interests include playing basketball, bowling and playing pool. Carl's writings, like this one, are especially poignant when he is reflecting on home and family. His use of to-the-point words in his writings goes beyond his outward shyness and quietness.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

Change

Frank F

I am older now and the hand of mortality is upon me.
I remember the seasons as if yesterday...
It has grown late today and the wind has grown cold.

Memories of other days whisper to me.
I once was someone else...
With fear and trepidation I maneuver blindly forward to what lies ahead.

I miss my innocence. I feel tired.

Frank's writings often explore the great questions in life. His gift with words allows him to use writing to say what his quiet demeanor inhibits him from expressing verbally. He hopes to do some serious writing someday.

Stella McCreedy, ILS Teacher

A First Time in My Life

Ella Marie M

From last week and this day today is February 1st, 07. I just want to share my whole experience of being here, is a first time in my life. That it's hard being tied up and being in these walls, with too many rules to follow. Of such instance the small things that are simple and bring in this life in here was depressing, lonely, and stressing. You are longing for sunrise but only a few of your times when it's open and when it closed. [Ella explained that she looks forward to the sunrise but has only seen it a few times because she is locked in her cell.]

Ella Marie grew up in the Philippines and lived there until 1993. She has completed all of the course work for a Bachelors of Science Degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management. Her degree is within reach and she hopes to get a job in her chosen field. Ella Marie is a good writer and a good student. She really pays attention and is anxious to improve her language skills.

Mary Jo Bassing, ILS Group Tutor

Remembering is Living It Once Again

Cesilio H

I like to remember:

When I have eight years old, living in Guatemala, I used to like to play soccer with my friends and other kids. I'm not thinking other stuff, just play soccer. My Mom, she's working and my older sister was always working a lot too. I remember clearly when my older sister worked as a cook she would bring me bread. I would always wait for her with so much happiness because she give me so much special attention. I had four other sisters and one brother. My father was a player and he never take care of us.

The family time I remember and like the most was Easter time because in my town we had two weeks of vacation. We celebrate with different activities. We would get up early to carry the water because we did not have a well. We had to carry water from a well that was half mile from the house. All my family, my aunts and uncles and cousins, would come to our house and we used to play all day and night. I didn't want the week of Easter to ever end.

Now, I am really appreciative to my older sister for the attention I was given when I was a little kid. I just wanted love – that's what I needed. I miss my family. I feel so good to remember when I was a child.

Cecilio speaks three languages – his village dialect, Spanish, and English is his third. His desire to improve his English reading and writing brought him to the writing group. He enjoys soccer, swimming and riding bicycles. His writings often go to his childhood with thoughts and memories of family and family gatherings.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

Where Is My Daughter Where Is My Child

Johnny R

It has been over 12 years since I have seen my daughter and she used to write monthly, but for the past year I had not heard from her. I wanted to write her something special to let her know how much I miss her but my writing skills were not that good. After working with Carl, I learned more about writing. I wrote my daughter this poem. She liked it and wrote me back. Now we are back to communicating and our bond is much stronger than before.

Where Is My Daughter Where Is My Child

Where is my daughter, where is my child
I don't know so it's driving me wild
Latreka has the beautify[ing] love of heart
I think about her love that withered and died
It left me with a broken heart so I cried
My heart is lost without her caring love
So I hope God can help me from above
I ask myself what could have gone wrong
Why did her love leave, why is it gone

Where is my daughter, where is my child
I don't know so it's driving me wild
I get on my knees for her beautiful love today
Yet there is so many words I have to say
I ask her and God for a caring love to share
Because I know Latreka is my caring loving delight
Even though her love is not there I know it's right
God I know Latreka is your beautiful love gift
But that don't take away the fact I need a lift
Where is my daughter, where is my child
I don't know so it's driving me wild

Johnny has accomplished a lot in his writing skills and he plans to enroll in English 99 to enhance his reading and writing. I am very proud to see him writing small poems for greeting cards that are used by his friends. He gives me a good feeling about helping others because it is a joy to see progress in the people you help.

Carl Sampson, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor

I'll See You Below The Rainbow

Randall B

I'm not there right now...I think of you daily.
Oh, how I wish to hold you, give you love and guidance.
You are the most special; you are number one;
you are the greatest joy to me.

I've failed you up until now but I ask you to accept me and my past.
I've been to places that I pray you don't ever have to go.
Remember I didn't do the things I did to hurt you.
I did them out of selfishness.

I ask you to see a bright future for us. I love you...Oh yes, I do love you.
I ask you to please someday forgive me
for not being the father that I should be.
I ask and pray that you will forgive me.
Always remember that I love you.

Your Dad

Randall is a 37-year-old father with a love of the outdoors. His hobbies include fishing, soccer, archery and baseball. He enjoys reading history books and the Bible, and Ken Follett is a favorite contemporary author.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

Gratitude

Johnny W

I have the pleasure not only to be a tutor, but also a learner. I feel every-day is a learning experience. Last year I graduated from Vocational Plumbing; I felt I attained enough knowledge in the plumbing field to enhance my construction trade as a contractor. Recently, for the past 6-7 months, I've been studying a more advanced phase in plumbing which ensures the potable water we drink has measures in place that will protect us from contamination. It is called the Backflow Prevention System. Although it would take a book to explain this method, I would just like to share with the readers that when we get water from our faucets, we should be thankful for the many steps taken that make our water safe to drink. With this being said, I now have been training under P.J. Seiler, so that I may once again give back to communities as a whole and also gain the knowledge I so desire in securing a lucrative career.

I look forward to completing all necessary phases of plumbing so that I may fully understand the concept of this particular field. I honestly feel that once a person understands what they've learned, they will have a better appreciation in whatever they choose in life. A mind is a terrible thing to waste. We all should take full advantage of this gift we call education. It's never too late to learn. All we need to do is apply ourselves. I am truly grateful for the many opportunities given me. In closing, I am also fortunate enough to attribute my newly found goals to my fiancée Alba, love of my life!

Johnny shows plenty of enthusiasm and interest in everything he does. Just as important, he is very easy to work with and he always seems to be one step ahead all along the way. He is a great learner, as well as a great tutor. I am pleased to work with him and I look forward to seeing him take and pass the Backflow Prevention System final exam. After achieving that goal, I am sure he will move on to his next challenge.

P. J. Seiler, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor

Responsibility

Joseph F

When I was sixteen years old, I would have never thought that responsibility would have anything to do with being someone successful in life. But as it turns out, I think, along with thousands of other adults, responsibility makes you what you are today. You can't live life on a daily basis without thinking of your next action, like dropping out of school and not getting your GED. By dropping out of school, it will affect you in a lot of ways. With all the free time you have from not going to school, you might end up doing pointless things like drugs or committing needless crimes.

Your education is the most responsible thing you need to take care of. I'm only 20 years old and just now realizing that my education is important. It's going to help me get a good paying job and help support my family. Because without going to school, you're showing that lack of responsibility in your life. With an education, you can go places in life, get a good job and not worry about being successful in life. That's why I'm focusing on my education, so I can survive on the streets, support my family and not end up back in prison.

Joseph is a good kid and an exceptional student. I've only been working with Joe for a short time, but his participation in Project REACH, along with his determination, is improving 100%. His dedication makes tutoring him a pleasure.

Robert Coté, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor

Alfalfa

Lane M

We have a big barn in Medina, Ohio – four horses, stalls, grain room, tack room. There's a big room for all the sawdust where the tractor goes and the front-end loader and bush hog are parked. Another room for all the tools and miscellaneous equipment needed for a 14-acre farm.

My Kingdom is up, up, up on top – the hayloft is my palace. I have the biggest fortress up here! The smell of sweetness is in the air...the smell of sweet oats that I love so much. I always have fun up in the hayloft making my Kingdoms larger and safer. There is a maze to find the heart of the fortress – stacks and stacks of walls to protect me and my Kingdom. There are so many worlds of adventure up here, worlds of conquering and saving my princess from evil and always – there is the sweet, sweet smell of alfalfa.

I miss having a home in the country. Someday, if I keep clean and sober, I will again have my home in the country – my own golden pond.

Lane is a 35-year old man who loves camping, fishing, swimming and his dog Guru. He is exemplar of the quote "you can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy." Lane's writings, like this one, often reflect his boyhood dreams of adventure, exploration and love.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

To the Youth of Today

Mark J

My name is Mark and I am here at San Quentin Prison, Level II. I will be out one day soon in 2008. Right now life is full of rules. Prison is not the place to be. I'd rather be out there with my wife Barbara, my family and friends, playing tennis like I did in high school.

It's a must that I put my life back in order. People do make bad decisions and take wrong turns, but there are no shortcuts in life. I have learned this and I want to use my experiences and what I have learned (the hard way) to help encourage the youth of today.

My message to young people is this: focus on what you're doing in school. Work hard, play hard, listen well. Healthy body, healthy mind – you need to eat right, get plenty of rest. Stay focused and never say "I can't." Always try to believe that you can do whatever it is you want to do. Okay? (Smile)

I can imagine right now I want some of the same things you want: to love and to be loved; to be with family; to be happy. The best recipe for happiness is to do the right things, and it's important that other people and teachers see that you're doing the right thing. Just keep up the good work! We also must grow up to know the Lord and keep God in our hearts. Try it! Try it all the time and pray.

Mark likes to gather his thoughts. He is working on his GED. He goes to Protestant Services and enjoys playing tennis and basketball on the weekends.

Carolyn Hardee, ILS Tutor

Fig Leaves

Myles G

Brown dirt, clear water, my older brother, Mark, and me laughing and playing with our toy army men and our dogs, Rags and Sarah. We are splashing, digging, and climbing our fig tree. We made a two-decker fort in that fig tree. Mark's fort was on top, mine under his. He helped me build my lower fort – talking to me about the back yard we shared, showing me how to tie rope and hammer a nail. Mark would hold me so I wouldn't fall, yell out his big brotherly instructions so I wouldn't get hurt – he loved me and he cared. Then, Mark would make us lunch and lower it down with our pulley contraption to my lower fort. He kept me safe by showing me how. I miss having my big brother to hold and share life with me and our family.

I feel some release having had this moment with him.

Myles is a 48-year old native San Franciscan. His brother died when they were both in their 20's. Myles has just recently begun to acknowledge that loss by recording the joyous memories on paper. He is an articulate, thoughtful man who ponders weighty thoughts in his writings and tries to process past experiences into today's lessons.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

My Goal for Success

Reggie W

Upon arriving at S.Q. I heard of a class called R.E.A.C.H. and it sounded interesting to me so I enrolled in the class. I have learned so much in the last year. I've learned math, reading skills and also a lot about myself – tolerance, patience and that there is much more I have to learn. I have a good and patient tutor named Roy and my teachers Nan and Carolyn and my friend Mr B, he is also studying for his G.E.D. I look forward to graduation day.

Reggie has made excellent progress since I started working with him a year ago. He is a hard worker on the job (we also work together in a sewing factory), as well as going to school four nights a week. He wants to improve himself, and he makes those around him want to be the best that they can be, as well.

Roy Jones, Project R.E.A.C.H. Tutor

Happier Times

Rolando D

I was on a vacation in Mexico. We went to the beach, a great beach. There was lots of family and lots of water games. We had family harmony then – my parents were living together with my brothers and me. We were all together, happy. My family were all good people, there were no drugs, no alcohol. It was always the best of times to have my family together in harmony. We had everything then – God was strong in our lives.

I miss that now. I just sit here alone. I can't understand why everything you love the most has to split. I miss my parents being together and I miss being a sober free man; but life goes on and as long as we are alive it's a blessing.

Rolando is a young, married man with no children. In his writings, he often explores the past joys of large family gatherings and the blessings of togetherness versus the isolation of present day realities.

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

Motive for Treatment

Ken C

I hate cement floors and cycling doors.
Commodores with attitude gets old.

Iron rack of slab to stretch out time
Phantom lights which are seldom truly blind.

Inside that's shut out
And outside that's walled in.

Plastic trays for breakfast and din
And paper bags for lunch and to gag in.

The food I buy I can put aside
But the feed they serve I can't keep or hide.

I have to watch who's on – rules change like weather
If I screw up I get to walk to court on a tether.

They tell me to lock down and I'm already locked up
But what's really my motive is I miss my girl and my pup.

*Ken's been involved in the martial arts for 27 years. He loves rollerblading,
hilly streets, and his cocker spaniel named Star.*

Stella McCready, ILS Teacher

My Life in Jail

Rosa L

Another day, another credit. That's what I say to my roommate every night at 10:00 pm when the deputies shout "lockdown" and we go inside the cells. I have been here for two months, and don't ask me how long more I'll be staying because I really don't know. What I do know is that if I don't put myself completely into my present, and keep thinking about the future, I will consume myself into anxiety and depression. So the saying "one day at a time." Living the present should be easy, or at least practical, but, I hate to say that, living the present can be really complex, and there is no better place to learn that than in jail.

Rosa grew up in Brazil and lived with her family there until she left for the United States as an exchange student at the University of California, San Diego. She likes getting things right and asks to have corrections made to her grammar, although she does quite well in English. She has been a pleasure to have in the class.

Mary Jo Bassing, ILS Group Tutor

M.O.T.H.E.R.S.

Carmen J

How have books and the MOTHERS group changed my world? Before the MOTHERS class, I can honestly say I had never read a book from cover to cover. Since the class, I have not only read but enjoyed 20-30 books in a few brief months. I'm 43 years old. I don't think I really understood the true value of what books could and will bring to my world. I surely never imagined that children's books could bring such knowledge and inspiration into my life at my age. I was wrong.

I believe I never had any interest in reading before due to my lack of comprehension and low self-esteem. Whenever I did take time to try and read something, it would always be the thinnest book or the shortest paragraph. These days I can't wait to get back to the book I'm reading, and I'm not limited to the number of pages or of words I try to read, because a whole new world of reading has been opened to me and I'm enjoying it more than I ever thought possible. There are so many positive ways and things you can learn from books and this program brings it all to you. I totally enjoyed myself while also receiving a whole new world about books both young and old.

Thank you MOTHERS.

Carmen is a curious and engaged student. Her positive outlook, consistent enthusiasm, and insightful comments about her experiences as a mother helped us all.

Tami Griffin, M.O.T.H.E.R.S. (*Mothers, Our Teachers: Helping, Encouraging, Reading, Supporting*) **Program Teacher**



West Marin Literacy Services



The majority of students in West Marin participate in small group classes. Some students have tutors, but because classes offer day-care and are held in the evenings after work on the ranches is done, they are very popular. Carla Twitchell has taught in two classes in Point Reyes and one in Tomales this year and has worked with most of the students who are represented here.

These stories explore a variety of topics but all contain a connection to major themes in life: family, work and education. Some stories are whimsical, others harrowing, yet each is written in a clear, distinct voice. Students tell of events that, small or momentous, have made a lasting impact on their lives.

– Eileen Puppo, WMLS Coordinator

Motivation

Lourdes G

I came to U.S.A. for first time in 1992. My first child was born here. We returned to México and when my daughter was one and half years old we came back to U.S.A. again. In 1996 my second child was born. When I came for second time it was very hard and sad for me because I was leaving my parents, brothers and sisters, friends and the rest of my relatives. But I was following my love - my husband. Immigration to U.S.A. was an opportunity to improve my life style and I had hope and goals for myself and my family. I said to myself I do not have to work hard physically, I can use my mind and my intelligence.

My first personal goal was to learn the language. Marin Literacy Program designated a tutor. That tutor was Judy Foley. She helped me a lot; she helped me through the process to get ready for my GED test, which I passed the first time I took it. Now I'm moving to next step, in this coming May I'll take the admission test at Santa Rosa Jr. College to get ready for my career. I would like to become a Medical Assistant. I believe that if you are a good role model for your children, they will learn and live by your example and follow you toward self determination and higher education. I like to encourage others to not give up learning English. That is the key to the success here in this Country. Keep trying and don't stop. Don't say to yourself you can't do it because I know you can!

*Tutor **Judy Foley** worked with Lourdes for two years. They went on family outings to the City to visit museums and attend movies. They shared experiences, laughter and literacy.*

A Special Teacher

Jose P

I remember my fifth grade teacher. He was young, tall, and brown-skinned like us. He used to be a friar. He showed us pictures of himself in his brown robes. He lived with his family in Colotlan, a small pueblo near Guadalajara. He invited me and my friend to his house sometimes, and I invited him to my house to eat with my family. We played basketball and soccer with him in the park in front of his house.

He was a humble man, but we respected him. After school every day, he would study to be prepared for teaching us better the next day. He never hit us with a ruler, or pulled our ear like the other teachers. We obeyed him because we wanted to please him. When he got mad, his face turned red, and he sent us to the principal's office.

At the end of the school year, there was a dance. The teacher had to teach us a song and a waltz, but he was embarrassed to sing and dance, so he made us listen to a record over and over.

We liked him so much we asked to keep him as our sixth grade teacher. I felt lucky to have him for two years. When I visited my home town a few years ago, I was happy to find him teaching at the same high school I had attended. I hope my children will someday have such a special teacher.

Jose lives and works on a ranch in West Marin. In Mexico, he enjoyed his work as a delivery truck driver. He likes to expand his skills on his new computer. Two of his children attend Tomales Elementary School, where one of them is in the GATE program. He also has a pre-schooler, and a pet Chihuahua named Botas, or "Boots." He and his wife Dolores know that the best future for their children depends on success at school. Jose is an excellent role model with his diligent attendance to ESL classes.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher

A Friendship Pact

Ofelia M

When I was in high school I made a pact with my two best friends. We had been together since elementary school and we promised to stay together after graduation.

One friend, Graciela, found work right away in a creamery. The factory only hired one girl. My other friend Lilia and I tried to persuade her to quit her job because we had made a promise to stay together. My mother heard me talking on the phone to Lilia. She punished me for giving bad advice. I could not go out with them for one week.

Two months later, Lilia and I got a job at a clothing factory, cutting and sewing fabric for pants and jackets. We had two days off per week, but Graciela only had one day off at her job. She quit her job and came to work with us. All three of us were now happy because we kept our promise to stay together until we married.

Ofelia recently moved with her family to a different ranch in West Marin. She occasionally works outside the home, and is involved in her son's sports activities. She is an eager student and is most interested in learning how to express herself in school situations.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher

“El Viejito”

Maria Luisa R

My son-in-law had a 50's Chevrolet that we called “Viejito” (old man) because it was an old car. One day, my son, who was about three years old, was chasing some kittens. The kittens ran under the car, and he was crying. I asked what was wrong, and he kept saying, “The kitten went with the old man!” I finally understood that the “old man” was the car, and I laughed.

Maria Luisa has been attending Marin Literacy classes for four years. She has seven children, some of whom are married and living in Mexico. Two of her adult sons live with her and her husband in Petaluma.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher

Family

Ana Isabel G

I was born in México and I am the fifth of eight children. My childhood was happy and fun, and I have very good memories of that. I was married very young to a marvelous man. When my first daughter was born I felt so blessed to become a mother. I have two more children and still feel blessed. To see my children grow has been a great satisfaction. I have a funny story about my son: When he was three years old he used to put on his father's rain boots and straw hat and say I'm ready to go to work with my father! It was so funny to see him walk because the boots were almost as tall as he was and he could hardly walk.

My husband and I have not been back to Mexico in nine years. We hope we be able to go soon and visit our parents and relatives there. Also, I'm very grateful because I have a very good Literacy tutor. Her name is Sheila S. Laufer and she is helping me with my reading. She encourages me to read a different book each week. She helps me with writing, spelling, vocabulary and pronunciation. I go to the Saturday's English Class with teacher Virginia Kortekaas too. She has a lot of patience with us, I think we have come a long way. She is impressed with me because I'm making a great progress. I know that without of the help of my tutor, and my teacher, I would never have reached the level of knowledge in English Language I have today.

Ana and I have been working together for months, but she has made excellent and rapid progress. She is a motivated student and I look forward to our future study sessions.

Shelia Swan Laufer, WMLS Tutor

Many Jobs

Juana G

When I was fourteen years old I worked in a fruit market. I met many people from the ranches but the work was heavy, carrying and lifting bags and boxes. When I was sixteen, I got a job in a clothing store. I enjoyed it very much, but the owner didn't like it when my friends came to chat, even though they also shopped in the store. At eighteen, I worked in a shoe store. I got along very well with the owner, but then he died and the business went to his children, and they were not as flexible with my hours as their father had been. When I was twenty, I worked in a general store. I was living with my grandparents, but I went back to live with my mother when she was pregnant with her seventh child and needed my help. I liked all of my jobs, and they all gave me good experience. I learned a lot, and met many people. Now I am married and have a baby. I live on a ranch, and am very happy to have the job of mother and housewife.

Juana has been in California six years. She and her husband moved to Point Reyes from Healdsburg. They have saved enough money to buy a house in Mexico. They are hoping immigration laws will change so they can visit and enjoy their new home in their native country. They feel their newborn is a miracle in their lives.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher

Photography

Yolanda G

I have lived in Point Reyes Station for seven years and I'm a mother of three children. I just love to live here, the people are very kind and nice. Three years ago I was very isolated from society and outside of my small world. By then, I already had my three little children. It was so difficult for me to go anywhere and I could not even think of having any kind of job! One day one of the employees of West Marin Literacy Program came to my house. By then I was familiar with this program because my husband had a tutor already and so did I. She introduced a person named Luz Elena Castro, who is a professional photographer, and explained the project they were thinking of doing. It was teaching English through the photography. I just loved the idea! I really did not have an exact idea of how much work it takes to be a good photographer and all the techniques that art has. Now I know a little bit more about it. Right now I have done two Quinceañeras, one a few weeks ago and the other last April 21st. My next project is going to be community services at Paper Mill Children's Corner: I'm going to take pictures of all the children that are attending now. If the parents and staff there like my work, I'm going to be the exclusive photographer for them. I am very thankful to WMLS and Gallery Route One for give me this great opportunity.

Yolanda has been working with the Gallery Route One Photography Class since its beginning. Her photographs are beautiful and she continues to grow in her art.

Rosalyn Miller, WMLS Teacher

That is My Child

Rosalba A

When I arrived at the U.S. border, the immigration agents took my child. I had given my baby to a “coyote” to carry him across the border; but the agents took my baby from her because the woman was dark-skinned, and my child was fair-skinned. In Tijuana, we had to call the doctor in Jalisco to verify that I had given birth to the child and that he was mine. The doctor had to fax papers to the immigration officers. The officers also spoke to my parents by phone. My baby and I were separated for five days at the border. After I got my baby back, we dressed him as a girl because we didn’t want to get caught again.

My brother also had a bad experience. He had flown from Jalisco to Tijuana. When he got off the plane, some “coyotes” pretended to know him and to be expecting him. He joined them, but then they robbed him of his money. He spent ten days alone. He had to sell his clothes to get back to Jalisco. When he arrived back home, he smelled, and was crawling with ants. That happened in September. He was able to enter the U.S. in March.

Rosalba and her husband have been married eight years. They live on a ranch and attend English class together.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher

Working and Learning

Norma M

When I first came to this country from Mexico, I lived in Los Angeles for a few months with my brother and his family. I was frustrated because I did not know English, and had no job. My other brother brought me to Bolinas. I helped his wife clean houses. Later I moved to Inverness, but I was without work for two months. I got a job as a dishwasher on weekends, and soon I worked three days a week. I helped the waiter clear the tables and soon I was working Mondays through Saturdays. I was happy because I came in contact with people who spoke English, and gradually I learned the language. Now I prefer to do housekeeping, and work only two days a week in the restaurant, but I am grateful for that restaurant work, because that is how I learned English.

Norma has become fluent in English in the two and a half years that she has been in California. She started nursing school in Mexico, and hopes to graduate there and start her career.

Carla Twitchell, WMLS Teacher



F.L.A.G.ship Services



The F.L.A.G.ship (*Families Learning And Growing*) is a fun place for families with young children to gather and learn more about the importance of reading, writing, art, music, and health issues. The bus and staff travel all over Marin, returning to the same 14 sites every week. Kids love to come onboard and learn something new every time. We have sites in Marin City, Mill Valley, San Rafael, Novato, San Geronimo, Marinwood, Tomales, and even in Bodega Bay! Families are given information about local family service agencies, insurance, health information, free and loaned books, healthy snacks, and much more. Many F.L.A.G.ship families are so invested in the service that they return year after year until every child has gone off to school. It is truly enjoyable to watch the children grow, learn, and succeed with their families.

English literacy levels vary greatly among attending parents, and so when parents are vocal about their appreciation for F.L.A.G.ship, we ask them to write down their thoughts. The story in this section is by one thankful mother:

– Ambre Tousley, F.L.A.G.ship Coordinator

My Sons Onboard the F.L.A.G.ship

Hanifa B

I started to bring my sons to the F.L.A.G.ship bus since my older son, Imran, was 2 years old and my younger son, Faizal, was 2 weeks old. That was over 3 years ago. We almost never miss the bus on Mondays. The only time we miss it is if we are out of town. My kids look forward to it all week. My sons learned a lot about school from the bus and when my older son started Kindergarten, he was very well prepared. His teacher said she could not believe that Imran had not gone to pre-school. She thought he had! He was attentive in class during story time, was good with clean-up time, knew to raise his hand if he wanted to talk, knew how to take turns, sing songs, and is good with art time. These are skills he learned on the bus.

I like that the bus exposed him to different educational toys, different stories and songs and projects that helped him develop motor skills. I also liked that the bus teacher helped him practice writing letters and numbers. I especially liked the erasable letter writing book, where they can trace and write letters and can erase so it can be used again and again. I also like the letter and shape Bingo games. We like that we can borrow books and [FLAGship] can suggest books the kids would like. I also enjoy being on the bus so I can see my kids' progress and know areas they need to practice more. The bus helped improve my sons' vocabulary tremendously. Now, I bring my 3 year old, Faizal, and my new baby who is 6 weeks old. I look forward to coming until he goes to Kindergarten in 5 years.

Hanifa is a very dedicated mother of 3 boys. She and her husband came to Mill Valley from India and has always been motivated to provide the most for her children. Hanifa began bringing her eldest son to the F.L.A.G.ship 3 years ago and continued until he started kindergarten last September. Since then, she, her second and third sons attend every week with great interest. Hanifa does not have a tutor and F.L.A.G.ship is the only school-readiness service that her family receives.

Ambre Tousley, FLAGship Coordinator

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