

Celebrating **Our Journey**

Volume 13

A Collection of Life Stories
written by Oklahoma Adult Learners



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Foreword

Dear Reader,

It's no secret—the ability to read is foundational to success in education, the workforce, and achieving individual life goals. While that's simple to understand, it's much more difficult to know why and how Oklahomans are detoured on their reading path. Community-based literacy programs around the state are key to connecting with adult learners and providing support to regain their footing on the path to achieving their goals. Since at least 1983, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries has worked to improve adult literacy by supporting these community-based literacy programs through professional consultation, grants, and training.

Celebrating Our Journey is a collection of stories and poems written by adult learners in literacy programs supported by ODL across the state. The authors in this

13th collection are from all walks of life and areas of the world. A woman immigrating from Cameroon to the U.S., a man overcoming his impoverished childhood to start his own business, and a grandmother planning a vow renewal on her 36th wedding anniversary. Each story is unique, but what they all have in common is a goal of growth.

Through the hard work they accomplish with their tutor, these students want to improve literacy skills for themselves, their families, and their futures. In an age of instant access and predictive text, the journey these authors embarked upon is a noble one, sure to bring additional opportunities and advancement.

On behalf of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, I commend these authors and students on their success and invite everyone to join me in celebrating these learners in their shared pursuit of growth.

Natalie Currie

Director, State Librarian and Archivist
Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Advice



Advice to Myself

When I came to Oklahoma City and started doing things alone, I was scared and sad because I did not know the true meaning of being alone or feeling alone. Being alone is an opportunity to get to know yourself.

When you enjoy yourself, the benefits are mental, physical, emotional, and social. Have you heard this? It's not the same to be alone as to feel alone. Being alone helps you to rest and promotes concentration; in my life, when I go to walk in the park alone or go eat alone, I feel my mind relax. Then, when I am ready to do something that I have to concentrate on, I feel that my mind is ready to acquire information, and I think clearly.

When I feel that increased independence and freedom, it is absolutely amazing because I have realized that I can do several things I have doubted being able to do. When I speak with different peo-

ple in English and they understand me, it makes me feel independent. This sensation for me is the best because it raises my self-esteem.

How could you learn to be alone? Find activities that you like. Make a list of everything you might enjoy like doing crafts, playing games, going to the theater or a concert, watching movies, reading books, or listening to music. Also, try moving with physical exercise like dancing and singing.

Doing things alone does not mean not having friends. Many people hold back from making solitary plans in public for fear of what others will think. Do not be afraid; do not forget that you are a great person, and that you can discover important things about yourself.

Now I really enjoy myself and I have learned so much from my time alone.

Adelmy Calderon Escobar
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Advice from my Mother

I want to talk about my mom. Her advice to me was to do my best and to try hard. Reading was my favorite subject and I read to my mom all the time. I love reading with my tutor.

Alexia Conway
Creek County Literacy Program

The Struggle to Success

I was born in 1997, the youngest of my siblings. Life was difficult due to my family's economic situation. When we moved to the States we were alone, helpless, and homeless. When I turned six, life was not giving me or my siblings a childhood. I often expected the worst, yet my mother was always there for us. She looked for a job that offered a better environment. Over time, life got better and we eventually had a roof over our heads, but mom had to work so much. She was never home and we had no guid-

ance. It was up to us to take care of one another. Eventually, we got settled financially and moved to another state. She found happiness, we lived more comfortably, and we had more siblings. We were a full family. We had gone through the worst with no childhood, no hope, no happiness, but we were glad to finally be stable.



I started my adult life with no education and no life experience. As I struggled, I always told myself it can't get worse than what we went through as children. I went from job to job seeking the best paying options for my future. I got married, started a family, and kept looking for opportunities to offer them more than I had as a child. I knew life had more to offer than struggles and I felt ready for whatever came at me.

The key to success is never giving up no matter what.

My struggle made me stronger. Life was difficult at times, sometimes very difficult, but it never held me back. Since day one, /I had to learn not to give up, because I wanted to offer my family the very best. Over time, my wife and I bought a house and I started a small business. We can offer our daughter a better future with all the capabilities and opportunities I didn't have.

This is my success story. I hope it will encourage others. Thank you Ms. Finley, Mrs. Lawson, and the New Dimension Literacy Council for helping me earn my GED. I know this will help me continue to have a successful future.

Carlos A. Carrasco Rodriguez
New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

Giving

There is nothing as difficult as the art of making good advice pleasant. I watched a video that talked

about “giving.” There was an old man that was on the streets selling newspapers and a young man came to him. He didn’t have the money to pay for a newspaper and the seller didn’t have any problems with that and gave him one. The old man knew that the young man was very grateful. Many years later, he came again and bought a newspaper. At that moment, he showed the old man that he was on the news! Now, he was a rich man! The old man was very surprised and the young man said: “Now, I have a lot of money and I can give you whatever you want, but it will never be the same, because it is much better to give something when you don’t have anything, since that means you give it with your heart.”

Cecilia Catu

OSCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Mindful Advice

I will always remember the advice my grandmother gave me growing up, words that soak into your soul are whispered ... not yelled. She never faltered when teaching me to think before I spoke and never judging anyone by their circumstances because you never know when your luck might change.



She was kind to everyone she met even those she disagreed with. She always met my worries and problems with understanding. If she couldn't understand, she came to a place of love and that always stuck with me.

Because of this advice, I always try to be mindful of how my words can impact others, especially those I love. I try to treat everyone kindly, even when I'm at odds with them because eventually those feeling will pass. While maintaining candor, I want to

always come from a place of love and understanding for my fellow person, because you never know if you're the only one who does. It's those times where I was treated the same way that impacted my life.

Courtney Herman

TLI of the Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

Dana Hinkle's One On One Advice Journey

My life journey is filled with joy and regret. My journey begins with saying, there is no reason to look back when you have so much to look forward to. So let me dive right in.

Don't waste your time looking back on what you have lost, move on. This is what I grew up on. My mother is a strong woman who motivated me and made me the person I am and to move forward. This is where I begin my inspirational advice. I am always giving out advice and it is honestly up to you if you

take it. Don't let it go in one ear and out the other.

Often when someone comes to you and wants to

vent, it's so tempting to start giving

advice. If you allow the person just

to let their feelings out, and then

at another time come back with

advice or comments. That person

would experience deeper healing

and support. If you want people to notice

your faults, stop giving unsolicited advice. In any

given moment you can always stop reading or look

forward on what I have to say. Advise a person, one

on one is my advice. My outlook on life is, if your

life counts, don't take yourself too seriously. Pretty

soon you can find the humor in everyday life. This

can be a life saver. Betty White is an inspiration to

my life goal which is moving forward in getting my

education, buying a new car, and building the fam-

ily that supports me in every way. The first step on

my life's journey is to build and keep looking for-



ward. I only look back at my accomplishments in building a better future, and stop holding on to my regrets. You cannot be a prisoner of your past.

Dana Hinkle
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

I'm Not Going to Complain Anymore

Sometimes we complain about simple things that happen in our lives or around us. Have you ever been to a hospital to see children, young people, or adults who are very sick or about to die? That makes me think positively and value life because it is only one life and I love myself, too. So tomorrow will be different. I'll get up and think positively.



I don't want to think about becoming a millionaire.

I just want to be happy. Luxury for me is waking up and seeing that I can walk. I can see that nothing hurts. Luxury is having my mom and my dad alive. Luxury is having my children and my brother. Luxury is being away from toxic and manipulative people. Luxury is being away from the bustle and problems that go along with that.

If we fall, God loves us so much that he takes pity on us and gives us another day to get up and rebuild. We'll never stop thinking positive because God rebuilds us in front of people who tried to break us.

Darlyn Mineli Siguenza Diaz
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Mental Health

One day, one of my best friends told me: "Your mental health is one of the most important things you have to take care of." But what did he mean?

Well, he talked about three different things. He said,

“First, you have to learn to love yourself, and take time to do the things you enjoy the most and make you feel good.” His second advice was, “Learn to control your emotions, because that way you will know how to appreciate the small things, learn from bad situations as well as enjoy the good ones.” Finally, his last piece of advice was, “You should work on your fears and overcome them by facing them, because that will be the only way you will be able to achieve all the goals you set for yourself.”

In conclusion, taking care of our mental health by loving ourselves, doing the things we enjoy the most, and being grateful for what we have are important keys to move forward in life.

Elissa Catu

OSCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

If I Could Give Some Advice

I'm originally from Venezuela. My husband and I

arrived in the United States in 2001. In Venezuela, I went to college and earned a degree in Advertising and Marketing.

In the 70s and 80s, Venezuela became the third-largest oil exporting country in the world.



It had the most stable economy in all of Latin America. In the 90's, political and economic decline began, forcing many Venezuelans to immigrate to other countries.

When I arrived in the United States, I encountered a different language, culture, and even climate! The first years were a difficult period of adaptation, but I eventually found my place. I had different jobs. I worked as a teacher's assistant and I had my own home daycare business. I now own my own cleaning company. For me, the United States has been a country of opportunities!

If I could give some advice to someone coming to

this country, it would be to learn the language since it opens the doors to communication, to having better jobs, to improving your quality of life, and it makes us feel a part of this country.

Glenda Faria

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

God is Life

The best advice I've ever been given was from my grandparents. It is to believe in God because he is great, powerful, and good. He unites our families in faith. There will be love and we can continue the right way.

God is incredible, because with the strength of prayer and surrendering to him, we have many unanswered miracles. It is for this, I tell my family about the miracles in my life, so they can witness and be motivated to continue in the way of God with much love and respect.

Many times, we have moments, people, or actions where God is there to be a guide in our lives. It is there when we listen and understand what he wants for us and then follow him. My grandparents' advice is making my life better.

Ingrid Carolina Mendez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Best Advice I Can Give

The best advice I could give is to tell all youngster to stay in school. Don't try to grow up so fast, trust me, it is not as fun as it seems. Stay away from doing drugs. Never choose to be in a gang because it never helps or works out well for you or anyone which you are associated with. When doing drugs, a person will lose their ability to think clearly and even result in death.

Given the opportunity to give this form of advice is important because it gives me the chance to help

young people not to make the same mistakes that I did during their youth. Growing up for me was not perfect at all. I was a young girl at the age of twelve when my mother left me at an apartment complex. I sat at a park on a bench for twenty-four hours. During this time, I waited for her to come back; she never showed up. A few children offered to help me look for my mother. I walked around the whole apartment complex and went from door to door and asking if they knew my mother. Once I turned nineteen, I ended up pregnant with my first child. I have learned my lesson.



I am now a smarter and wiser adult person. I feel as though at this point in my life I have firsthand advice to pass on to the young people, both male and female. Finally, the best advice I would give to the youth of today is to value and take pride within themselves and to enjoy being a child! Once you

become a responsible adult you can make sound decisions which will positively impact your life.

Jasmine Geimausaddle
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

A Mother's Fear

I have a son. He is ten years old and in the fourth grade. I want to share a feeling of anguish that invaded me days ago.

When I picked up my son at school, while getting into the car, he shared his day with me. He said, "Today didn't go very well, something ugly happened," I thought, "Oh, he couldn't finish his work, but my blood froze when he continued with his story. He said, "A classmate pulled out a knife and threatened my friend. A teacher who was nearby saw him and took the knife from him and it was all over."

Since that day, I leave my son at the door of his school with anguish, and I ask myself if I am doing

the right thing to send him to school. Am I sending him straight into danger?

Months ago, I was listening to the news on television about shootings and attacks in schools. I thought how sad they must be. They were distant events in another part of the country or the world. Today I feel that the danger is so close, and we don't see it. It is already in our Oklahoma, in our schools that we select as a safe place for our children.

Now the danger is next to my son in those children that I see running and playing with him. The danger is in their hearts and minds, and I ask myself, "What are we adults doing wrong that our children, our youth are taking that path so monstrous.

It makes me ask myself what are we going to do—each of us as parents, teachers, leaders, politicians, the entire adult society—to avoid these misfortunes?

Karla Duran
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Looking Forward to the Future

I am currently in a women's diversion program called ReMerge. They help you in so many aspects of your life like education, health and wellness, strengthening the family, and housing.



It's a four-phase program. Each of the first three phases are about three months long and the fourth phase is six months long. The first phase is about three and a half months long. During this time a person must stay out of trouble. Once you go into the second phase, you will go into sober living for a minimum of thirty days. Depending on how long it takes you to get into housing. You will be expected to get and maintain a job at least two to three days a week. Once you go up in a phase, you will have fewer classes to go through while in ReMerge. While in

this phase, assistance is given to help clients reunite their children.

Once I complete this program, I will be able to live a successful and productive life. In addition, I will be able to reunite with my children, family and friends. Together we can work on making new memories to make up for the time we have lost. I am excited how bright my future is. I feel as though I can accomplish anything that I set my mind to. I am now a mature and much wiser adult and able to make more sound decisions. Now my past is behind me. I can start my future with a clean slate. I can now take care of my children on my own. I can depend on myself instead of always seeking out someone else to pay my way and my bills. The choices that I now make in life are endless because I have many paths that I can take.

Katheryne Purser
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

With Michael's Advice

I live one day at a time. Sometimes I think I have nothing else to do with my life. Then I help with my



grandchildren. I want them to have a good education, never get in trouble, have good health, and have respect for everyone. Some parents are busy with life and do not take time for discipline. I can help

as a grandmother. I can help teach these things and keep them on the right track.

I work a lot at my tree farm and nursery because I enjoy it. I take English lessons and learn on the computer. I want to make a good example for my four children, ten grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

When I met my husband, Michael, he changed my life completely. I was living in Mexico, a widow with children, and met him in Texas at a Flea Market

while I was looking for a job. He offered me a job cleaning his house. He took me to Duncan, OK, to his little 2-acre tree farmhouse. There were so many beautiful trees ... all kinds—Maple, Oak. I fell in love with him and the tree farm! But I missed my children. So, he applied for all of us to come to Duncan, and we became a family.

We were together for 23 years. He always took care of me and my children, giving advice, enjoying us as we worked to make his dream come true. We worked and learned together to make a good life.

He liked to travel when the trees did not need as much care or when it was too hot to work. We went from Branson, Missouri, to Washington State, through the beautiful mountains with beautiful scenery ... we had a beautiful life.

Maria Dunn

Duncan Area Literacy Council

Never Too Late to Learn

When I lived in Nicaragua, I didn't have the opportunity to go to school because my parents were very poor. They didn't have the money to buy me a uni-

form for school. Now I am a grown per-

son in the USA and I have started to learn English because I want to speak to the other people here.

I believe it never is too late to learn and I have been learning a lot

in my English class. I am grateful that

my teachers Mrs. Mora and Mrs. Routh have all the patience with us. They are amazing with me and my classmates. It has been a pleasure to be in this program.



Maria Garcia

Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

The Sewing Job

I am from Durango, Mexico. In summer, it is dry, hot, and very hard to work under the sun. I will always remember my parents telling my brothers and me to study hard and work in an office that is more comfortable than outside. This was good advice.

Every day after school, we looked for work to do. With that money, we bought fruit at school. On school vacations, we went to work and live where there was work cutting grapes. I helped bring food to my brothers who worked a lot. They gave me money every weekend. I bought what I needed to go to school.

When I was seven years old, I used to watch my mother sew on a machine; sew dresses, blouses, etc.... I saw all the pieces of fabric that were left over on the floor. I had an idea that I could make dresses for the dolls that my neighbor had. I made

three dresses, which I sewed myself. I sold them to my neighbor for one dollar each. Those were the first coins I got for working. I felt in the clouds because I could buy what I wanted with that money.

Over time, I studied in the city. After a year and a half, I graduated as a business secretary. If you want to earn enough to live, you have to study hard all the time.

In the present, I work for myself selling perfumes and pots, but I will always remember the sewing job that I really liked and my mother who always worked in sewing to give us a better future. I give my three children the advice my parents gave me, study hard and learn different jobs for a better future.

Maria G. Perez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

No One Can Do It Better

The best advice I've ever been given was from my mom. Every day I have it in my mind and heart. When I started college, I was only 17 years old, and I needed to separate from my twin because we selected different careers. At this moment my life changed completely. That girl that had been with her twin all her life, was glued to her 24/7 sharing moments, now had to take a different path, alone this time.

Is there a difference in how twins survive this stage compared to one who lives this stage individually? There is a difference. Adolescents tend to distance themselves from their parents, so that somehow, they can discover their personality, their way of thinking and see around them the new world that they must face. As for twins, it refers to the fact that these people also have to distance themselves from their other half to find themselves. This estrange-

ment is like being another person. You do not know yourself, and it is more difficult to find your own identification.

The situation becomes more complicated because distancing yourself from your sister with whom you felt linked is not easy. In my case, I decided to talk to my mom about the great pain I was going through, and her wise words were, “No one can do it better than you, raise your eyes and start writing your own story”.

A twin always has in mind that there will come a time when she becomes independent, but when it happens, it is more difficult, more painful than you think. You finally realize that even though you are separated physically, you will always be united by the simple fact of having a stronger bond compared to other family members.

The Blue Sky

I have always wanted to travel across the blue sky and fly like the birds and airplanes. I want to feel free and just enjoy the moment ... fly, fly, and fly!

One day, I really want to do this, I want to touch the clouds and eat them like if they were cotton candy. I would like to tell my kids about my beautiful experience and that I would like to try it with them as well. Maybe they will enjoy it or maybe they will want to try something different and exciting that makes them happy as well. This idea never gets off my mind, and although I know this is impossible and just a metaphor, I want freedom for me and my children and the ability to see the beauty of enjoying the moment. I want to tell them that the memories that we can have as a family by doing things that make us feel great will always be the best things that we can do. I would also advise my kids to remember that the time spent with the people they love the

most and are important to them will always be the best investment of their time in this life.

Maylen Barrios
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Why It is Important to Be Good to Yourself

I think it is important to be good to ourselves because nobody can do it for us. Most of the time, we just go about our daily tasks until it becomes a routine, without caring if we are morally well. We make a lot of effort to get through day-by-day, which makes us a little conformist with what we have. Rarely do we start to meditate and ask ourselves what we really want to do and what will improve our lives.

Nevertheless, we have to get used to the idea that doing something we like helps us enjoy our life. Even if you do not realize it, if you do less of the least

thing that makes you happy, you will make it a good habit in your day. You will feel comfortable with it because you will start to enjoy your life a little more.

My advice is to never give up fighting for what really makes you happy.

Fight for your goals even if it takes days, months, or even years to reach them. It is okay, because everyone goes at his or her own pace

and we should never underestimate ourselves. We have to be our main admirers and our own supporters. Of course, we will never forget the people we love and those who show us their support and admiration. However, you need to be well and be yourself first so that you can give what you want to receive what you desire.

Have you ever wondered if you are happy with yourself? If you have not, think about your life and start doing something for your happiness. It could mean



going out for your favorite drink or going for a walk to your favorite place.

Michelle Guerra
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Pen Pal

I think it's great advice to have a pen pal for practicing writing and for fun!

In 1st grade, they didn't teach me how to read. I didn't know I had a reading problem until I was older. I struggled in school, but liked sports. In high school, I got a job at Wendy's. I needed help with job applications. I was in the Special Education program, but they didn't try hard to teach me. I graduated from Memorial High School in 1980. Someone told me about the literacy program in 1986. Jennifer taught me how to use the computer to practice reading. I'm still in the program and my reading is improving!

One of the best things I've done is make a friend to keep in touch with. I met her on vacation in Hawaii.

We went to Hawaii in September 2002. We stayed at the Outrigger Reef Hotel. We met Aldyth on a tour to Paradise Cove. We talked at the hotel because they were staying at the same one.

The next morning, we went to Pearl Harbor to see a documentary about the attack. We saw the monument of USS Arizona and the names of the soldiers. Being at the Arizona feels strange because of all of the young kids that passed away there. Next, we went to the USS Missouri and the Punchbowl cemetery. I asked the bus driver if we could get out and take some pictures. He said we couldn't. The next day we took a limousine to the Punchbowl so we could take pictures.

Aldyth took us to Cheeseburger Paradise on the last day. Before we left, we exchanged addresses and hugged.

Aldyth sent us a letter and we wrote back. Now we email each other. We've been writing for sixteen years.

Niki Brown

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Christmas Wishes

People always write stories on Christmas just for kids, but nobody thinks about people of the third age.

This story is about one man 86 years old. He lives in the nursing home. His family comes just once a week to visit him. Despite his Alzheimer's he tries to remember his family and that's why he talks to the nurse about them.

But this Christmas he told her, "This is my last Christmas. I have a little wish." She said, "Can I help you?" He said, "I don't know." She asked him, "What is your wish?"

He said, “I would like to take Christmas with my family in my home, but I don’t know if it’s possible.”

The nurse said to let her know if she can do this for him. Later she talks to one of the sons and manages to convince him to let Mr. Paul spend Christmas with his family.



On Christmas Eve, Mr. Paul’s eldest son, Joseph, went to the nursing home to tell them that he will pick him up at 9 AM and to have him ready.

Christmas Day—Joseph arrives to pick up his father and take him home to celebrate Christmas with his three children and their families. Everyone was happy because despite his Alzheimer’s, he remembers them all. He was only sorry to have to go back to the nursing home.

When he returned to the nursing home, he told the

nurse everything and how happy he was to see all his family reunited and thankful to her for helping him to fulfill his wish.

Three days after Christmas he did not remember many things, but it was a wish fulfilled. People who believe small things can achieve great things.

Nubia Maez

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Life Is a Gift

Life is a gift and when you know the meaning of that, you are so lucky because every day will be perfect. My name is Pilar Martinez. I am the mother of three beautiful women and one son. My husband is Julian Sosa. He is my best friend, soul mate, and the love of my life. We moved to the USA twelve years ago, and our lives changed a lot. We were all born in Mexico City, so when we got here it was a big mess! I was very scared because we didn't speak English.

The community and our home were very nice, but when we tried to do things like buy our groceries at the supermarket, language was a challenge. We suffered a lot during our first and second years in the adaptation process. Our family worked hard every day.



Then I got sick. I have multiple myeloma (cancer in the white blood cells), and we need to travel every fifteen days from our home in Laverne to Oklahoma City for my chemotherapy. When you have chemo, your body has side effects and your memory is bad. For months I had problems in my whole body. Simple things like walking, eating and breathing were difficult for me. That's why I believe that life is a gift and you must be grateful. You never know when you can lose everything.

At this point in my life, I found a place to learn

English. Believe me, it's not easy, but when you understand English and can speak, read, and write it, you can do many things by yourself. I feel grateful because this year we had an excellent English course. It was incredible, and our teacher did a great job, and I had very good classmates.

I thank God for this opportunity to learn, grow and improve every day, and I thank all the people who made a difference for us and shared their time and knowledge with us.

Pilar Martinez

Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

Education Is Important

When I was your age, I would have made sure I would have finished what I could. Also, I would have taken the chance to listen. During that time, If I knew then what I know now, I would not have let support become the reason I did not complete. I

would have taken getting my diploma and studying more serious. I believe it is very important because coming back to school later in life with working full-time, keeping up with the life of being an adult is difficult.

So, my advice is if you want to be successful, finish school.

Robyn Farries
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

Always Have Goals

I'm originally from Mexico City. I left my two kids, my parents and my siblings.

My adult son and I came to the state of Texas, where many people speak Spanish. Years later we moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma.

One of the adversities was the language. It was a surprise to find a lot of support from the Libraries.

I am always grateful to all my tutors for giving me support, while obtaining my GED diploma. I am continuing my learning and one of my goals is to be bilingual.

My kids know nothing is impossible, although I have to combine two jobs and find the time to learn, with more projects in the future.



I am married and my husband does not speak Spanish, now I can have better communication with him and the community.

I learn more from my tutors than grammar, pronunciation and writing. Something more important is helping each other. Thanks.

Sofia Lima Martinez

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

The 83-Year-Old Lady

The lady, 83 years old, looked elegant. At 8 AM, the lady put on make-up and fixed her hair. She was preparing to go to the nursing home. Her husband just passed away, so she was ready to go to a nursing home.



The lady had been waiting in the waiting room for a couple of hours. She smiled at the staff when they came to let her know the room was ready. When she moved slowly towards the elevator, the staff gave her details about her room. “I love it,” she said like an 8-year-old child that just got a new pet.

The staff asked Ms. Jones, “Have you ever seen your room before?” Ms. Jones replied, Happiness is something you yourself decide after a long time. Whether I like the room or not does not depend on how you decorate tables, chairs, or a bed. It depends on my

preference. I decided that I like it. It is a decision that I make every morning when I wake up.

I have a choice. Either I lie down all day to think about difficult things because some parts of my body don't work correctly, or I get out of bed and am thankful that there are some parts of my body that still work well. Every day is a gift. I will focus on a new happy day with memories that I have for this time.

Your happiness is like your bank account. You only withdraw anything that you put in it, so I would highly recommend you put a lot of happiness in your bank account. Remember these five simple things: erase all hatred or discord from your heart, let go of worries, live simple, give more, and ask for less.

Tuyen Vo

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Do Not Lose Hope

It was a summer evening so there was a light wind. I slept in my bed. I couldn't hear anything when I woke up. I was so scared, and I cried. My life was completely changed. Nothing will ever be the same again for me.

I went to the hospital immediately. It was the weekend, and I was treated by the emergency doctor. I was admitted to the hospital and saw the professional doctor on Monday.

The name of the sickness is sudden hearing loss—a disease with a 50% cure rate. I was confused. What will I do now?

When I got out of the hospital, I could only hear a little. So I went to the place that sells hearing aids. It is so expensive, but I have to take it to hear. I don't like the way it sounds. It won't be the same anymore, but it is still a miracle for me.

Ten years later, I saw a doctor's research paper and

e-mailed them. I got a positive response, so I came to the doctor in Massachusetts, in the USA. No new



treatment is available yet, but the doctor said they are working on it. “The treatment is currently in trial phase. Soon it will work. Do not lose your hope. Healthcare in America is expensive, but you can apply to the financial system, and you can get good health insurance.”

Thanks to the advancing technology, this disease will pass. I will completely hear. I will recommend this treatment to those who have this disease like me. I will learn English completely and help them when they come to the hospital.

There is no guarantee of what we will be tomorrow. Appreciate that you are able to see, hear, and walk. Life is full of surprises.

Yasemin Akin

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Goals



My Goals for the Future

My first goal is to learn English very well in order to be able to reach my other goals. I would like to study and obtain a diploma in HVAC/R Technician. After some years of experience, I would like to be able to start my own business and work hard until I have my own house. I would like to have a good future for myself and my parents.

Abel Galeas

OSCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Goals

I was born in the city of Baku, the Republic of Azerbaijan. The city of Baku is a very old city and has beautiful architecture. In this city I began my studies and studied at a sports professional football school.

Later I decided that I needed to get a higher education and I entered the St. Petersburg Polytechnic

University, where later I received a higher education in specialty Engineering for safety in heavy industry. The city of St. Petersburg is very old, has beautiful architecture and there are many museums and theaters in this city.



I have also been professionally painting historical figures and miniatures for about 6 years. Many of my works are exhibited by collectors in Europe and America. In the future, I would like to open a private school for children and teach them how to paint miniatures and build dioramas, teach them how to work with brushes, how to choose colors in work.

America is a beautiful country and there are a lot of beautiful places and people here, and I am very pleased to start a new life here and I want to benefit this country and people.

Many thanks to the United States of America for

being here and to the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services for providing me with a tutor who is helping me improve my English. Thank you all for reading my little information about me, my friends.

Alexander Grishchenko
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Goals

My goals in this moment of my life are to learn English, speak it fluently and to continue studying to obtain a diploma in Diesel Technician. I would also like to keep working hard to get and run my own business with my family. Additionally, I also have another goal that I would love to reach. I would love to buy my own house one day, the house of my dreams and help my parents get theirs. My parents have always dreamed of having their own ranch with animals and I would love to help them buy that. Last but not least, I do have the goal of being

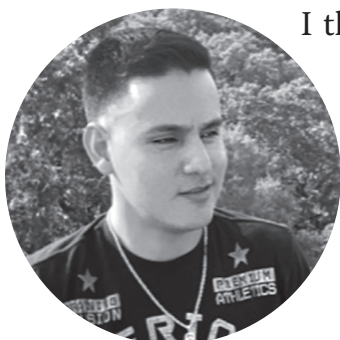
an example and a role model for my brothers and for my future family.

Anderson Gramajo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Graduation

I am a person who is a little shy, quiet, hard-working, kind, honest, sincerely loyal. But I've always had a problem; I've never known which way to go in life. That was a problem because when I was younger I never knew what I wanted to be, what profession to pursue. When I was in grade 11, I started working and I liked having my own money and buying things. I thought I didn't need to study anymore. Over time, I realized that was a mistake because in my job to continue having better positions and earn more money, I needed the GED. Last fall, a friend published on social networks that there would be classes to obtain the GED in my city. I went to ask

for information, when I arrived, I met a very friendly lady who would become my tutor. At first she told me, “You are in the right place here. We will help you. Sit down and if you pursue it, you will achieve it.” I doubted because as I said I have always doubted my abilities.



I thought the day I left high school I would not make it, but like a bucket of cold water, the words of Mrs. Michelle Lawson, who was my tutor, fell on me. She said, “Here in my class all my students pass their exams because they’ve already taken the first step by enrolling in our class. Together, we will take care of the rest,” She advised and instructed me so I was successful. So there, finally, after so much time, I found a path that I had been looking for a long time.

There were four tests of things that I had forgotten

for years and had no idea how to start, but thanks to the motivation and dedication of my tutor, I found the starting point and began to study and practice. I passed the first exam and after that I was very motivated because I thought that what my tutor told me was true.

My final test was math, and after passing the practice test with a rather low score, I was discouraged, but Ms. Finley, the Executive Director of New Dimension Literacy Council, encouraged me to go ahead and take the real test. Guess what, I passed it the first time! On May 25, 2023, I marched across the stage at our graduation, in my cap and gown! I'm now a high school graduate!

Arnulfo Sánchez

New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

My Goals for Learning English

My first goal to learn English is because I want to

communicate with all the people in this beautiful country who have always showed me their love and support. I also want to communicate with my doctor and make an appointment without have to take an interpreter.



Another goal for learning English is that I want to be able to get a better job and to continue supporting my family.

My last goal is I want to improve myself with more and better education. I am thankful for this program to learn English because it provides education for adults and supports us as we try to learn a new language.

I love this country as if it were my native country.

Claudia Isela Borunda

Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

My English Learning Journey

I am a native Portuguese speaker, and I'll tell you about how I learned English. My journey started ten years ago in Brazil; yes, I'm Brazilian! I was studying for my Biomedical Sciences bachelor's degree, and I noticed that I couldn't read the scientific articles that were very important to my studies. I had to translate all the articles into Portuguese so I could understand them. In that moment, I decided to start an English course.



I went to school, and I took an exam for a scholarship and I received it. That was how I was able to take two years of English courses in Brazil. I was studying and happy because the course was helping me to read the articles in English. I continued practicing my English while obtaining my master's degree in aesthetic medicine and while read-

ing updates on treatments for my patients. It was then when I decided that Brazil was too small for me and I wanted the world, I made a plan to move to the United States.

I'm a very organized person, so I first made a financial plan, then obtained the necessary travel documents, closed my business office, and left Brazil. I arrived in the USA and started a new life from zero!

After I arrived here, I realized that my English wasn't as good as native speakers, and my accent was a problem when I was trying to obtain new American documents and a driver's license. So, I found an English course and I am just finishing it. I'm thankful for my teacher and everyone who helps us immigrants to start our new lives. My plan for the future is to go back to university and get my professional license and work in my specialty again. Thank you, USA! I'm living the American Dream.

Becoming a Mechanic

I met Benny Dement in 2005 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, but I lived in Huntsville, Arkansas. Benny was a teacher at the Arkansas Rehab and Ability Center. We worked on cars that came into the shop and sometimes they had been in a wreck. He was a good teacher. I found out years later that he had died.



Here are the things he taught me. He taught me basic care maintenance you would find at an oil change shop such as: oil change, windshield wiper replacement, battery replacement, and checking antifreeze levels. I also learned more difficult jobs. Some were front end alignment, replacing gas lines, installing hydraulic systems, and how to change out a motor. I also learned how to replace a parking brake cable and install brake drums on new cars.

My goal is to one day work in an auto repair shop

again. I want to be a mechanic. I knew that I needed to go back and take a refresher course because car systems have changed since 2005. That is why I am in the Duncan Area Literacy Council so I can go back to school and achieve my goal of becoming a mechanic.

Danny T. Raybrook
Duncan Area Literacy Council

My Journey to Better Reading

I work part-time Monday through Thursday at a Braum's store in Duncan, Oklahoma.



I want to read and write better. I like to read words in stories and would like to learn more words. Each week in my tutoring session, I practice reading and writing letters and words to make sentences.

When COVID-19 happened, I had to stop my read-

ing lessons until last year. Now, I work on letters, words, and numbers each day.

I watch TV when I do not have to work. My favorite shows are *The Waltons*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and *The Andy Griffith Show*. I see words and sentences on TV that I want to learn.

I hope that I can continue to read more letters and words and learn to write sentences and stories.

Donna Box
Duncan Area Literacy Council

My Goals for a Better Future

As a young teenager my family moved to the United States from Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. I came from a family where education was not important. While living in Mexico I attended beauty school and earned my Cosmetology Certificate that allowed me to work in Mexico. I would like to use it here in Oklahoma. Unfortunately, the lack of education in my teenage

years has prevented me from using my Cosmetology Certificate in the United States.



I now realize that to have a better future, education is very fundamental in our lives, in early and later childhood. My goal this summer will be to attend GED classes. I will have to work hard and study hard to obtain my GED Certificate. Once I have my certificate, I will apply for a Cosmetology License.

My plan is to open my own beauty shop. I plan to start to work immediately. My shop will offer services that I am good at such as beauty advice, hair and skin care, and manicures. That is the reason I have decided to work with the Duncan Area Literacy Council and my tutor Miss Cyndy, so they can help me with my GED. I will be able to meet my new goals for a better future.

The Future Awaits Me!

My name is Elizângela and I'm Brazilian. My husband Diogo and I moved to the USA in August of 2022 because he received an invitation to teach at The University of Oklahoma.



I have a major in Chemistry from Unicamp University in São Paulo.

During my time at Unicamp, I participated in an undergraduate research program. At that time, I realized that working as a scientist was what I wanted to do for life. I am very grateful to my advisor, Professor José Alberto Fracassi da Silva. I am also very thankful to professors Márcia Breitreitz, and Watson Loh for contributing a lot to my development as a student and, consequently, as a researcher.

After I graduated, I worked as a junior researcher at Solvay, a multinational company in the chemis-

try sector. I have always loved working as a scientist. I wanted to earn a master's degree and a Ph.D. to improve my skills and knowledge to become one of the best researchers in my area. That's why I joined the OCCC to study English and thus take the TOEFL and GRE tests to apply for the master's degree.

Elizângela Morales
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Objective in the USA

I came here two years ago. I think this is a big country with bigger opportunities. Here we can have better jobs. In my country the economic situation is difficult.

For example, here the children have better lives and a free education. The people have bigger opportunities to get a better life. I believe if you want something you can get it here because this is a country

with more opportunities.

My father came here ten years ago. He worked hard and saved money, and now he has a better life.

Now I'm working hard. I miss my other family, but I'm here because I want a better life for my family. It is difficult, but I can do it.

Fernando Didier
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Change for the Better

My name is Gina, and I am from Brazil. I have two kids, Andre and Mariana. Andre is a 17-year-old boy and Mariana is a 12-year-old girl. Last year, my life changed for the better. I got married, and my husband, also from Brazil, now teaches at the University of Oklahoma. Then, we started talking about possibilities to move to the US to provide better opportunities for our kids.

It was a tough decision for me. I had a Law degree and a position as a legal clerk with the Supreme Court of my state. In short, I had family, friends,



and work in Brazil, but if it was important for my husband and kids to move to the USA, it was good for me too. My family is my priority. I was also blessed because I was authorized to work from my office at home.

Now that I am settled in the United States, my biggest goal is to become fluent in English, because I want to communicate with people while doing my daily activities. Also, I want to help my kids in their assignments and make friends in the US. At first, I started attending free classes at a church in Norman and I was amazed with their kindness and dedication.

Afterwards, when I realized I needed more, I started

looking for an English school and I found Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC). My classes began in January of this year and I can see my development over these last four months. This new reality for me—coming back to school—had some unexpected results. Not only did my English improve greatly, but the course itself and OCCC has exposed me to new friendships and cultures. This is more than I signed up for and I am thankful for that.

Gina Espinola

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Travel Goals

I have many goals that I hope to achieve in my life. Many of my goals have to do with travel. I want to travel throughout the United States and around the world.

One of my goals is to travel within the United States and see many of the famous places and monuments

that our country has to offer. I especially would like to visit national parks such as Yellowstone and see Mount Rushmore. I have never been to San Francisco and would very much like to visit there.

We also like to travel outside of our country. Our next travel adventure is to travel to Barcelona. My



husband and I are very excited for this vacation as it will be the first time for my husband to meet my older brother, his wife, and child. We are looking forward to having my brother as a guide to see all the historical sites and places in Barcelona and to experience the country with locals.

My husband and I continue to plan and think of different places we would like to see. My Catholic faith is very important to me, and I would love to go to Rome and see all the rich history and culture that Rome has to offer. I would also like to go to Israel

and tour the Holy Land.

I have many travel goals and dreams to fulfill with my husband, and we are very fortunate to be able to achieve some of these dreams. We talk every day about places and cultures we would like to experience, and our list of dream destinations is getting quite long. My husband always takes me on a vacation for my birthday in September, but this year he is keeping our destination a secret to surprise me.

Gricelda Bevers
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Future

I want to learn English and understand it well. My goal is to have a business, to have a good future. When I cannot work anymore, I need to depend on myself and not be a problem for my family. I want to work in real estate. I want to buy houses to rent. Then I will be able to give my children a good future.

They can study for a good career, for their future.
They can give their children a better life.

Guadalupe De Lara
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A More Successful Future

When my father moved us to the United States, we boarded a bus to Amarillo, Texas. I was crying in the back of the bus because I didn't want to move and leave my friends and my life in Mexico. My father saw me and asked me, "Have you really thought about what it means that you come to the United States with papers, sitting in an air-conditioned bus without risking your life? Do you know how many people want to be in your place?" He was right, so when we got to Texas, my goal was to get as much education as I could so that I could someday have a career. First, I had to learn English, so I enrolled in high school.

After I got married, my husband was working in Woodward, so we moved there in 2002 and I found a job in a restaurant. In 2011 my father passed away, and the next year, the Woodward tornado destroyed our home. We worked hard to rebuild and raise our boys, but I never forgot my goal.



When my three boys became independent and did not want to spend time with me, I began to think about my own goal to continue my education. In 2019, I began to work in the cafeteria at the middle school, and I found a tutor to help me to improve my English skills. My next goal is to go to college to learn a profession and possibly have my own business or a senior position in an office.

I love America's people and the opportunity to accomplish my goals for a more successful future.

Guadalupe Garcia

Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

My Academic and Life Goals

In the next few years, I have some academic goals.

If I achieve them, I will be happy and satisfied.

I want to speak and understand English fluently.

This is one of the most important goals for me.

Ultimately my core goal is teaching.

I have always wanted to be a teacher and already

have my bachelor's degree in education. But I need

to master my English to teach well. I was inspired

to be a teacher from my elementary teacher Mr.

Shahin. I love teaching and helping young children.

To improve myself further in the field of education

I want to finish some books about effective teach-

ing and take personal development courses. I want

to impact the lives of kids positively. To do this I

must ensure the trust of the students. I will have

to set and focus on my targets to be completed as

soon as possible.

I don't only have career aims. I also want to be successful in my whole life and stay healthy. This year, one of my most important goals is to be happier and have emotional self-control. I desire to have happy relationships, which includes my family and kids.

What I want and strive for the most is to raise my children with good morals and to be well- educated. I also want and wish to have a healthy life for my loved ones.

Next, I must fulfill the duties commanded by God more accurately. I want to live a life within the framework of God's will and be a good example for my children.

I think everyone can achieve their dreams or goals if they are stable and determined. I am confident that I will strive steadily, albeit slowly, to pursue my goals.

Hacer Sahan

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Goal Setting is An Integral Part of My Life

When my best friend and I were graduating high school, she knew exactly where she was going next and why she was going, but I did not. When the people around me were making decisions, wanting something, going somewhere, striving for something, and changing their lives, I was just wandering in the darkness of my own.

There were a lot of questions in my mind: What about me? What do I want to be? Where will I go to study? What will I do? And how do they do it? Do they set goals? I did not know what I wanted to be when I grew up, but I really wanted to know. I wanted my life to have meaning. That is when I felt for the first time what it meant to set a goal and go for it. A goal sprouted from my fierce desire to figure it out. I did my research and figured out what was best for me. That is how I became a business

organization manager. Next, I decided to make the world a better place and figured out environmentalism and energy efficiency. My daughter was born, and a new goal arose to figure out motherhood. The issue of good nutrition arose and here was a new goal. So many situations arise in my life where I need to dig in, understand it, figure it out, and make a decision. Every time I set a goal, I will achieve it.



Goal setting has become fuel for my restless nature. I still do not know what I want to be when I grow up because in life there are so many interesting things. However, I know one thing. Everything is possible if I set myself a goal and achieve it.

Iryna Naboichenko
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Celebrating our Journey

I have been through a lot from the time I was a kid until now. As a young boy I always wanted to study about diseases or start my own record label and sign musicians and comedians across the country, promoting shows along with interviewing on radio stations to promote my artist and my record label. As I have gotten older I started to hang with the wrong crowd. I was breaking into cars around my neighborhood and just causing trouble for no reason. I caught my first case for a DUI and my life has not been the same. Despite the trouble I have gotten into and what I have been through, I want to get my GED to be able to get a better paying job and pursue my goals of opening my record label and eventually studying biology in college.

Jaeviyon Desmar
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

My Journey to Set and Achieve My Goals

My journey to get my GED has me looking forward to receiving a positive education. To full fill all my dreams and goals. Today my first goal is to push myself to get educated to take my tests. I have a study goal of fours hours a week at home. I also will be attending classes to learn the knowledge needed in order to get my GED. These goals are going to make me a smarter, more educated person.

Another goal set for myself. Once I receive my diploma is I want to start cosmetology school. Just so I have another career to lean on for income. As of right now I work in the hospitality industry, I am a hands on worker and I enjoy that aspect of it. After getting my GED I will be choosing cosme-tology. So I can still be hands on and continue to work with people.

I am so excited and very determined to be the best

possible person that I can be. These goals are going to help me build my life to the potential that it has to be.

Jawayna Montgomery

OIC of OK County, OKC

My Fashion Dreams

Sports met fashion and music in 1986 when hip-hop group Run DMC recorded their devotion to streetwear on the track. I'm inspired by sportswear like Run DMC wore. They had jumpsuits with shoes to match. They had hats and jewelry.



I want to walk on the runway again. It was fun. I want to design fashion. I want to design coats and suits. I would like to go to fashion designer school. I want to see how much I could learn. I want to learn about how to put on a runway show. I want to know

about the best runway show there is, and what the best material is.

I am inspired by doing new shows. I am inspired by cohesive collections. I like fashion that is modern style and I like hip-hop. I like clothes that are colorful. I like clothes that are brilliant.

Jerome Combs

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Goal: University

I am from China. I have lived in the United States for eight months. I attended a university in China and my major was Vehicle Engineering. For me, Engineering was difficult and boring. When I realized I had no aptitude for this, I decided to come to the US and explore possibilities.

My goal is to go to a university here in the States. The first and most important step for me has been to improve my English listening so I can follow the

classes better. In my first five months in the US, I studied on my own to improve my listening skills. I practiced listening by watching movies every day and speaking English out loud along with the characters in these movies. To avoid getting bored, I always watched romantic comedies. I would write down some useful sentences and words from the movies. Before going to bed, I would look at these sentences and words.

After that, I registered for an ESL class at the OCCC Adult Learning Center to improve my speaking and writing skills. This class is very interesting, and I like my teacher, Mr. Anthony. He is very friendly and patient and helps me with my grammar study and oral communication.

As I grow in confidence, my next step will be to advance to the next level and prepare for the TOEFL test. After that, I wish to pass the TOEFL test so that I can attend Oklahoma City Community College.

Since I am interested in business, I will probably choose business related majors and then try my best to fulfill the conditions for transferring to a university. I believe many students do this because it makes going to university more affordable.

Jianfeng Jian
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Goals

Ever since I was a child, one of my goals has been to become a chef because I really enjoy cooking. My favorite things to cook are steak, pork chops, and spaghetti. My tutor, David, at the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services is helping me improve my literacy skills so that I can read recipes and cookbooks and write my own recipes. I am excited to reach my goal of becoming a chef someday.



As I am working with my tutor to improve my reading skills, I want to brainstorm ideas on how to become a YouTuber. My goal is to become like the YouTuber “Typical Gamer.” I enjoy playing video games on my PlayStation and would like to interact with other gamers while having fun and making some money.

John Boone

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

A Brief History

In January 2011, I arrived in the United States to work at a company in Laverne, Oklahoma. I came from Mexico, and I recognized that my biggest rock on the road will be the language. My biggest challenges to progress would be to learn basic English and to get a driver’s license for the state of Oklahoma. I bought the driver’s license manual in English and studied it with the help of an English-

Spanish dictionary. That was a very challenging task but not impossible. Finally I understood it and passed my written test at the first attempt, and soon after that I got my driver's license.

Then I looked for a school to learn English and the closest I could find was the Northwest

Oklahoma Literacy Council's class in Woodward, so I went to apply and was accepted as a student.

The class was from 6 to 8 PM and because I live in Laverne and had

to travel over thirty miles to get to the class and could not leave work until five, this was very hard for me. I talked to the director of the Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council to see if it was possible to have a class for learning English in Laverne. The director asked me for two requirements: to find a place for the class and to find some students. With the support of my company and my community, we



did it. My wife and I took the class together and we learned a lot. Then my work shift changed, and I could not continue going but my wife did.

Last September, my wife and I decided to travel to Woodward to take an advanced English class that the Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council was offering. With a lot of effort to get to the class two nights a week, but with a positive attitude to learn, we have finished the course. Personally, I feel very satisfied and incredibly grateful to the Literacy Council leadership and the teachers. I feel proud when I have conversations in English with American citizens at work, on the street, in businesses, and on trips. Whenever there is an opportunity to speak English, I take advantage of it to improve my skills.

Julian Sosa

Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

Goals: Striking a Balance

Setting goals can be a useful practice for many people, but it can also lead to negative outcomes. For instance, if someone has the potential to become an excellent dentist but believes they lack the intelligence to study, setting a goal to become a nurse instead may limit their potential. Similarly, setting unattainable goals can lead to stress and depression. In my opinion, having a goal is important, but it is equally important to strike a balance between ambition and enjoying the present moment.

Personally, I have a goal to graduate college and find an interesting job, but I try not to obsess over it. I know that stressing over not achieving my goal will only make me unhappy. Instead, I focus on living in the present and enjoying my life. I am confident in my abilities and believe that I will find a job that suits me.

It is important to remember that setting goals should

not come at the expense of flexibility and personal growth. It is okay to make changes as needed as life is unpredictable and circumstances may change. By being open-minded and adaptable, we can stay on track to achieve our goals while also enjoying life in the present.

Finally, it is worth noting that the importance of having a job and job security may vary from country to country. While it may be difficult to find a job in some places, it is important to remain optimistic and not let fear dictate our actions.

Katsiaryna Klimasheuskaya
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Life Changed

My life changed from the moment my son decided to come to Tulsa with his grandmother in 2017. It gave my husband and I a reason to spend Christmas with them in 2020.

I never imagined that we would stay in this country, since it was not our life plan. Due to the situation in Venezuela and the announcement of TPS (Temporary Protection Status) for Venezuelans, we decided to stay. With God's blessing we are looking for a better quality of life.

The most difficult thing has been communication since it is necessary to speak and understand a new language in order to have access to better opportunities.

After visiting three libraries I got my tutor, Mrs Carli Amersek. She is wonderful to help me improve my language. She has been a great help to me. I thank her for her words of encouragement to achieve my goals.

My goals are to express myself easily and understand the English language. Another goal is to pass my driving license exam which has not been easy.

My current job is as a Dental Assistant. In Venezuela I graduated from University de Los Andes as a Dentist. I specialized in crowns and bridges at Venezuela's University of Zulia.



When I came to the United States I had 28 years of experience as a dentist. Though I am very happy in my work, sometimes I feel frustrated that I can no longer do what I did in my country. At least I am in my field of work, which is the most important thing to me.

Another goal is to have my own business, a coffee and pastry store. This project already has a name, Dulce Kata. With patience and dedication I keep moving forward with projects and dreams.

Katy Espinoza

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

A Better Life

My goals in my life were to come to the United States and succeed. In May 2019, I was pregnant, which was really bad. I couldn't work because I was tired every day, but 2020 was better year. I was able to work and buy my own stuff. I was able to start giving my daughter a better life. I was able to buy my first car. My parents helped me a lot, and I'm very grateful to them. I love them very much.

I met my partner and my life changed. He has a daughter, but I love her as he loves her. Now I have more support to achieve what I wanted to do while still in my house in Guatemala.

Kerin Callejas
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Three Goals

My first goal for the year 2023 is to achieve my Hiset which is equivalent to a high school diploma. This

is something I have worked to achieve for many years. I am practicing and currently working toward that goal.



My second goal is to achieve a degree in the nursing program and get a good job. My third goal is to buy a decent, dependable vehicle for my son and me.

My first main goal that I have chosen is achieving my Hiset. The reason this is a goal and is so important to me is because I want to be able to get a good job and provide a wonderful life for son and myself.

The second main goal that I have chosen is achieving a degree in the nursing program. I have chosen this goal because I care about people's well-being and there are also opportunities in my area for a job with that degree.

The third main goal I have chosen is buying a vehicle. The reason that I have chosen this as a main goal of mine is because I need reliable transportation. With being a full-time parent, working and going to school, it is important that I have reliable transportation.

I have most always driven the kind of car they would call a “lemon” so I will be very happy to achieve this. I want a good life and nice things and with achieving these goals I’m already on my way there.

Kristi Green

TLI of the Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

The Perfect Restaurant

Since I was young, I’ve always wanted to grow up and create my own all-fresh restaurant franchise. Not just one that has all fresh food, but one that is locally grown, grass fed and raised by me or people I have hired to do it for me.

I've always loved to cook. As a kid I would grab anything and everything I thought tasted or smelled good and just threw stuff together and called it my own.



As I got older, my cooking changed.

Now I realize that the fresher and more organic the food I use, the better tasting and smelling when cooked. Not only will that be a

benefit in my cooking, but I will also

be able to start doing sales through bigger companies like Walmart, so it all plays together on a business plan and the goals I've set for myself.

I hope people will enjoy the thought process I've put into my cooking because to me, it's all about how happy the food makes people feel when they eat it. I don't have a name for the business yet, but I've got plenty of time to figure it all out!

Landon Cook

TLI of the Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

My Goal of Saying Thank You

I am from Venezuela. I have lived in Oklahoma City for two years. I found out about this college, OCCC, through a coworker. From the first moment the staff made me feel comfortable. The teacher, Annette, is the best! I love the dynamic way she has of teaching us. Her charisma makes the difference.



This country, the USA, has given me the opportunity to work and pursue education. I feel indebted and would like to contribute my help. It is my goal to help the neediest communities. It is a way of saying, “Thank You!” to this beautiful country.

Lesibeth Solano
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Learning English Was the Right Decision

I arrived in this country with a family made up of three children, and we had very little knowledge of the English language. Not speaking English definitely represented a barrier to our success and limited me in achieving my goals. Because of that I was forced to make double effort to succeed compared to people who speak the language.

Learning English is undoubtedly the best decision



I have made because of the advantages that speaking English has offered.

It improves my job opportunities and my income. It gives me more independence and confidence to interact with others in my daily life

in the community where I live. Added to all the above is that I have learned the customs, music, and traditions of another culture.

Fortunately, I came to the Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council. That was the right decision also. I found valuable people who are willing to offer their resources and time to help us in the process of learning a new language.

Knowing English has helped me integrate more fully into my new community. I thank the NWOLC for their support and I hope this program will continue to support more people like me.

Maria De Los Angeles Cervantes
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

The Pathway to Reaching My Goals

I am 32 years old, a wife and mother of three beautiful children. I will tell you a little about my life story and pathway to reaching my goals. I was born in Mexico and was raised by my grandparents. I did not have the opportunity to attend school at any

stage of my childhood.



When I arrived in the United States, I was 15 and ashamed to go to school. Not only did I not know English, but I had never been to school—anywhere. Perhaps I was embarrassed at not being at the level

of education of the other students and was afraid they would ask me questions I couldn't answer.

Later in my twenties, I became a mother for the first time—a single mom. I thought that my desire to study would go unfulfilled, since I had no one to support me and take care of my child while I was studying.

A few years passed and then I met my current husband. He is both my friend and my support. He encouraged me to go to school. This is where my goals begin to look real. I have written each one of them down to make sure I achieve them. I enrolled

in GED classes and managed to get my diploma in just over three months.

Right now, I am attending English Second Language (ESL) classes in order to achieve my next goal of entering college and gaining a business degree. I hope that I can continue to prove to myself and others that dreams can come true. I also want my children and my husband to be proud of me. I believe I can be an inspiration for people who, like me, have little formal education and yet dare to dream.

Maria Eakins
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Citizenship

I have a few goals to accomplish this year. My goals are to speak English fluently, have a better job and obtain my citizenship. I want to be able to read a book to my children and be able to help them more with their homework. It has been a long way since

we began this class back in August and it has helped me to understand English more each day. In this class, I have learned to write, read, and speak more English, and it has helped me communicate with other people. Now, I can have casual conversations with people at my work. I want to keep being in school until I get my high school diploma, so I can get a better job. The phrase, “Effective leaders have a clear vision for the school,” has a great meaning for me which is that teachers make a difference when they put all of their effort so children can have the best education and grow to have better opportunities and accomplish what they want. I am a mother and have four amazing children and I always try my best for them, but it is hard to have better opportunities when you have a language barrier. After 14 years living in the United States, I have decided to accomplish the goal that I always thought was impossible: to get my citizenship. Thanks to this

class, I feel more confident than ever that I can do anything I want if I put my mind to it.

Maria S. Valle
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

To Grow

While at the library to register my daughter for swimming classes, I saw many advertisements about different activities that take place there, so I decided to give some a try.



When my daughter began school, I decided to initiate my journey to the library to find out if it could help me. Even though the English classes were for beginners, I took them to help others, because they felt comfortable with me answering their questions and improving their ability to manage the language.

Later I saw a brochure about computer classes,

and I decided to participate in those as well, both to improve my English skills and office abilities. I mastered the basic skills class, then was asked to stay on to help the others.

My goal for mastering the English Language is to demonstrate to people what I can do and to be able to find at least an office job position. I studied very hard in my home country to get a degree in the medical field, but after coming to the United States, I am out of practice in the ability to work and communicate in a simple manner. I don't have any work experience here besides volunteering.

Despite being a US Citizen since 2019, I am still looking for an open door to demonstrate my potential. Breaking all the barriers I face on an everyday basis is difficult. Moving frequently to different cities inside the US and having to stand by ourselves without family support has also been very challenging.

I will continue to grow even though I keep falling.

On the other hand, I have lost all the greed I accumulated throughout my years of studying. I know I am in God's hands which have never abandoned even the least of his children.

Mirasol Vivas
Duncan Area Literacy Council

Reading and Music

I am a janitor at a middle school in my hometown. My personal goals are to improve my reading skills and to learn to write music so one day I will be able to meet some well-known people and own a home.

One of my goals is to buy a big piece of land close to town with a circle drive. I would like to put a dune buggy track in to ride around hills and tunnels. I would also like to have an above- ground swimming pool that is deep enough for me to swim in.

Another goal of mine is to write my own songs. One

I really want to write is a love song for my mom. I need to learn to play a guitar and find someone to give me lessons. Rock and Roll and Country are my favorite types of music.



Elvis is a singer who I really enjoy.

“Love Me Tender” and “Your Time Hasn’t Come Yet Baby” are two songs that I want to learn. I would like to meet Priscilla Presley and

ask her how and where she and Elvis met. Of course, Dolly Parton, Jennifer Lopez, and George Strait would be amazing to meet, too.

Every week I meet with tutors at Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services to learn and practice reading. When I can, I practice reading at home, too. The more I practice, I have found, the better I get.

By achieving my goals to improve my reading skills and to learn to write music, I hope, will make my

dreams of meeting these wonderful people and of owning a home come true.

Mark Martin

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Service

Celebrating our Journey

Since I have been discharged from prison, I have come up with a list of goals, so I can have something to look forward to. Education is important to be successful, I am working towards getting my GED so I can move forward. After I pass all my GED test I am going to go into a sixteen-week training to get my Peer Recovery Support Specialist license. After getting my PRSS license, I will be doing forty hours of volunteer work in order to become a *certified* specialist.

The main goal is to become a recovery peer specialist so I can help others in recovery from drug addiction. I am two years sober and my dream is

help other addicts with their sobriety.

As time goes on I may further my education to become a mental health or drug counselor. There is plenty of people who need help with their mental health. An individual's mental health plays a big part when it comes to addiction.

Megan Urish

OIC of OK County, OKC

Learning to Live in the United States



I am from Guatemala. I studied and graduated as an urban elementary teacher in my country. I traveled to the United States when I was 18 years old, and married my husband at the age of 20 in Arkansas.

Back in Guatemala, my mother became ill with a very serious illness, resulting in kidney failure.

My husband returned to Guatemala because his father was also very sick. After five years of living in Guatemala, my husband returned to the USA to help me pay for my mother's medicine because it was very expensive. He left me to take care of my mother, but her illness soon worsened, and she died. My grandparents also died that same year.

After nine years of living alone in Guatemala, I came to the United States to be with my husband. Now that I am here, it has been hard for me to understand the English language. I began going to the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services with the goal of learning English so that I can speak and understand people. I am studying English with my teacher, Ivonne, and with my tutor, Kathy. I am beginning to understand a lot of what is spoken to me. I also want to learn English because I am installing ceramic floors with my husband. His boss and the owners only speak English, so I need to con-

tinue to learn more English. Thankfully, by studying English at the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services, I can achieve my goal of learning English so that I can get ahead in the United States.

Nancy Méndez
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Service

My Goals Achieved and to Achieve

It is very different when you take a vacation than a trip where the place you arrive will be your new home. The meaning of this is totally different. When



I arrived in Oklahoma, I never thought that this event would change my life so radically. From coming to visit to staying to live here, I was forced to redirect my plans and adjust them to a new life, culture, city, and customs that were all new to me.

My first objective on this new path was oriented in the interest of improving my English since all the communication would be in a language that is not my native tongue. This goal began, and to this date I continue to work on it constantly and formally since my goal is to achieve clear, precise, harmonious, and elegant communication. I dream of being able to engage in a fluent conversation without gaps in it, so that the words I hear are clearly understood, and for my satisfaction in giving a correct answer in my speech.

Another goal of mine that I already achieved was to complete other studies apart from those in my country. This was completed by earning my diploma and certification in Project Management, and it was endorsed with an international certification. I completed this goal in September of last year. This achievement filled me with great satisfaction.

My plans changed when I moved to Oklahoma. I set a goal of learning English and completing my stud-

ies. I completed my studies and I continue working on my goal of learning the English language.

Norma Luck

OSCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Life and Goals

This is my story. I was born in Los Angeles, but for personal reasons my parents and I returned to Zacatecas, Mexico. That is where I grew up. At the age of sixteen, I married and decided to emigrate to the USA. When I arrived, I realized I needed to learn English. However, I got pregnant, and I didn't have family that could help me, I dedicated myself to my children.

As time went by, I realized that this country offers you many opportunities to study and to work. My dream has always been to have a degree and even though it was not easy, I managed to get my GED at OSCC.

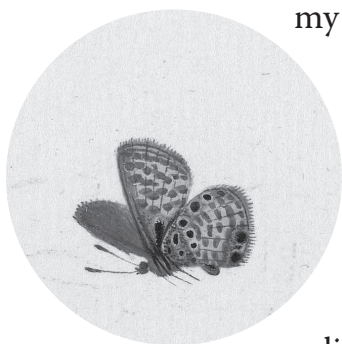
Currently, my husband and I have a small construction company that we are very proud of. However, I want to continue my studies and be able to acquire a master's degree. That is why I continue at this school. I also want my family to be proud of me. I want to show everyone that you can achieve your goals in addition to being a mother and a wife.

Oyuky Ibarra
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Goals

Hello, my name is Sandy and one of my main goals is to learn English well because all of my other goals basically depend on that one. Learning how to speak English fluently can help me get better job opportunities and may allow me to study to be a nurse or a medical assistant. Also, I want to buy my own car at the end of this year. Another long-term goal that I have is to be able to buy a house for me and my

family and buy a house in my country, Honduras, as well. I would like to buy a house on an island from my country called Amapala. This is the place where I was born and I have traveled to this place a few times. Additionally, I would also like to travel to other continents like Asia or Europe and visit different countries like Italy and South Korea. Last but not least, something very important to me is to also stay close to God and ask him to not take me away from my faith and church ever.



Sandy Guevara
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Working on My Life

My goal is to start and keep a job. I wish to do more than that. I'm hoping to bring my reading and math up to an eighth-grade level. When I get to that

point, I wish to go to college so I can get a degree in Sociology, Psychology, and Neurology.

I go to the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services for my tutoring. I go every Tuesday and Wednesday and enjoy going because it helps me improve myself so that I can be independent. My whole goal in being independent is so I can help those who helped me.



With a job and being independent, I want to have my own place so that I can do my hobbies without interruption and spend time with my friends. When I have my own place, I will want to keep it clean so I have more space to go around.

By working on my life, I hope to bring in a new age of philosophies. We as humans have a very complicated way of doing things. As we evolve, the way we think changes and it changes us. I hope by bringing new evidence to how we think, we can learn faster

and continue growing as a species. Therefore, knowing how we think, we can have a better way of life.

Todd (T.J.) Miller

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

My Plans

I remember my great grandmother would always say that, “If you want to make God laugh just tell him your plans.” It would be several years later before I would truly understand that statement. Little to none of the things I had planned for my future actually came to pass. As a result, I would often catch myself believing that my current life status was the only path laid out for me. I had gotten so caught up in working to make ends meet and successfully raising 2 children who didn’t have to recover from their childhood that I had neglected to water myself.

Looking forward, I have made a conscious deci-

sion to pursue my own hopes and dreams. I know that my future will need to consist of hard work, patience, self-discipline and dedication to get to the next level in my life. I welcome these challenges with open arms, and I will embrace each obstacle along the way.

Realizing that your goals not only matter but that they are attainable is almost like a baby taking his/her first steps. Once you realize your “legs” are capable of getting you to that baby bottle or that favorite toy you love so much you begin to utilize your legs to your advantage to get to the things you truly desire. A breakthrough moment at its finest, right?

I use this metaphor in my own effort to convey how magical the feeling is the moment I realized that the only thing standing between myself and a nursing degree was myself! Looking forward, I have decided to utilize myself to the best of my ability to get the things I know I deserve in life. And with that being

said, here goes nothing.

Wish me luck!

Tennie Long
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

Terrill's Bucket List

I want to travel for vacation to see Los Angeles, California; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Orlando, Florida. I want to travel to see different locations and cities. I want to see different cultures and take the time to learn new things. I want to go shopping and spend time in restaurants learning to cook.



I want to complete my education. I am trying to learn to read and write at a higher level to pass the GED test. I want my parents to be proud of me. I know they will be when I pass the GED. After I get my GED, I want to go to a community college or

university. I want to start a business and be self-employed.

My long-term goal is to learn a foreign language. I would like to learn to speak, write and read Spanish fluently. Being bi-lingual will enable me to speak with other employees in their native language and will possibly earn me more money. In order to learn Spanish I will need to take courses.

Terrill Smith

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Independent Living

Four years ago, when I came to America, one of the most powerful countries in the world, to reunite with my son, I was very excited. The difference in everything and the little English I spoke made me confused and stressed. The biggest barrier is not being good in English, so I set a goal for my independence in life: to learn English.

Indeed, in ESL class, I learned many topics related to real life such as going shopping, to a doctor or a bank, getting the car serviced, car warranties, buying a car or house insurance, traffic. I could go on and on.

Although my age is not young, I studied quite slowly, but I still try to gradually improve English in daily communication. Every day I feel happier, more confident.

I hope to achieve my life goal of independence. Life will become more meaningful in the near future.

Thi Hong Tran

OSCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Celebrating our Journey

My goal is to obtain my GED and to go on to college to become a nurse. Not just getting a better GED, but to also to be a better mother to my children. I know it is going to work on my end. I will have to

study more and have discipline when it comes to my academics. I am looking to having my own house and a brand new car paying both off in full. Once I receive my GED and finish college, I am looking to taking my family on vacation. I want to tell my fiancé thank you for encouraging me to go and get my GED. I want to be better than I was yesterday. My mindset is to achieve my goals.

Tousha Henderson
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

Life Goals

It's very important to set goals for yourself. I'm a mother of two. My daughter is ten years old. And my son is two years old. I'm Thirty-nine years old. And I feel as though my upbringing didn't give me the security for my future that I need as an adult. I wasn't educated on how to be financially responsible. So therefore, I pretty much had to be self taught

in managing money. I realized after so many setbacks that it's time for me to set boundaries, eliminate waste, and toxic relationships and anything that can be put in my path to hinder my progress. So that I can execute my goals.

Growing up as a child knowing that my ancestors inherited land lots in Eufaula, Oklahoma that have been passed down to me and my siblings. I always wanted to move to Oklahoma. Since I'm finally here, I plan on finishing my GED program. After that I'm going to pursue a business class at a business academy. After that I'm going to open up a crisis center in Eufaula, Oklahoma.

My mission is to help people. I'm dedicated to helping and educating whomever I come in contact with. I'm striving to become a better person, an excellent mom and a phenomenal friend. I also want to build a house from the ground up on the land lots that I inherited. And, also grow crops as well. It's been a

hard journey for me. But I know I'm going to overcome any obstacles that could possibly hinder my progress with hard work and dedication.

Tracy Thompson
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

A New Home

I remember the first time I came to the United States in 2020. It was my first time on a plane. Everything was new to me, and airport security is very careful because of the COVID-19 epidemic. Everyone must test COVID-19 and measure body temperature before coming to the airplane. The airport has very few people. Everyone wears masks and protective gear. My flight schedule was Vietnam to Korea to the United States.

In the Korean airport, while checking in for the plane, the flight attendant asked me, "Is this your hand luggage?"

“No,” I replied.

She asked again, “Really. Is this your hand luggage?”

This time I understood and said, “Yes, my luggage. Sorry, my English is not good.”

She smiled and said, “No problem. “

OMG, English is difficult with me.



I came to the United States after a 24-hour flight. The first thing that surprised me was that there were a lot of cars on the road. In Vietnam, there were more motor-bikes than cars, but we were often stuck in traffic.

I started a new life with my family in the United States. I worked at Balon Corporation. After work, I learned English at Capitol Hill Center. My goal is to competently speak English, to have a better job. I like the United States because everyone has free-

dom of speech and freedom of religion. The United States is my second country.

Van Sau

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Taking Care...

The thing I always have in my mind is what I would like to be tomorrow. My goal is to become a doctor. I would like to speak English and listen well so I can go to college. I would like to give my time to people. Not only that, I also want to earn money to take care of myself. I would like to have a good job and take care of my family. The reason why I would like to be a doctor is because I like to take care of people and I like to encourage people, too. You may feel that it is not very good for me, but it is good.

Vivian Fenelon

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Goals

My name is Viviana and since I was a child, I have had many goals. One of them was to be able to be in this wonderful country. When I arrived, I realized that everything can be achieved with a little dedication and effort.

I have been stuck for years for not being able to speak English. Now, one of my short-term goals is to learn English well and be able to fulfill my other dreams. I want to be accepted into a university and study nursing. This is a career that I have always been passionate about. I love helping people who are in need, and I know that this would also be my way to contribute my grain of sand to make this world something better.

Viviana Cortes Arias
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Looking Forward



Looking Forward To

I'll be looking forward to getting my diploma so I can move forward with my life. After I complete this, I look forward to furthering my education. I want to be able to go to RN school. I look forward to everything that I know I can accomplish in the future. It has been a difficult journey getting my diploma, but I know if I just focus and stick with it, it'll be worth it.

I look forward to everything good and worth waiting for in the future. I feel like my life will be easier once I accomplish my goals. I also look forward to being able to look back and say I did it and be proud of myself. I want to be an example for those looking up to me. I know the journey won't be easy. I just need to remember it's important.

Amaya White

OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

My Journey

In December 2021, I moved from Cameroon to Oklahoma. It was the longest trip of my life. I took three flights. The first stop from Doula was in Belgium early in the morning at 5 AM. It was a night flight, so I had fallen asleep. The second flight was at 10 AM from Belgium to Chicago. I arrived at 1:30 PM. This airport was so big we needed to take a metro to leave from one place to another. I even got lost. I was looking for my gate to Oklahoma City. Luckily, I got information from a nice lady who helped me find myself. It was so crowded with people moving around. I visited designer clothing stores and very lucrative restaurants. I was very excited and very tired at the same time.

The last flight to Oklahoma City arrived. It was a small one unlike the other two. I was really tired and also stressed. After three hours, I was at my home.

Even though my journey was long and exhausting,

I made new discoveries and met new people, but I was too tired.

Annette Djomani Leintheu
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Better Time After COVID-19

In 2019 a virus started killing many people. It was a very bad year. It was my best year, because I got a lot of work, and I could do a lot of things. Thank God, my whole family was fine. We're in 2023 and the virus still affects people. Because of this, the country is economically affected, but not me, not yet.

Ediver Navarro
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Our Anniversary Celebration

Our Anniversary is October 11, 1987. I've been dreaming of a big party. We all celebrate together with the family gathered. Our family has observed

how my husband and I treat one another with our character. We cherish our moments together with harmony.

There will be joyous music in the air. Family members admire us and speak highly of my husband and I. We are role models for the next generations. We are going to renew our wedding vows with our families included.



The celebration will have festivities and food. I envision decorations of black and gold. The celebration will be on a fall morning with the birds singing in the air. We smell the flowers in the air.

On our special day, we will all dress up. Our grandchildren will lead, dropping flower petals down the aisle. Our brothers, JD, Virgil and Cleo will lead the ladies down the aisle before my husband and I. Leo and I will come down the aisle and everyone will

stand. After, the entire wedding party will take lots of pictures to remember the day.

After brunch, we will have a blessing from our minister and a toast for us. Shortly after, we will slice the cake. We will dance with the family. We will thank all for coming. We will announce for everyone to sign our memory book.

We are thankful for happiness, growth, and long life, in his name. *Amen.*

Jacqueline Smith

Literacy Link, Midwest City

A Survivor Looking Forward

My mental health started becoming an issue not only for me but for my family also.

I definitely felt like I was looking forward, just trying to see the light, but it just kept getting darker and darker.

I spent a week in inpatient treatment. After I got an evaluation, I felt like I was grounded and found a way of making better judgments for myself.

Trauma has happened to me. I am a survivor. Moral lesson: *be prepared always*.

Proverbs 6:6–11: “Go to the ant you sluggards and consider its ways and be wise. It has no commander or overseer.”

Jayda White

TLI of the Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

Starting a New Life

I am super excited to write about what I am looking forward to in life. There are so many things I want and need to make up for. Since my crazy spell of taking the wrong bus or should I say, going down the wrong path, I have gained a lot of self-love to help me move forward in life for myself and family.

First, I had to change my places even though I am limited on where I can go, this keeps me on track and focused on what I need to do to plan a healthy, better, and safe life for my family and me.



Secondly, I had to change my friends.

Looking back, I have found out that these people were not really my friends. I have found out that being around people who are sup-

portive and can give me sound advice

is more important to have in my corner versus having people in my life who bring drama. With this mindset, it leads me to making the necessary changes of who I allow in my company.

I have definitely learned my lesson but I am not sure that I regret it because I would not be where I am in life today. Life experiences teaches an individual great lessons. I have learned in this regard that my poor decisions are what has made me to be

the strong person that I am today. I could not have made it this far without the resources and support that I have received being in ReMerges's Diversion Program. I am twenty-two years of age at this time in which I find that this is a perfect time to start my new life. I now have two children and now working in a full-time program. Being in the first phase, my future looks bright!

Jayne Sain
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

A Visitation to the State of Oklahoma

I arrived in Oklahoma in February, and it was a big cultural shock from my hometown. The main difference that caught my attention was nature. The trees, lakes, roads, and markets were very different from what I was used to.

The trees looked alike and their height did not

exceed 45 feet. They no longer had leaves, as if a big bush fire had passed by. Still, in March, these trees started to have flowers, and by April, they all had green leaves: what a wonderful change! We also see these changes with the grass surrounding houses. Spring is a beautiful season.



While rivers were rare, lakes were so many that when you were walking, you could see a lake every two miles. They had different dimensions: large, larger, and largest.

All the roads and streets had two sidewalks to reduce accidents between walkers and cars. The roads were very large and they were divided into two, four or six lanes. The highways were divided into eight or ten lanes. On the highway, there was no crossroad and no traffic lights. The roads were often straight. All the roads look alike and travelers needed to use a GPS to avoid missing their des-

tination. The roads were also very clean.

The churches varied in belief, in buildings and in dimensions. The Catholic church leads in everything: schools, ceremonial halls, living structures, parking and so on.

Markets were concentrated in supermarkets. The supermarkets had large, long and high buildings. Their parking lots looked like conference places. Inside the supermarket, you could find everything you need for the house: from food to clothes and electrical appliances.

All the elements of nature were wonderful. Birds disappeared in winter and appear gradually in spring.

I really enjoyed seeing these new things and I look forward to staying in Oklahoma.

Jean Taffoti

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The United States: a New World

My life has been full of amazing adventures. Little by little, my steps have been spreading through more distant paths. I am fortunate to know my entire country of Mexico, but for this story I want to make it known how I got beyond its borders. The restlessness and the taste for traveling prompted me to cross the line imposed by nations to limit their territory.

Leaving my town, my people, my friends and family was a complex process. There were moments when my feelings were in endless emotions. My mind went through a process of euphoria, a pleasure to go to new lands and then wondering if it would be worth leaving behind my daughter's hug, my wife's smile, the talks with my parents, and the shelter of my home. I was afraid, afraid of leaving everything to go in search of dreams that others also had and that not all of them had succeeded. I did not want to return as a failure. Even though there was sad-

ness in my heart, I had no choice. The necessity forced me to go.

That was my way of getting here, to a new world, full of modernity, completely different landscapes, and people whose unknown language has been difficult for me to understand. This experience makes my imagination fly to the first encounters of civilization. I imagine the pioneers trying to guess the meaning of other languages which they had never heard before.



Today, I am here living in that complicated process that many others have gone through. I study English because I am now part of this culture, in this glorious land full of opportunities. I try hard to make English my second language because I want to improve myself to be able to contribute and replay the hospitality that this country has given me.

Thank you, United States, for the honor of allowing me to be part of your community.

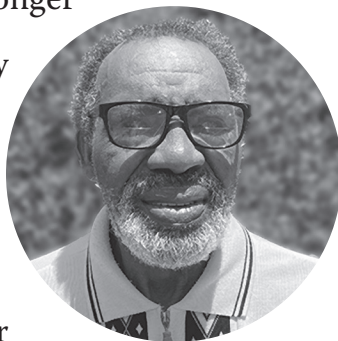
José Gabriel León Martínez
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

My Family and Me

Hennery, my brother, and I played together and ate together. We helped my dad with his car, too. We often had dinner together; and after dinner we had to go and help clean the back and the front yards. My dad would lead a meeting during which he would assign us chores to do. My mother would also join us and lend a hand where needed.

Hennery was the first male child to leave our family to pursue a job. After a while he came back home, and we were real glad to see him. Later we three brothers (Hennery, Cleo and Leo) all got jobs at the oil mill. My second oldest brother was Cleo who went to Douglass High School. When he graduated

from high school he went to the US Army. When he got out of the Army he moved to Los Angeles, California. My brother Virgil married a beautiful lady named Jonie (they are no longer married) who knew several family members very well, including my two sisters Ruth and Darlene. My other brother Paul was a funny guy who made people laugh. Our family traveled to California with friends on many occasions. My younger brother Donny enjoyed playing cards especially the game of Tonk with other members of our family.



In closing I would like to recognize my brother Cleo who has always been there to help our family in times of need. I also want to mention that with the passage of time I met the love of my life, Jackie.

Leo Smith

Literacy Link, Midwest City

Building a Brighter Future

Mizuta Masahide, a Japanese poet, said that since her house burned down, she now has a better view of the rising moon. Awesome!!! But no one wants his house to burn down since the future is uncertain. Anyway, mine has “burnt,” consumed by years of domestic violence. I am now doing therapy to “build” a new one.

I got married to a man who believed in male supremacy. As a wife, I had no rights. I had to ask permission for almost everything. Raised by a strong mom in an open-minded family, this was terrible for me. However, since I have three children and had to raise them, I tried unsuccessfully to negotiate. Some friends spoke to him, but nothing changed. Exhausted, I started to disagree with him, and of course, my house began to “burn:” psychological abuse, blackmails, and threat of repudiation. Despite that, I didn’t give up and the violence stepped up

physically. I informed family and friends, but they all advised me to be nice to my husband.

Unable to sue him because this behavior is culturally acceptable and the justice system is corrupt, I had to find another solution. Unfortunately, I had to run away. Therefore, I couldn't stop my house from "burning." Almost depressed, taking advantage of the opportunity to accompany my son, I flew to the US in July 2022. Since my arrival, I have met wonderful people like Mr. Bryon who helped me start "seeing the rising of the moon." He directed me to the health facility, to the English class, and to a lawyer. I am in the immigration process looking forward to being granted asylum. Even if I am far from home, jobless, and with no income, I am safe and happy. I am strongly looking forward to a brighter future here.

Leocadine Touani
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A New Way of Working

The pandemic had a significant impact on the lifestyle of everybody around the world. It marked a before and after in our way of acting, thinking and behaving, transforming our routines, customs, and habits. But like any crisis, it gave us the opportunity to look at things in a new way and start over. For example:

At the social level, it generated changes in the way we relate and interact with each other. The basis of our interactions has been face-to-face and hugging. As a result, we are now more selective and less effusive with everyone, and we spend more time with family.

This stage made us rethink our priorities regarding life and realize what we really need. Our priorities changed in a positive way because we could learn to value what we temporarily lost or switched.

In the world environment, there are some people who adapted to working from home during COVID and now do not want to return to the office. There is another group who have plans to move to a new place now and think they can work outside the office. Others are considering making a change in their lives, and that often involves a turn-around in their careers. Working remotely, people have much more flexibility than in the office. Even so, some leaders believe that employees must be accessible 24/7.



As a result, both employees and business leaders have been forced to refocus on a new vision for working and looking for benefits for both parties, so as not to lose effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, we must adapt and organize our lives, having a balance between personal and work. Valuing

what we have, our family, our health, putting into practice what we have learned and looking forward.

Leticia Arteaga

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

A Good Life

My life had a big change. I moved to another country, another people, another culture. All my life I lived in Mexico. I grew up there, I studied there, all my friends and family are there. I had my son; I was really happy.

But sometimes adult life is difficult, and circumstances exist that change your life. You must make decisions that you never imagined. The time is different than the times when our parents were young. Nothing is easy and I am working hard to have a good life and be a great example for my son.

We had just moved when the pandemic happened.

It was a very hard time. I feel that was harder for us than changing countries.

Mayra Tanori
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Looking Forward to the Future

I can't wait for the future. There are so many things that I am looking forward to in my future. Building relationships with loved ones and new people.



There is a whole new world out there.

New adventures, new places, and new things to do and eat. My future is bright at this time because I am working with the staff at ReMerge which they have shown me steps and trained me on ways to be a more responsible person. ReMerge is a program that is there to help individuals get back with their children. They have so many programs that help

each part of a person's life. While in this program, we are able to take coping skill classes, time management, behavioral therapy, including helping clients get a high school diploma. I find these classes to be very helpful and are helping me to reunite with my child.

Once I complete this goal of successfully getting through the program, I will have phased up which is the start of my new life. Starting my new life with a clean slate is a wonderful feeling to have. Completing this program will give me many opportunities that I didn't have before. At this point in my life things are going well for me. I am enjoying all of the classes I am currently taking. I will use all of these tools that I have learned at ReMerge to help become a more responsible person. My children deserve the best from me and so do I. I will be forever thankful to ReMerge for giving me tools to be successful in life. I am determined to do just that.

Even if I fall short on completing a goal, I will not give up on myself or life.

Megan Norwood
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

After A Difficult Season....

I'm looking forward to a great year. I got married on January 16, 2021. My husband had a heart attack this year while he was at work. I am trying to better my reading and math skills so I can help at home more. It makes me feel good to be able to help him when he needs it. I enjoy coming to the Literacy office and I am learning to read and count money better.



Paula Watson
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Poetry



Love Light

Don't be afraid to fail,
Life can teach you many lessons,
Remember light turns into darkness,
Day turns into night,
Light and brightness will always return,
They are only cycles of time,
Be patient,
Everything will light up.

Alejandra Hernandez

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Try



COVID took us by force.
Changed the world as we know it.
Can we move on or will it get worse.

We move on.
Take it head on.
Try our best.
Failing if we don't try.

Alexandrea Overby

TLI of the Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

My Backyard

I can hear the wind blowing peacefully
The cars passing on the highway
Carefully looking at the dark sky
And stars are shining in the sky beautifully
The birds are singing peacefully
And the moon is lighting up the sky so brightly

Alisha Cheatham

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Blue Sky

Blue and beautiful sky
Bring me peace and love
It is too high to fly

Let's enjoy it all the time.

Alma Trejo

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Profound Feelings

I love silence, because

I find peace and tranquility.

I love the wind, because

it seems to take away my problems.

I love the sun, because

it displaces the darkness.

I love the moon, because

it inspires me on my sleepless nights.

I love my shadow, because

I don't feel alone.

Ana Osorio

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

16 Years and Counting...

I'm here, in this country,

In this place, which is different than the place I
was born

Here people speak English,
Oh my God! I couldn't understand a word!
I miss my family, they are a thousand miles away

When my three daughters came to my life
They became my engine
But that October 1st
I still remember that day when the doctor told me
"You have cancer"
I felt faint
I asked God why
But I didn't receive an answer

One winter day I saw through my window
And all I saw were gray skies and clouds
but suddenly something red appeared
It was a Red Cardinal on a tree and I felt peace

Life, hope, and restoration came
Chemotherapy and radiation I received
God put angels in my life
Like Karina who has been teaching me English
And this has helped me to become a US citizen

Thank You, God, for my life.

When My Granddaughter Comes to Visit



When my granddaughter comes to visit,
Up on my lap she sits.

We watch cartoons, Sponge Bob
and Mickey Mouse.

Later, it will soon become a madhouse.

When my granddaughter comes to visit,
To her toybox she goes, lickety split.
Out goes her dolls and cars,
Scattered all over near and far.

When my granddaughter comes to visit,
When comes naptime, she then throws a fit.
So, I'll decide to lay down too.
Soon she will calm down and snooze.

When my granddaughter comes to visit,
Stretching and breaking my glasses becomes
deliberate.

She thinks this is funny and giggles, too.
All this drives me cuckoo!

When my granddaughter comes to visit,
I do love to babysit.
Even when she steals my food,
It still puts me in a good mood.

When my granddaughter comes to visit,
I think I'm about to be outwitted.
For her baby sister she brings,
Feeling great, I still think I have everything.

Billy Colson

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Mother

No one but you
Possesses the seed of wisdom,
Abundance, life and breath of the creator
Without you I would not be
Because you were always there
You are the caress of God's hand
You always took me with you
Despite all adversity
You were a mother and

A good father too
And it seems that nothing in you
Has changed because you are always there for
your children
You have been my angel and guardian

I love you, Mom

Brenda Damaris Fuentes Valencia
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Color Purple
Full of beautiful bouquet
Full of fragrance
The color purple looks
Like clouds of purple perfume

Carmen Sanchez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My First Spring in Oklahoma
It's 6:20 AM and in the distance I hear a song that I
recognize.
This song is different; it's the song of many birds.
While I prepare my coffee, I contemplate

something unique through my window,
A flurry of birds of different colors and shades,
shining in the distance.
Embracing this panorama, the hum of the wind
takes its part,
And joins the song of the birds, producing a
sweet and harmonious melody.

Contemplating nature from my window gives me
infinite peace.
At the back of my garden, I have a giant walnut
tree.
I don't know how old it is, but it must be more
than 50 years old.
It has its arms open, as if they were embracing
Spring,
And kissing it slowly with its green buds.
In this walnut tree an owl perches that I can't see,
because it camouflages itself in the
branches, but I can hear its hooting.
This is how I experience my first spring,
full of many colors,
smells and flavors.

For My Children

I wasn't ready to have you
But you taught me at every stage
I was not prepared
But when I saw you fragile in this big world
You made me stronger to fight
And now I know that this is what life is all about
Fighting and learning in each process

Celeste Mishell Mazariegos Lopez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Oklahoma

Everybody knows about your existence
But just a few people know where you are on the
map
I learned that you are between six states
Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas and
New Mexico
I found kind and lovely people everywhere They
always ask me
Where are you from?
Because of my Mexican accent

Sometimes it is hard to fit in a different culture
and language
But I want to adapt to Oklahoma where my
family is now
It's difficult to explain this to my people down in
Mexico
Because they think I'm not Mexican anymore, but
I am
I do not want to change how I was raised
I feel happy and thankful for being here
I am in love with the big parks, nature and empty
highways
I continue to learn English and try to teach my
husband Spanish
We have a funny and cute mix of food, traditions
and language every day

Claudia Sutliff

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Birds

The birds are so wonderful
Now they make their nests with leaves
They cover themselves with rain

They always walk in groups
They are wonderful birds

Claudia Yadira Ibarra Cerano
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Green Mountains

I see the beautiful leafy trees
Transmitting life and a lot of peace,
Green plains,
Like streams of living water,
High mountains
In which my imagination is lost,
Mountains that are home
To me and the animals

Deisy Magaly Jacinto Ramos
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Sunset

The magic of the sunset
Begins when the sun hides on the horizon
Achieving perfect harmony in its colors
Finding peace and tranquility in this

Reminding me that I have enjoyed love and life
Seeing the beauty and greatness of nature
And always thankful for the day that is ending

Deyanira Jimenez de la Garza
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Interminable

One day I learned that in the most intense silence,
molten dreams emerge; remnants of those
that with the passing of time become dusty,
rusty, forgotten.

I learned that savoring sips of my own loneliness
not only intoxicated me with nostalgia
and fragility but detonated an explosive of
necessary resistance.

One day I learned that in cold dawns when
contemplating the simplicity of the walls,
they suddenly formed an exquisite palace, a
majestic castle.

I learned that the empty armchair was now the
perfect space to be accompanied by a coffee,
one, two, three and thousands of conversations
with my Father with my Eternal One.

I learned that sanity becomes a cautious enemy
in order to survive, that without madness and
constant laughter at nothingness the sense of
here, of now, would dissipate.

One day I learned that the drowned sobs to the
past inordinately gnawed the miracle of my
present....

Diana Ward

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

At Peace

I see the clouds are floating above the canyon.
I hear the wind whispering through the tree.
I smell fresh air from the grass and trees.
I feel freedom like I can reach the sky.

Elaine (Dan) Yang

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Bush

I am a little tree
I can refresh nature
Then I can help many trees around me
In spring I feel better because

I bloom
Birds come
I am gorgeous!

Elen Silva
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Ocean
Ocean looks good
Roses smell good
Sunset feels good
I hope that my English
Would be just as good

Elena Stanislavovich
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Spring
Spring is here! Spring is here!
Winter is gone and two flowers appear
Three little robins begin to sing
Four bicycle bells begin to ring

Five children come out and jump the rope
Spring is here now!
I hope, I hope!

Elvira Padron
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Dear Oklahoma

It is day to day and not a fantasy, when the
climates change.

It's a beautiful sunny day
the next day it is a raining one
and the next day, a tornado.

It seems like a fantasy,
how cool would it be,
but this is day to day in Oklahoma fantasy.

In Oklahoma, its climate always varies.

Enedina Chaparro
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Old Pink Bus

Colorfully decorated in a yard, I stand like a
 painting
There was a time, when I could run
 accompanying people
Some were happy, some others were sad
Witnessed their joy and laughter, observed their
 sorrow
As days passed by, I started losing my energy
 slowly
I did not ask for rest, still I have been rested
Though I can't run anymore, people now run on
 me, little ones—innocent, joyful, smiling all
 around
I am an old pink bus!

Ferdousi Abedin

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Power of Thunder

Temporary is your time in the sky
Heavy is your sound
Under the storm, everyone is afraid of you

No one can keep up with you
Disaster is your power
Electricity is followed by you
Running away is the best option when you are
heard

Gabriela De Loera Ruvalcaba
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Tulips

Oklahoma dresses in multiple colors in the spring
with the colors of the beautiful tulips,
with their bright colors that seem unreal,
the red that is the color of romance
or the yellow the color of the radiant sun.

In the mornings they bloom
and in the afternoons,
they wrap themselves up
waiting for a new dawn,
the great lover of many colors.

Graciela González Martínez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Sweet Turkish Advice

We need to pay full attention to what is entering
our mouths

All foods and drinks have to be clean and tasty

We need to watch our mouths to speak clearly
and lovely

Do you know why we have loving mothers?

They have heaven under their feet.

Mothers are keys for heaven like teachers.

Do you know what is revenge?

It is like drinking a cup of venom, it is dangerous

You drink it expecting your opponent's death

Yet you might die

Gül Seçil Tahmaz

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC



Snow

Snow falls softly from the sky
A winter wonderland, cold
We build snowmen, snowballs
A magical world, white
A playground for kids, cheerful

Hanaa Mohammed Al Balushi
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Life

Some say life is great, beautiful, and amazing
There are oceans, animals and nature
Life sometimes is easy
sometimes is hard,
but I keep going.
Life gives me happiness and peace of mind.

Hanane Zemmou
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Look at You!!!

With your look you comforted me.

With your hug I found myself

With your smile enlighten me.

Thanks Mommy

Irma Mercedes Rodríguez Pineda

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Lake Murray

Here on the smooth glass of those great slopes

that form those surfaces of fresh water

that imprison the superb panorama of

splendor and tranquility

that make you fall in love;

Walking through those limits of water that little

by little soak my warm feet

with tenderness and pleasure

by breathing its breeze, I soak in an

awakening

where those beautiful species that inhabit

in your waters

flutter in every drop of that tranquility.

From that lake I drank cleverness and many words
and in this place, I learned that I am not
the one who moves around
but that it is the world that makes the
turns and that it's here, in this lake,
where I
baptized your lips and drowned your
sorrow.

Iveth Puente Gallegos

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC



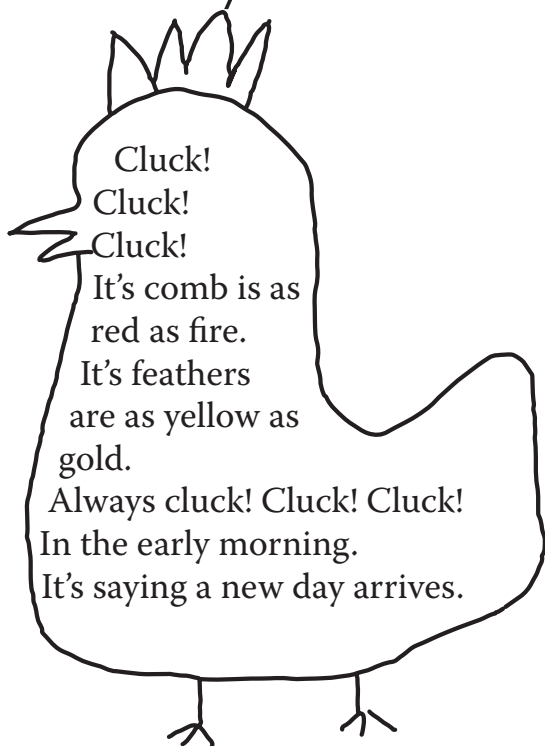
Raindrop

I dreamed
I was a raindrop
Outside
Dropping from the sky

Jade Wells

Community Literacy Centers, Inc. OKC

A New Day with Roosters



Jin Yang

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Snake

Sometimes slow

Sometimes fast

Sometimes graceful

Sometimes dangerous

Night and day begin to merge

Always lurking, waiting and watching
Kind of creepy,
like a devil from deep
or a ghost from dark Even so,
its mystery is unforgettable

JinYang Nie

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Beyond Everything!

The sunset announces to us that the day is about
to end,

leaving behind everything,
problems, sadness, worries,
and allows us to see beyond
everything.

I have always seen nature as my safe place, where
I can escape from everything. One of the most
impressive things is the greatness of a sunset
which connects us with something
indescribable;
it fills us with peace through its
wonderful degradation of orange colors,
yellow, and red.

We can imagine a different world, we can see
beyond everything,
 beyond all borders and be united through
 the same feelings by watching the sunset.

There is nothing more incredible than feeling that
great sensation
 of peace and tranquility when seeing
 beyond everything through a sunset.
With that same peace, we can leave
everything behind
and marvel at the last ray of sun, hoping
for a wonderful New Dawn.

Regardless of the circumstances, you have to see
beyond everything,
 like a sunset that turns off its light with a
 last glorious glow, with the firm hope
 that a new beginning will come,
 a new dawn,
 new illusions,
 beyond everything!

Jorge Alberto Nolasco Lemus
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Sons

My amazing sons
My strength today, tomorrow
I'll always love them

Judith Avila de Robertson
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Wind

Wind you can't see but is everywhere
Wind is blowing, all tree leaves are going
Wind is scary and can damage lots
Wind can move slowly and strongly
Wind brings down power lines
Wind can bring happiness in our lives
Wind can save our lives
Wind can save our energy
Wind can save us from heat on hot days
I love wind because it protects us a lot
I am scared of wind because
It can damage too
Beautiful creation from God

Wind is a Blessing
Thank you

Karidja Kone
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Rain
Rain is falling down
My dog is running too fast
Umbrella Shelter for the rain

Kate Truong
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

A Wish
At night I love to walk and look in the sky
Oh, how I wish heaven had an open door
For I can see my babies and hold them
But there is no door
So I think what you look like or what you are doing
Not a day goes by I don't think about you
Your mom misses you
Love you Madison, Austin, and Dakota

Kayla Lhamon
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Sunset

When I am looking at the beautiful sky, full of the
colorful sunset

My heart feels lonely, even though the sunset
calms my heart.

It looks like my life; it's beautiful and changes
every day. It looks like my age now, not
splendid,

but gives a little smile after many ups and downs.

Keisha Rowan

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Mint

The benefits of mint are endless

Let the mint and lemon peel boil a little

Add a little cinnamon, a pinch of ginger

Refreshing mint, a thousand cures

Kevser Gokalp

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Basketball



Make the shot young man
Deliver ball to the hoop
Yes, you can do it
He makes the long shot
Three points earned with one basket
Everyone yells hooray
Need to be on guard
You need to be on defense
Need to block the shot
Two kids pass the ball
Working as a team in pairs
To learn a new play
Way to get the ball
See them running on the court
To get the big shot
I used to coach you

Now you are teaching me plays
 You are a teammate
 Arm workouts bring tone
Conditioning brings muscle
 Strength to play the game
They showed me team work
The players passing the ball
 To shoot in the hoop
 At the line looking
At the goal, dribbling the ball
 For the winning shot
 You need to be quick
Block the player from shooting
 Take back your ball, son
 Unpredictable
Losing points, hopeless, come back
 Redeemed at the end
 Not backing down ever
Always hungry for the win
 Players united

Lawana McCalister

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Nature is Beauty

Nature is somewhere I can dream
About being free
Running through the fields
Like a horse at full gallop

Nature is somewhere I can relax
Lying peacefully under an old oak tree
Thinking about casting my pole
Into the gurgling stream as it runs by

Nature is beauty at its best
Full of colors and fresh air
Inviting me to come closer
So I can feel joyful again

LaWanna Wade

Community Literacy Centers, Inc. OKC

I Dreamed

I dreamed
I was a mallard
In the pond.
Swimming with wings,
Pleasantly.

Linh Duong

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Three Girls

I have three girls
One is called Mishy,
The other one is called Peggy,
And the smallest one is Dishy.
They make my heart happy.
Mishy is the leader
She's always the first one
Who visits me;
She is special and has
The stoic soul of an American.
Peggy is a very hard worker
She doesn't eat all the seeds
And saves them for later
But I think she doesn't remember
Where she buries them,
Because she keeps working endlessly.
Dishy is the very shy one
After eating, she goes up
To the second floor of the tree
To clean her mustaches.
Squirrels are rodents
But to me, they are tender

Beautiful, and with personality
And they beautify every tree they climb.

Liseth Yoneidy Salcedo Zea
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Sea

I fell in love with your colors, aromas, noises, smells.
You don't keep them, you release them.
To catch us and stay enlightened.
With that moon that turns into a bright
sun.

My thoughts turn to strength.
To continue dreaming and enjoying life's
changes over time.

Lourdes Lopez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Seagull

I'm like the seagull
Who flies from port to port
In search of new horizons
Keep singing sweet seagull

And fly, fly away seagull
Fly with your sweet song
And don't stop...

Magdeli YC.
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Mother

Mother, you were an oak
They were going through storms for you
You didn't break
You were an oak with a heart

You had love for everyone
You helped those who asked for help
You never said no
Always available

Though you were abused
You were there
That was your gift
You were an oak

That with the years
You weren't broken
But your loving heart
Couldn't take it anymore

You've been broken so many times
Scars you had
But you will always be
In our hearts

The ones who loved you
Always yours
Beloved mother

Maria Bravo
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Best Childhood

Back when I could run free
And build my own wooden toys
It was then when I used to say
My best hood was my childhood
No electricity was needed
My mind was healthy
My life was lively
That was my childhood

Maria Guadalupe Arteaga Licea
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Winter

Winter is cold,
Frozen but pleasant,
Snowing all around.
The snows in the mountains are natural,
Sometimes in the trees,
Hanging in the branches.
It is also in the roads but it is beautiful.
In this time, you can breathe fresh air.
Feels good inside my body.

Maria Olivas

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Love

Love is the secret
Ingredient, use daily
And see the magic.

Maribel Rmz. A.

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Wind

Blow away my worries,
blow away my sadness,
don't blow away my sweet memories.

Maribel Rmz. A

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Wolves and Foxes Wolves

Wolves

Wild, Fierce Running, Chasing, Howling
Canines, Carnivores, Omnivores,
Canidae Sneaking, Sleeping, Hunting
Sneaky, Smart

Foxes

Marie Pascal Taffoti

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

To My Brother Anibal

Loving, kind, authentic, dedicated,
Lover of trees and your profession
Beautiful brother I love and miss you
I remember you every day and I hug you

I know that we will meet again
When God decides
My heart is broken since you left,
But I close my eyes
And I see you peaceful, happy, calm
Next to God and our parents
and it calms me down
I ask God for your eternal rest
I will love you forever

Mariela Josefina Castillo Suarez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Calm Found
Sunny and colorful days
Peace in the sunsets
Reconciliation with calm
Inside my soul
I find a new path
In a green paradise

Marlen Najera Chavez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Freedom

I live it, it's true.

Freedom is in my soul,
it's in your soul.

Freedom is hidden treasure,
and when it leaves,
it hurts in your heart.

It is your mind, it is your soul,
when your thought is free.

Today my people do not feel it,
another day,
another cry.

Martha Rosa Viera Gomez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Bird in a Tree

A little bird
With feathers brown
Sat singing in a tree.

The song was very soft and low,
and sweet as it could be.

Martina Hunter

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Caribbean Beach

I dreamed
I was walking
on a Caribbean Beach
with the sand oozing between my toes
feeling relaxed and peaceful.

Melody Nowkola

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Spring

It's time to spring.
Singing birds, blooming flowers.
This winter has passed.

Nishapa Thiamthaisong

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Mother

My mother loved me unconditionally
Years passed and it feels like it was yesterday
 when I lost you
Memories of happiness and joy you left in my heart
Only you knew how much I loved you
The light of your soul shines all over me
 when I am sad
Happily knowing that I'll see you again one day
Every lesson you taught me was a blessing
Reminiscing those moments with my mother
 brings me peace and joy

Norma Angelica Caballero
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Flower

Flower

Beautiful Fabulous

Growing Fighting Strengthening

Leaves Color Smell Petals
Pollinating Decorating Surviving
Alive Pleasant
Flower

Olena Chepurchenko
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

For Mom

How beautiful are the flowers!
How beautiful the stars!
How beautiful the immense sea
and the sun with blond braids!
But my mom is prettier and more beautiful
than the field flowers and the white stars,
than the sea of blue waves and
the sun that makes them happy.

Paola Reyes
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Great Africa

Africa is a great continent

It has great minerals

Diamonds and gold

Africa is a wonderful continent

It has wonderful zoos

And timber forests

Africa had important leaders

Nelson Mandala, Muammar Gaddafi,

and John Magufuli

For a great Africa to be built

All the leaders of today

Must come together as one

To create

A great Africa of tomorrow

Paulinus Ndungmbowo

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC



Africa

Gigantic Africa.
Continent of legends.
Producer of resources
that everyone needs and wants.
Mother of the world, Her riches
feed the progress of the world
she fights to keep her
freedom
when all of the world
wants a piece of her.
But she will stand
strong and
survive.
Africa

Paulinus Ndungmbowo

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Paulina's Poem



Paulina

Responsible, hardworking, honest, helpful

Granddaughter of Marie

Mother of Gloria

Who feels happy to be independent

Who likes spending holidays with my kids

Who needs education

Who lives in Oklahoma City

Paulina Moore Kumeh
OIC of Oklahoma County, OKC

Home

Happy—a place to relax

Open—my door is always open for friends
and family

My time—to enjoy life and myself

Enjoy—sitting on my patio listening to music and
looking up to the beautiful blue sky and stars

Precynthia Cole

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

I Dreamed

I dreamed

I was a raindrop In the sky
Falling to stop a drought Peacefully

Rajanisree Gorantla

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Stars

Looking at the stars at night, makes us wonder
how big the universe is. Stars are seen more
in the mountains, and along the roads.

They seem like carrying tons of stories.

When I sat down near the campfire, I looked up
again at the night sky. The sounds of crickets
bring more stars to my eyes.

I keep wanting to look at the stars on a beautiful
night with a soft breeze.

Rhyounjin (Maria) Oh

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Sunrise

Thought for the day
Every sunrise is a poem
Written on the earth with
Words of light, warmth, and love

Rita Jolldashi

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Rainy Morning

Rain, early in the morning.
Morning of a spring season.
The freshness so sweet of this morning keeps me
in my bed.
Looking out the window I see the dark sky with
heavy clouds.
I feel particularly good, this season makes me
happy.

But the thunder rumbles very loudly and I am frightened
under my blanket.
Then I hear drops sound on the roof which means to my
mind *sleep again*.
This sound is so sweet to hear, and it is like a lullaby sung
by a mother to her baby.
And my whole being only wishes one thing:
Rain come, come repeatedly.

Ruth Abouo

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Wonders of Nature

When the moon rises
The sun already hides

To let the stars begin to shine
And so you enjoy and beam

Sandra Sanchez Prado

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Hobby

Watching birds coming and going
Different sizes, different colors
I like the bright colored ones
Some coming, some flying away to
a different climate

But some come back
I watch them during the day

Sherry Albright

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

I Dreamed

I dreamed
I was love
In the heart of every person
Taking care of each other
Lovely, lovely

Syeda Sawera Javid

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Sandwich

Very good sandwich
mustard onions and peppers
tastes very spicy

Terry Cooper

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Mountain Meets Ocean

Mountain

High Green

Hiking Camping Climbing

Birds Snake Fish Crab

Swimming Fishing Diving

Deep Blue

Ocean

Thanh Vo

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Being an Eraser

I dreamed

I was an eraser

On my life's page

Erasing my bad memories.

Clearly.

Tugba Mert Dogan

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Village

There is a French village
Where life is calm and peaceful
Where time has stopped. Why?

Valerie Bornarel

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

A Day at the Park

The days with the wind blowing
The birds are in the trees
The people are playing basketball
The people are walking in the park
They listen to the music and dance
And eat barbecue
And play cards

Winford Barnett

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Eternal Love

You were in my life like a rainbow,
You gave color to my days,
But you left like a mist

That appears and then disappears
 I see you in every star that shines
 And I feel in the touch of the soft and light wind,
 Your voice is kept in my mind and in my heart.
 The day will come
 When I can see the sparkle in your eyes again
 And at that moment
 My arms and yours
 Will be joined forever in *eternal love*.

Wuinjairy Maria Gomez De Quijada
 Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Life

Life is a poem
 Comes in different forms
 In another case, she has rules to follow
 She shows feelings, ideas, realities, and facts
 All ... are very important parts of the life
 Write and rewrite your poem
 Try to improve every day
 Finally, this is your poem

Yelitza Itamar Rodriguez Garcia
 Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Rain

I can smell the rain
Take cover from the raindrops
Perfect for a nap

Yolani Elizabeth Palacios
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

The Magic of the Night

In the darkness of the night,
The castle light slowly brightens in the sky,
Guiding the way for each step,
As people move closer, they can't help but sigh.
Suddenly, the music starts to play,
The sound of people fills the air,
Children's dreams come alive,
Fireworks light up the dark night.
A celebration of joyful life,
At this moment, all are happy and bright,
A wonderful journey of hope and delight.

Yuling (Miki) Lin
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Love

Laughter makes family and friends closer

Obeying is not loving, respect is

Values are very important for each family

Each member has his/her own value

Zhong (Cindy) Chen

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Instructors



Endeavors

Since I retired five years ago I have tried my hand at many new endeavors. Some I have enjoyed, some brought me a since of purpose, some weren't



at all what I had imagined. Some I was paid to do, many were volunteer opportunities and quite a few were simply for fun (they usually cost me money).

All of them were worth the effort, but being a tutor with Adult Literacy through the Tulsa Library has opened my world to understanding humanity at a deeper level than ever before. It's given me new friends, cultural experiences, a sense of purpose and pure joy at the improvement of my students.

I am fortunate to be working with two women, each from a different country. From them I have a greater appreciation of the effort it takes to live in a world

where the language is foreign and every goal takes twice the effort because of it. And often I wonder – who is the student and who is the tutor?

Since I started as a tutor, my students have each set the goal of finding work and found it in a field they love. They work diligently on increasing their language skills through those jobs, reading library books which interest them, having conversations and writing essays. Life goals such as entering a writing contest, acquiring a driver's license, starting a small business, and reading books to their children are a challenge. As I watch them work towards and achieve each goal I am filled with pride and awe.

Of all the endeavors I have undertaken in the past five years this one has been the most fulfilling.

Carli Amersek

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Life in the USA

I have always loved the English language. From a very young age, learning English has been a priority for me. I realized that it is easier for some people to learn English than for others; however, that was not going to be an impediment to my achieving this goal just because it was challenging. I insisted on studying English to achieve my goal.

My husband is an American citizen. Although, spouses usually do not correct us because they understand us, practicing my English with him every day, also helped me achieve my goal of learning English.

We have two kids whose native language is English. I have tried to teach them Spanish and encourage them to speak, to understand, to write and to read my language and learn my culture, too. Both sons love Mexican food, as does my husband, but he

says just not 24/7. Speaking Spanish and English at home to my sons has also helped me to improve my English.

Now that I work at the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services, I see that most people who are married to someone from their country find it hard to learn English, because they don't practice at home, which is why sometimes it takes years for them to learn.



I attended Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services as a learner and I earned my US citizenship. I never thought that one day I would teach English, Spanish and Citizenship classes. I love learning about other countries and their cultures. Helping others learn English and gain their US citizenship is something that I am passionate about.

I love my family and my work and that is happiness

to me. I will continue to work on my goal of helping others learn the English language.

Ivonne Leap

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

That Moment

In that moment between awake and sleep,
That blink of an eye when
The world stands still on its axis,
Dwells the certainty of solitude,
Truth known only by the heart.

In that moment between awake and sleep,
When breath mingles with heartbeat
Heartbeat with breath,
I can see beyond the stars
To the infinite beauty of the universe.

In that moment between awake and sleep
When I feel the vastness beyond myself,
I know all and nothing,
I feel my smallness
And am thankful that I am not alone.

Laurette Taylor, Tutor

Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Margo Met Her Goal

Margo and Miss Kay said their farewells to “Reading Class” yesterday. Margo received her Graduation Diploma as she learned much along the way.

Margo’s sister and guardian, Ali, signed her up with the Duncan Area Literacy Council on her 53rd birthday in 2016. Timid and shy, childlike in her ways, Margo brought pictures she’d colored for everyone that day, saying, “I’m going to reading class and learn to read a book!”

On that journey with Miss Kay, Margo first learned to write her name and address, and count money. She studied a map of the United States—places she’d been or wanted to go. She put puzzles together while learning new words, building on skills, reading her first books.

Margo enjoyed reading about Fancy Nancy, but Biscuit the dog made her laugh and became her favorite character of the twenty-five to thirty books

she could read.

Margo got a job at the Senior Citizens Center helping clean up after lunch. On “Reading Class Day,” she rode a bus to the library to meet with Miss Kay. Margo made friends and invited them all to the

Awards Luncheon one year. Margo was



loved by so many people for the sweet nature she displayed. She was not the timid and shy girl I met that first day. On Halloween, she dressed in a large, fuzzy dinosaur costume and came to Reading

Class to surprise Miss Kay!

When her sister Ali became ill and then passed, a friend from her church, Gwen, took over Margo’s care.

Their Reading Class ended, no more lessons every week, but not the love that’s grown between Margo and Miss Kay making this ending ... bittersweet.

Margo wrote three *Journey to Success* stories in her time with Miss Kay and because she's unable to now, I'm writing this today.

Mary Brancich, Director
Duncan Area Literacy Council

Why I Tutor

When my late husband died, my youngest brother asked me if I were going to move home. My immediate reply was "Why would I want to do that?"

A year later, he helped move, or give away, the accumulation of forty years in one place and here I am! Being widowed for the second time brought me new challenges, but I think I faced them as my parents taught me: head-on, full steam ahead.



The unpacking is still not complete, but mostly done, and I am living in a "new" home in a "new" town

with a “new” church, although it is the same town and church where I was raised. Add in new friends and new activities and you are caught up on my life.

Sounds pretty simple. Yes, and no. I still remember the first Sunday at church. I knew only a few people. Now, I am very involved, but was still seeking something to do that could make difference in someone else’s life.

Friends offered opportunities, but nothing felt “just right” to me, until my pastor spoke to me about Great Plains Literacy Council. The Council was seeking volunteer tutors. I thought I could make a difference here. Tutoring brings me joy and satisfaction. I get excited when someone smiles, has an ah-hah moment and “gets” the vowel or word pronunciation previously alluding them.

You can’t do this? Yes, you can? Don’t have a teaching degree? Me neither. My degree is in journalism. Scared? You are probably not as scared as your stu-

dents are.

Volunteer! If not this, find another way to make a difference in your community. It is good for your soul. “Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very quiet if no birds sang there save those that sang best.”

Mary Cole Patterson
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Thank You to Every Student

“In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn.”—Phil Collins.

On May 30, 2023, I completed my Ph.D. My dissertation was the product of 10 years of working with international students in higher education. I never imagined I would be a teacher, and I certainly never imagined that I would be fortunate to work with such amazing individuals from all around the world. I have loved every second that I have been involved

with global education, which started with my own education abroad journey. I truly believe so many of the world's problems could be solved in a classroom with individuals from all over the world. The



good that international students bring to higher education will never fully be appreciated for how wonderful and important it is. I would never want to live in a world where we did not have international students in our schools in the United States. There are things that threaten this possibility, so we must fight to protect it. However, never underestimate a student's ability and desire to learn and the sacrifices they will make for an education to help the ones they love. Thank you to every one of my students. You make the world such a wonderful place to live and have forever changed my life.

Taylor Jennings
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

