

Stay With Me:

2023-24 Adult Learner Writing Collection



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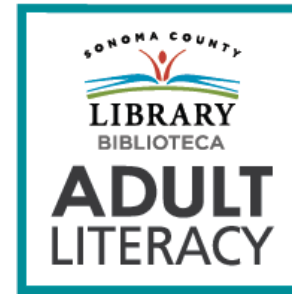
Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy



**“Own only what you can always carry with you:
know languages, know countries, know people.
Let your memory be your travel bag.”**

— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn





Sonoma County Library's Adult Literacy & English Language Partners is a free service for adults who want to work one-to-one with community volunteer tutors to improve their basic reading, writing, and English language skills. We provide adults with a learning partner and resources so they can work together toward their goals as lifelong learners, family members, workers, and community participants.

Since 1987, these services have been an integral part of Sonoma County Library's mission: to bring information, ideas, and people together to build a stronger community.

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Cover Art & Layout: Sonoma County Library Graphics Department

Printing: Accent Printing, Santa Rosa, California

Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy is funded in part by grants from:



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Acknowledgements

Thank you, adult learners, volunteer tutors, and community classroom facilitators of the Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy & English Language Partners for your ongoing work together.

Thank you to the 2024 staff of the Adult Literacy Office: Joe Ayala, Leticia Soria, and Christine Whyte, who help adult learners and their tutors prepare and embark on their important work together.

To the adults who submitted these writings and gave permission for them to be printed in this book: I want to express my deep gratitude for your willingness to share these important memories with me and future readers.

Alisa Adams, Supervisor

Adult Literacy & English Language Partners
Sonoma County Library

Each year the Adult Literacy Department of the Sonoma County Library publishes a book of writings by adults who are enrolled in its Literacy Program. As you will learn by reading the following essays, the writers in this year’s collection were asked to think about a cherished memory that they want to hold on to forever. Not all of the memories are positive—some of them are poignant and bittersweet, as the writer recollects a time and place that no longer exists. As Hugo Jose Mora Sanchez writes in his essay, “The world today is so dynamic and complex that it makes our reality and perception of time ever changing and sometimes uncertain.” In this context, memories serve to remind us of simpler times and pleasures and bring comfort.

Memories are the cherished treasures of our lives and have the power to uplift our spirits, strengthen our connections with others, help us understand our own lives, and provide solace during difficult times. Remembering a lost loved one makes them come alive again in our minds. The essays contained in this collection explore many aspects of these writers’ lives, including childhood experiences with loved ones, such as making food with family members, farming with a parent or grandparent, or remembering an annual family trip to the beach. A few of the writers tell stories about defying their parent’s expectations, and as a result, they found strength in themselves and learned to be independent. Several of the stories address the joys and struggles of motherhood.

These essays celebrate the profound significance of these moments in our lives. They illuminate the ways in which memories enrich our emotional well-being, strengthen our connections with others, and imbue our lives with meaning and joy. As you reflect on these cherished experiences, I hope you will be reminded of the beauty and wonder of the human experience.

Erika Thibault

Library Director



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**“Fond memory brings the light
of other days around me.”**

—Thomas Moore



We Didn't Have Anything but We Were Happy

By Alicia Caldera

I grew up on a farm in Zacatecas, Mexico. We were a poor family, I was the youngest of ten children.

I loved to help my father plant corn and beans. He had a pair of bulls that pulled a plow that made a furrow in the ground. I walked behind him putting the seeds in the row and sometimes had to wait for him on the other side while he returned to cover the seeds.

While waiting, if I became tired or wanted to go home and play, I dug a big hole, put in a portion of the remaining seeds and covered them. I kept enough seeds so we could finish planting without arousing my father's suspicion, but in the spring, corn or beans sprouted from the hole to reveal what I had done.

A creek ran through our farm that filled with water when it rained. We were so excited playing in the creek, splashing each other, screaming and laughing like crazy:

The joy of smelling the natural.

The vibe from feeling the abundance of the water coming from the mountains.

The satisfaction of living in the moment.

We didn't feel the rain, we ran as the water.

At the end of the day, anxiously waiting for a new day.

The world is full of beautiful experiences. It all comes down to understanding how to recognize the beauty in everything around you.

Tutor: Bob Alwitt



Embracing My Memories

By Magdalena Reyes

My most cherished memory is when I lived in Mexico with my parents. I remember when I was a child and I accompanied my mom to bring food to my dad. He was a farmer, he worked for other people, he planted corn and sometimes wheat. My dad started work in the morning. He milked a cow, then he prepared all the things he needed for his job. After finishing his breakfast, he rode his horse to work. He was accompanied by a dog called Cacique.

During the morning, I helped my mom finish making tortillas. I remember when I filled a bottle made of glass with water and I put a piece of "guillotte" on it so that the water wouldn't spill. My mom made a net to carry the bottle of water like carrying a purse. She used a basket to carry the food. She put the food in a medium blue enamel cup that was then covered with a thick tortilla. My most favorite food was when she prepared pork with sauce and accompanied it with rice and beans.

We walked to bring my dad's food. I remember we walked a lot – like an hour, I think. When we arrived we sat on a little rock under the tree or on the ground for lunch.

When we finished eating, I walked through the cornfield looking for fruit called "pichecuas." Some days were very hot, and my dad told me to be very careful because there were snakes. Sometimes I would watch one, and then I would tell my friends at school and they would be surprised.

Being close to my parents; I truly miss those days and embrace my dreams that will not return. Eating in the field, walking among the cornfields, drinking fresh milk together again will only happen in my memories.

Tutor: Kristin Patterson



A Happy Memory When I Was Twelve Years Old

By Soledad Fernandez

Every May my father and mother took all sixteen of their children to the beach. Sometimes my aunt and her children came too. The drive took 6 hours or more. The road had a lot of turns up and down the mountains.

Now there is a freeway, and it takes 2 or 3 hours to drive to the beach from my village. My family rode in one big green truck. My Dad only rode a bicycle before he bought that truck, but he drove it home from Texas. I don't think he had a driver's license ever!

When we are almost close to the beach everyone is excited. We say, "I can smell the ocean." In the truck, we change clothes from shorts to bathing suits. When the truck stops, we run to the beach. We jump in the ocean. The ocean is very comfortable: not too hot, not too cold, just warm. There are a lot of big waves. We stay in the water where it is not so deep. I like to dive in the big waves. My body feels very light. We go in and out of the ocean all day.

On the beach, we used oil to make the body tan. I got very dark. I always remember the sun and the ocean. It is a wonderful memory.

We ate something and then ran back into the ocean. It was a wonderful time because we were free and happy. Not very many people were at the beach. We walked far and saw many palm trees, many coconuts, many shells, seaweed, starfish and crabs.

We left the beach sad to return home. We went to the beach only one time a year.

Tutor: Sandy Drew



One of My Favorites

By Michael A. Orozco

One of my favorite memories is from the time that I lived with my mother in Mexico. I remember making tortillas from scratch with her. I would add the water and my mom would massage the dough and put it in the machine that shapes the tortilla. She would then heat it up and serve with chicharrones and salsa roja. It was so good that it would make me lick my fingers!

Now I make chicharrones just like my mom did. The memory makes me feel happy.

Tutor: Coot Alexander



Section 2

**“In the midst of winter, I found there was,
within me, an invincible summer.**

**And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter
how hard the world pushes against me, within me,
there’s something stronger —something better,
pushing right back.”**

— Albert Camus



My Great Escape

By Marta Camacho

When I was a little girl, my father enjoyed spending time with us on the weekend, taking us to the river to fish. When it snowed, we made snow monkeys together.

However, when I was a teenager my father was very strict. He made me stay at home after school. This made me very angry because I liked to enjoy time with my friends. We would go downtown, buy ice cream, and listen to music from the jukebox in the café.

But because I didn't have permission to go out with my friends, I felt so frustrated, angry and upset. Tears ran down my face. I thought that it was not fair; I wanted to be with my friends.

One day when I was leaving the house, my father said to me: "You have to stay home alone this weekend without music, without TV, and without books." He locked all the rooms in the house and left me in the garden. Even though the garden was beautiful with peach trees, chili plants, and red, white, and yellow roses along the fence, I felt very frustrated because I had to stay alone for six hours.

After two hours, my friend and neighbor, Laura, climbed the fence and asked me, "What happened?"

I told her what had happened and the punishment my parents gave me. My friend told me that I could jump over the fence and get out. She put a ladder on her side of the fence, and I had another in the garden. So after that, every time my parents punished me, I jumped over the fence. My father never found out because I was back in the house when he returned.

I learned then that I could be independent and strong.

Tutor: Jane Vosburg



The Uphill Climb to a U.S. Passport

By Ana Fresquet

Getting my passport was one of the most difficult things I have ever done, and that is why I will always hold on to that memory.

First of all, I paid a fee for the application, which included many papers to fill out. After that I went to the clinic to get seven vaccinations for my green card, and they made me feel sick, tired, and nauseous.

I studied the basic English I needed to communicate with the interviewers, because during the process I had many interviews. I had to study three hundred questions and answers. It was very difficult, very challenging, and very exciting.

Close to my appointment, I practiced the interview with my husband. I was very nervous to be face-to-face with the interviewer. The interview was intimidating, but the questions she asked me were simple and I answered correctly. After that she told me I passed the interview, and three weeks later, I went to the swearing-in ceremony to receive my citizenship certificate.

Finally, I applied for my passport. I had to have my picture taken, and I emailed it with the application. Four weeks later my passport came in the mail.

I will always hold on to this memory because it makes me proud of myself. I set my goals, I did what I had to do, and I accomplished them. Now I can travel. I can vote freely. I can serve.

Tutor: Sandy Litzie



Unforgettable Memory

By Leslie Yang

This summer when I visited China, I met up with my former classmate, who is also my best friend. We have been friends for over 30 years. We recalled an unforgettable thing that happened in our eighth-grade class.

The day before the final exam, our teacher told us that we did not have to return to school after lunch to review the class materials if it was raining. My classmate told me that her cat gave birth to six kittens three days before. We could play with them in the afternoon if we wanted. It was drizzling that afternoon, so we decided not to go back to school.

Those six kittens were curling their cute bodies while being fed by their mother when I saw them. We weren't allowed to approach those kittens because their mother was mean to us. After these kittens were full, we played with those six new kittens that afternoon till it was dark.

The next morning, our teacher didn't allow us to take the final exam. He ordered we needed to write a reflection, and our parents had to sign it.

I knew my parents were strict, and I was nervous and afraid that my father would be angry at me if they knew about this. My friend told me: don't worry about that. Her father signed it for her, and she said her mother would sign it for me. Finally, we took the final exam successfully.

Over 30 years have passed, and my parents don't know what happened that morning. It is a secret in my mind forever. I know I should tell my parents the truth to see their reaction. But I haven't told them.

Tutor: Linda P. Frank



Marcus Aurelius 1974 – The Dash Between

By Marcus Aurelius Buser

Marcus Aurelius our times
My name
An emperor before
Another leader today
Here to show a better way
Everles: his name from fathers before
Our legacies come from across the shores

Boats from here, boats from there
Our bloods do mingle
The earth we share

Marcus is here, someday be gone
A ripple his fathers help carry on

Those who know him bloods of lines
Share within secrets of times behind

Us - We - Ourselves is who we are
It's in our genes
Selfless to the core. We live our life
For the betterment of humanity, nothing more
It's what we do shore to shore

Genes of thoughts flailed upon spectrums of light
We come from lands we see at night.

Tutor: Michael Powell



Section 3

**“Memory is the diary that we
all carry about with us.”**

— Oscar Wilde



Your Smile

By Elizabeth Estrada

Your smile is the most beautiful memory that I keep in my heart with all my love, which I will keep for the rest of my life. It's so wonderful to be able to remember it every moment because remembering is living again and that fills my whole life with joy.

Your smile says more than a thousand words: shows your light, your glow, everything that you are. Your smile is more beautiful than the stars and more immense than the sea itself.

Thank you for your smile. You filled my life every day with so much love and made the impossible possible. Your smile changed my world.

Thank you for sharing that great and amazing treasure with me: your luminescent and beautiful smile.

The world can change with a simple smile.

Tutor: Nita Ledford



Musical Memory

By Rickey Dee

I'll begin with jazz.

I think John Coltrane is at the top of the list playing saxophone.

Then, Joe Henderson (playing) "Round Midnight."

Miles Davis on the trumpet.

Jazz has always been the sound for me:

I have a feeling of freedom. Life makes sense to me...

I guess I'm happy.

Tutor: Sheldon Reber



The Opera Festival

By Jerome (aka: Kua KiatLiong/Ko Chi Lung)

Children in my village gathered after school under the outdoor Taiwanese Gezaixi Opera stage. It was set up temporarily in the square in front of the temple with bamboo scaffolding and wood planks as the stage floor.

Just for fun, naughty boys who were not really interested in the art would use stiff sticks to trace the performers' footsteps in the empty space under the stage and rub performers' thick-soled shoes through the gaps between the wood planks. Occasionally, the audience would hear an out-of-place curse directed at the naughty lads under the planks from the performers, interspersed within the smooth-spoken words or singing of the opera.

Every March in the lunar calendar, festivals were held to pay respects and to celebrate the birthday of the local goddess Mazu. People were more tolerant of the demeanor of the naughty chaps in this happy and chaotic environment, which included lots of noise, firecrackers, and a parade with a Mazu Shrine added to the craziness.

Suddenly all the noises stopped, and people were stunned by the extreme grief being conveyed by an actress in mourning costumes of black and white. While the traditional Taiwanese orchestras played, she was singing and narrating along with gestures. Her once beautiful headdress, smooth hairstyle, and colorful costume in the previous scene had transformed into a few strands of hair on her forehead, messy long hair, and tear-stained makeup caused by her extreme sadness.

That crying tune of her mourning for her beloved husband was tearing the heart out of the audience and touching people's souls. Even the mischievous children were all standing obediently in front of the stage, listening and watching her performance with all their hearts.

I think that was the first time I was seriously entertained and touched by a traditional Taiwanese Gezaixi Opera art performance.

Tutor: Kathie Barclay



A Year with Simona

By Catalina Nuñez Reyes

Simona was a dog that lived on a street in Tunja, Colombia. She slept next to a school and the students bothered her. She was thin, with a hunched back, and had burned skin from the sun. My sister brought her home; we took her to the vet and we learned that she was twelve years old and had many illnesses. At this moment, my family and I decided to accept Simona into the family even though she was going to be a challenge for everyone.

In the beginning, Simona didn't trust us. She walked around the house trying to find an exit, and she tried to escape many times in the park. We continued doing everything that we could: we bathed her, fed her, and gave her lots of love but she only ignored us. She wasn't affectionate and she wanted to be alone all the time.

After a few days, we noticed many behaviors that made us understand that she'd had a family before: she was house-trained, she didn't do any damage in the house, and she was never aggressive.

As time passed, she wanted to stay with us more and we understood that she had accepted us. She gained weight and began looking healthy and happy. But she was old and more health problems started: she had to use a diaper at home, she stopped eating, and she walked slowly. Eventually, she only wanted to sleep next to us. Until her last day, she was a grateful dog.

Living with Simona, a dog that suffered maltreatment, affected me in a powerful way. I learned to be present in each moment and to be thankful for her. Even though she only lived with us for one year, I understood then that I want to dedicate my life to protecting helpless animals. I also decided to be vegan and generate less impact on the environment, especially on the lives of animals.

Tutor: Lisa Pollack



Section 4

“So long as the memory of certain beloved friends lives in my heart, I shall say that life is good.”

— Helen Keller



The Greatest Treasure Is Memory

By Juliana Jimenez

The greatest treasure is memory; if we did not have it, we would not be able to recall all of our loved ones who are no longer on this earth with us. And so, the image of my father will remain with me always; he was a very special person, and the first love I met in this life. One of the greatest treasures that I keep in my memory and heart is the advice my dad gave to me as I was growing up.

One of the many indelible memories I have of my father's advice are the "sayings" he passed on to me. He would say: "Never judge anyone when you don't know the reality of that person." Likewise, he always advised to "Never interfere in anyone's life." He stressed that I should not be envious of others, or distracted by what they did: "Focus on your path, not that of other people; be responsible for what you do, regardless of how great or small the task."

My father had much tenderness in his heart: he was kind to others, enjoyed helping them and demonstrated this constantly. He would say: "I respect my elders by always greeting people." And he was a very good dad and grandfather; he taught me to "... never leave your children alone; always take them with you wherever you go."

I want to thank God for the opportunity He gave me to know my dad and share our lives for 38 years. The words he shared then are still with me and will always remain. And now I am trying to pass on his words to my children. In this way, I hope he lives on in our family forever.

Tutor: Jack Magrisso



How It Was

By Maria Rivera

I grew up with my grandparents in Michoacán, Mexico, until I came to the United States when I was 15 years old.

When I was little my grandfather woke me and my sister up at 5:00 a.m. to milk the cows. Then, we came back to the house and my grandmother made breakfast for us. My sister and I attended school in the morning and came back home in the afternoon to eat dinner and feed the cows. After that we separated the mother cows from the babies so we could milk the mother cows the next morning.

Every night, I prayed with my sister and my grandfather. After praying we used to go out of the house and sit on the porch. One of us would sit in a little chair and the other would sit on my grandfather's leg. My sister and I would switch every night. He talked about the stars and told us the name of the stars. He told us the biggest and most beautiful star in the sky was our dad. This made me feel good because my dad died just before I was born. He said: your dad is always watching you guys.

Diá de los Muertos was a special time. My grandfather always made an altar to remember the people from our family who passed away. We used a big table in the hallway. We went to the store and bought a candle for each person. Grandfather put a picture of each family member next to their candle. Also we used to put the type of food each family member liked when they were alive.

I wish my kids could have a similar experience like I had with my grandparents in Mexico. I was able to be free and go anywhere. I miss my town in Mexico a lot, but at the same time, I know nothing is the same because my grandfather passed away. At least by writing down these memories my children will know how it was when I grew up.

Tutor: Richard Holve



Riding the Train

By Margie Padilla

My grandma was a big part of my life growing up. I called my grandma Mamá Blanca. I spent many days at her house when I was on vacation from school. Because my mom moved to a different city when I was 5 years old, Mamá Blanca used to take me to her house by train.

We took the train from León to Managua. We used to take the very first ride at 4:00 a.m. I remember walking by her side on dark empty streets. I was never afraid because I was holding her hand. I always felt safe when I was around her.

The train was fun for the most part. I remember seeing a lot of people from the countryside going to Managua (the capital of Nicaragua) to sell eggs, chickens, pigs, produce, and vegetables, and plants. One thing that I disliked the most was the smell of the chicken. I still don't like it.

One of my favorite things about riding the train with Mamá Blanca was that in the middle of the trip the train stopped by a city called La Paz Centro. People would get something to eat. Some vendors offered a drink called Tiste in a traditional cup called a Jicara because the cup was made from a Jicaró tree. The cups were reusable, and I was supposed to give them back when I finished my drink. I never finished my drink before the train started to move again. I kept many Jicaras, and I had a nice collection of Jicaras at my grandma's.

My grandma used to give extra money to vendors to compensate that I kept these Jicaras. There was a story in my family that I was stealing the cups, and my cousins used to tease me until my grandma said that she bought the cups for me. She did not want me to rush. She wanted me to be able to enjoy my drink and not to worry about it.

Mamá Blanca passed way 3 years ago in Nicaragua. I could not be by her side because of Covid. That was hard for me. I am grateful for the time we had together and all the beautiful memories that I keep in my heart like a treasure. She will always be with me.

Hasta Pronto, Mamá Blanca...

Tutor: Julian Blair



My Forever Memories

By Martha Espinoza

It is a blessing to remember being age seven in Mexico. I was living in a small town near Guadalajara. My family had a ranch of five acres, a little house, and animals, especially cows. My dad had a small dairy and sold lambs for their meat. My mom died seven years later, but when I was seven, she was young, healthy, and dedicated to the family. She took care of the house and my older sister and me. One of my memories is the smell of her delicious albondigas soup in the kitchen. She also had a talent for sewing dresses and had a part-time job making clothes for friends.

That time was only for me because I was the youngest, doing fun things with my friends and my family. I was a very happy girl and loved my life. I had no responsibilities and I didn't know stress. I like to remember my shiny, straight hair. I had a passion for sweets like creamy pastelitos with strawberry jelly. I was exploring all the time. I was looking for insects, butterflies, and bird nests.

I dreamed of many things. My mom showed me some photos of her trips to the beach and she had a big conch shell where she taught me how to listen to the waves of the sea. I really enjoyed listening to the shell and dreamed of visiting the beach. I had a picture viewer with Disneyland pictures. Two of my big dreams were to get on a plane and to know Disneyland.

That year my dreams almost came true because we requested a family visa for the U.S. My entire family was sad when our visa request was denied.

I am happy to remember my childhood, which will be part of me forever.

Tutor: Cynthia Denenholz



Memories with My Mom

By Susana Romero V.

I remember when I was a little girl, I went to play with my friends a lot. When I was big, I remember my mom worked a lot to give us food to eat. It was something sad but beautiful.

Now that I don't have my mom I would turn back the time to be with her and see her again.

Tutor: Liz Magrisso



When I Was Young

By Consuelo Diaz

When I was young in Mexico, I lived in my grandma's house with my two brothers and my sister. My mother was a single mom. She never worked but my older brother worked and my sister worked. They paid for my younger brother's and my clothes and food. My sister helped me with my homework because my mother did not read or write.

I remember when I played with my friends. I miss my friends now. I was so happy to play outside with them. We played "policías y ladrones" which was like cops and robbers. Also "quemados" which was like dodgeball. We played baseball and soccer in the street. These memories are beautiful. My neighborhood was poor but all the kids were happy playing.

When I was in middle school, I was grown up like a woman, but I liked playing soccer all the time. In middle school we had dancing in the street — salsa, cumbia, rock Mexicano, rock pop. The music was played on records, through big speakers.

In elementary and middle school, kids wore uniforms: shirt, sweater, skirt, pants. School was free, but for middle school, we had to buy books, notebooks, pencils, colors, scissors, rulers, protractor, eraser, and glue. In my middle school we could choose secretarial, electrical, technical, or electronic studies. We had folkloric dancing, with long, full, big skirts. For dancing, we all wanted our hair long so we could have it up in a bun.

In Mexico, there were three grades of middle school. The last year of middle school was the third year, and I was 15 years old. I remember I said, "I don't want to grow up any more!" because I liked that time playing with my friends. I didn't want the problems of growing up.

Tutor: Susan Sipe



Leaving My Parents' Home

By Esmeralda Alcaraz

When I got married, it was very difficult for me because I was very attached to my parents. My parents were very protective with me and my three brothers and four sisters. They didn't like us to go out or talk to the neighbors or to have friends.

So it was very difficult for me to leave my family to go and live with my husband's family. And I never was able to enjoy and spend time with my boyfriend (who is now my husband), because my parents didn't allow it. We always looked at each other secretly.

I am now very happy to tell the story of my parents, and that they accompanied me to my wedding.

I am very grateful to God for my husband and our two children.

Tutor: JoAnne Powell



Section 5

**“Gratitude is when memory is stored
in the heart and not in the mind.”**

— Lionel Hampton



The Value of Each Moment Lived

By Hugo Jose Mora Sanchez

There are many memories in our lives that are very important, like the day we graduated. Other memories are transcendent like the birth of our children, the day we got married. In short, many significant experiences that have marked our lives — some momentarily, others forever — make up our memories.

Perhaps my most significant life memory, particularly now in my condition as an immigrant, is when I shared and enjoyed the company of all my loved ones in Venezuela starting with my daughter, my mother, my brother, and my in-laws, as well as with my friends and closest acquaintances.

As time goes by, we value situations we thought were already controlled or could be taken for granted, but it turns out that was not going to be true forever. The world today is so dynamic and complex that it makes our reality and perception of time ever changing and sometimes uncertain.

However, I will never stop thanking life and destiny for having met such wonderful people, both in Chile and here in the United States, and especially in Sonoma: the people who have given me a lot of support, understanding, and solidarity.

Among these experiences that will later be beautiful memories is being able to share and express, with the great help and wisdom of my beloved teacher, Carl Sherrill, these heartfelt lines about the value of each moment lived with great strength and passion.

Thank you all very much. Blessings.

Tutor: Carl Sherrill



Thankful

By Manuel "Manny" Orozco

My name is Manuel Orozco. I am from Nicaragua, a country which I left in 2021. I did this to protect my life and that of my wife who was pregnant. We chose the United States as a destination due to the security that their systems guarantee.

I thank God we have found this security not only in their institutions, but also in the people who in many ways show us their friendship and good will. They help us improve day by day. They are friends and co-workers. People like those who work in the Sonoma Library and very, very special people like my friend and tutor Buzz too. I thank you not only for what you teach me, but also for your beautiful and sincere friendship. These days I am learning a lot during my time in classes with Buzz. I have lost the fear of saying many words that I could not pronounce, and I have acquired the ability to understand a lot when listening to others speak.

I have to thank this beautiful country. I believe California is the best state in the nation and Sonoma the place where I want to live the rest of my days. The warmth of home that I have received from everyone fills the void in my heart when I miss my mother and children. I hope to learn even more about the culture, language, and customs of this country; and be able to work hard and serve as a good example to God, my family, and society.

Tutor: Nelson "Buzz" Kellogg



Memories and Gratitude for Opportunities

By Sarahi Morán

My name is Sarahi Morán. I am from Nicaragua, a country located in Central America between Honduras and Costa Rica. My country is also known as the land of lakes and volcanoes.

I have lived in the United States for a few years. The majority of people not born in the United States know it as the land of opportunities because it offers different opportunities for work, education and entrepreneurship. Opportunities are always there for you, no matter if you are a citizen or not. I like this country because if you want to improve, you can do it, you just need to be focused on your goals and objectives.

There will always be people who are willing to help you, as in my case I met Joe Ayala from the Adult Literacy program and Mary Jo Yung. Joe contacted me to tell me about the program and looked for a volunteer tutor to help me with my English learning because my first language is Spanish.

It was there that Mary Jo and I began to walk together this path of learning English as a second language. She has been a great help for me because she is always willing to give her best so that my learning has significant progress. She always motivates me to continue learning.

I am very grateful to God for allowing me to live in this country, to be part of this program and for putting people with very kind hearts in my path who are always willing to give the best of themselves to help other people regardless of their race or their origin or their color or their immigration status.

Tutor: Mary Jo Yung



Section 6

**“Yesterday is but today’s memory,
and tomorrow is today’s dream.”**

— Khalil Gibran



My Son's Birth – An Unforgettable Memory

By Elena Jauregui

In July 2007, a pregnancy test said I was pregnant. It was a big surprise, and I was afraid.

The day my water broke, I didn't feel any pain, but I was nervous. I immediately called my doctor who told me my baby would probably be born soon. I arrived at the hospital on a Tuesday night. I was terrified and just thought: I don't want to feel pain!

I woke up Wednesday and I was the same. My stomach was covered in stickers with wires monitoring the baby's heartbeat. The doctor applied something in my vein to speed the birth process, but my body didn't react.

Thursday, there was no change. I remember the nurses' surprised faces. My mother called from Mexico and asked why they didn't do a cesarean. She said the baby could die! My doctor just said to wait. She offered acupuncture, but there still wasn't any progress.

Friday morning, I was in the same situation. My mother called again and her worried voice made me cry. Suddenly, intense pain came and my body reacted. Everything went fast, but painfully. When my baby's head came out, my doctor said, "Stop. Don't push!" The umbilical cord was around my baby's neck. My baby was born but appeared lifeless. A lot of people came into the room quickly and I asked why he didn't cry. They just said, "We are helping him!" Thank you, God!!! My baby lived!

My unforgettable memory leaves me with questions: How important is an ultrasound? (Which they never took in those days). Was it medical negligence?

My baby's first cry was not until he was 3 months old, and three years later he was diagnosed with autism. I don't know if the birth had to be like this. I think they could have helped him more.

Tutor: Marti Simon



Joy Behind My Tears

By Janice M. Bowens

He brought joy behind my tears.

This was the day that ushered in the greatest moment of joy to me: My little miracle, just 3 ½ weeks overdue, but the Most on High sent His angels to watch over my baby boy. And the angels cried for my joy on the day he was born.

Yes, I finally had this miracle child longed for after so many miscarriages — about nine by this time. Now, not any more stillborn, but a living, breathing child who I could finally behold and embrace. Seemed like all the heavens opened up and the sky began to weep for my joy. Then my heart started to beat just one beat faster than usual on the blessed day you were born — the day you brought joy behind my tears.

Looking back at him, he was a bit yellow — in other words, he was jaundiced. Let's laugh and smile about it. I loved him anyway no matter what color he was going to be. I was going to love him because he brought joy behind my tears.

I felt like Hannah in the Old Testament. Hannah had a sister-wife who had a bunch of kids. The sister-wife would taunt Hannah and call her hateful things because Hannah was barren. I do believe the sister-wife needed a good beat down: Don't talk to me crazy, that's my fact. Hannah kept on praying for her miracle, just like I did. And God granted Hannah and me our sons.

Tutor: Janet Felker



The Love of a Mother Is Forever

By Elizabeth Reyes

Being a mother is a lot of work and is a challenge every day. But on the other hand, it is a privilege and a big blessing. One memory that I want to keep and remember forever is my kids' birth. It was painful and it was a long, eternal, and exciting day waiting for the special moment.

My daughter's birth was very special. I remember the day when she was born. In the room there was a mirror on the ceiling, and I could see her coming and moving like a fish. When I saw her: very thin and long, with her eyes very open, with big hands, big feet, and a long mouth — at that moment, a thought came into my mind that my daughter seemed weird.

When the nurse started cleaning my baby girl, my daughter started crying a lot. I heard her crying without stopping so I decided to speak to her. I said, "Qué le estan haciendo a mi niña!"

When she heard my voice, she stopped crying and looked around trying to find the voice she heard.

Her eyes were very open and very strong, and she was moving her little head.

When I saw her trying to find me, I asked the nurse if I could have her. Then the nurse put my daughter on my chest.

That moment was the most beautiful sensation in my life. I want this memory to be remembered.

My daughter is growing, and she doesn't look weird any more. She is very pretty. I love my baby.

Tutor: Jacquelyn Cosgrove



The Birth of My Children Changed My Life

By Lupita Ochoa

On February 10, 1995, I, Lupita Ochoa, married Pedro Ochoa, a wonderful man. Two months after I was married, I became pregnant. I felt overwhelmed because a being was growing inside of me. As the baby grew, fear grew, and I anguished over the kind of mother I was going to be.

Was I going to be a loving, understanding, caring and expressive mother or was I going to be a mother that was not able to give love to my child? Was I going to be like my mother who did not give a word of love or affection, no hugs, nor kisses? I did not know what it was like to have a loving mother, and this tormented my thinking. Maybe I was going to be a copy of her.

On November 30, 1996, when I was in labor, I remembered being very tired and in pain at midnight. My son was taking his time being born. I was given medicine to rest and sleep a little. At 5:30 a.m. the nurse woke me up to start the labor process. After twenty-five minutes my son was born on December 1 at 5:55 a.m.

When I heard his first cry, at that moment everything that tormented me — my fear and all the anguish — vanished like magic. My son's crying made me know what kind of mother I had to be. I felt the desire to be patient, tolerant, comforting, caring, protective, sacrificing, and above all, loving.

I feel so grateful to God to be the mother of Gustavo and my beautiful daughter, Sandy, because they have transformed my life. They gave my life great happiness and I feel blessed by God.

Tutor: Janice Eurgubian



FREE Services Provided by Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy

One-to-One Adult Literacy Tutoring & English Language Partner Services: Available for enrolled adults at all library branches.

An adult learner is matched with a volunteer tutor who is trained and supported by the Adult Literacy Coordinators team. The learning partners meet for tutoring sessions at their local library branch for a minimum of 2-3 hours per week, for at least six months in order to achieve learner-centered goals through the improvement of the adult's basic reading, writing, and/or English language skills. Participants have access to laptops and tablets if needed for program participation. Program assessment, instruction, training, and materials are FREE.

Prerequisites/Learner Requirements:

In addition to having 2-3 hours a week to meet with a tutor in-person at their library or virtually using Zoom, adult learners need to seek services for themselves and schedule their own appointments and related communications independently. All interested adult learners begin by contacting us. Interested in FREE One-to-One Adult Literacy learning or tutoring?

Contact: (707) 544-2622
literacy@sonomalibrary.org

Visit Us: In-person service Mondays through Fridays:
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy Office
Physical Address: 2nd Floor of Central Library
211 E Street, Santa Rosa, CA 95404



Family Literacy resources (FL) is a service for all enrolled adult learners who have children 0-18 years of age residing in or visiting their home on a regular basis.

FL provides free new children's and young adult books for the adult learner's household. The tutor supports the adult learner in how to read the books aloud to their youngest children, so the learner feels confident sharing the story as appropriate. FL is designed to improve the adult's reading skill, provide early literacy skill-building tips for parents and caregivers, and create an encouraging literacy environment in the home of all adult learners.

Let's Talk English Conversation Classes: Available Online

Non-native English speakers meet for classes led by a facilitator fluent in English. Classes are ongoing, free, and designed to help adults practice and improve their conversational English skills in a welcoming and social environment.

Check the library's event listings sonomalibrary.org/conversation to register for virtual Let's Talk English Conversation Classes.

Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy Community Outreach

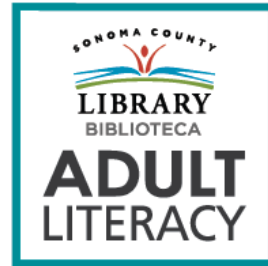
English and Literacy Classroom Instruction

These classes are for adult, non-native English speakers to focus on developing English and literacy skills.

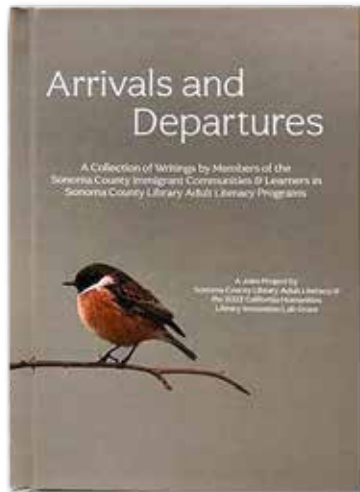
Classes are in the evening during the school year at partner school sites. Instruction is provided by credentialed instructors.

Inmate Library Services and Literacy Programming: Santa Rosa, CA

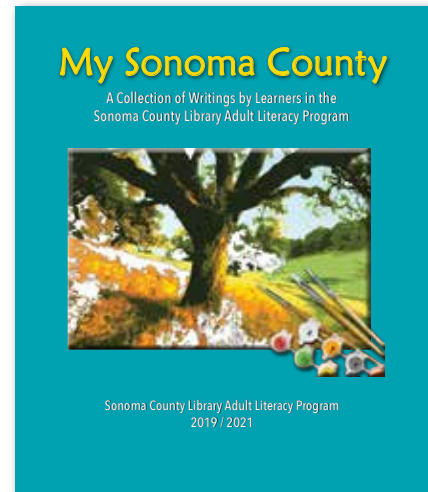
Through a contract partnership agreement with the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office, we provide library services and literacy programming taught by an on-site librarian at the Main Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa.



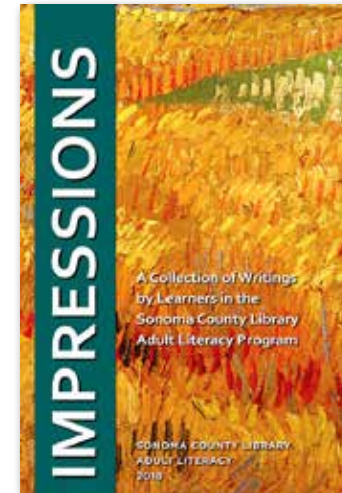
Read more stories by our adult learners, available in Sonoma County Library's collection...



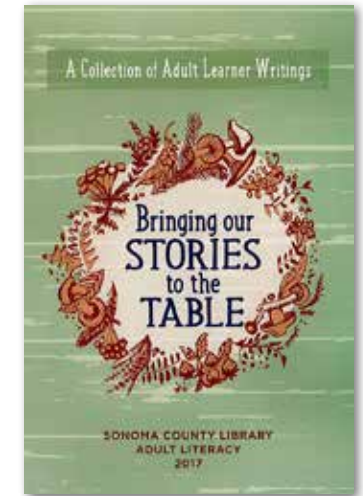
2023 Publication



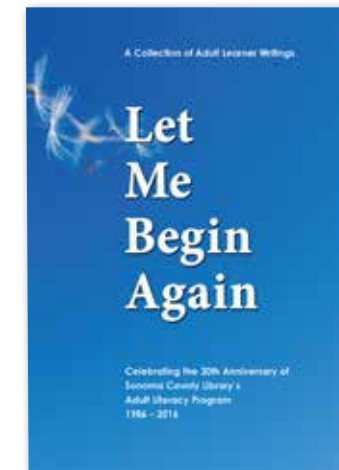
2022 Publication



2018 Publication



2017 Publication



2016 Publication