

Vision LITERACY

Partners Creating Opportunities

408.262.1349

Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, 540 Valley Way, Milpitas CA, 95035

www.visionliteracy.org

Tutor & Volunteer Newsletter

July 2009

VISION LITERACY LEARNERS GRADUATE INTO LEADERSHIP

Viridiana Tolentino was skeptical when Vision Literacy staff suggested that she enroll in the Adult Learner Leadership Institute (ALLI). A part-time ESL and computer skills student with three small children at home, she couldn't imagine how a leadership class could be relevant to her life. "I didn't want to go," she said.

By contrast, Ferial Hanna – a long-time learner who had recently rededicated herself to her education – was excited to receive the invitation to join the class and have another opportunity to learn new skills.

But while these two women approached the course from different perspectives, they are equally proud to have graduated from the ALLI program in June and equally determined to use their new leadership skills to benefit their communities.

ALLI (formerly known as the Henry Huffman Leadership Program) is a six-month leadership development program for advanced adult learners. Students spend a full Saturday each month acquiring skills in public speaking, research, learning styles, and even fundraising and advocacy. At its core, the program is dedicated to building students' self-esteem.

According to Louise Shields, Vision Literacy's south county associate manager, "Viridiana is very shy when you first meet her, but she is very determined and a natural leader." She began attending computer classes at Vision Literacy two years ago and also takes ESL classes at Gavilan College.

Tolentino said of her decision to attend ALLI, "I help my friends a lot, and I want to be a better leader and give good advice and encouragement." She hopes she'll be able to

put her new skills to work as an instructor for an alcohol and drug addiction prevention class at MACSA in Gilroy.

Hanna, who emigrated from Iraq nearly 30 years ago, has been tutored off-and-on at Vision Literacy since 1986, but she became more serious about studying after her children were grown.

"I didn't have a chance to learn because I was working," she said. "Always I depended on someone to help me."

For the past two years, Hanna has worked consistently with her tutor, Carmel Scott, meeting at the Saratoga Library to study English language and computer skills. She was the winner in the Emerging Writer category of the 2008 Writer to Writer Challenge.

While she was nervous at the beginning of the ALLI course, she was put at ease by the patience of the teacher and the realization that her fellow students also felt uneasy.

"It's not the end of the world to make mistakes," Hanna said about practicing new skills in front of others. "People don't have to be ashamed or scared if they don't read and write. They just have to try."

Hanna, who is a cancer survivor, now dreams of writing books that encourage others and perhaps becoming a tutor herself.

If you would like more information about the ALLI program or know a learner who would like to enroll in a future session, please contact the Vision Literacy office.



2009 ALLI graduates Tolentino (above) and Hanna plan on reaching out to their communities



Tutors: Please submit your monthly progress report by mail or online at www.visionliteracy.org. Reports are due August 3. Thank you!

SOUTH COUNTY LEARNERS RECOGNIZED FOR YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS



Seventeen South County learners recently passed the CASAS Work and Life Skills Test – the culmination of a year's worth of dedicated work. The learners in the United Way-funded program received a certificate of achievement and were feted by dozens of tutors, staff and family members at a potluck celebration. The event took place at the Gilroy Apartments, where classes are held five days a week.

Congratulations to the graduates and key supporters pictured above: back row (left to right) – Maria Rosario Alva, Judy Walko (tutor), Soledad Figueroa, Veronica Lopez, Sara Diaz, Martha Saucedo, Reyna Barrios, Maria Vasquez, Juana Valdivia; front row (left to right) – Elvia Hernandez (learner advocate), Josefina Galvan, Ernestina Barrios, Angelica Sanchez, Victoria Salinas. Not pictured: Mariana Nieto, Alejandra Salinas, Maria Elena Arellano, Petra Lopez, Blanca Ramos.

KEEPING THE (ELECTRONIC) LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Many of you, our volunteers, have told us you would rather not receive this newsletter in paper format, for environmental reasons as well as for convenience and to help Vision Literacy reduce costs. We hear you and are making plans to transition to an electronic format. We may also be relying on email for other communication functions in the future – stay tuned!

So that you don't miss out on any important information, please help us update our records by emailing info@visionliteracy.org from the address where you'd like to receive email. You can also help by making sure that email from "visionliteracy.org" is not blocked by your software's spam filter. Rest assured that we will always protect your privacy and will never share your email address with any other agency. If you have questions or concerns, please call Kristin Seitz at 408-262-1349. Thanks!

TUTOR TIP: LANGUAGE CROSS-TRAINING

Remember that the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – can be taught together and help reinforce each other in terms of learning and understanding a concept. For example, you can always end a conversation exercise by writing the words and sentences used, giving your students the opportunity to read and write the words and sentences that they used orally.

This month's tip comes from Literacy Volunteers of Coconino County (<http://www.lvccreads.org>)

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS RAISE MONEY WITH GOURMET FUNDRAISER

Joanna Laznicka and Michelle Rose, honorary members of the Friends of Vision Literacy, hosted a three-course fundraising dinner at the award winning La Tosca restaurant in San Carlos on July 15. The event raised more than a thousand dollars – an important start to filling the budget gap made by recession-era grant reductions. Also attending the event were the artistic director and several principal dancers from Ballet San Jose, local business owners, Vision Literacy staff members, and operating board members Carolyn Brown and Steve Toy.



COMING EVENTS

- Saturdays North County Computer Classes
Sobrato Center for Nonprofits
10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Aug. 15 Learner Group Meeting
Milpitas Library
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- Aug. 22 Volunteer Orientation
Milpitas Library, 160 N. Main St.
10:30-11:30 a.m.
- Aug. 24 Volunteer Orientation
Cupertino Library, 10800 Torre Ave.
6:30-7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 27 Volunteer Orientation
Mountain View Library, 585 Franklin St.
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Registration is required for all events. Contact 408-262-1349 or email info@visionliteracy.org.

Let us know if you have a question, comment or submission for the newsletter. Contact Kristin Seitz at 408-262-1349 or info@visionliteracy.org.
Next deadline for submissions: August 13, 2009



Vision Literacy is a service of the Santa Clara County Library