

Celebrating Our Journey

Volume 9



Celebrating Our Journey

Volume 9

A Collection of Life Stories
written by Oklahoma Adult Learners

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Contents

Forward xvii

Courage

A Friendly Police Officer 3
Hicham Achbarou

Courage Through My Journey 4
Daniel Baker

When Life Gets You Down, Find Courage! 6
Mary Barnes

Courage Within Me 8
Natasha Baxter

Courage 9
Camille Bianchi

Courage 12
Maria Bogdan

My Strength Within Courage 13
Janice Bowman

Special Olympics 15
Crystal Breitengross

Confidence 16
Li (Amanda) Cao

If 17
Ricardo Cereceres

| | |
|--|----|
| It Takes Courage to Make It Happen | 19 |
| Carlos Coronado | |
| Courage | 21 |
| Francisco Guerrero | |
| If a Duck Can Do It, I Can Too | 23 |
| Kiera Hall | |
| Courage Was First | 25 |
| Steve Hohler | |
| Mei | 27 |
| Mei Qiong Huang | |
| I Live My Life for Today Instead of Tomorrow | 29 |
| Carnell James | |
| Travel of Life Takes Courage | 30 |
| Leut Keochanthanivong | |
| My Life Needs Courage | 32 |
| Leticia Lara | |
| Deana's Story | 33 |
| Deana Livingstone | |
| Reading Has Taken Me a Long Way | 34 |
| Lawana McCalister | |
| Never Back Down, Never Give Up! | 36 |
| Jeannette Martinez | |
| Echo From the Past | 38 |
| Oscar D. Martinez | |
| If You Study Hard You Can Be the Best Version of Yourself | 39 |
| Esmeralda Mascote | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Never Too Late: My Journey to Learning English ... | 41 |
| Ana Mendez | |
| Determination to Overcome | 43 |
| Donna J. Mills | |
| My Courage to Start Fresh | 45 |
| Yeicy Minera | |
| Reaching For My Dream | 46 |
| Donald Moore | |
| My Father | 47 |
| Dung Nguyen Thi My | |
| Sticking With My Game Plan | 49 |
| Peggy Parsons | |
| Courage to Pursue My Life Goals | 51 |
| Heather Poor | |
| Hope or Courage—Which One Do You Think? | 53 |
| Cynthia “Cindy” Reynolds-Lansdale | |
| The Best Present to Me ... My Father | 55 |
| Belinda Z. Rodriguez | |
| My Greatest Accomplishment | 57 |
| Blanca L. Romero | |
| My Survival | 58 |
| Leticia Sanchez | |
| Life | 60 |
| Tramy Tran | |
| Darrell’s Story | 62 |
| Darrell Turner | |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Courage | 64 |
| Uriel Vazquez | |
| My Life Written With Courage | 65 |
| Martha Lorena Velazquez | |
| My Name is Paula | 68 |
| Paula Watson | |

Hope

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Hope | 73 |
| Frances Alexander | |
| Looking to the Future | 74 |
| David Gutiérrez Álvarez | |
| Learning to Believe In Me | 76 |
| Maria M. Alvarez | |
| Courage to Get Help Like I Did | 78 |
| Zoe Elaine Anderson | |
| Hope | 79 |
| Maria Arredondo | |
| Destination??? | 81 |
| Octavio Arreguin | |
| Never Give Up Trying | 83 |
| Patricia Atilano | |
| I Love My Vocation! | 85 |
| Cipriana Ayala | |
| My New Life | 88 |
| Esbeidy Benitez | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| I Didn't Give Up and Now I'm a Citizen | 89 |
| Lucy Camacho | |
| Why I Hope to Get My GED | 91 |
| Vincent Carter | |
| Finding My American Dream | 93 |
| Fabiola Ceballos | |
| I Like Reading | 95 |
| YanYan Chen | |
| Looking for a Better Life | 97 |
| Yulisa Cisneros | |
| First Time in America | 99 |
| Amy Cleveland | |
| Never Give Up | 101 |
| Billy Colson | |
| The Life of Do Trung Kien Do | 103 |
| Do Trung Kien Do | |
| My New Life Takes Courage and Gives Me Hope | 105 |
| Cassie Dupree | |
| Never Too Late | 107 |
| Georgina Fabela | |
| Hope for Me and My Family | 109 |
| Isela Fernandez | |
| Hope for a Better Life | 111 |
| Kenneth Ferrel | |
| My Story | 113 |
| Liz Franco | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Butterflies | 115 |
| Odys Galen | |
| A Better Life | 116 |
| Ezekiel Garay | |
| Hope | 118 |
| Gonzalez | |
| Hope to Learn English | 120 |
| Alvaro Guzman | |
| Things About My Family and My Country | 121 |
| Bhey Hidalgo | |
| Hope Never Ends | 123 |
| Robert Hu | |
| The Hope of Surgery | 125 |
| Anh Huynh | |
| Hope | 127 |
| Hiba Ismail | |
| The Hope for Tomorrow | 129 |
| Diane Jackson | |
| Children Have Hope Today | 131 |
| Bounthone (Bonnie) Keochanthanivong | |
| Just 30 Minutes Before My Daughter's Birthday | 133 |
| Ines Kindelan | |
| My Life Story | 135 |
| Tamala Kirk | |
| A Miracle | 137 |
| Quyên Lang | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Hope | 138 |
| Ji Sun Lee | |
| My New Start | 140 |
| Marissa Lopez | |
| The Best Thing About Learning to Read | 142 |
| Daniel Lott | |
| Growing Old Together | 144 |
| Nubia Maez | |
| Hope | 145 |
| Wisal Abdl Majeed | |
| Hope For a Better Life | 147 |
| Whitney Marcellin | |
| Hard Work Always Pays Off! | 149 |
| Clara Moody | |
| While You Are Young | 151 |
| Brenda Moreno | |
| Hope of Getting the Best Education | 153 |
| Griselda Moreno | |
| Hope of a Miracle | 154 |
| Noelia Moreno | |
| Hope In the Future | 156 |
| Christian Merritt | |
| Don't Ever Judge At the First Look | 158 |
| Chuong Viet Nguyen | |
| Hope When All Else Fails | 159 |
| Rutilo Pineda | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Key is Hope | 161 |
| Kevyn Josué Morán Paiz | |
| Don't Be Discouraged | 162 |
| Andrew Raines | |
| Hope | 164 |
| Herlinda Razo | |
| Hope | 166 |
| Brian Regalado | |
| I Believe In Miracles | 168 |
| Miguel Reyna | |
| Satisfied and Happy | 170 |
| Noelia Rios De Velasco | |
| Tammy | 172 |
| Tammy Rodgers | |
| My Hope for the Future | 173 |
| Ernesto Romero | |
| The Life of Carmen Ruiz | 174 |
| Carmen Ruiz | |
| New Life | 176 |
| Anahi Salazar | |
| You Can Die of Sadness Too | 177 |
| Leticia Salinas | |
| Hope for Myself and My Granddaughter | 179 |
| Alicia Sandoval | |
| Hope | 181 |
| Stephen Santos | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| My Journey | 183 |
| Tunisha Smith | |
| Hope | 186 |
| Lois Thurston | |
| My Dogs | 187 |
| Sharon Townsend | |
| My Dream | 188 |
| Huong Tran | |
| My Trip Back to Vietnam | 190 |
| Lina Tran | |
| Getting My GED | 191 |
| Brandon Veasley | |
| Hope Story | 193 |
| Sandra Velez | |
| Hope | 195 |
| Imelda Viezcas | |
| Life As We Know It | 197 |
| Allison Vincent | |
| The Reason I Hope To Speak English | 199 |
| Kim Yunog | |

Humor

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Know the Laws | 205 |
| Miguel Banuelos | |
| Riding Horses | 206 |
| Maria Castillo | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Best Valentine’s Day Ever | 207 |
| Jasmine Cui | |
| Going to the Restroom with Police Assistance | 209 |
| Nguyet Dinh | |
| Humor | 211 |
| Iris Garcia | |
| Civil Defense Alarm | 212 |
| Arcelia M. Hernandez | |
| A Funny Story | 214 |
| Norma Hernandez | |
| Children are Funny | 216 |
| Ethel “Pookie” High | |
| Restaurant Work Had Some Funny Stories | 218 |
| Judy Hu | |
| Expecting a Nice Tip | 220 |
| Payman Mahmoodi | |
| El Dia Del Nino (The Day of the Child) | 221 |
| Maria Molina | |
| Humor | 222 |
| Sima Nemati | |
| A Snow Day for a Bus Driver | 224 |
| Marek Niemirski | |
| A Skunk’s Revenge | 226 |
| Soledad “Lucy” Nun | |
| The Mango Juice Mix-up | 227 |
| Barbara Saavedra | |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| My English Accident | 228 |
| Maria Vasilkovich | |
| Exercise on the Highway!! | 230 |
| Faezeh Poursaeid Zahed | |

Poetry

| | |
|--|-----|
| Marina Alejandra | 235 |
| Marina Aguirre | |
| Elisa | 236 |
| Elisa Barrientos | |
| Money | 236 |
| Elizabeth Bishop | |
| Great Plains Literacy Council Dedication | 237 |
| Sun Chung | |
| Margarita | 239 |
| Margarita Cano de Estrada | |
| Jose | 240 |
| Jose De Lira | |
| Jenny | 241 |
| Jenny Diaz | |
| Nguyet | 242 |
| Nguyet Dinh | |
| Nguyen | 243 |
| Nguyen Doan | |
| Deysi | 243 |
| Deysi Montiel Gaona | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Sury | 244 |
| Sury Marisol Gramajo | |
| Spring: A Haiku | 245 |
| Grant Grey | |
| Love | 246 |
| Mitchell Harris | |
| If | 246 |
| Jeffery Hubbard | |
| Virginia | 248 |
| Virginia Huerta | |
| Hello, My Name is Eugene | 249 |
| Eugene Littlefield | |
| A Haiku | 249 |
| Eugene Littlefield | |
| Glenda R. | 249 |
| Glenda Lopez | |
| Monica | 250 |
| Monica Lopez | |
| Ivis | 251 |
| Ivis Maldonado | |
| Run With the Horses | 252 |
| Bill Martin | |
| Vilma | 253 |
| Vilma Minera | |
| Luciano | 254 |
| Luciano Olguin | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Martha Azucena | 255 |
| Martha Cruz Olivares | |
| The Struggles in My Mind | 256 |
| Bruno Perez | |
| Melvyn | 257 |
| Melvyn Perez | |
| Cristina | 258 |
| Cristina Ramos | |
| Josue A. | 259 |
| Josue Regalado | |
| Joana | 260 |
| Joana Reyes | |
| Maria Cristina | 261 |
| Maria Reyes | |
| Yesenia | 262 |
| Yesenia Rodriguez | |
| Guadalupe Saldana | 263 |
| Guadalupe Saldana | |
| Eduardo | 264 |
| Eduardo Sandoval | |
| Don't Give Up Hope | 265 |
| Jason Douglas Smith | |
| Gloria | 266 |
| Gloria Solis | |
| My Time | 267 |
| Michael Taylor | |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| A Poem | 268 |
| Eric Torres | |
| Samuel | 269 |
| Samuel Torres | |
| Who Retains My Love | 270 |
| Silvia Torres | |
| Sonia Elizabeth | 271 |
| Sonia Vazquez | |
| My Challenge and Reward | 272 |
| Daniel Villazana | |
| Spring: A Haiku | 273 |
| Betsy White Eagle | |
| Learn with Literacy | 274 |
| Harold Wilson | |
| Hope | 275 |
| Alma Zavala | |
| Fight | 276 |
| Bruce Perez | |

Foreword

It has been fourteen years since the publication of the first volume of *Celebrating Our Journey*. The project was envisioned to encourage new readers to take another leap in their learning process, to put pen to paper, and to write their stories of growth and discovery to share with others. The effort has been a resounding success, as evidenced by this ninth volume of new writings by Oklahoma's adult learners.

Reading these life stories reveal certain commonalities in the journeys of the authors. Many stories let us share in the feelings and fears of people in a new land, struggling to learn and understand a strange new language as they work to provide a better life for themselves and their families. Other stories reveal the special challenges that learners have had to overcome—health issues, hearing and eyesight deficiencies, hardscrabble childhoods, difficult relationships, and the daily scramble to survive that often leaves education on the backburner.

No matter the circumstances of these learners, certain characteristics shine through in the stories. Each individual has had to confront his or her educational challenges by acknowledging them and reaching out for assistance. That call for help can be a humbling experience for students, yet it illuminates the strength, courage, and hope that all of these individuals possess.

Accompanying these learners on their journeys are family, friends, faith, and the commitment of adult literacy providers across the state. As the students reach for their goals, a community of support surrounds them with encouragement, assistance, and cheers.

As we unveil this latest volume of *Celebrating Our Journey*, we celebrate both the student and the community that makes a difference in the lives of new learners every day.

Susan McVey

Director, Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Courage



A Friendly Police Officer

When I first came to the United States, I worked as a cook in a restaurant for one year. It was a great job for me because I was forced to speak English all the time. It was a good place for me to practice my English.

After about a year, I found another job with a friend of mine—as a distributor. In this job, I have to drive a truck to deliver products to different locations of the state.

One day, early in the morning, I forgot to turn on the headlights of my truck, and I didn't realize that because the street was lit up. After ten minutes driving from my home, I saw a police car that was parked in the median of the road. After I passed him, the police officer followed me, and he pulled me over.

At first I was scared. He asked me about my driver's license. I gave it to him, and a minute later he said:

“You can’t drive this big truck with a learning permit; you need to get your driver’s license.”

After that, he asked me if the headlights were working. I turned them on, he gave me my learning permit back, and he told me that I need to take the driving test as soon as possible.

Three days later, I went to the Department of Public and Safety to take the test and I passed.

Hicham Achbarou
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Courage Through My Journey

Some people are courageous. I feel I am a courageous person for three reasons. I’ve lived to see the age of 21 by the grace of God, I’m more than halfway through my penitentiary sentence, and I’m taking necessary steps as a GED student to be a successful, productive citizen.

It may be courage or I may have Someone watching over me. I've seen and done things most people can't imagine.

Through this life that was given, not asked for, I've managed to stand up courageously. I did all I had to do to still be here today—from surviving shoot-outs to hanging in a seatbelt out the car door while doing 90 mph on Hwy. 169.

Now I am locked up and labeled as a felon. No one told me when we were having fun, chasing fast money and fast women, that we were only chasing the penitentiary. Now I'm here.... It takes a lot of courage to live somewhere where people get stabbed right in the middle of an open dorm. I'm halfway there, and I've almost made it.

Tenaciously pursuing my education, I am dedicated, motivated, and excited to leave that life and use this as my first courageous step to being a productive

family man. Most, importantly I want to make my mother proud by being the man she raised me to be.

I'm a courageous person. I've lived to see 21, I'm halfway through my prison sentence, and I'm taking necessary steps as a student to insure my discharge success. Some people have courage.

Daniel Baker
Lakeside School, Taft

When Life Gets You Down, Find Courage!

Before the teacher I have now, my first teacher started me out with homework that she believed that I could do. Then she had to quit just a little bit before I really understood what I needed to learn words. After a month, I believe they gave me another tutor. She was really patient with me and helped me read a little more than before. Then this tutor had to have an operation and she left me. Later on, they

found another tutor for me. Her name is JoBeth. I



Mary Barnes

was scared to talk to her and read to her. I was scared of what I was reading before.

She gave me the same material that the other tutor had left me with. So I wasn't really learning like I thought

I should have been, higher up. But the books they had given me were too high for me to learn. It felt like I was supposed to be in the 9th grade reader. I was really in, to me, the 4th or 5th grade. I was too scared to say anything. I cried out to the Lord and he guided me. He told me to explain to JoBeth. So I explained that I needed a book that I felt was my level to start learning. Then I had the assessment test to see how far I had come in my learning. Before changing I was at 1.6. Then with the change I went to 4.9. In the past year I went up to 5.8, a whole grade

level! So don't be afraid to ask, or to talk, about how you feel. Get your courage up and speak up for yourself! This is my courage.

Mary Barnes
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Courage Within Me

Courage is staying strong and never giving up. I was with the father of my children for six years. He abandoned us in the sixth year. I was left with nothing. I ended up in a women's shelter with my two children. It was really tough for all three of us, but because of the courage I had, I continued to be strong and never gave up.

I started counseling, and it encouraged me to know I am a great mother and I am doing the best I can for them. I joined the TANF program to better my education. I get up every morning, kiss my daughters goodbye, and get ready for my daily class. I know

this program will help me to get a better education and to get a good job. I know sticking with this program will help my daughters and me to have a good future. Courage is what keeps me going.

A few years ago, I was tested and told I had a math disability. I wanted to give up but I stuck with the TANF program and was placed in literacy. With help from the instructors and my effort in not giving up, I went from addition to subtraction and on to multiplication! I think the TANF program is a really great idea, and hopefully I will soon get my GED and then a good paying job.

Natasha Baxter

Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

Courage

I am native to France and a few months ago, I decided to improve my English. My only opportunity was to work as an Au Pair in America.

Three months ago, I arrived in The United States and I met my host and new family. My first time was a little complicated but I tried to learn The American Life. I take care of three children; two boys and one girl, ages two to twelve years old. All the children are different but we have found a balance to play together. For me, the best time for play is outside. We play basketball and trampoline. The little girl likes to sit in the wagon and eat her snack.



My host family helped me a lot. It was difficult for a simple discussion (the mime was, and is, perfect) and also for pronunciation.

The first time, when I took my France/United States flight, I talked with an American man. He didn't understand me when I said: "I am angry." At this time, I understood my mistake. I forgot to pro-

nounce the H. So, I was “hungry.” A little mistake can change the meaning of the sentence.

Now, I make different mistakes, but I am not afraid when I need to ask something and try to understand.

Many people decide to travel to the United States, and we must live an American life. But the most important is to know the American history.

And in coming here, I discovered that the people are welcoming, smiling, and happy all the time. So they can help you.

I left some French people, but I don't regret at all, because I could live this only one time in my life.

You need to believe in yourself and nobody can change your way.

Camille Bianchi
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Courage

I came to the United States from Romania where I was born. I am 61 years old.

When my daughter, my only child, married a Romanian-American man and came to Oklahoma, I missed her very much. In 2002, I visited them in Ponca City for the first time. I loved Ponca City and the area. On my second visit they asked me if I would like to live with them. I decided that was what I wanted to do.

In the fall of 2006, I moved to Ponca City. I met Pat Hicks, who was a tutor for Ponca City Area Literacy Council and had tutored my daughter. She told my daughter if I wanted to learn English, she would teach me. I agreed, and soon we started to work together. We started one day a week, but soon she decided on two days a week. I liked it and she was a true blessing to me. She is really nice and is always there to help me. When I studied for citizenship, she

helped me with that. Now she is helping me study the manual for the driver's license.

We started studying in 2006, and now we are very good friends. She knows my family and I know hers.

Today, I can speak English, so I am very happy. I am very thankful for the Literacy Council and my tutor. I encourage everyone to learn English. Whatever your age you can learn English. Just take it step by step.

Maria Bogdan

Ponca City Area Literacy Council

My Strength Within Courage

My name is Janice Bowman. I am 25 years old, and this is my story.

When I was 17 years old, I met a guy who I thought was the nicest boyfriend in the world. After a few short months, I found out I was going to have a baby.

After I had the baby, he became abusive towards me. After 7 years of being beat on and cheated on, I found courage and strength within myself. Therefore, I left.

Because of the courage I have now, I am a single mom of four wonderful kids. Therefore, I have the courage to live my life to the fullest and the courage to pursue my life goals to better my life.

I am bettering my life by going back to school at TANF Literacy. I have met some amazing people here. My friend Heather is a big inspiration to me because she always encourages me and says I can achieve and do well here at the literacy program. So does my other friend, Fred.

Since I have been here at literacy, I also have found that, with the courage I have, I will succeed in life. The teachers here are very helpful in teaching me and encouraging me to succeed.

Therefore, I will continue to have, to show, and to teach my children courage to find their own strengths inside of them and to always believe in themselves, and to encourage others in life as well.

We all can succeed if we just find the courage we have inside of ourselves.

I encourage those of you reading this to work hard, and do not give up on life. Just find your courage, and move forward with life and achieve all your life goals!

Janice Bowman
Literacy Council of Leflore County, Poteau

Special Olympics

When I was thirteen years old, volunteers from Special Olympics came to my school. They gave us forms to be signed by our parents. This allowed us to be in Special Olympics.

I got four medals at my first Special Olympics: bronze in the 100 meter walk, silver in the 25 meter walk, silver in basketball, and silver for jumping. I hang them on my bedroom wall.

I went to Stillwater and spent the night. My classroom teacher shared the room with me.

My mom says it is something to be proud of, that I should be proud of the accomplishments.

My next goal is to learn to read and write better. That will be my next accomplishment.

Crystal Breitengross
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Confidence

I still remember the feeling that I had at the first meeting with my tutor; I was nervous. I was not confident and worried whether I expressed myself clearly. When I saw her, I felt comfortable because

she was so nice. In our conversation, she gave me

many good suggestions about how

to learn the English language.

She borrowed many books for

me to improve my listening

skills, conversation ability,

and understanding essential



idioms in English. She also

encouraged me to practice out of class. Through

several weeks studying, I can understand what my

tutor says to me more than before. Actually, on some

topics we can communicate very well. Yes, my tutor

gives confidence and I have seen the progress!

Li (Amanda) Cao

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

If

If I could make one positive change in my life, I

would become a better person. I believe that by get-

ting my GED and learning positive skills, such as communication skills, listening, and speaking skills, I will improve my life.

Listening is one of the most important skills I can learn. If I become a better listener, I think I would get more accomplished. By not only hearing, but by listening to my teacher, I will be able to understand more about the writing skills test.

Speaking is another communication skill I would like to improve. If my speaking skills were more enhanced, I believe that I could make others understand my meaning easier and faster. Speaking would also help me to deal with any misunderstandings that might come up in my life. Some misunderstandings can even result in violence.

I hope, during this journey, I will accomplish these goals by passing my GED. I would be able to return to my family and be able to find a better job. I could then support my family and not end up in prison.

I don't want to be limited to committing crimes to support my loved ones. I have to find the courage to change my old lifestyle of crime so I can become a better person. I know I will accomplish this. It's time for a change.

Ricardo Cereceres
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

It Takes Courage to Make It Happen

Like the title says, it takes courage to make it happen. Regardless of what your dreams may be, in the end, anything that we as adult learners may dream of, we can develop the courage necessary to make it happen.

I'm a firm believer that it is us who defines who we are, who we can become, and what our future will hold for us. In order to accept that fact, we must ask ourselves, "who are we?"

In order to answer that question, I had the need to look back in time and try to understand why or what I am doing here. The answer to that question is very simple: *opportunities*.

Opportunities are something this great country has to offer to many people; but do not be confused, when I mean many



Carlos Coronado

people, I mean only those who have the courage to make changes in their lives. Those who are willing to start as many times as necessary to find the way to succeed, regardless of where they come from. So, it seems to me that we have already found the answer to the first question.

Who are we? The answer is, we are *fighters*. We are individuals with needs, needs that we understand require courage; needs that we understand require hard work, motivation, a desire to become better,

a desire to grow, a desire to take the opportunities as they come and make the best out of them. That's who we are.

So, next time someone tells you “that is not possible,” have the courage to prove them wrong, have the courage to prove “you” right. As I mentioned before, you, we, are the ones who can define who we are and who we can become. Always remember who you are.

Carlos Coronado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Courage

Three and a half years ago, I found out that my kidneys were functioning at less than 10% of their capacity. I wasn't in pain and the only symptom was that I was always tired. I traveled to Mexico because of the death of my mother, and one of my brothers told me, “You don't look good,” and recom-

mended that I go to a nephrologist. I got a kidney capacity test. When the doctor saw the results, she was shocked and said, “You don’t have more than 3 months to live.” I told her, “I’m not in bed and nothing hurts.” She said, “The speed at which the toxins are accumulating in your body will be fatal, and your only options are hemodialysis or a transplant.”

Suddenly, I felt like the world was falling apart, and I wondered how to solve this situation now, after recently moving to the USA without much money and looking for work. It was hard to clear my mind of this problem. In my family, we have always believed in Jesus Christ, and thanks to that belief and the support of my family, I got the strength to make decisions—and the first one was putting myself in the hands of the nephrologist and starting hemodialysis. Through divine intervention, my daughter and her husband were able to get me health insurance. Then I started English classes at OCCC and

found a job. Thank God I have survived without my health getting worse. My English has improved, I have an independent job, and I'm moving forward. Now I reflect on when we are in difficult situations, God will always help us and give us strength to get through the mental battles and move forward—if we have faith, strength, and the courage to not give up in tough times.

Francisco Guerrero
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

If a Duck Can Do It, I Can Too

You wouldn't believe how I got through all the traffic from school that day, due to construction. It was already a head banging drive when I saw life in a symbolic way.

As I was adjusting my mirror to briefly check myself, I caught a glimpse of ducks in front of me. I swerved drastically as the waddle of ducks came fearlessly

across my path trying to reach their goal on the busy freeway, allowing the little fellas to get across to meet their success.

I've never seen ducks move so fast on foot I tell ya.

I could only imagine what the ducks were saying as they crossed, "I've got to move

quickly and efficiently. My accomplishments are calling my name beyond the highway before I'm road kill. I won't have success awaiting me if I don't move it swiftly so that I can take flight."



Kiera Hall

I continue driving, grateful of the fact an 'ambulance of complete community help' saw me wheel crazy to the other side of the street just to save their lives over my own. I bet EMSA was joyful, witnessing me doing good deeds by saving one's life for a life of opportunity.

Life gives you chances; either it hits you or lets you

through depending on your surroundings. Once those chances are given, take them so that, when leading or driving your own waddle, it will never end in leaving one behind.

Kiera Hall

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Courage Was First

I have been with the program a long time. Courage was first, to join the program. Hope keeps me here. The camaraderie with my tutor makes it seem less like work. My brain does not work with my hand sometimes, so patience is required from both of us. My parents were both good readers and I realize now what they kept trying to tell me about reading.

I like to work with my hands. When I catch myself doing something wrong, I catch it quicker at work, but not in reading. I passed up some foreman opportunities because I didn't trust myself to read instruc-

tions on the prints or to write names down correctly.

I do not have trouble understanding blueprints, but reading the notes that go with it. I do not have trouble with numbers or math. I just seem to know what the answer is. But I still have problems writing it down



Steve Hohler

properly from what I added up. I could even measure something, then write it down quick, right next to the measuring tape, saying it out loud to myself but still writing it down wrong. This remains a problem for me today. I can spell the word in speaking but still write it down wrong, leaving out letters or reversing them.

I hope I am better now, after 4 years in the literacy program. My tutor assures me it is not happening as often, but we are still seeing it. I do believe I am

better at reading, even when they are flashing words at me on the TV screen.

But this “right here, right now” reading is something I can do now, that I used to could not do. Maybe those flash cards do help!

Steve Hohler

Miami Public Library Literacy Services

Mei

Hello, my name is Mei,

I came to Oklahoma for the first time in the spring of 2012. When I first came to the United States, I could only speak a little English. I have a happy family that also helps me to learn some English.



Mei Qiong Huang

I wanted to learn to read and speak English better. My

neighbor told me to go to the Sapulpa Library. I received a library card and checked out children's books in English.

Then my neighbor told me about the Creek County Literacy Program next to the Sapulpa Library. With the help of Debbie Marshall and Melissa Struttmann, they soon found an English teacher for me.

My English teacher's name is Carolyn Mathews. She is a kind lady. She took me to the Gilcrease Museum to learn about American history and Native American Indians. She taught me to sew. Then she took me to the supermarket and had me join her at her friend's party. She also brought me some English books to study. Her heart is filled with love for her student.

I love this place in the United States as well as arrangements God made for me to know these people.

Mei Qiong Huang
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

I Live My Life for Today Instead of Tomorrow

I know there are no guarantees in life. So, I must give it all I've got. It takes effort to find and make better choices because they are there. I found a few, many more will come. I realized overcoming my old habits may take a lot of commitment. But, once I do it, I will feel like I can take on any challenge! I just need to think about who I truly want to become in life. So, I use the best version of myself and who I can be. The choices that I make, every moment of my life, can be easy, because they are building a better future for myself. It takes courage to be focused on learning a new way of life. The choices I make today will determine who I am tomorrow. Time waits for no one, so I will take control of my life today! Even if I fail, I feel better knowing that I tried rather than failing to try.

Carnell James
Lakeside School, Atoka

Travel of Life Takes Courage

I escaped out of Laos in 1975 from the Communists and walked all the way to Thailand. I stayed in Thailand for five years. Then I traveled to the Philippines and stayed four months. In 1980 I arrived in the United States.

My sponsor found a job in Hobart for me. I worked at a company called C.R. for nine

years. My next home was California, where I stayed for over five years in the city of Eureka. McMurray and Son was the name of my employer. My job was in the warehouse with their roofing supplies.

Finally I moved back to Altus, Oklahoma, in 1998. I have worked in the Altus Public School System for 15 years. Now I am the head custodian at the Will Rogers Elementary School.



Leut Keochanthanivong

I go to tutoring to learn the English language for one hour a week in the Altus Public Library. My friend Kimly Pang told me about the literacy help at the library and that no charges were required for the service. Jennifer Stanley has been my teacher since I started in October of 2013. Jennifer tries to help everyone who wants to learn English as a second language. Lao and Thai are my native languages. I am very happy to improve my English. A few years ago my wife Bonnie and I were students at the Altus Adult Learning Center. Mr. Lynn Rowland was our teacher for the year. Then the school closed, and we came to the Great Plains Literacy Council for more help.

As I look back over the years, my life has brought many different travels. I believe I have had courage in the many travels, chances and opportunities.

Leut Keochanthanivong
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Life Needs Courage

It takes courage to learn English, to work in the public, and to get a driver's license. I know about these three topics because I am trying my best to do these.

First, I really want to read, speak, and write better English. I grew up in Mexico. Spanish was the language in my life. In 2004 I moved to the United States with my 3-year-old daughter. I picked up some English words, but I knew I needed more study and help. A family member told me to go to the Altus Public Library in late 2014 for tutoring. It is hard to go every Wednesday evening for English lessons with my tutor Aleida Burchett, because I am usually tired from work and need to spend time at home. *But* I have only missed a few times and it takes courage to not give up.

I know how a worker needs courage to do a good job. I have been a school custodian for the past three years. At times it seems that everybody needs my

help at the same time! It takes energy and hard work, but I am willing to do this demanding job for 12 months out of the year.



Leticia Lara

I am studying to get my driver's license. My tutor showed me how to use the Internet and computer to take practice tests. Now I'm learning the driving rules, plus how to use a computer all at the same time.

My life is full of challenges. It takes courage to improve my English, do a good job at my employment, and to study to pass the driver's license test.

Leticia Lara
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Deana's Story

I was told all my life that I could never learn how to read. My tutor Melissa told me to read in a read-

ing book every day. I am now reading books that people said I could never read like *Stink*, *Nancy Drew Mysteries*, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and *The Borrowers*.

My very favorite is Laura Ingalls and *Nancy Drew*.



Deana Livingstone

Reading has opened a new world for me! I don't want to put the books down until the last page!

Deana Livingstone
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Reading Has Taken Me a Long Way

The literacy program has helped me because I've come a long way. I can read better but my spelling is still not good.

I had started a medical assistant class and my reading and spelling was so bad that they kicked me out of the program. I was sad when I was kicked out of the program. I also felt sorry for myself. Even though I had a high school diploma, I still couldn't read and spell. I wanted to find some way I could get help with my reading, so I called 211. The Literacy Office was the number they gave me. I didn't know my reading was still that bad and I was scared at first because I don't do good on tests at all. Tests still scare me to this day; that's why I'm afraid to come for my driving test again.

I was evaluated and then they set me up with a tutor.



Lawana McCalister

Then I started working with her once a week at the Central Library. I could tell each week I was doing better with my reading because I was reading more than I used to.

I have stayed in the program even through all of my life's challenges. I am still working on my reading and spelling. I'm also in the Literacy Book Club every month and my son comes along too. My son and I love reading every day, and I'm reading The Amish series.

Lawana McCalister
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Never Back Down, Never Give Up!

(Edited for length)

I was born in Santa Anno, California, but I grew up in Durango, Mexico. When I was two years old, my father took me to meet my grandparents. Who would have thought that it would be our last trip together? We had an accident and my father died.

After a few months my mother had to move to California. I returned with my grandparents who

had two of my older brothers. I learned the ways of my people and their traditions. I grew up with my grandparents. They were humble and hardworking people. At eight years old my mother sent me back to California. She was not the person I imagined she was.

Because of my father's death, my mother was very angry. She was emotionally and physically abusive to me. One day I went to school with my cousins who were going through the same situation. A policeman was standing at the entrance of the school and saw the face of one of my cousins. That was when they realized we were being mistreated by our mothers.

My cousins and I stayed in state custody for a year. If they did not find my grandparents they would find adoptive parents for me. Thank God, after a few months they found my grandparents and I returned to Mexico. I finished college, and went to work to help my grandparents. Then I decided to return to

the United States. Now that I am back in the United States, I want to learn English. I want to work and teach my children how important it is to study and learn to appreciate the sacrifices you have to make to achieve your goals.

I am thankful to my grandparents for the values they gave me.

Jeannette Martinez
OKC Family Literacy Program

Echo From the Past

Personal experience about work can be very touching and bring to you a deep sense of respect toward people and their hard work. My experience began with the task to draw a map required by an electrical company in my country. This drawing was about an electrical power line that fed many villages in the mountain. There wasn't any road to access the line, so my co-worker and I walked along the power

line, which passed through mountains, pine forests,
and a river.



The difficulty of the work made
me think of the people who
made this power line, the first
ones to see this tough reality.

Their work was much harder
than mine, yet they brought to those
places in the old mountain the light from electric-
ity, progress, and a comfortable life.

Oscar D. Martinez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

If You Study Hard You Can Be the Best Version of Yourself

I came to the United States on January 2, 2013.
When I arrived in Oklahoma City, few people would
speak to me in English, and I only spoke Spanish
with my family.

In May, my brother invited me to his wedding. I rented a car with my siblings to travel to Indiana because my brother lives there. It is a long trip to Indiana—about 12 hours by car.

My husband and my dad drove the car. After the wedding, they drove the car to Chicago and visited my aunt for a week. Then we came back to Oklahoma City. I felt bad because I couldn't drive.

Then I decided to get my driver's license.

People told me to travel to another state, because in Oklahoma City they only gave the driving test in English. Later, I decided to take the driving test here in Oklahoma City, because I wanted to learn to speak English. I went to the office to get my driver's license. I bought a book there to study for the test.

One week later I went to take the test. I passed it the first time. After I passed the written part, the

policeman said “come back tomorrow because it’s too late to take the driving test.”

I went back the next day and waited my turn for the test. Then one lady told me it was hard and she was a citizen of the U.S.A. I got really nervous at hearing this, but then I went ahead and took the test, and passed it. With that experience, I figured out that if you study hard you can be the best you can be, and even surprise yourself.

Esmeralda Mascote
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Never Too Late: My Journey to Learning English

When I was a little girl, I loved to go to school. I went to school every day. When I was 11 years old, I finished elementary school and prepared to enter middle school. However, my Mom’s husband had different plans for me.

One day, he said to my Mom, “She doesn’t need to go to school! She needs to work and help you.” Days later my Mom tells me that she has no money for me to attend school any longer!

As time passes, I wait for the next year, and I tried to go to school again. One day, I went to my aunt. My aunt was supportive. She said, “I will help you. I will give you the books, pencils and all the supplies.” She was able to do this for me, because her husband was an employee of a mining company. The company provided supplies to all the children of the employees. I was happy and thought this was the answer.

Okay! I thought in my heart and head that I would try again next year! When I was 12 years old, I started to work as a maid. Time goes by and I never got to go back to school.

Now, it is a different story! I am learning English. I

will pursue getting my GED. I am so happy to be able to have the opportunity to learn and reach my goals.

Ana Mendez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Determination to Overcome

When I was a little girl, I had a lot of ear infections.

I lost fifty percent of my hearing.

When I was in second grade, my teacher discovered I could read lips. She played a game with us; she pretended to have lost her voice. I was able to let my classmates know

what she was saying by reading her lips. Then, she told my parents that I was able to read lips.

All through school the teachers did not care if they helped me at all. When I was in the seventh grade, my dad made them give me a test to see if I could be



Donna J. Mills

put into the Special Ed class. They were not going to put me in that class at all. My grades were not good enough to be in regular class.

My dad told them to put me in Special Ed. I was in Special Ed class until I quit school in the eleventh grade. I missed nine weeks of school because I was in the hospital for asthma. Then, I tried to go back to get my GED, but just could not do it. One reason was because I had three kids. I got married to my husband, Tim, and he has two kids. Together, we have five kids. We have three grandchildren. Two of them are boys, and one is a little girl.

I have been working on my GED for the past three years. This year my GED teacher was able to get me help with my reading and math from Ponca City Area Literacy Council. They assigned me tutors to help me out. With Mrs. Lou Ann's encouragement and knowledge of what I was having problems with,

she was able to bring me out of my shell, and I am reading much better.

Donna J. Mills
Ponca City Area Literacy Council

My Courage to Start Fresh

When I was born, I stayed with my grandmother. My mom had to come to the United States. Then my grandmother had to take care of me, because my parents separated. When I was growing up, my grandmother would take me to school. When I left school, I liked to play basketball.

When I grew up, I met a boy and became pregnant. I had my son. We lived with my grandmother. When my son was four years old, my grandmother died. Well, we were living one year alone.

After that, I decided to come to the United States in 2010. We lived with my mom for three months.

After a while I met a boy, and we dated for four months. Then, I married him.

Now, I am very happy with my son. We are a happy family. I thank God, my Father. Now, I am learning to speak English. I hope to learn well, because it is very important to speak English in this country.

Yeicy Minera

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Reaching For My Dream

I was proud when I was able to build up enough courage to study for my GED. I encouraged myself to keep moving forward. I am happy I made the decision to study the subjects required to get my GED. I will continue believing in myself and doing things required to achieve my goal.

The main goal that will make me feel happy is to know that I finally have my GED. Another thing

that is important to me is to have the courage to read in front of other people.

With the improvement of my reading skills, I can answer questions with confidence and talk without being unsure of myself. With the skills I have acquired, I feel I can help others achieve the same level of confidence that I have.

Donald Moore

New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

My Father

Phi was my father. He lived in a small fishing village in Vietnam. He was a fisherman. My family was poor, so he left high school when he was 15 years old. He met my mom when he went fishing in the harbor. He worked very hard and had good ethics.

My family had a grocery store. One day, a customer forgot a wallet. My father kept it, and later the customer came back to receive the wallet. This story

had an influence on me because my father wasn't a greedy person. He said: "You have to return anything when you pick it up." I have always remembered that thing. In addition, my father was generous. For instance, he often saved a lot of money to help the poor. He spent time to collect money from the community. After that, he sent it to people that needed heart operations. He had an effect on me because he was a good example that I needed to follow. So, I always had a dream to become a doctor to help the patients. This has encouraged me toward the community.



Moreover, my father was caring. For example, he worked very hard and helped others. Besides fishing on the boat, he took care of all members in my family. He washed the clothes, he cleaned the house

and he cooked. He put everyone before himself. He always worried about friends first, then himself. He observed strangers in the neighborhood when they left their houses. He called the police when the neighborhood had trouble. The kindness of my father made me a good-hearted person who likes to help everyone. My father was an admirable person who influenced me to be a better person.

Dung Nguyen Thi My
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Sticking With My Game Plan

I just lost my job and I didn't want to live with my parents forever, so one day I had a meeting with my caseworker. She told me about TANE, that would help me and my son with our financial problems and our healthcare. I grabbed an application at the front desk, filled it out, and returned it the same day.

Then I waited for my results. Finally, I got a paper in the mail stating I was approved.

However, they really don't tell anyone in orientation about OIC and what it is going to be like. When I first started, I jumped right into what the other students were doing. However, I was still struggling from not being able to subtract or recall multiplication facts, and I struggled with believing the messages



Peggy Parsons

I had been told—that I was slow. I was letting my learning disability overcome me. Since I've been going to OIC, I've learned that I can use strategies like slowing down and pausing before answering a question, or redirecting where I look in a problem. Now, I focus on using my strategies when I'm working on assignments, and I'm more successful doing them.

What keeps me motivated and still on my game plan is seeing myself be more and more successful every day, and having others believe in me, such as my mom and my teacher. Another thing that keeps me at OIC is my son—I want to show him no matter what people say, never give up. This is why I wake up every day at 4:20 AM, then wake my son up, and then catch three buses. I will tell you it's not easy to do that, but you really have to be motivated and be on your game plan if you want to succeed.

Peggy Parsons

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Courage to Pursue My Life Goals

I am proud that I have passed blocks of my 2014 GED test because I did not think I was going to ever pass it.

Before coming to TANF Literacy, getting my GED was just a dream that I had for myself. TANF Literacy

helps me work towards achieving my goals . It took me through the necessary steps in order to be able to make it through the actual test.

I have more self-confidence and more motivation to want to keep working hard. TANF Literacy has shown me that taking my time in the areas I do not quite understand has improved my learning ability in those certain areas.

Now I am working towards the next portion of the GED test and will soon be ready to take the next step.

Without the help of TANF Literacy, I would not be able to reach this goal. I am truly grateful to this program and everything it has helped me gain.

Heather Poor

Literacy Council of LeFlore County, Poteau

Hope or Courage— Which One Do You Think?

It is difficult to decide if I had a little bit of hope or if I had a little bit of courage during the past 18 months. My parents and my older grandson Gage had traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, and were waiting to see the judge to see if I would get custody of my second grandson, Eric, on January 22, 2014. The judge granted me custody of 5-month-old Eric, and we took a picture of me and the boys.

All of a sudden, I could not understand any talk very well. My mother and our attorney took me to the lady's room to wash my face to make me understand. My parents helped me into our family pickup, and I slept all during the two-day trip home.

We finally got to our home in Altus, Oklahoma; my parents took me to the hospital where I could only sign my own name with "X." Several months

later, my mother told me that I had a major stroke. I could not talk.

After I got out of the hospital, my parents and my brother George helped our family in many ways, like taking me to Wal-Mart, and with writing.

I am telling you that I was pretty messed up, but I have worked very hard to talk and read a lot. I am thankful for reading and talking with my tutor, Judy Miller at the Altus Public Library, since June 2014. I am



Cynthia "Cindy" Reynolds-Lansdale

not perfectly better, but I am working on my speech and hearing.

I have a part-time job at the Altus Christian Academy, helping several teachers and students when they need assistance. I feel better. I can answer

that I have had *much hope* and *much courage* in the past 1½ years!

Cynthia “Cindy” Reynolds-Lansdale
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

The Best Present to Me ... My Father

My parents, Candelario and Eloisa had six children, and I’m the third of them. My name is Belinda Z. Rodriguez, and I have three beautiful children: Gabriela, Carlos, and Ximena. I used to live in Mexico, but in January 2011, I came to live in Oklahoma City, OK with my husband Joseph Rodriguez.

When I was 21 years old, I finished my career, and dreamed of being like my father who gave me many values and moral principles. He was the hero of my childhood. He had my admiration when I became mature. In my adult life I understood him more.

When I became a mother, I saw that his way of strict education to us was called “love.” My father is the subject of my essay.

He went through hard times with honesty, effort, and perseverance to reach his goals. His adult life didn’t stop him from reaching his goals. He started his career at 40 years old and finished at 44. He was the most improved student with honors and excellent degrees. He pushed his siblings and his family to study and to overcome.

Now my father is 76 years old. He is a smart man, always searching for new knowledge. He has unconditional love for us and my mother. He has a spiritual wisdom, which I love a lot. I’m grateful and proud of him for his dedication and protection to my mother. He was a great son to his parents, and an honest friend, a great lovely dad, and he always pushed us to love God.

Today I hug him in my dreams with all my heart

and I say to him, “Thanks Father, for being my hero, my best friend, and the best adviser; for the education that, together with my mother, you gave me; for making me who I am now.”

God gave the best gift to me my father.

Belinda Z. Rodriguez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Greatest Accomplishment

I was very happy for making the decision to take the citizenship test. I felt frightened and nauseous because I thought it was too much for me. I had to learn about the history of the United States. It was something I knew little about! I knew little English.

It was a goal for me to study English an hour every day. When I would pick up my children, I would listen to the CD to get used to knowing the questions. I also made copies of the questions and every day, I

would read and answer them by writing them down. That helped me to prepare for my citizenship test. Finally, the day came. I felt very nervous, but it happened very quickly. Now I feel proud of myself because I did it. I answered everything correctly and I read and wrote too. That was an accomplishment for me. I did it by myself. Lastly, the day I pledged allegiance came. I felt proud and happy because I accomplished my goal. Seeing that my children were proud of me made me even happier. My effort and dedication was worth it.

Blanca L. Romero
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Survival

(Edited for length)

It was 2002 when we first came to the United States. We stayed for 5 years, and three of my children were born. In July 2007 we returned to Mexico, because my mother in law was very sick. In September 2009

she died. In 2012 we decided to return to America because I was pregnant.



We arrived in Nuevo Laredo and stayed three days. During those days we did not have a lot of money and when we were stopped by a federal road officer they took away what money we had. We asked our brother to help us by sending money so we could eat. My children were hungry and I had nothing to feed them. My brother sent the money. Also we were able to get a hotel room for the night. When we found who would take the children to safety it was 6 or 7 at night. When my children left I felt very sad and began to cry. My husband said they will be okay.

We returned to the hotel alone. I could not sleep thinking about my children. We had many difficulties along this journey... we were separated from our

children, ran out of food, had no clean clothes, and had no place to stay.

Finally we ended up on a road with our children and our new baby traveling to McClain, Texas. We encountered coyotes, people who rob and take the possessions of others. Scared and frightened, we were able to reach San Antonio. There we met a woman who helped us, and we could finally relax. After a few days we received more money and our family headed to Houston. We were excited because from there we traveled to Oklahoma City.

Throughout all the difficulty, we endured. We thank God that we are happy and together.

Leticia Sanchez
OKC Family Literacy Program

Life

I was born in Vietnam to a fairly wealthy family before the Vietnam War ended. April 30, 1975, was

the darkest day of all the people of South Vietnam. That was the day that the communists took over South Vietnam, changed the lives of the entirety of South Vietnam, and my life had also been changed since then.

The communists took everyone who worked for the South Vietnamese government, including my dad, to a reformatory. They confiscated my family's properties and all of our money. As a result, we became homeless. I was 11 years old at the time, and the oldest of 5 children. My family moved into an unoccupied house and we began our new lives in extreme circumstances.

I would go to school during the first half of the day, and then spend the second half of the day helping my mom take care of my siblings, and I did all of the house work while my mom worked. I even did one thing I have never thought I could do. I went into the forest alone, chopping firewood for our family.

For the first time in my life, I had to cross through a small river by a single plank bridge. I had to tightly carry firewood on my back, then cried and crawled through the tiny bridge. I was very scared, but I had tenacious courage through that fear. I spent some days each week to do that job until I graduated high school and went to college.

Today, 40 years later, I am living in the United States of America with freedom and a good life. As I look back, I think to myself, how could I do it at that time? In short, I would say I had courage.

Tramy Tran
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Darrell's Story

I want to stay out of prison. Forever. I do not want to be 50, 60, or 70 years old and be sitting in prison. I've already been there. It's no place to be.

When I learn to read more I will get a GED. That

would help me get a job. Staying busy is important.



A job also means extra money for my family.

Somehow I fell through the cracks. I always needed help with reading. They all helped, but not to the point where I got

it. They passed me on to the next grade. By the beginning of the 9th grade, I got kicked out. And I still couldn't read.

Recently I joined the Okmulgee Literacy Program. I have a tutor. We meet once a week. They got me glasses. I have never been able to see good. Now I can.

I want to get a driver's license. A car. Be able to travel as I want. Cars work better in the rain than bicycles do.

There's a lot of good that comes from being able to read.

Someday, I would like to help someone else learn to read. I want to be a role model to my family even though I can't spell too good yet.

My name is Darrell Turner. I'm 47 years old. I can't read as well as most folks but that is about to change.

Darrell Turner
Okmulgee Literacy Council

Courage

Welcome to my courage journey. My name is Uriel Vazquez. It was frightening to step into the class, but my beautiful wife gave me the courage to do the first step.

I grew up in Durango, Mexico and my first language was Spanish. I had a goal for this year. My resolution was to increase my English vocabulary and grammar skills. I started English classes in August 2014.

As soon as I started my first class, I realized I wasn't

alone. Sometimes I felt the English language was like a big mountain, but thanks to our teachers and the nice staff, they always gave us the power to keep climbing the big mountain one step at time.

I hope in another year I will be a bilingual person. I appreciate the OCCC for the help they provide to the community to make this happen. It is really a big help to me and other students. Different people from other countries like China, Guatemala, and Africa are what made our class so special.

Uriel Vazquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Life Written With Courage

I was born in a “Pueblo Majico”(magic town), located in Sombrerete Zacatecas, Mexico, on June 13, 1977.

My childhood was wonderful, because of my father’s work.

We got know other cities in Mexico, like Mexico City, Guadalajara Jalisco, Durango and finally Cd Juarez Chihuahua Mexico.

It was there that my father decided to stay. I was only 16 years old and had not finished high school. I wanted to work and my dad wanted me study! I didn't know or didn't realize how important it was to study and finish a career.

I almost forced my father to give me permission to work in a factory. We were talking about working in the most dangerous border of Mexico in those days. He accepted, telling me, "You do not need anything but I'll let you learn how money is earned."

I think I inherited the character and courage from him, because after six months of working there, I was a quality inspector.

When I was 18 years old, I had earned the respect of my parents and friends. Then I realized that

respect is earned through hard work, courage and dedication, because that's the main thing my parents have taught me.

I was 19 years old when I met my husband. When my oldest daughter was 5 years old, and the youngest 2 years old, we decided to migrate to the United States in July, 2004 .We started from scratch. It was difficult because we always had some obstacles. But this was an opportunity for our daughters to have a good education and better future.

Still today, we are not millionaires, but we're still together and my girls have received good educations. I hope and trust in God that they someday will achieve their dreams and fill us with pride.

My main message is "never stop studying" for the future to be better.

Martha Lorena Velazquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Name is Paula

I live in Mounds Oklahoma and go to church in Mounds. My church is Assurance Church and my pastor is Jarrod Vanderslice. My Aunt Jeanie is my reading tutor and Home Therapy Services aide also. I am doing well in my reading class. I have a dog named Sweet Pea Jan Watson, and she is funny and silly and will dance for wieners and Cheetos. I tried to move to Tulsa, Oklahoma and I did not like it.



Paula Watson

I was born on June 21st at St John's Hospital in Tulsa in 1984. I lived in Sapulpa about 25 years, until I moved to the country. When we have Thanksgiving we go to Choteau. We go to Sapulpa for Christmas at the Senior Citizens Center. My mom and dad love me and grandma and grandpa. I met my sib-

lings about 3 years ago, and their names are Amy, Mark, and Johnny. I have a buddy named Andrew, Aunt Vicki, and a friend named Sara who I have lots of fun with.

Paula Watson

Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Hope



Hope

Everyone has the hope to be like every child who learns to read. I went to school with that hope; but it didn't happen. I never learned to read. The teachers and students would laugh when I missed a word. I couldn't understand or remember the words the teacher tried to teach us. I couldn't make the connection between the sounds, the letters and the words. I was upset most of the time and the teachers would send me home because they didn't know how to teach me. I didn't learn like other children. I sometimes read letters in the wrong order and I have trouble hearing the sounds of the vowels.

This continued all through school and life. My children didn't know that I couldn't read until they were older. My husband helped with reading the important papers that I needed to do. Even though I couldn't read, I still worked and raised my children. I am so thankful they all learned how to read.

I have been trying to learn to read for 15 years with the help of tutors and I feel like I am getting better. I can read most of the things they hand out at church. I can read some of the papers the foster children bring home from school with a little help from my husband or daughter. My hope is to someday be able to pick up a book and read all of it without any help.

I haven't given up hope on learning to read. I am 73 years old and I will keep working on it until I can do it.

Frances Alexander
Literacy Link, Midwest City

Looking to the Future

My first experiences in America were very surprising to me. I arrived in Houston, Texas, from Medellin, Colombia, almost four months ago. The cold weather—I was not used to it! And another

surprise was the *light!* When I moved to Bartlesville, it was not only colder than in my home country, there was so much more daylight. Because Colombia



David Gutiérrez Álvarez

is so close to the equator, we have about 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of night. There is so much more daylight in Oklahoma! Another surprise!

I have hopes for my future in Oklahoma, I hope to improve my English because I want to be an actor. This is very important to me. I hope to keep working with the language study group at the Bartlesville Library Literacy Office and with a tutor to reach this goal.

David Gutiérrez Álvarez
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Learning to Believe In Me

(Edited for length)

I left my country because my children's father wanted me to come to get a better job. I traveled by boat. When I reached the United States, they sent me back. I stayed in Tijuana for one month. I had no house, no food, and no family. I had to stay in a garbage house. Someone who saw me brought me food for one month.

My uncle tried to sell me to different people for money. But I refused to be with anybody. I looked for someone to help me. I found a factory where someone helped me. While in Tijuana, I looked for my aunt. After finding my aunt, I stayed with her.

After one week, I found someone to cross the border with me. The man driving the car allowed me to act as his wife. He had legal documents for me. After we crossed the border, we had to switch cars. I had to ride in the trunk of the car.

We rode to California. I was very happy to be in the United States. After 6 months, I went to visit my sister-in-law. While visiting her, I did not know she was selling drugs. The police came to her house, and arrested everyone, including me.

They deported me back to Mexico, where I stayed for one week. I returned to Tijuana, went back to Los Angeles, and left for Modesto, California. I remained in Modesto for 12 years. I met my new husband, who was from Oklahoma City, in Modesto. We moved to Oklahoma City, where I have lived for 12 years.

I am happy being in Oklahoma with my husband and children. I want my children to have a better future.

My goals are to learn to speak English, get my GED, and become a citizen of the United States.

Maria M. Alvarez
OKC Family Literacy Program

Courage to Get Help Like I Did

I chose to read because, before I die, I want to read to my grandkids and stand up in front of my church and read. I want to tell my story. If there are others in the same boat like me, I want to give them courage to get help like I did. I don't want to get paid; I just want to tell my story, because God made us in His own image.



Zoe Elaine Anderson

Learning to read is hard. What I found to be hard was not being able to read my kids' report cards, read street signs, and read what meat or seasoning you were buying. Learning to read is a journey, but a journey you can achieve. My journey is the ability to read and spell with my dyslexia.

When I moved to Oklahoma City from Dallas, Texas, my wife told me about this school. I began

reading in Dallas in 1988 and was using the same books. In Dallas, I was in a group, but what works best for me is the one on one teaching. In the last year I have gotten from Book 1 (*Laubach Way to Reading Skill Book*) to Book 3. Book 1 starts out like a children's book; that really helps. Book 2 gets you prepared for Book 3. Now I can read books 1, 2 and 3 and understand what I am reading. You have to want to get the help.

I guess I am just determined. It is so awesome. I am somebody with dyslexia. I thank God to have the school to help me, because I am my own Zoe Elaine Anderson, and I am not in a boat by myself.

Zoe Elaine Anderson

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Hope

When I was a young girl, I would play with my friends all day long until the sun set across the hills

of our small ranch located in Mexico. I loved playing dolls and house because we all came up with different ideas about what we wanted in our futures. These huge houses were made from rocks, stones, and plants. I believed that one day my dreams of those houses would come true and not just be rocks, stones and broken silverware that we collected.

We used those same stones for the children we were going to have in our future. Coming from a fourteen sibling home, I dreamed of having many children. My older siblings always helped provide for my family, as they came to the United States to find jobs. We never worried about going hungry or needing shelter due to their assistance. Yes, they did suffer a lot, but because of them, I have become the person I am today.

As I grew older I started to notice how hard my older brothers worked for our family, striving for the best they could provide. I also imagined my future and

how hard I was going to have to work. After I met my husband we decided that we would both come to the United States and start a life here. It was not as easy as we had planned, nor was it the ideal life, but my husband has worked very hard to create a better place for our family. In these few years that we have been on the marvelous earth, we have accomplished so much, like buying our new house and having our new home. My life has been shaped into something that I never would have imagined possible.

Maria Arredondo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Destination???

Seven years have passed since I had to leave my country and family, because life is very complicated in Mexico due to the low salary and lack of employment opportunities.

I was studying architecture in the Leon University

in Leon Guanajuato, Mexico, but it was financed by my father (Jose Arreguin). He used to live in Edinburg, Texas. He sent money for my school and family. In 2005, he got sick (emphysema) and was placed in the hospital. My mother (Socorro Romero) and I had to come to the United States, because he didn't have any family in this country. Sadly, he passed away one week later. After he passed away, I tried to return to the university, but it was impossible because I needed to pay for my school and also give some money to my mother. So I had to leave and come to the USA for a job. At the beginning, I wanted enough money to finish my degree, but it was very difficult because I didn't speak any English. When I finally got that money for my degree, I went back to Mexico. However, destiny didn't want me to



Octavio Arreguin

return to my country, because my mother got diabetes. If I had a job in Mexico I could not pay for her medical treatment. I had to return to the USA, but this time I met a wonderful woman (Alecxis Gonzalez) who became my wife. My mind changed, because my wife is studying to become a Medical Assistant. Now I am learning English at OCCC, and I hope to get a degree in this country and give my family a better future. Now my family is in this wonderful country full of opportunities.

Octavio Arreguin
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Never Give Up Trying

(Edited for length)

I am from Jalisco, Mexico, my Name is Patricia Atilano and I am 28 years old. I have lived in the United States for 16 years.

When I was a girl my parents always talked of a

better life. My father said that being in the United States would work for our family. The living conditions in Mexico were very difficult. Our family was separated when my father came to the United States to work. Economically, it was better because my father sent us money. My father had the opportunity to buy a house for our family to come to the United States.

When we came to Oklahoma City by bus it took 24 hours. During our trip we were so scared because we had never traveled from our farm in Mexico. The border police asked questions and we were nervous. When we were able to answer all questions and showed them all of our documents, we were allowed to cross.

When we arrived in Oklahoma City we moved into the house. Compared to working hard on the farm and the other bad experiences in Mexico, this new experience was very welcoming. Now, I can go to

school and learn to speak English and feel great in my new country.

My goals are to learn English and to learn more about the United States. I also want to get my GED, my Driver's License, and my citizenship to help other people like me. I met my husband here in Oklahoma City and we have two daughters. Now my children will have a better life. I don't fear for the next generation because my children will learn Spanish and English and they will be good at both.

Patricia Atilano
OKC Family Literacy Program

I Love My Vocation!

My vocation as a teacher began when I helped my mom take care of my younger sisters and brothers. I was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and am the oldest of my siblings.

I graduated in my country from the National

Pedagogical University. After graduating, I worked as a teacher for a time, but it was very hard to find a job as a teacher because in Guanajuato there were many teachers. Then, thanks be to God, I got my residence and immigrated to United States.

Once I arrived, my friend told me I could never work as a teacher. I would read the newspaper looking for jobs in childcare. I would see names of places where they are working with children. I couldn't believe it.

One day I went to the Tony Reyes Bilingual Child Development Center and completed the application. Sometime after that the director asked me to come back for an interview. She also observed me working with children—this was part of the interview process.

I didn't have a personal phone, so I went to the store and called the director. She offered me the job and said I could start work on February 27, 2005. I felt

happy. I was lucky because I would work with children, infants, and toddlers.



A few months later, the director asked for my teaching certificate. She told me she wanted me to apply for another position as teacher of

Early Head Start (EHS). This position was in fact a higher calling. More importantly, I filled my application, then got the new position as Lead Teacher.

I was very happy because the education of EHS is so important for helping children in their early development—for their future.

I love my vocation!

Thanks be to God for my job!

Cipriana Ayala
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My New Life

I'm Esbeidy Benitez. I'm 37 years old. I lived in Zacazonapan Estado De Mexico, with my parents, for 18 years. My journey to the United States began when I went to Tijuana Baja California, Mexico, where I met my husband, Melecio.

We had a son, Eduardo, but my husband did not have a job, so he came to Oklahoma City. After one year, my husband earned enough to bring me and my son to the United States. When I came with my two year old son, we arrived in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, where we stayed for two days.

Later some men came to take my son to Texas. They looked like bad men. After a long night, it was time to cross the Rio Grande. We crossed by water in a tire with a boy that looked like a teenager. I slept in a safe house until a big truck, an 18 wheeler, came to get us.

We hid in secret spaces, between the beds of the truck. We crossed the border and arrived at my son's location. We came to Oklahoma City in a car. I spent a couple of months with my sister-in-law.

Since we have been in Oklahoma City, we bought a house, and now we have three children, Eduardo, Miguel Angel, and Melissa Joleth. They all attend school, here in Oklahoma City.

My goals are to learn English, so I can help my children, get my GED, and become a citizen of the United States.

Esbeidy Benitez
OKC Family Literacy Program

I Didn't Give Up and Now I'm a Citizen

(Edited for length)

My name is Lucy Camacho and I am from Zacatecas, Mexico. I came to the USA in my teens, and I lived

in a small town in California. I didn't speak much English then but I knew that it was very important to learn to speak English. I worked two jobs to make my own living, and I learned it the hard way....by listening.

My life changed when I married a wonderful man and we moved to Woodward. That is really where my story begins. After I married, we had two little boys. I heard about the ESL classes at night given by the Northwest Okla. Literacy Council, and I started to attend, but because my boys were so young, I had to stop going to class. I was very discouraged, and then the NWOLC gave me my own tutor....Betsy Baker. Betsy and my friend Ayda Rosales are my angels. They helped me improve my English and I was able to go to High Plains Technology Center in Woodward where I earned a license to have a children's day care.

I wasn't satisfied with the day care business, so I

closed it and enrolled at the Technology Center again and studied to be a Certified Nurse's Assistant. I passed the CNA test. I was so excited and grateful to Betsy and Ayda for all of their help. While I worked for a home health care agency, I kept studying with my tutor, and I decided to study for the citizenship test. I passed the citizenship test on May 8, 2015, and I am now waiting for my ceremony to become a citizen of the USA!

Lucy Camacho

Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council, Woodward

Why I Hope to Get My GED

There are many reasons I hope to get my GED. Many of which are very important. I hope to get my GED so I can go to college and make something of myself. I hope to get my GED so I can educate my kids. Also, I hope to get my GED so I will not go back to

what I used to do, that led to my incarceration due to selling drugs.

My dream is to go to college, but I know I can't go to college without my GED. I can't make the type of money I'm used to making unless I go to college. Going to college will help



me get the type of job that meets up to my standards. I was always told that knowledge is the key, and by going to college, it will help me obtain the knowledge I need.

I hope to get my GED so I can help educate my kids. My daughter will need help with her homework. However, without my GED, I won't be able to help her. I hope to get my GED so I can let my son know that one of the biggest mistakes of my life was not getting my GED. I figure getting my GED will help inspire my son to not drop out of school.

I want to get my GED so I will not go back to selling drugs. Selling drugs is what landed me in prison; however, getting my GED will give me the hope I need to walk a straight and narrow path. Another reason I don't want to sell drugs is that it would be embarrassing to my family.

I hope to get my GED for many reasons. By going to college, I will be able to help educate my kids. But most importantly, getting my GED will help me stay out of prison because I won't need to go back to selling drugs.

Vincent Carter
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

Finding My American Dream

(Edited for length)

The first time I came to the United States I was 16 years old. I took a bus to Reynosa, then we waited to cross the river. We had until midnight to cross

so they would not discover us. We crossed the river in a tire along with seven people. After we crossed, we walked for six hours. While walking, we saw the Border Patrol Officers and hid. We walked all day. It was very cold and I was very hungry. When we arrived in McAllen, Texas, a couple was waiting for us and they gave us food that night and we slept in their home.

Early the next morning we were taken to Houston, Texas. We had to pass another immigration checkpoint. We were told to hide under the suitcases. While I was hiding, I heard the officers talking. I was scared that they would discover me and I would be taken to jail. But thank God we crossed and I was happy. At the same time, I was very sad because my brother and sisters were still in Mexico.

When we arrived in Houston, my first husband was waiting for me. The couple called to him and asked him if he had the money. The cost for me was

\$2,500. He said “yes” and I saw my husband. I was very happy to see him.

My husband took me to McDonald’s. I was so happy. I got a hamburger, French fries, and something to drink. I am so happy to be here because of the many opportunities that I have here, as well as for my little girl.

I am sometimes sad because I can’t go to Mexico when a member of my family has died or is sick. But I am very, very happy to be in the United States.

Fabiola Ceballos
OKC Family Literacy Program

I Like Reading

I like reading very much! We all know that reading has a lot of benefits.

First of all, from some readings, we can broaden our horizon and our outlook. We may know this world in a better way.

Secondly, as for a student, we can enrich our knowledge from reading a large number of books, such as history, geography, or physics books.

Thirdly, reading can cultivate the habit of thinking, which makes us smarter. Reading has a great many other advantages. It is wise for us to develop the habit of reading.

I like reading, because reading books is very important. It makes you a qualified person and makes your life enjoyable. One is never too old to learn! You are never too old to live your dream! No matter what time you realize the importance of reading books, you can enjoy it during the rest of your lifetime.

Reading teaches us skills. There are so many books about how to learn a certain language, how to get a good job, how to become popular in your circle, how to cook and so forth. These kinds of books can make us more skillful, so we do certain things.



By reading, we can learn different kinds of things, how things happen, and how to avoid bad things from happening. Reading is a good way to improve literacy and writing skills. Before you learn to write, you must know how others write. Reading helps us become self-confident, that would be beneficial to our whole life. You may find great charm and benefits of reading!

Love books, for they are your best friends! We can find lots of benefits and fun through reading. Reading can help us be forever young!

YanYan Chen

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Looking for a Better Life

I am Yuliza Cisneros. I am 24 years old. I left my

country because I want a better life and future for my daughter and better opportunities for my family. I traveled 15 hours to get to the border. When we presented our passports, it took 3 hours. The bus we rode on went off and left us, so we had to get another bus, which took over an hour. It took us about 4 hours to leave, because my husband had to find another bus.

After we found another bus, we left for Oklahoma City. It took us 30 hours to get here. It was a long, hard ride.

I choose the United States because the opportunities are much better here. Much better jobs for a better life for my family,

My goals are to learn English, get my GED, and become a citizen of the United States. I want to also bring my parents to the United States so they can be with me and my family and be happy.

I want to achieve my goals, learn to speak English, and have a career and a better future for my family, here in the United States.

Yulisa Cisneros
OKC Family Literacy Program

First Time in America

(Edited for length)

My name is Amy. I want to tell you the story of when I came to America. In 2006 with the help of my friend, I met my future husband Brian. In 2008 my son and I came to America. I married Brian and made a new family.

Speaking English is very difficult for me. I can only speak a little English. I remember when I came to America; the next day my husband told me, “We have to go somewhere to do something.” But I didn’t understand. When I saw him get a suitcase I thought we were going on vacation. So I said, “Yes.” We drove

for about three hours. We arrived in a city called Eureka Springs. A lot of people were waiting on us. Turns out they were waiting for my wedding. Because of our communication issues I didn't know about this huge event. I didn't think we were going to have a wedding that soon. It had me very much unprepared.



Amy Cleveland

One day my husband's customer came to visit us. He complemented me by saying, "You look like you are 18." I said, "Thank you very much but I am 14." He looked shocked! My husband replied, "*No! No! She is 40!*" Then the customer laughed. I felt embarrassed. I meant to say 40 but I said 14 instead.

My language problems give me a lot of trouble. For example, it is hard for me to get a job and a license. Through six years of hard work, I have gotten a job,

my driver's license, and I can communicate better. I want to keep working hard to improve my English language skills. Now I have a teacher at the Creek County Literacy Program in Sapulpa. Her name is Carolyn Mathews.

Amy Cleveland
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

Never Give Up

Since my last story was written in the book *Celebrating Our Journey*, I have been active with my learning through the literacy program as well as being busy with my family life.

Now that I can read much better, I feel more in control of my life and with my family. When my wife sends me to the store with her list, I don't mind since I can read the labels with ease now without any problems.

When we have our grandchildren come to see us

on the weekends, I seem to enjoy them more because I feel I can teach them different things to do to keep them busy. I feel more confident in doing this since I can read better. I encourage them to do well in school and make good grades. I believe this is an important thing to teach children.

I am now meeting with another tutor and student together. I encourage him not to give up on the literacy program and to keep meeting with his tutor in order to better his reading skills so he can feel more confident with his life.



Billy Colson

Sometimes I meet with new tutors and talk with them about how to help new students feel more comfortable coming to the literacy program for the first time. I also tell the new tutors how I started out in the literacy program and where I am today

with my learning, and that I still need help from the tutor I have now.

If I had anything to tell anyone, it would be to keep on learning. Whatever you do in life, never, never give up on yourself. Keep on learning something new every day.

Billy Colson

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

The Life of Do Trung Kien Do

I was born June 11, 1955, in a coastal city named Nhatrang in South Vietnam.

I have two brothers and five sisters. After completion of Nguyendu High School, I served my country, which was in civil war. I worked as a technician and fixed airplane engines during the Vietnam War for three years. I was only 17 years old at the time. In 1975, the war ended. Many people left Vietnam

by boat and came to America. We were losing and many people were taken prisoner.

I faced many difficulties in life. I lived in poverty and had no job, money, or food. Many people in Vietnam were hungry and out of work.



Do Trung Kien Do

I started my own small business of collecting used machine parts and used clothing for resale. It made very little money, not enough to survive.

So, I started another job at the same time. I got a job in a company entertainment business. There, I assembled projectors and sound systems for movie theaters. I worked there for 10 years.

Now, I am 60 years old, and I am learning a new life in America. Here, the English language and finding

a job are my biggest challenges. I hope my life will be better for my family and me.

Do Trung Kien Do
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My New Life Takes Courage and Gives Me Hope

Before I went to school, my mom and dad tried to help me learn to speak clearly and get ready to learn to read. (I already knew how to tie my shoes.) They tried hard, but they couldn't help me.

I started school in a little town called Yeager in the Head Start program. I went through 4th Grade there. Then I came to Holdenville to Park View Grade School, Thomas Middle School, and Holdenville High School. I had a good time in school. I went for 13 years in Hughes County. I have many pictures of school days showing how the teachers tried to

help me learn to read, too, but it was still hard for me to read.

My senior year was full of special times: Senior Tea, Prom, Graduation, and a senior trip to Texas on a fancy bus with TV to spend a day at Six Flags Amusement Park. We had dinner at Chili's restaurant. I had many good friends. Learning to sing in the High School choir helped me speak more clearly, and it was fun besides. But it was still hard for me to read.

Now that I have graduated, my Dad has found a reading tutor for me through a program at the library and the Wes Watkins Technology Center. We work together two or three times a week. It is different to work with a tutor. I have to keep up with my own books and tell the tutor if I can't come to a lesson. I don't ride a school bus to my lessons.

It is different, but I like it. I am becoming a better reader all the time.

Cassie Dupree

Grace M. Pickens Public Library Reading Assistance Program, Holdenville

Never Too Late

I am really grateful for having the opportunity to retake my school education.



Georgina Fabela

I got married when I was too young, so I decided to stop my education to take care of my family. After seventeen years my three children have grown up, and one more time, I had the great opportunity to return to school. Two and a half years ago I enrolled at the OCCC Family and Community Education Center to learn more English, and I started in the intermediate classes. They helped me

have more confidence. Then I decided to continue working hard to get American citizenship and I happily achieved one of my goals. After that I continued my education and started GED classes. Again, I studied hard to try to accomplish my goal. Now I am in the TOEFL classes, and I hope to continue forward to become a pediatric nurse.

Thank you Heavenly Father for staying by my side, thanks to my family for supporting me, thanks to my Mom and friends for motivating me to continue learning, and thanks to all of my good teachers for their valuable time.

I would like to tell everyone who hopes to progress, to never give up. All dreams can be achieved, just focus on it and work hard.

Georgina Fabela
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope for Me and My Family

I am optimistic for me and my family. My husband and I have three children, ages 14, 8, and 4 years old, and we all live in Altus. Because of my job, English tutoring, and schooling for our children, I am happy for our life and future days.



Isela Fernandez

Since I grew up in Mexico, I know the Spanish language. In 2008 I came to Texas for two years and now in Oklahoma for the past five years. I needed to learn English. I came to the Great Plains Literacy Council in 2011 for tutoring. I even wrote a story that year that was selected for the *Celebrating Our Journey, Volume 7*. Because of some jobs at restaurants and the birth of our son, I have not been able to go to all the classes. Now I'm back with my tutor Aleida and I'm hoping to learn more English.

For the past three years, I have been doing housecleaning part-time. I am glad to have extra money to help with family expenses. All the homeowners speak English only, so I am able to talk with them even with my limited English. My hopes are to get more houses to clean because I am honest, trustworthy, and am a hard worker.

My hopes for my one daughter and two sons are for them to stay in school and learn. In Mexico I finished high school and stopped college after two years. I hope they will continue in Spanish and English and also in continuing their education.

Hope is part of my dreams for my future as well as for my family. English literacy classes, housecleaning jobs, and schooling for my children give me hope today and tomorrow.

Isela Fernandez

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Hope for a Better Life

You hope for change, to get a better place in your life, to see the picture clearer, to understand and have knowledge of what's in front of you. You never know you've changed until you see the things around you change.

Everybody in my family has their GED, good jobs, and lives in homes that they own with little to no worries at all. Fear took my mind off my GED and put me around people that didn't want to do well for themselves. I see that and also how my family used to look at me, so I sat down, and thought, and hoped for change. But how could I do this when the people that are around me didn't want to?

I took the courage and went to my family and asked for help, more of an understanding, of what I'm doing wrong and what needs to be done. My mother sat me down and told me, "You fear the only thing that can give you a better life." The answer to your

question is to remove your fear and replace it with hope, and you will find the knowledge to reach your goal.

I removed myself from friends, family, and put my face in the books. For months my mind grew clear. I started understanding better, feeling better, and I wanted more. Then it started getting hard, so hard that I lost my understanding. Fear was coming back because I didn't know how to ask the next person for the help that I needed. My mind was racing, running a wild mile a minute. I stopped thinking and just hoped for the best and to do what was right and continue my journey to reach my goal.

Weeks later a change came into my life. I no longer have the fear. I am going to get my GED which will open up doors to a successful life. I've learned that hope is you, and it is inside you. As long as you

have hope in yourself, nothing can stop you. Only you can change you.

Kenneth Ferrel
FCI EL Reno Literacy program

My Story



Liz Franco

I'm 28 years old from Mexico. I was 12 years old when I came to live in California. I didn't speak English. I didn't understand anyone. I felt very sad and was sometimes scared.

When my father died, I was 10 (my brother was 13). We needed to work to help my mother, so I did not go to school.

My first job was babysitting at age 12. At 15, I met a wonderful American couple and they helped me enroll in high school. I went for ninth and part of

tenth grade. I left school because it was too hard to live on my brother's salary.

My new job was processing food. I worked there for 7 years. Then I married and stayed home to raise my children. In 2013 my family moved to Oklahoma.

Early on was terrible for me. My mother's doctor and my son's school didn't have anyone who spoke Spanish. I was very unhappy. Then I found Rogers County Literacy Council. Thanks to God they helped me and put me with the best teacher I've ever met. Lee Brashear has patience and dedication.

Today I help my son with his homework. I understand my mother's doctor. When I go to the store, I speak with the cashier. I'm very happy now. I want to learn more English so I'll have better opportunities. I want to fulfill all the dreams I had the day I left Mexico. One of my goals is to become an American citizen. I'm striving every day for that.

Thanks to the council and Lee, I will have a bet-

ter future in this country. I hope other people who think they cannot learn English will find help as I did. If you are dedicated, you can learn English. *It's not easy, but not impossible!*

Liz Franco

Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Butterflies

The best thing about learning to read in English is I can read different types of books. I read a book about butterflies. I learned some interesting facts about butterflies.

Butterflies are insects with large wings, and they have great beauty that identifies them. These beautiful flying insects have their wings covered with small scales that give the color characteristics of each species.

Butterflies live in almost all environments with vegetation.

Most butterflies are tropical, although some are found in the very north, and others live in the mountains. One of the best known butterflies is the Monarch Butterfly. The Monarch is especially known for its long annual migration. They migrate south from August to October and migrate north in the spring.

The extraordinary variety of colors, metallic reflections, and the velvety softness of these insects bring out the elegance of their flight. I love blue butterflies, as they symbolize transformation and represent freedom. They owe their colors to the flowers. They are also symbols of peace, love, and happiness.

Odys Galen
New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

A Better Life

I was born in 1968 in the small town of Laguna, Seca Fresnillo, Zacatecas, Mexico. I started school

in 1974. There was only one elementary school; but, I wanted to keep on studying. I studied middle school and high school in Fresno City. It is ten

miles from my hometown. I rode my bicycle to school every day for seven years.



When I graduated from high school, I stopped studying. In Fresno City there were no uni-

versities. In Zacatecas City there was one university, but it was far away—about 70 miles—and my parents didn't have money to live in the city. In 1988, I got my first job. It was in construction. This was a hard job. I had to work to pay bills because I am from a big family. I am the third oldest of 14 siblings.

In 1991, I met my wife. A few months later we got married. After that, my big brother called me from Oklahoma City. When we arrived, I got a job a week

later. We went to a church to give thanks to God. God blessed us. In 1997 we bought our own house. Today we have peace and harmony at home. My children attend school. I told them that when I was young, I wanted to go to the university but didn't have the opportunity. I also told them that America is a land of opportunity and if they go to college, they are going to have a better life than their parents had. My daughter studies at OCCC. I give thanks to God for His blessings. Finally, I understood what my brother said. In the United States, when you work hard and obey the rules, you have a better life.

Ezekiel Garay
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope

It was very scary for me, when I was asked to read a paragraph in a loud voice in front of my classmates. The main reason for that was because I was afraid

that all of them may start laughing at me. Because I am an English language learner I have a problem with the way that I pronounce words. But after a few months I became more confident and more proud of myself.

I'm not only learning more English every single day, but I have a place where I'm learning it. I would proudly say that even in prisons you may someday be able to meet your guardian angel. That's the new name that I will use every single time that I pronounce the name of my teacher. Thanks to her dedication and charming way of teaching, she patiently explains every single detail on how to increase our skills or abilities, and teaches us how to spell and pronounce words correctly.

So I would like to say to someone who wants to learn how to read and write English correctly, "Never give up." Constantly keep trying until you reach your

goal. Hope and perseverance are the tools that can guide you to a successful life style.

Gonzalez
Lakeside School, Granite

Hope to Learn English

My name is Alvaro Guzman. I came to the USA a long time ago. I study English at OCCC. I started two years ago. In the past, I wanted to study by myself, because it was difficult for me to go to school as I worked too many hours. However, I have a new job, and now have time to go to school. I enjoy school because it's better to be bilingual. It is with hope that the teacher will assist me in learning English. Mrs. Elizabeth is a very nice teacher and has the knowledge to help me learn. I want to learn



Alvaro Guzman

English to get a better job and support my mother, as my dad died three months ago. I feel more responsibility now, and need to go to school to be able to take care of my mother. I hope to help my mother and family live better lives by learning English.

Alvaro Guzman
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Things About My Family and My Country

My name is Bhey. I'm from Ecuador. I have two daughters. My oldest daughter's name is also Bhey. She is a dentist. She is married to Dennys who is a Marine. They also live in Ecuador. They have a little boy named Dennys, named after his father. I became a grandmother in 2010. My youngest daughter Vanessa lives in OKC. She is currently working on her Master's in Public Administration at UCO in Edmond. I worked as a science teacher for

25 years in Ecuador. While doing my doctorate in Biochemistry and Pharmacy, I taught high school. I was a high school teacher for 25 years. I also co-owned a pharmacy in Ecuador where I worked for 20 years.

I came to the United States eight years ago. When I came to Oklahoma City, I decided to improve my life by doing the following four things: 1) getting a job 2) studying English 3) getting my driver's license, and 4) becoming an U.S Citizen. Currently, I'm studying English at Oklahoma City Community College. I am in an intermediate-level course. I study two nights a week: Tuesday and Thursday. My class is from 6 PM to 9 PM. My teacher is Mr. Anthony Tyrrell. I like his class; it's fun and dynamic. Finally, I hope to improve my English and learn to speak English much more fluently.

Bhey Hidalgo

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope Never Ends

When I was a young man in Taiwan, I was able to see the American way of life. I worked at the mili-



Robert Hu

tary base and had hoped to come to America before 1980. That desire to learn the new language and customs, to better communicate with others, and to have better health have been my lifetime goals.

I started as a co-owner of a Chinese food restaurant in Wichita Falls, Texas, one year later. I moved to Altus, Oklahoma to own the Polynesian Garden Restaurant. I knew I needed to learn the English language, but worked very hard in the restaurant business for 33 years. That was seven days a week for 13 hours a day! So the English I learned was from only talking to customers. Since I retired, I have been able to have one-to-one tutoring at the Altus

Public Library. Now I am able to learn new words and to improve my speaking and understanding.

Communicating with my family and friends in America is important. My tutoring is helping me say the English words better. When I talk on the phone, I want to say the words clearly. I am trying to improve my conversation by better listening, writing, and reading.

I have learned that good health makes life more enjoyable. At the library, my wife and I have completed the “Fresh Start” nutrition and cooking classes and the “Eat Better, Move More” meetings. I walk over 10,000 steps daily for exercise.

Learning English better, speaking more English every day, and taking care of my body gives me hope for today and tomorrow.

Robert Hu

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

The Hope of Surgery

Anh Vu was an eight-year-old boy born with ptosis (the falling of the upper eyelid in his right eye, causing the individual not to see clearly) who lived in Long Ho district, Vinh Long Province. At school, he was always teased by his classmates for having ptosis and had problems academically.

His family lived in poverty as his father was a taxi driver and his mother made plastic baskets for a local company. Anh Vu's mother worried about her son growing up in similar conditions due to his eye problems.

"I wish I could do something for my son," she said with a broken voice a day before the operation. She always wanted to take her son to the hospital, but surgery was too expensive. One day she heard the news on the local television regarding a free eye treatment. She took her son to Vinh Long Social

Disease Prevention Centre (SDPC), to undergo the eye surgery.

Before the operation, Anh Vu was extremely nervous. He did not let go of his mother, and kept crying and asking to go back home. It pained his mother to see her son cry, but the future was going to be brighter so she convinced her son to have the surgery. She comforted him and expressed her love towards her son. Vu agreed to go to have the surgery after thirty minutes of comforting and persuading. The eye surgery was a success and a milestone for Vu, his family, and the doctors. Thanks goes to Dr. Truong Hoang Nam, a pediatric surgeon of the Phu Yen Eye Hospital.

Vu returned home and can now play his favorite games of hide and seek with his cousins. Now he can study and fulfill his dream of becoming a doctor, and help others just like him.

Hope

I grew up in a poor family in Africa—North Sudan. I'm the oldest of eight. My parents worked real hard to support us, but didn't make enough money for us to go to school. When I was thirteen, we moved to Egypt because my parents wanted a better life. I started school but never knew how to read because my parents didn't have time to teach us. I tried so hard but could never focus in the classroom. Then we moved to America. I was fifteen and put in sixth grade. I was scared to go to the classroom because I couldn't read like my classmates. When the teacher called me, I refused to get up because I didn't want the kids to laugh at me. I didn't know what to do and struggled with it for a long time. Later, I just gave up and started looking for a job.

I worked in housekeeping for 3 ½ years. Finally, I decided to go back to school. When I was twenty, I attended Job Corps and was there for 1 ½ years. The

teacher worked hard with me, helping me get my H.S. diploma. I went back to work again doing housekeeping. When I was 24, I became pregnant. I worked until I had my baby, a beautiful girl named Zayla. She's everything I hoped for, but I knew I needed to get more education to better myself and keep her from going through what I have. As a single mother, I ended up at OIC. Reading is still a challenge for me and I struggle because of it. At OIC, I'm challenging myself more, telling myself I can do this. I'm working on my spelling and reading without embarrassment, pushing myself to learn and get what I need.



Hiba Ismail

Hiba Ismail

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

The Hope for Tomorrow

Yesterday, the rain came down from the sky. What a muggy day! My, my, my!

This is a day that you stay inside, watching TV, and giving the children piggyback rides.

Some of the movies that we watched this day would make us sad, while others were horrible and that made us mad.

After watching TV, it was time to eat.

We sat down at the table for a delicious treat of pinto beans, fried chicken, sweet potatoes, and collard greens.

Finally, it is time for us to go to bed. So we get on our knees and bow our heads.

We say a prayer, thanking God for this day—because God made it possible for us, anyway.

We wake up to a better day. No rain is coming down—it has gone away.

The sun is shining so pretty and bright! It woke the children, with all of that light!

As they jump out of bed to put on their clothes, one of the boys hit the other in the nose.

It did not hurt the boy, nor did it make him cry, because he is a tough little guy.

They went outside and started running around, playing football, and rolling all over the ground.

They stayed outside all day long, while I stayed inside, playing Gospel songs.

Then, it became time for hot dogs and chips. So I went to the door, with my hands on my hips.

Yelling, to tell them to come inside and wash their hands—those boys were dirty from playing in all of that sand!

Once again, the time has come for us to sleep.

We kiss each other good night and fall asleep as quiet as sheep.

Wow! Tomorrow is coming! Just you wait and see. Another great day, as we hoped it would be.

Diane Jackson
OKC Family Literacy Program

Children Have Hope Today

I am a mother of four adult children, grandmother of four children, wife of my husband Leut for the past 34 years, a school custodian for 12 years, and an adult ESL learner for the past three years. Because of all these reasons, I have hope for children today.

I am so happy to have grandchildren. I can see how their parents love and provide for them. Their ages are 10, 8, 3, and 2 years old. The two older children

are able to go to school. These grandchildren show kindness and love to all their family.

Since I am a custodian at the Washington Elementary School, my hours are from 7 AM to 3:30 PM with young children. I like working around so many young boys and girls, ages 4 to 11. My job is to keep the



Bonnie Keochanthanivong

school clean and safe for everyone, especially the students. Schools can be places for germs, so daily I sanitize, mop, sweep, and help clean up any accidents. I hope I can be a good influence on the children.

I have lots of time to see how children are learning today. Schools now are full of many learning opportunities that I never got. Books with colored pictures, computers, library time to learn, and good

teachers are ways education gives hope to the future of my grandchildren and other children.

Bounthone (Bonnie) Keochanthanivong
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Just 30 Minutes Before My Daughter's Birthday

In 1996 my husband came to the United States to a church meeting. After visiting his family, he went back home. Two years later, he got a visa to come to the U.S. I stayed in Cuba with my two daughters. After 11 months and 28 days, I was at home when two men came to my house. They were coming from the government. One of them told me that it had been close to one year since my husband left and he couldn't come back home to live with us. I was so sad! I prayed to God to help me!

One week later, my husband called me from the U.S. He only told me not to worry and, "You need to

come to the U.S. too.” He did all the paperwork for immigration. Immigration approved all of it. My daughter Magvis’s birthday is April 8. When I got my papers from immigration, she was 20 years old. I only had one month to get her visa. She needed to come to the U.S. before she was 21.



Ines Kindelan

By April 4, I got all her papers ready. I only had 3 days to buy a ticket. I went to different offices in Havana trying to find a ticket to the U.S. All tickets were sold, but my faith was strong. I prayed to God for a miracle. Later a lady told me she couldn’t do anything. I told her that I wasn’t going anywhere until I could buy a ticket. The phone rang, the lady answered, she looked at me and said she had a ticket. My daughter got here April 7 at 11:30 PM, just 30 minutes before her birthday.

My family has been blessed immensely in the U.S. God always answers our prayers.

Ines Kindelan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Life Story

When I was little girl I wanted to follow my dreams of being a model with an outstanding life and perfect family. However, when I was fifteen, people would laugh and put me down to where I struggled with my self-esteem and didn't want to follow my dreams.

By the time I was in high school, I found something I enjoyed that helped me deal with my problems—running track. It made me feel like nobody could put me down, as if I ran all my problems away. Things were going well until I became pregnant at eighteen. I was scared and had lots of things going on in my head. Then on December 9, 2011, when my son was born, I was glad he came. It changed

me. I became stronger, not wanting my son to have the same struggles that I did. After having him, I went back to school, but I hated being categorized by other students. I ended up dropping-out and began working full time. I really liked my job and wasn't worried about attending school again.



Tamala Kirk

Meanwhile, I was expecting my second child. This time I knew what to do and was better prepared. I told the father who had been through everything with me and he was happy. After my second child's birth, I got a good job at O.U. Medical, but was laid off a year later. During this time I became pregnant with my third child at twenty-one.

Now I am going back to school to try and get my GED so I can give my kids a better life. My mother

did the best she could to raise us. She and my kids give me hope to go on in life and follow my dreams.

Tamala Kirk

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

A Miracle

When I was a child, I went to the pond to play with my brother and my friends. We climbed up to the tree to pick some fruit to eat. But suddenly the branch crashed and I fell into the pond. At that time I didn't know how to swim, so I started drowning. My brother saw me sink. He jumped in to rescue me, but he didn't know how to swim either, so both of us were drowning. My friends saw us and they screamed for help. But in that neighborhood, nobody knew how to swim because "we lived in the mountains."

Luckily for us, an elder man drove by and saw us. He jumped in to help. My mom told us we were

very lucky to be alive because, when rescued, I was almost dead and my brother was in danger. But God saved us. I was alive a few minutes later and my brother felt ok a few days after.

Now I believe in God for saving my family.

Quyen Lang
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope

My first son had a cough. The cough did not stop. After all this, we went to the pediatric hospital. The doctor said “His lungs don’t sound good. Go to the big hospital right away!” I was very embarrassed.

We went to the big hospital. I felt afraid because I did not speak English. After a while the nurse took him to a small room. After several checks, the doctor said he had a “Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).” At first, I did not understand what he was saying. Even though he said it slowly for me, I still didn’t

understand everything. There was no Korean interpreter (or machine) in this hospital.

After that, the nurses had him checked day and night—under continual observation. My son was very attached to the respiratory device. I thought “this situation arose because of me. I didn’t take proper care of him.”

This situation was difficult for me. It drove me to complete exhaustion. For a week, my son received the treatment very well. I felt he was really patient. He did not cry or grumble. My son was proud. Around the end of treatment, I slowly became worried about the treatment bill.

After all the treatment, the hospital bill of almost \$3 million came out.

Fortunately, as soon as I arrived in the United States, I had gotten some child insurance to help one of my children’s aunts who lives in New York. I didn’t have

to pay any fee. This insurance was for low-income earners. Because I was a student, I was eligible to register. After insurance coverage, total hospital charges were \$0.00. I sometimes tell my son, “Do not forget the help of the United States.” I knew the U.S. was the country for the weak.

Thank you, God! Thank you, America!

Ji Sun Lee

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My New Start

(Edited for length)

I came to America nine years ago, because I was living with an abusive man in Mexico. I had to put some distance between us. My journey started in a bus in Culiacan Sinaloa, Mexico. The bus ride was 16 hours to the border. When I got there, I had some problems because I forgot to bring proof of my address. I also needed to get my permit to enter

into the United States. So, the immigration officer told me I could not enter.

I walked through the desert back to the city I had just left. I waited a long time for my dad to send me a fax verifying my address. When I took the documentation back to the immigration patrol officer, he gave me permission to enter the United States. I then took the shuttle bus to Arizona to visit my sister. My life changed because when I was in Mexico I did not have a job. But In Arizona I started to work and I didn't mind working hard.

Even though I loved Mexico, I really love America because of the opportunities I have been given. Now I am happy because I have a beautiful family. I have a new husband and two children. Now, my life is worth living because of my family. I am now learning English so I can get a better job to help my family.

While I was writing about my journey I lost my dad. He died and I could not go to Mexico because my

tourist Visa had expired. I am really sad because I cannot see my dad anymore. I really miss all my friends and family in Mexico but I know this is the best place for me and my family.

Marissa Lopez
OKC Family Literacy Program

The Best Thing About Learning to Read

The best thing about learning to read is the ability to learn about anything else once you know how to read. For example, if you are interested in space travel, fitness, or tarot card reading, all you have to do is go to the library and find a book about the subject to learn all that you want. It can lead you to become knowledgeable in any subject under the sun.

There are a lot of other advantages to becoming literate as well. Reading books can be entertaining, newspapers are informative, while magazines can

be both. You could find a new hobby from reading, like golf or running. You could also read warning signs at work or in public areas. Signs such as caution high voltage, no smoking, or hard hats required, are important to observe.

Life is very difficult for illiterate people. Not being



able to read letters or other mail that is sent to you is a problem.

Also, not being able to read some restaurant menus (without pictures), or public warning signs such as “lane merges in 1 mile” could be very embar-

rassing and/or frustrating, as well as dangerous.

All of the above is why I recommend to anyone who cannot read, to learn to read immediately. The world will open up and you will never regret your decision.

Daniel Lott
Lakeside School, Granite

Growing Old Together

I would have liked to grow old with you,

Each morning look at one another face to face; and
be thankful for a new day.

But was it destiny? I do not know. Was it you; was
it me? Perhaps both.

Thinking now, I remember.

Fighting for your eyes so you do not look at me.

While on the horizon, leaves are falling in the bot-
tom of my soul.

My heart strikes in the evening shade. I am miss-
ing my deepest yearnings.

The time of love comes in old age.

And I keep my light alive for your face; the light
descends in your voice, strong waves strike my illu-
sions.

I offered you many clear days,

I gave you unconditional love every day; I wanted
both of us to see

Flowering plants, nesting sites, and future dreams.

What did we do? We lost everything.

We never got together and never traveled to infinity

To experience our final destiny.

Nubia Maez

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Hope

My hope is for my country Iraq to return to what
we were in the past. There were various religions
who practiced their prayers and concepts in their
homes, then interacted with each other with respect
of other's religion.

We are the same in God eyes. We are his beloved

creatures. Our attitude within ourselves and people; this is most important to God and people.

I hope the law comes back and punishes the criminals who didn't obey the government rules. I desire to have returned our historic monuments that were stolen. I hope and look forward to our builders rebuilding and cleaning the country, with all the trash removed from the streets.

We need to form a new strong army like we had in the past to protect our boundaries. We need to be free to think as we want and release our mind, and thoughts to practice what we like to do.

I hope my country stops the division and unites our land and wealth.

I hope my country exports our dates, because we

have the most fruitful date palms; so the universe will know all our 500 kinds of dates.

Wisal Abdl Majeed
OCCC Adult Learning Center

Hope For a Better Life

Having lived in St. Lucia for 36 years, I wanted a better life. St. Lucia is a small island country in the Caribbean Sea. I had a desire to leave my native land. Leaving St. Lucia gave me a chance to travel, to improve my education, and try to get a job.

In 2011, I was able to leave St. Lucia. I flew to New York City to visit my sister and mom. Compared to my hometown of Castries with 60,000 people, it was a very crowded city. Then I flew to Orlando, Florida, to see my dad. It had beautiful coasts like St. Lucia. Then I traveled to Altus, Oklahoma, and I thought it was the middle of nowhere! Now I am enjoying living in this small town compared to my country.

My hope in leaving my native country was to have more education. Most children can only attend school up to sixth grade. Then, a test determines if one can go on to secondary school. Only two chances are given to advance. I was never allowed to continue my stud-



Whitney Marcellin

ies as I had trouble with the English testing. I grew up with the French “Kweyol” language. Now I have studied and passed the driver’s license test, go to GED adult education classes at career tech, and am tutored in English at the Altus Public Library. I am glad education is more available than in my home country.

When I came to America, I hoped to get a job. St. Lucia offered low wages and limited work. I am now employed full-time as an assistant cook at a local nursing home in Altus. I have worked there

for two years. I am hoping to get my GED so I can get a better job.

Whitney Marcellin
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Hard Work Always Pays Off!

My name is Clara Moody. I am 44 years old and have lived in a Group Home since the death of my parents. I have been working with my Pawhuska Literacy Council tutor, Leeanna Boe, for about 3 years now. My goal was learn how to read simple labels, instructions, recipes, mail, and bills, in hopes that I could eventually move into my own home.

I've worked very hard and learned a lot! I practiced reading cooking instructions on frozen food cartons, simple recipes, and laundry labels on my clothes. Soon after, I began cooking, doing my own laundry, and cleaning at the group home. Eventually, I took the big step and stopped by Osage County

Housing Authority and asked for a housing application!

I took my application to Leeanna, and together, she and I filled it out. This took more than I was expecting because I had to gather a lot of information for the application. I needed my income information, 3 let-



Clara Moody

ters of references (that had to be notarized!), and copies of my birth certificate, picture i.d., and Social Security card. Once I got everything gathered and ready, I turned in my application and waited.

After a couple months, I received a letter from the Housing Authority stating they had a 1 bedroom apartment available for me! I was so excited! This had been my long term goal. I had worked so hard for this, and it was finally coming true!

I have lived in my new apartment *all alone* for a few

months now. I cook my own meals, do my own laundry and house cleaning, and do all my shopping! I still run into things here and there that I need help with, but overall, *I'm doing great!*

Clara Moody
Pawhuska Literacy Council

While You Are Young

When you are young you don't think clearly. The only thing in your mind is to have fun and nothing more. You stop listening to your parent's advice. If you study it's going to be something that is going to help all your life, but you'll never listen until it is too late. I did that so much during my life. I have done so many things that I regret. Dropping out would be one, but life goes on and you try to do what you couldn't before. Up until now, I have felt like things have not been very good for me. My mind and heart have been filled with negative thoughts. I have ded-

icated my life to my children, making sure that they have what they need. I always forget to think about myself, but now I have decided that I'll do something that I will be proud of. Now I have time for myself. I want to take this opportunity that God has given me, and do something good for my future and my family.

My first goal would be to learn how to speak proper English well and try to speak without having shame or embarrassment to speak it with other people. That is something that has kept me from learning. Another reason I did not speak English was because I feel afraid people don't understand me. And the second goal was to push forward and take my GED and then try to finish a short career. I hope and strive to meet my goals, as well as reading and writing well in English.

Brenda Moreno
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope of Getting the Best Education

When I finished middle school in Mexico, my mother wanted me to look for work due to our economic issues. I wanted to study and finish high school, so I enrolled in the next level. I told her, “I don’t think they have a job for me, because of my age. I need to study and finish high school. I want to enroll in the next level.” One of my neighbors convinced my mother to allow me to try and pass the test, as many of the applicants fail. However, I wanted to go to school and they accepted me. My mother got sad, because she could not make money from me. She was going to have to spend three more years on me. My neighbor encouraged my mother to support me due to my desire to study.

My father had passed away and life was full of worries and problems. My brother did not want to assist my family and only wanted to be with his friends.

With four children and not having a job, my mother's hope was on me, because I finished school. My brothers had quit middle school. After I finished school, I took the first job I could find, cleaning offices near my house.



Griselda Moreno

The secretary heard about me finishing school, and encouraged me to find a different job where I could apply my knowledge, get practice, and experience. She encouraged me to get a college degree to be somebody in life. College is difficult, but hopefully one day I will finish

Griselda Moreno
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope of a Miracle

My name is Noelia Moreno. I have lived in Oklahoma

City for 21 years. I have two daughters. Ruby is twenty years old and Daisy, sixteen.

In 2012, it was a hard year for our family. Ruby was eighteen years old. On May 18, she graduated from High School. We were happy because she was ready for college and she had a lot of dreams. On May 20, she didn't feel good. We went to the hospital and she was diagnosed with cancer. Our lives changed completely. At night my husband and I couldn't sleep. I couldn't imagine how my daughters felt in their rooms. When we went to see the oncologist, she was crying. She told me, "I'm scared." I told her that I was also scared, but we believe in God. He has everything in his hands. The first biopsy was bad. The surgeon came to us with a sad face and told us, "Sorry, your daughter has the worst cancer, and we can do nothing. She has a tumor around the aorta." I called my family, friends, and my church. I asked for prayers and fasting. Everyone did as requested.

The following week, we went to the oncologist again. He told us that he did not know what happened, but everything changed. She needed another biopsy. When the surgeon came, he had a smile and told me, “I don’t know what happened, but she had the best cancer now.” I answered, “God changes diagnoses when people pray.” The treatment was hard with chemotherapy and radiation. God made the miracle. She is well. She is a survivor. It was difficult for Daisy, as well. God is good, and He is everything for my family and I.

Noelia Moreno

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope In the Future

Hope to me means that you want to become more of who you are, that nothing can stand in the way of who you want to become. You face and complete

every goal you have, and no one can make you stop doing what is best for you.

What would it take for me to have hope? Setting



some goals like getting my GED and going to college to further my education to get a degree. This would make me a proud parent, and help me in finding a good job to help with my future and kids.

Finishing school would help me find out who I am and where I want to be in life. Setting goals will help me by not letting anything get in my way of becoming the woman that I am. Staying focused and completing all my goals will help me get a GED and, hopefully, a degree. If I put that first, no one can stand in the way of my future.

Christian Merritt

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Don't Ever Judge At the First Look

Three years ago, my family and I moved to the United States. I was sitting next to the airplane's window, and I could see it was a sunny day in November. As the plane was landing, a terrible scene appeared in my eyes. All the trees were dead. I thought if big trees cannot survive in the USA, how can I? That thought stayed in my head for a long time.

Finally, the airplane landed, and I had a lot of things on my mind: getting our bags off the plane, going through immigration—all the things required when you enter a new country. I was excited and could not wait to run outside and see the new country where I will spend my life. When I walked outside, I immediately ran back, the weather was extremely cold. I couldn't understand how it could be so cold on such a sunny day?

My previous thought about the “dead trees” came

back, and I was scared the whole time during the ride back to my grandparents' house. My uncle saw that I was worried; he asked, "What is wrong?" I asked him all the questions I wanted to know. He explained those trees were not dead like I thought, and the weather is cold because it is winter; however, this only lasts for a few months, and the next season, spring, would soon follow. Spring has a lot of flowers and the weather will be warmer. After all, I learned the lesson to never judge anything so fast, like the quote, "Don't judge a book by its cover." In Vietnamese, we say "đừng bao giờ phê phán ai đó qua bề ngoài của họ" which means literally, "don't ever judge at first look."

Chuong Viet Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope When All Else Fails

Hi! My name is Rutilo. My family calls me Tilo. I

am from Gurrero, Mexico. I have six brothers and one sister. I am the oldest. I came to Los Angeles, California. I started working to help my family, and sent my dad money every two weeks due to their poverty situation. I met my wife when we were nineteen years old. We lived together for seven years. After that we decide to get married. I remember when my wife got pregnant. We were very happy, because we were going to have a baby. We love each other. After nine months, we had the baby boy. His name is Francisco. We call him Frankie or Frank. In 2009, when the economy was very bad, we lost our job and home. It was very hard to find jobs in California.

I called my cousin Bonny, from Oklahoma. He told me to come to Oklahoma, and said there was a lot of work there. Well, I spoke to my wife and son about moving. They were hopeful about me finding work in Oklahoma. The next day I was ready to

go to Oklahoma. I drove 19 hours to get here. After two days in Oklahoma, I got a job.



Rutilo Pineda

I was very successful. After one year in Oklahoma, I went back to California to move my family to Oklahoma. I was hopeful that they would love Oklahoma, but at first they

did not. I had to tell them, due to not having a job, we could not move back to Los Angeles, California and had to live in Oklahoma where I had a job. After four years, I asked them if they wanted to go back to Los Angeles, and they said, “No, we love *Oklahoma !!!!*”

Rutilo Pineda

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Key is Hope

It is good to be in Bartlesville, but it is very differ-

ent from my home country of Guatemala. I have hope to find the key to overcoming obstacles in learning English. In the three months I have been in Bartlesville, I have been learning to speak English better at the public library, feeling most of the time that I am making progress.



Kevyn Josué Morán Paiz

I hope to become a University student. I would like to work in mechanics or computer systems. I hope to continue to unlock the door to my future!

Kevyn Josué Morán Paiz
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

Don't Be Discouraged

I hope that just because you do not know how to read a book or a text message and/or a facebook post, you do not feel discouraged to ask for help

from one of your peers. I got a tutor to help me to learn how to read a book or a restaurant menu.

When I was younger in age I felt discouraged to ask anybody to tell me what something said because I felt like, at my age, I should know how to read anything as simple as a facebook post or a text message or a book. Now, at my age of 26, I am just now learning how to read a facebook post or a text message or a restaurant menu.

So, again I am saying to anybody out there, do not



Andrew Raines

feel discouraged to ask anybody what something says in a story or a facebook post or a restaurant menu. I once felt discouraged to ask anybody for help to tell me what anything said. But now, when I look

back on it, I wish that I would have asked anybody a lot sooner than I did, or got a tutor to teach me

to read stuff a lot sooner than I did. If I would have asked somebody for help to read a long time ago, I would be a lot farther than I am today.

I thank my grandmother and my mother for pushing me to get a tutor to help me learn how to read because now I am getting to where I do not have to ask anybody what something says unless it is something really big!

Andrew Raines

Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

Hope

I was born in Mexico in September. I am from a family of eleven. I am the fifth child in my family. I grew up on a farm. When I was 7 years old, my family moved to the city because my mom wanted my siblings and me to finish high school and get degrees. When I got my degree I worked as a public accountant for 5 years. Later, I met my husband in June

of 1989 and we got married on July 27, 1991. Two years later we moved to the USA. I have four children and their ages are 23, 22, 12, and nine years old.

I have many memories in my life; but I remember one especially. One day, when I was nine, my brother Francisco (who was six at the time) was crying outside the classroom, and I asked him, “Why are you crying?” He said that some kid kept hitting him. When he told me that, I was angry, and later I found the kid. I grabbed his hair and walked around making a circle with him until he cried. I remember that situation. I laughed.

My other memories are when I was six years old. My father said to me “Herlinda, this year you need to go to elementary school.” I wasn’t very happy because it was my first day of school. I didn’t like it because I was walking two miles to school and

two miles back. When I arrived home, I said to my mother “Mom I’m sweaty, very sweaty.”

Herlinda Razo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope

I’m from Chihuahua, Mexico. I grew up in a town called Monte Verde. The majority of my extended family lived there, too. By Mexican standards, my family would be considered small. I have three brothers.

Here in the United States, I work full time and study English on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is very interesting and I find friends and good teachers wherever I go. Some days, however, I feel sad, because I miss my home town. When I’m sad I begin to remember much about life in Mexico.

I remember horses running free, cows grazing, green fields, and the sound of roosters. In my home state,

most people wear boots because they are ranchers. Cowboys wear boots to ride horses. Boots are even part of the dress code at some restaurants and clubs. Almost everyone wears hats at special events. In my home town, life is slow and quiet. Many people do not like the big cities, which are fast-paced and have many rules and regulations.

Many people, like myself, don't understand the city. I remember walking down the street and waiting to cross the road. The pedestrian light would be flashing green for "walk." I would never wait, but just run as fast as I could to get to the other side, not completely understanding the process. Also, the first time I ever went to the mall it was very funny and strange for me. I had never seen such huge stores and so many crazy people. Jumping on the escalator was also quite an experience that very first time!

English is very difficult for me. I often don't understand people when they speak to me; but I hope

one day to speak fluently and communicate more effectively here in my new home—Oklahoma. This is my goal!

Brian Regalado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

I Believe In Miracles

September 23, 2014

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC It was 7 AM. I had been running every morning. I was alone. When I finished the run and exercises, suddenly I had a heart attack. The first of several miracles was a nurse that was running near me, so she gave me first aid. Another miracle was a fireman who was near, too, who took me to the hospital.

I was 4 days in a coma. The doctors said it was possible that I would come back with brain injuries. I will never forget a nurse that said to me, with tears in her eyes, that she was so happy to see me alive

because she received me in the ER, and I was dead. She didn't believe that I would survive.

After several tests the doctors said that it was necessary to do an open heart surgery and get two bypasses, so I had a surgery on October 2, 2014. My birthday was in the hospital (September 29). Regardless of being sick, I enjoyed my 50th anniversary.

Since that event, I saw many blessings of all kinds: love, friendship, emotional and financial support. One of them is a financial miracle. The bill of payment for the days that I stayed in the hospital (two weeks) was \$130,485.32 dollars. It's a lot of money! Do you know how much I paid? Nothing!!! The hospital told me that my balance was zero.

God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

I thank God for the opportunity to live. I finish my

testimony with a question for you: if at this time that you are reading this, you die, how is your relationship with God?

Enjoy a healthy life. God bless you.

Miguel Reyna
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Satisfied and Happy

(Edited for length)

My name is Noelia Rios. I live in Edmond, Oklahoma.

I lived in Mexico many years ago. I left because I married my husband who lived in the United States. I never thought about leaving my country because it was a beautiful place.

It was very scary traveling to America. The trip was long and tiring. Because my husband traveled with me, I didn't have any problems with bad people along the way. I am happy I never had to confront Border Patrol Officers.

When we crossed the border, we slept in a hotel. The next morning, we traveled by bus. I hid in the bus restroom because I did not have a passport. I arrived in Los Angeles and my life began in the United States.



I lived on a farm in Mexico. This is something I miss. When I arrived in Los Angeles, it was so big. I felt like a “bird in a cage.” I lived there for three years and then I went back to Mexico for five years.

My son was two years old when I returned to Mexico. We stayed for five years, then returned to Los Angeles and lived there for seven years. My daughter was born in LA.

Finally, we decided to move to Oklahoma. We have been here for nine years. I am happy and comfortable because my house is not in the city. Here I have

incredible opportunities. One of the great opportunities was being able to own my own beauty salon. My children also had the opportunity to receive a better education than in LA, and my husband had the opportunity to have a better job.

Finally, after many years of thinking that the U.S. was not the place for me, I am satisfied with what this country has offered my family and me.

Noelia Rios De Velasco
OKC Family Literacy Program

Tammy

My name is Tammy Rodgers, I live in Midwest City, Oklahoma. My hope is one day to be a child care teacher. I love kids. I want to care for them, cook for them, read to them, sing to them, and teach them to say their ABC's.

I hope one day I can go to work. I would like to work with three and four year old kids.

I go to Literacy Link in Midwest City, Oklahoma. I go there to learn how to read, write, and spell better.

I hope one day, I can make something out of my life. I want to be a better person. I graduated from Harrah High School. I feel like the teachers just passed me through school. I feel like they did not want to teach me.

I also hope one day I can help out at the zoo, so I can care for the animals. I love animals. I have a cat at home and her name is Shadow. She likes to run and jump.

Tammy Rodgers
Literacy Link, Midwest City

My Hope for the Future

My name is Ernesto. I have hope to be one person, helpful to society and my church. Helping people to find their faith. I hope to learn many things, including English. I want to live my life by making things

better and learning about individuals in the professional areas. I hope to travel around the world to Europe, England, and other countries that speak English. I would like to be the sailor who travels to the Bahamas with friends and family. My hope is for the democratic winner for the next president to be Hilary Clinton. I hope to be rich and speak English.

Ernesto Romero
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Life of Carmen Ruiz

The thing I remember when I was a child was “happiness.” I grew up in a small one room house, in Chihuahua, Mexico, where we had a kitchen, two beds and an old wardrobe chest. Five children lived in this one room house with my mother and my father. I don’t know how my parents did it, but we always had everything we needed. We didn’t have electricity, and we didn’t have a TV. We didn’t need

them, because we had the nearby river and mountains.

When I was fifteen years old, I came to the USA for



Carmen Ruiz

the first time. I remember that I cried all the way from Chihuahua, Mexico to the border. I didn't really know what was waiting for me. We stayed in Juarez, Mexico for about two days. We slept in

the bus station waiting for the escort to take us to El Paso, Texas. When the person came, I was very worried. He only said, "Run fast." We had to across a big highway which was very dangerous. Many more hardships followed.

Now, I dream that one day, I will be able to read, speak and write good English and become the nurse that I want to be here in America!

Carmen Ruiz

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

New Life

I was born in Florida, but when I was a baby my parents moved to Mexico and never came back. I am the only US Citizen in my family. I finished high school in Mexico. After that, I had a job as supervisor at a bank. I worked there for a year.

I decided to move to the United States because there I could find a job where I could make more money. That way I would save enough money to make my family citizens. Also, I wasn't happy with my pay at the bank and I couldn't go to the university because it was too expensive. It's hard to live for most people in Mexico.

I came to the United States about a year ago. The United States is so different from Mexico. It was not easy for me because I didn't know English. That's why I wanted to learn English. I would be able to go to college, get a better job, and then become a professional. I have always wanted to be a teacher. My

mom is a teacher, and I really like how she works. I would like to work the same way.

The most important thing in my life is my family. I really miss them and sometimes it's really hard living so far away from them, but I have to keep going for myself and for them. Currently, I'm working hard saving money so I can apply for their citizenship. My boyfriend and I are very happy together. He helps me accomplish my goals and I help him with his. We are both young, but I feel that we put our responsibilities in front of anything else and do everything we are supposed to do.

Anahi Salazar

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

You Can Die of Sadness Too

One day, several years ago, a puppy wandered into a small house with a large, humble family. One of us decided to name him Conan. Like every puppy,

he liked to play and eat his favorite toy—shoes. He nibbled on them until he destroyed them. Days and months passed, and the puppy grew into a big dog. The carefree, playful, “puppy” days gave way to the heavy-hearted days of responsibility for Conan. He grew into new responsibilities as he was a guard dog for the family and its home. Strangers were definitely not welcome!

Conan was a good dog. He was given enough food and water, but nothing special. He was a regular, average, dog.

Until one day when a new person came to our family. Her name was Raquel. She began to spoil him with love and attention. So Conan was loved in a new and different way. Raquel played with him, hugged him, and he felt loved. Conan started to become very attached to Raquel. He would sleep on the floor by the door to her bedroom. He followed her wherever she went.

Raquel stayed just one year at our house. After that, she had to go to the city to work.

Conan lost his best friend. He would look for her at the end of every day. He would lie outside her bedroom door, waiting for her to suddenly appear and give him the affection he had become accustomed to. He looked for her in all the usual places around the house, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Conan just slept, and would pass the days crying. After about a month of this, Conan was so sad he passed away. It appears he had died of a broken heart—of sadness.

Leticia Salinas

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope for Myself and My Granddaughter

I believe in hope not only for myself, but for others. Spanish is my home language, so I want to learn

English better. I hope my health will continue. But my biggest hope is for my granddaughter's future.

On March 11, 2013, I came to the Great Plains Literacy Council at the Altus Public Library to learn how to speak English better. I had read in the newspaper how tutoring for adults was available. I started in a small class of women with Mr. Frank Revilla as the teacher. Then Judy Miller was my tutor. She encouraged me a lot on speaking more English.



I want to be healthy. My tutoring recently has used the "Health Stories" series. I enjoy the stories about how to care for my body. The lessons on care of my teeth and talking to the doctor have been helpful. Every year I have a mammogram and an appointment to see the doctor. Two times a year I visit a dentist. I am thankful for health workers.

Cancer was found in my granddaughter Jasmin when she was about 11 years old. She now walks with a leg prosthesis. Every three months she has a cancer check. I was able to go to her high school graduation on May 23 of this year in Colorado Springs. She has good grades and plans to go to college with scholarships. I do hope for her future to include good health.

Hope is a part of my life. I want to continue learning English, having good health, and praying for my granddaughter's life.

Alicia Sandoval

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Hope

Hope is a major factor in my life. Before I got incarcerated, I thought I had lost hope.

Well I was wrong. One day I called home and my mother answered the phone. She told me that my

ex-girlfriend had called and stated that she was pregnant with my child. There's no perfect line or saying to describe the way I felt when my mother told me that. All I know is that from that day on, my whole life changed dramatically for the better.

The day my son was born, I was the happiest man alive. God blessed me with the most beautiful gift I could ever receive. It's like I was born all over again. Honestly, my son saved my life. Back then I was on a one way track. No one could tell me anything. "I've been there and I've done that." I thought that I knew it all. Now I look at life from a different angle. I have to better myself in order to provide a better life and future for my son and it starts with me. I have hope in being the good father I never had. Teach him the right ropes in life, help him understand the meaning of being a man; teach him the proper morals in order to succeed in this life. These are goals I hope

to accomplish and will stay eager to make happen. I will never lose hope.

I know one day God will grant me my only wish, and that is being able to be home with my son and my loved ones. I will dedicate my time to those who have been there for me through these hard times. My family never gave up on me and always pushed me to the limit. We can do anything we want, if we only set our minds to it. While being incarcerated, I've been enrolled in GED and I am eager to get it. It's a goal I want to accomplish. Being able to help your kids when they come home from school is a beautiful thing. Those are the benefits of a life with hope.

Stephen Santos
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

My Journey

When I first came to OIC, I was mostly in my feel-

ings. I couldn't read, write or spell, and was scared to ask for help. My scores were really low. I thought, "I'm forty years old and my scores are down that low! They should be higher." I went into a deep depression. I started pushing people away, breaking down crying about my scores and my life—a forty-year-old with a six-year-old not understanding the work I was doing.

But I was willing to learn and keep going even though it took about six months for me to really see a difference. Everyday I'm learning something new, and it has changed my life in being a better person, mother, and woman. At OIC, I've met nice and supportive people who energize me. I'm not a morning person, but I still get up and go to school even when I'm fighting the "morning grumpies."



Tunisha Smith

I've changed for the better and I've come a long way. I read with more confidence. I feel better about myself. My spelling and writing has improved a lot and I don't avoid doing math now. I see myself as a different person, still being challenged, but I'm working through it, not running away like before. I've gotten stronger and have more belief in myself. Now I love coming to school and seeing my classmates who are like family. I have a wonderful teacher that pushes me to do better.

Now I'm paying even more attention to my son Caleb. He brings books home and we read them together. We read every night. I teach him things I've learned. Although we spend special time together going places like the park, zoo, library, even museums, the time I spend reading with him is his favorite.

Tunisha Smith

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Hope

I really was surprised to know that I could do math problems. I can read better now.

When I first came to the Creek County Literacy Program I didn't know how to read well.

Now I can read better and I would tell any person who can't read to go to Creek County



Lois Thurston

Literacy Program to learn to read. Do not be afraid to go. The people are very nice and are eager to help you. You can find it through the public library. We have a book club. We read books and talk about them. We have a lot of fun at the book club and we are learning. We have a potluck dinner, too. I hope to read better and I want to help other people.

Lois Thurston

Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

My Dogs

I have two dogs. Their names are Snowflake and Cougar. Cougar is Snowflake's son, but they are not alike. Snowflake is laid back but Cougar is hyper. Cougar likes to eat on the bed, but Snowflake does not. Snowflake likes to run and play in the rain. Cougar does *not* want to get wet. However, both like to roll and play in the snow.

My dogs like to sleep in my bed, but I don't let them sleep under the covers with me. They both must think they are people because they want to eat what I am eating, and also want to go everywhere I go. They cry and whine at the front door when I leave without them.

My dogs love me most of all. They are happy to see me when I come home and cry when I leave. I love them back.

My Dream

My name is Huong Tran. I'm from Vietnam. I was born into a poor family. My parents worked very hard taking care of my brothers. My parents like to travel but they never go because they can't afford it. I hope, when I grow up, to make a lot of money to give to my parents so they can travel.

I tried to study to become a teacher. In 2003, I became a university student. Four years later, I graduated and taught at a high school. But in Vietnam teacher salaries are very low. My first month's salary was 60 dollars. I always dreamt of being in a country with better conditions for me to accomplish my goals and have a better life.



Huong Tran

In June 2012, I came to America.

I was very happy because this country helped me with better working conditions and more free-

dom. Then, I began to worry because I didn't speak English or know how to drive. But I think I can learn anything if I have the determination to do it.

In September 2012, my mother called me. She told me that my father had passed away. I was very sad, and I cried a lot. Then, I realized I had to be strong to take care my mother. Everyone around me helped me.

I'm taking ESL Classes at OCCC. I hope this class helps my English improve so I can communicate better with people, go back to university and find a better job. My teacher has taught me grammar and to listen and read. I think my dream to help my mother travel will be realized soon.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who helped me in the early days in the United States. I thank my uncle, my aunt, and my teacher.

My Trip Back to Vietnam

I came to America from Vietnam in February 2005, and then in May 2013, I took my husband and children and went back to Vietnam. We have three children. They were then seven, three and two years old. That was the first time I went back to see my mother and all my family. After we visited them, we planned to go to Quang Ngai to see my grandmother.

While we were at the railway station waiting for the next train, we were so hungry I bought fried chicken for my husband and kids, and I went next door to get some soup for me. I took the folder that held all of our passports and train tickets.

I began to worry about my children so I ordered my soup to go. But when I left to go back to them, I forgot to pick up my folder. My husband asked me where all the papers were. I said, "Oh no! I don't remember!"

I was so worried! Without the passport we couldn't go back to America. We couldn't go to Quany Ngai on that day. We would have to go back to my mother's house. But luckily my phone book was in the folder. Someone found it and called my mother later that day. We picked it up the next day. I said, "Thank you so much," to them.

As I think back, if we hadn't found the passport, I don't know what would have happened to my life. The United States is my second country. I love it. It is my home.

Lina Tran
Literacy Link, Midwest

Getting My GED

(Edited for length)

Growing up in Aurora, Colorado, it was very rare to see black men graduate or get their GED. My main focus wasn't on either. All I was worried about was

making it to eighteen. I had a couple of family members graduate and go to college, but we were going in two different directions in life. My grandmother and parents always told me that it was important to be educated, but I didn't want to hear anything from anybody.

It wasn't until my eleventh grade year that I started to take school a little more seriously. I was playing sports for the first full year and I had a lot of schools looking at me at the next level. I didn't really have the patience to sit around in class though, and I always wanted to run the streets. Towards the end of that year I found myself, yet again, getting kicked out of school. Luckily, colleges still wanted me and I went to play college basketball for about three months, then I dropped out. Then something tragic happened.

Now that brings me here, ten years later, trying to get a GED. When I sit here and study, I realize that

I've forgotten a lot of stuff that I learned in school or just didn't pay attention to. I'm not just refreshing my educational memory for myself, but also for my children. I try to remember everything. I study so when they come and ask me questions, I'll know the answers.

If you don't have a high school diploma, I encourage you to get in a literacy program and get your GED so you can have something to fall back on. No matter what happens, two things nobody can take from you are knowledge and education.

Brandon Veasley
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

Hope Story

April 15, 1994 was the most exciting day of my life. It was the day that I got married to an extraordinary and a lovely man. It was the most amazing day of our lives, I was full of happiness. I couldn't imag-

ine how much our lives would change in 15 years. Our happiness began to grow when we received great news that we would have a baby girl. It was our first child together. A year and a half later we received pleasant news that we were going to have a baby boy. I felt even happier. Time passed and we felt very happy with our children. I remember one day, I said to myself, "I cannot believe I'm so happy. I have my kids, and a great husband who loves me."

The happiness did not last long. One morning, I received unpleasant news from my husband. He told me that he had been diagnosed with cancer. I felt my world crumble when I heard those cold words. I was hoping that the news was not true. That began a difficult period for my family. The treatments were very hard, but he remained calm and optimistic. My hopes were that the doctor would give us good news. Every day that passed, I had my hope and faith in God that everything would be

back the way it was. Sadly, that was not true. One afternoon I received a call where I heard the unfortunate news that I wished I never had to hear. After hearing those words I still had the hope that they were not true. Time has passed and thanks to the love and trust I have in Jesus Christ, I hope that one day we will find each other in the heavens above.

Sandra Velez

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hope

My name is Imelda Viezcas. I was born in Mexico. I went to school until 6th grade. I could not continue studying for economic reasons. At the age of 22, I decided to come to the United States in hopes of succeeding. When I arrived, I started working without thinking I needed to speak another language because it was very difficult. However, I had to always depend on someone else to help.

One must do their part and not trust, otherwise things will not happen the way one might desire.

I met my husband, and after 6 months we got married. We had 3 children. My oldest daughter was born in 1984, and everything was okay. When my 2nd baby was born, we hoped everything was well. But at 13 days old, he became very ill. My son needed surgery. The doctors told us they did not expect him to live. The doctors told us that the surgery would take 4 hours, but we prayed and hoped all would be successful with God's blessings. After 6 hours, the Doctor came to us and looked amazed. He told us all went well, and we needed to wait for the recovery. Thank God my son is healthy.

In 1995, my other daughter was born. I had to have a c-section when she was born. With faith and hope in God all my children are well. I have two beautiful granddaughters and I am happy to tell you, I thank

God for everything he has given me. He is my faith, confidence, and my hope. This is part of my history.

Imelda Viezcas
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Life As We Know It

People don't seem to realize how wonderful life really is and the resources that are available for those who haven't grown in the best environment. This is about what made me so grateful in life and in finding OIC.

Recently, I've learned to be a better person and parent to my two children. I've developed a stronger mind, healthy ambition, and have realized that true motivation comes from within. Knowing me today, you wouldn't believe I've worked since I was 14, that I've always had a problem with math and always needed to be accepted because I've never

felt good enough. Working a job, my high school GPA ended as a 2.9.

Very few people know my full story because I've always been too shy to tell it. Looking at me, you can't tell my background consists of being battered physically, damaged emotionally, and completely lost and discouraged at 23. What keeps me going is I'm a godly woman. I wasn't going to write anything until I went to church where the speaker said I should share my testimony. Her testimony touched my life; maybe mine will touch someone. I can only hope that my story of physical and emotional battering, math deficiency, being a young single mother of two, and low self-esteem shows there's still light at the end of the tunnel.



I'm currently engaged to a wonderful man, my self-

esteem is higher than ever before, I have a job I love, my math deficiency is no longer a problem, and my future is brighter. This may not seem like a big difference to you, but it's a major difference to me, and it all came about because of OIC. If you don't believe in yourself, how can anyone else believe in you and your dreams?

Allison Vincent

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

The Reason I Hope To Speak English

I'm from South Korea. It takes more than 12 hours by plane to get to Oklahoma City. I came to Norman, Oklahoma on November 18, 2013. The reason that I came here is my husband's work. I got married just before I left for the U.S.

I needed to speak English as I was not used to the American lifestyle and culture. I also wanted

to make friends, so I searched ESL classes on the internet.

When I came here for OCCC ESL class, teachers and students welcomed me. I have enjoyed studying English, and I feel more confident now. Most importantly, taking ESL class has given me lots of information and support. I thank all of my friends, as well as my English teacher. I hope to get along with them here until I return to my country.

South Korea might be an unfamiliar country for some people, so let me tell you a little about it. As capital of the nation, Seoul has a history of 600 years. This history plays an important role economically, politically, socially, and culturally in this country. The area has many companies and public offices; however, it is densely populated and has a traffic problem. Seoul has many shopping places, famous eateries, and traditional cultural places. The city is an amazing place. In fact, the most remarkable thing

about this city is shopping. It is so popular for many foreign travelers because things are cheaper and of better quality. If you come to Seoul, you will enjoy it. You will enjoy a diverse menu of the traditional foods of my country.

I want to study English very hard. By doing that, I will be able to introduce my country and hometown to many Americans.

Kim Yunog

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Humor



Know the Laws

When living or visiting the United States, there are rules one might not know as one drives, walks, or participates in activities. When breaking one of



Miguel Banuelos

these rules, one might receive a ticket from the police officer.

Some examples are parking one way on streets in front of one's house or not parking on the grass, and pulling over when the emergency vehicle

has the lights on.

In 1991, I came to Oklahoma City to visit some of the interesting places, such as the lake, restaurants, Oklahoma river, and parks. My cousin allowed me to borrow his vehicle to visit relatives, who lived close to Oklahoma City. While I was driving, I heard an ambulance close to my vehicle. Other cars were pulling over, but I continued to drive two to three blocks.

Other drivers were smiling at me, and I was really embarrassed. Upon arriving at my cousin's house, I talked to him about the situation. My cousin told me that I was lucky there was not a police officer around. We started to laugh about it. However, I learned how important it is for foreigners to know the laws of the countries they are visiting.

Miguel Banuelos
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Riding Horses

Hello, my name is Maria Castillo. I have been living in Oklahoma for 15 years, and have had several funny things happen. Some of the events have been nice at times, while others have been embarrassing. My husband, mother, and I went to a ranch in celebration of the Virgin Mary. There was dancing, food, horses, and music.

My husband was riding horses all afternoon, and

was insisting for me to ride as well. My sister and her daughter came with me. Forgetting to pull the horse's reins, I had some bad luck. The horse started to run very fast, and I started to scream because I was scared. I became afraid because I thought I was going to fall to the ground. A foreigner came to the rescue, and prevented us from crashing and prevented me from being embarrassed. When we returned, people laughed at my embarrassing moment. Most of the embarrassment has passed, since that day. However, I am afraid to ride horses. I do not want to be embarrassed like that again.

Maria Castillo

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Best Valentine's Day Ever

It was February 14th 2015. It was a Saturday, and the weather was super nice. I took Mojo for a walk at Lake Hefner. I drove to the lake, parked, put on

Mojo's dog chain, got my camera, pressed the button on the driver's door to lock the car, and then got out of the car with Mojo. Suddenly I remembered something. I forgot the keys in the car. I also left my phone in the car and I didn't remember anyone's



Jasmine Cui

number except for mine. Mojo didn't have a phone at that time (well he still doesn't have a phone now). I didn't know what to do. I was looking and looking around, then I saw a guy who was leaving! Great! I walked to him and asked him: Could you please do me a favor? He said: Depends what. I told him my situation then he said: Sure! The nice guy took us home. He said: There you are, bye! Then I felt so embarrassed and said: Could you please take me back after I get the extra key? Nobody is home.... He was silent for seconds then said yes.... I left Mojo in the car with the nice guy, I went into the house

to get the key. The nice guy took us back to Lake Hefner and said: Where is your car? I will make sure you get in the car then leave. I unlocked the car, then came to him and said “Thank you” a hundred times. The nice guy put a CD in his car’s player and drove away. Mojo and I were there. I said: “hǎorén yìshēng píngān” in Chinese. It means may kind people be blessed with lifelong peace.

I was really grateful! I still am!

Jasmine Cui
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Going to the Restroom with Police Assistance

The day I arrived in the U.S.A., in Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, I got in a panic situation. When my family was waiting at the airport check in counter, the police had checked our passport and papers. Suddenly my daughter needed to go to the

restroom. She couldn't wait any longer, because she did not use the toilet on the airplane, even though it was a long trip.

On the way from the arriving gate to check in counter, I saw a restroom. I let her go to that restroom. Immediately,



Nguyet Dinh

I heard a loud shout: “Stop! Stop! Where are you going?” Some police ran towards us and kept us. We got in a panic. We wondered what was going to happen to us. “I just needed to go to the restroom,” I answered. A woman police took us to another restroom behind the wall next to the counters, and stood by the door watching out for us. When we went back to the counter we still were so worried. I didn't know why!

After that, I knew that the counter was the nation's border. We passed the border illegally! Today when

I remember that, I still think it was so funny. It was the first time in my life I went to the restroom with the support of the police.

Nguyet Dinh
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Humor

I had been living in the USA for four years when I started to work in a restaurant. I met Jerome and we became good friends. He also became my listener, so I could practice my English pronunciation.

I had no confidence in speaking another language and I was too shy too. One day, as any other day, we started our day having an animated conversation. He was so happy telling me about the funky chicken dance, but he got very serious when he saw my face turn red. I couldn't believe what I apparently just heard. He never used bad words when we spoke to each other. I was surprised that he was

being disrespectful because he was very respectful before. I shyly asked him about the “F” (bad word) chicken. He laughed so hard about what I said and he repeated it several times so I could hear the right pronunciation.

It was so embarrassing how I learned about the funky chicken dance.

Iris Garcia

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Civil Defense Alarm

I arrived in the US for the first time 9 years ago. I’m from Mexico City. We don’t have tornados there. We have earthquakes. I found a job in sanitation. I worked every night cleaning food machines, so I never heard the tornado alarm before because I slept almost all day.

One year later, I found a new job in the day time, and I remembered it was on a Saturday and I was

home alone. The owner of the house had a tornado shelter. I started to hear the tornado alarm go off. I got scared because I remembered the owner mentioning to me once that when the tornado alarm goes off you are supposed to seek shelter. I grabbed a bottle of water and ran inside the house owner's tornado shelter. Once I waited inside the shelter for about 25–30 minutes. I came out because I didn't hear anything.

My neighbor saw me and asked me, "What are you doing?" I told him, I heard the tornado alarm go off and I ran inside the tornado shelter. He could not stop laughing at me because I thought it was a real tornado warning. He told me that every Saturday at 12:00 noon they test the tornado alarms. I will never forget that day!

Now that I look back at the situation I find it funny because I thought a real tornado was coming. It is

good to know that I was prepared if a real tornado was actually coming.

Arcelia M. Hernandez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Funny Story

In this world there are different cultures, different persons and different languages, and today I want to talk about the language. I think it is very important to learn the language that the people talk where you live.

I came to the United State when I was twenty years old, and I didn't understand any English. Since I came here, I realized that to learn English wasn't very easy. I remembered one funny story when I went to buy a coca cola from a machine. I put in fifty cents for me to buy the coke but the machine didn't give me anything. I started to move the machine because I thought that the coke was stuck but noth-

ing happened. I saw on the little screen the words “one dime” and I started yelling coca cola, coca cola to the machine because I was thinking that the machine wanted me to tell it what I wanted. In Spanish the words “tell me” are spelled “dime”. That’s why I yelled to the machine that I wanted a coca cola and one of my cousins was close to me and when she heard that I was yelling coca cola, she started to laugh at me, and then she explained to me, “No, Norma, the machine said that you need to put in one dime for you to afford the coca cola, because the price is sixty cents and you just put in fifty cents.

I was very, very shy and since that time I realized that I needed to learn English and also that it wouldn’t be very easy for me because the way you write sometimes is different from the way you pronounce it. Now I understand more English than at

the beginning when I came for the first time to the United States.

Norma Hernandez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Children are Funny

I have found out that young children have and practice humor. I work at Wilson Head Start as a teacher's assistant. In my class, I have 20 four and five-year-old children and can see that children in this age group have a sense of humor. I see and hear funny actions and words in their "Show and Tell" activity, their laughter, and their talking.

Every Friday we have a "Show and Tell" time. The children all take turns explaining where they got an object, what it does, and how long they have had it. "Show and Tell" is done in small groups. Each child has to call on a classmate to let that person ask a question about what is shown. That also helps the

children begin to think about each other's names. It is so amazing and funny what shows up on Friday in our classroom.



Ethel "Pookie" High

Children even laugh at themselves and about what they say. At this age they are beginning to use sentences and to show some action in their words. Also we have share time

to tell a joke or say something that was funny. We all laugh together, NOT at each other!

Young children will pretend or act out various characters. It's a great way to let children explore themselves and others around them while helping them feel more confident in themselves. I have seen children pretending to be grown-ups and many other characters in the housekeeping area.

Humor is easily found in children. I am in a pre-school program and have experienced laughter in

children at “Show and Tell” time, their ability to laugh, and in their speech. All of these help boys and girls open up and enjoy life with humor and learning at an early age.

Ethel “Pookie” High
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Restaurant Work Had Some Funny Stories

I had attended a cooking school in Taiwan, but came to the United State and opened a Chinese food restaurant in Altus, Oklahoma with my husband. I worked 33 years there as the head cook. That has been a happy and rewarding work for me and my husband.

Every day I cooked the menu items with safety and cleanliness. Sometimes I served the orders. Our restaurant grew from 61 seats to 240 seating for customers. Our buffet had about 30 hot foods in the

serving tables, along with salad and dessert bars.

This gave customers many dishes to choose on their

plates. My husband and I always like

serving good food to people as

long as they are hungry. We

wanted them to be happy and

full.

Only two customers said they

did not have that feeling. They

had filled their plates from the buffet once and ate.

Then returned to the buffet three or four times more

to fill their plates and ate all the food on their plates.

When they left, they said all the food was BAD!

Then some people would ask for take-out orders

from the buffet. The containers would be filled and

have enough food to feed a crowd! So that was also

funny to see.

These are only a few funny things that happened

in my many years of cooking for the public. Now I



Judy Hu

can laugh about those humorous experiences. As a whole, I enjoyed making delicious Chinese food from my culture. We believe that good customers make good friends!

Judy Hu

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Expecting a Nice Tip

My name is Payman and my job is driving a taxi. I enjoy my job because I meet interesting people and I can practice speaking English. One day in April I stopped at the airport taxi stand to pick up a passenger. A man wearing a nice suit came to me and asked, “Are you working?” I said, “Yes.” I got his luggage and the address to drive him to. After a few minutes we arrived at his address. “How much is



Payman Mahmoodi

the fare?" he asked. I said, "\$30." He handed me some folded dollar bills and said, "Keep the change." I said, "Thank you sir, I appreciate that." But I didn't count the money. I drove on with the cash in my hand. I was thinking maybe he gave me \$35 or \$40. When I stopped at a stoplight, I looked at the money in my hand. I saw that the cash was only \$27! Next time I will count the money when I get it.

Payman Mahmoodi

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

El Dia Del Nino (The Day of the Child)

Today it is April 30th in my home in the United States. I woke my son with a big hug and gave him some candy. He said, "It's not my birthday!" I told him that in Mexico, we celebrate El Dia Del Nino today to recognize the important part children have

in our lives. Then he went to school. Tonight, we will have his favorite food, pizza!

Maria Molina
New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

Humor

I have many memories from my first year here like most people. Being lonely and language difficulty are the most common problems for everybody. That's why I decided to go to school and find a job. I was thinking this way I can keep myself busy, and also it is a good way to communicate with people.

I started working in a restaurant. On my first day I worked the drive thru. I knew it was going to be difficult for me. After a short time, I realized the restaurant was in chaos. Everybody was complaining about getting the wrong food. Anyway, they decided to change my position. They put me in the

front with someone to train me to take orders. I tried to do my best.

Suddenly something came up that caused me to lose my first job. An old lady came to me and asked me, “Can I use the bathroom?” I didn’t understand her and asked her, “For here or to go?” She got mad and asked me her question again. I told her I’d call the manager. I called him and told him, there is a lady, but I don’t understand her order. After his short conversation with the lady, he told me she is going to use the bathroom. When he was trying to show her the bathroom I figured out everything. But it was too late. She was so mad and asked him why they don’t hire people that understand English better. Her attitude caused me to lose my first job here.

It was ok to me. I learned my lesson. After that, focusing on English and more practicing were more important to me than finding a job.

Sima Nemati

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Snow Day for a Bus Driver

I wake up in the morning and make coffee. I put on my uniform and go to my old car.

The day will be long because of the snow. Before I arrive to work, I do not know how many different routes I will drive on any day. After arriving at work, I get the docu-



Marek Niemirski

ments from the office and head to the bus. Between the bus and office, I slide on the ice like a dancing ballerina. Upon arriving at the bus, I do an inspection to make sure everything is working, except for the heater. After ten minutes the heater starts to work.

On the way to the terminal, I pick individuals up early. Due to the weather, it seems like I am the only one on time. Due to the weather, a late bus was picking up passengers I was supposed to pick up,

but this does not bother me due to the dangerous stopping on the ice. Stopping at the lights and bus stops where people were waiting was very dangerous. Finally, I arrive back at the terminal on time. During the day, I repeat the same route.

When I got off work and grabbed my sweater, I saw my car was covered with two feet of snow, and the ice caused the doors not to open easily. I finally got my door open and turned on the engine. I lit up my cigarette and waited twenty minutes for the ice to disappear and start moving my vehicle. I drove to my favorite place, McDonalds, where I almost got stuck in the driveway. Finally, I arrived home where my wife invited me to do the dishes and cook lunch for the next day. I was so tired, and went to sleep with my uniform on.

Marek Niemirski
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Skunk's Revenge

When I was eight years old and living on a farm about one hour from Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Mexico, my mom sent me and my six-year-old brother to check a trap. We had set the trap for squirrels but when we pulled it out we got a big surprise! The animal we caught turned out to be a skunk and it was not happy.



Soledad "Lucy" Nun

The skunk was angry and in pain because its foot was caught in the trap. My brother and I were completely covered with its stinky spray before we could get away. I pulled the skunk home after I put it out of its misery because I knew my mom would want its heart and liver. In Mexico, those organs are used to treat pneumonia.

My mom was the only one who gained from this

experience; my brother and I suffered for three more days! We were given baths in soap, tomato juice, and various plants but nothing worked. We just had to let the bad smell wear off.

Soledad “Lucy” Nun
Ponca City Area Literacy Council

The Mango Juice Mix-up

Five years ago, I was a nanny. I enjoyed working with a particular family. The parents were both doctors and were very kind. They enjoyed doing activities together. One day they had friends come to their home. I was helping the husband cook for the friends, and his wife wanted to help, as well. The husband suggested to the wife to make a large amount of mango juice. Her husband and I knew she did not know how to cook, but did not want to inform her about the issue. The wife was excited about having the opportunity to help.

The wife started out by putting water inside the blender and washing the mango. She did not peel or take the big seed out of the mango. When Luis found out, he screamed at his wife. He said, “NO!!!! You need to peel the mango, then take out the shell, and put the mango slice in the cup before beginning the blender.”

She was very embarrassed and said sorry. When the next time came, she was able to make juice, because I taught her how after the funny situation.

Barbara Saavedra
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My English Accident

It happened approximately ten years ago or more. At that time I worked in a cafeteria of some elementary school. I was washing my dirty dishes when my cashier came up to me and introduced me to her son who was visiting her for a couple of min-

utes. "This is my oldest son Mike," she said politely. I turned around and saw a boy in a doorway. He was a tall, very slim person. He had a pale face and un-groomed red hair. His small eyes were colorless. I thought I should say something about him and my brain tried to remember some good English words for a compliment. In a moment I smiled friendly and exclaimed "Oh! He is pretty nice!" My cashier got big eyes, ran to another room and laughed very loudly. She couldn't stop laughing for about ten minutes. I realized that I said something wrong. Carefully I looked at the boy. He stood petrified at the same doorway. His face was red and his small eyes became even smaller. Without any smile he peered at me. "Poor boy!" I thought, but no calming words came to my mind. I didn't even think to say to him "I'm sorry, Mike".

This accident helped me to understand that I must learn English immediately! I just have to!

I continue to learn English. If somebody says to me “Your English is good!” I smile and am proud of myself. But I don’t really believe my English is very good.

At the end I want to say a big thank you to all the teachers and tutors for your hard work and patience with me.

Maria Vasilkovich

Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

Exercise on the Highway!!

I arrived in Oklahoma on July 21, 2014. In Oklahoma City, most people have some sort of vehicle. They use it to go out to take care of their personal business, such as going to work, shopping, visiting, watching a movie in the cinema, etc.

In my country you can walk around, but here I saw lots of highways and main streets with long distances between places.

One of the very first days I decided to go out from home. I walked around the neighborhood and the main street to familiarize myself with our new neighborhood and new city and get some exercise at the same time. I was walking and listening to the music and didn't pay attention to other noises. Suddenly, I looked backward. Oh! I saw a car slow down and asked me if I had a problem. They offered me help. I only gazed at them and was thinking about what they said to me!!



Faezeh Poursaeid Zahed
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Poetry



Marina Alejandra

Is happy, positive, friendly, and an overachiever.



Marina Aguirre

Daughter of Yolanda and
Guadalupe.

Sibling of Cristina, Jesus,
Casimiro, Jose, Damian,
and Nataly.

Lover of my family,
husband, and life.

Who feels loved, wonderful, and excited.

Who gives love, kisses, and time.

Who fears snakes, tornadoes, and scorpions.

Who would like to see the beach, moon,
and Europe.

Who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Marina Aguirre
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Elisa

Everything is hope within my life

Loving and enjoying every
moment with my family

Imagining a beautiful future
full of happiness

Sunshine in my life



Elisa Barrientos

Amazingly happy surrounded by my friends
and family

Elisa Barrientos

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Money

I go to the grocery store

I go to the mall

I go to the shoe store

no money in hand

no money in time
no money for me
or you
when it's here
it's gone
with bills in hand
no time to spend
and the end
no money for me or you

Elizabeth Bishop

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

Great Plains Literacy Council Dedication

A lonely, strange place I now live

And I have some difficulty with the language.

This place I come, seeking help.

I shyly hold out my hand to you.

There are warm hands that
are willing to help me.

With shining eyes and
lovely heart, step by step,

You hold my hands to help
me walk by myself.

You walk beside me.

You watch over me without any cost.

You awaken my still heart with ripples of courage.

You shine your light as a beacon

To be seen as a gleam of hope.

Your efforts are budding to make my life new.

I put your name in my mind,

I inlay it in my heart with gratefulness!



Sun Chung

How beautiful is your name...

Great Plains Literacy Council!

Sun Chung

Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Margarita

Is optimistic, positive, responsible, and honest.



Margarita Cano de Estrada

Daughter of Ramon Cano
and Monserrat.

Wife of Erasmo Estrada.

Sibling of Teresa, Martha,
Josefina Socorro, Elena,
Ramon Alfonso Cruz,
Benita Marisela, and Rosy.

Lover of God, my family, my work, my profession,
and my husband.

Who feels blessed, positive, and happy.

Who gives friendship, blessings, necessities, food,
and money.

Who fears snakes.

Who would like to see God, my children, my
nephews, my grandchildren, and my parents.

Who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Margarita Cano de Estrada
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Jose

Is happy and wonderful.

Son of Felipe and Mary

Sibling of Felipe, Juan, Edy,
and Ricardo.

Lover of my family and life.

Who feels powerful,
blessed, and intelligent.



Jose De Lira

Who gives smiles, energy, and time.

Who fears tornadoes.

Who would like to see God and other countries.

Who lives in Oklahoma.

Jose De Lira

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Jenny

Is happy, crazy, simple, and honest.

Mother of Carlos, Daniel, Katy, and Melissa.

Sibling of Daniel and David.

Wife of Luis Gonzalez.



Jenny Diaz

Lover of my husband, my family, my grandmother, and my grandfather.

Who feels surprised, proud, wonderful, and enamored.

Who gives time, love, and money.

Who fears snakes and scorpions.

Who would like to see Mexico and my parents.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.

Jenny Diaz

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Nguyet

Name is the moon

Go on in motion

Up to the future

Youthful mind

Effort never stops

Touches everyone

with softness and gentleness



Nguyet Dinh

Nguyet Dinh

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Nguyen

Now this is the time we open up our hearts.

Going into the heart, we will find peace
in our soul.

Understanding what our heart wants.

You and I will become one.

Everyone will become one together.

Nobody lives without opening their heart.

Nguyen Doan

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Deysi

Is an overachiever, tired,
honest, and positive.

Daughter of Maria and
Meliton.

Sibling of Jaime, Javier,
Eduardo, and Miguel A.



Deysi Montiel Gaona

Lover of my mom, brothers, and nieces and
nephews.

Who feels enamored, proud, excited, and sad.

Who gives hugs, love, and time.

Who fears frogs, mice, and the dark.

Who would like to see shooting stars
and my grandparents.

Who lives in Oklahoma.

Deysi Montiel Gaona
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Sury

Is friendly, honest, pretty, and happy.

Daughter of Alfredo and Haira Gramajo.

Sibling of Yeison, Maico, and Katherine.

Lover of my family, my cousin, and my boyfriend.

Who feels blessed, enamored, and surprised.

Who gives time, love, and kisses.



Sury Marisol Gramajo

Who fears snakes, mice, and
monsters.

Who would like to see my
grandparents, my middle
brother, and my family
in Guatemala.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.

Sury Marisol Gramajo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Spring: A Haiku

I hear birds singing

Rain pounding on the window

Now we are mowing

Grant Grey
Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Love

Do you love me as much as I love you?

Would you have been beaten and spit on as I
was for you?

Would you have nails driven into your hands
and feet as I did for you?

Would you have hung on a piece of wood
and feel the pain of death as I did for you?

Would you die for me as I did for you?

Do you love me as much as I love you?

Love, Jesus Christ

Mitchell Harris
Lakeside School, Atoka

If

If, if was a fifth I would pour me a drink,

Come down for a minute so I can think.

If I were a bird I would fly away

Take the wings of the morning
and leave my cares to stay.



If I could move mountains I
would start with my own,
Make my path crystal clear,
so I could see my way home.

If I were a season I would
choose to be spring

Because everything comes to life, and that's a
beautiful thing.

If I had a second chance I wouldn't drop the ball.

My eyes would be on you, my ears attentive to
your call.

If I had a magical eraser I would walk around
the world,

Erase all the pain of every little boy and girl.

If tears could speak what would they say, “My heart, why does it feel this way?”

If I were a book I would be adventure, a mystery fiction would definitely be a clincher.

Jeffery Hubbard
Lakeside School, Granite

Virginia

Value the life of everything

Improves and enjoys each day

Refuge in the faith

Goal to triumph

Influences others with good actions

Never falls to defeat

Interested in loving others

Amazing life

Virginia Huerta
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Hello, My Name is Eugene

My name is Eugene. I work at the Senior Citizen Center. I go to Bethel Chapel Church. I was born in Tulsa, OK. I have a big family. I worked for Eastland Mall for 15 years. I enjoy helping people and talking to them.

Eugene Littlefield
Rogers County Literacy Council

A Haiku

Eugene helps people

He brings them their food and drinks

He also hugs them

Eugene Littlefield
Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Glenda R.

Is friendly, positive, pretty, and honest.

Daughter of Jose and Corina.

Sibling of Orlando, Rigoberto, Erlis, Brenda,
Lizzeht, and Leiby.

Wife of Ceferino Lopez.

Lover of my family and life.

Who feels loved by my
family.

Who gives money and love.

Who fears dying.

Who would like to see Israel and Paris.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.



Glenda Lopez

Glenda Lopez

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Monica

Moon, sun, earth, sky, a beautiful life

Or happiness in the most beautiful month

No matter what happens, April is my month
In this beautiful month, I celebrate my birthday
Can I dance, sing, or jump?
April is when I am the happiest

Monica Lopez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Ivis

Is in love with her beautiful daughters



Ivis Maldonado

Values every day that God
gives her to enjoy them
Is a precious gift given by
God to bless her
Some day they will grow up
but they will always be her
babies

Ivis Maldonado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Run With the Horses

*“If you weary with the footmen at the swelling
of the Jordan, how will you run with the
horses...”—Jeremiah 12:5*

As you grow older, always stay young
Educate your mind and enliven your imagination
Study and learn well of history, math, and
the sciences
But omit not Twain, Dickens, and the great men
and women of the Bible.

Gaze upon the stars, marvel at the moon, and
explore universes
Climb mountains, swim rivers, and “run with
the horses”
Take none of these for granted; learn of
life’s lessons;
Possibilities have no ceilings, obstacles provide
opportunities, and never let others slow
you down.

Finally, and most important, cultivate your soul

Awaken each morning to the dew of
God's presence
Throughout your day bask in the warmth of
His word
In the evening accept the atoning work of Christ
And God's peace will protect your heart as
you sleep.

Bill Martin
Lakeside School, Granite

Vilma

Is happy.



Vilma Minera

Daughter of Alejandra Minera.

Sibling of
Guillerimo Minera.

Wife of Osvin Deleon.

Lover of my God, husband,
family, and life.

Who feels blessed, loved, and powerful.

Who gives love, energy, and time.

Who fears losing loved ones, storms,
and tornadoes.

Who would like to see God, movies, shooting
stars, and the beach.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.

Vilma Minera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Luciano

Looking for something new all the time

Useful and always ready

Can work alone on many things

I can use a variety of machines

Amazingly putting his skills to work

Never giving up on anything and
remaining positive

On life and everywhere

Luciano Olguin
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Martha Azucena

Is crazy, pretty, happy, and honest.



Martha Cruz Olivares

Daughter of Martha
and Jose.

Sibling of Jose, Alejandra,
and Edgar.

Aunt of Aidan.

Lover of my life, my
boyfriend, and my family.

Who feels hungry, wonderful, and enamored.

Who gives energy, kisses, and smiles.

Who fears spiders, snakes, and frogs.

Who would like to see Puerto Rico, my family,
and the beach.

Who lives in Oklahoma City

Martha Cruz Olivares
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Struggles in My Mind

Family

They are my hope

Because of them, I'm still alive

They are my strength, why I strive

Continuing to fight against all the pain

Changing my criminal thinking, keeping
myself sane

Hope

For a brighter tomorrow

Thanks

To God for making me strong

Family

For supporting me with love

As I continue to fight the struggles in my mind

Bruno Perez
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

Melvyn

Man who likes



Melvyn Perez

Electronic work

Lives in Oklahoma City

Values life

Youthfully learning English

Naturally loving life

Melvyn Perez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Cristina

Is happy, crazy, honest, and
sleepy.

Daughter of Miguel and
Patrocinio.

Sibling of Irma, Sonia,
Miguel Angel, Maira, Ana,
Paty, Gil, Carlos, Jorge, Sand
Fernando.



Cristina Ramos

Lover of my family and life.

Who feels loved, positive, and blessed.

Who gives love and time.

Who fears making mistakes, failing,
and tornadoes.

Who would like to see my parents, Italy,
and Germany.

Who lives in Bethany, Oklahoma.

Cristina Ramos
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Josue A.

Is happy, positive, intelligent, and tired.

Father of Joshua.

Sibling of Veronica, Adriana, Flor, and Ricardo.



Josue Regalado

Lover of my wife, mom, son,
and daughter.

Who feels sick, starving,
and wonderful.

Who gives flowers,
chocolate, and presents.

Who fears snakes, spiders, and scorpions.

Who would like to see movies, the beach,
and my mom.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.

Josue Regalado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Joana

Is friendly, honest, and crazy.

Daughter of Ignacio Reyes
and Maria Reyes.

Wife of Jose L. Carrera.

Sibling of Manuel,
Guadalupe, Ignacio, Jesus,
Antonio, and Mary.



Joana Reyes

Lover of my life, running, and my family.

Who feels loving, blessed, and starved.

Who gives love, time, and kisses.

Who fears tornadoes, dying, and obscurity.

Who would like to see the Cancun beach and
other countries.

Who lives in Del City, Oklahoma

Joana Reyes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Maria Cristina

Is independent, responsible, optimistic,
and strong.

Daughter of Pedro Martinez Macias and Maria
Esparza Duran.



Maria Reyes

Sibling of Jesus, Hortencia,
Enrique, Laura, Maribel,
and Lourdes.

Wife of Hector Reyes
Nunez.

Lover of life and family.

Who feels blessed with life and happy for
everything God gives me.

Who gives love, understanding, and strength.

Who fears not being with her children.

Who would like to see my parents, brothers,
and sisters.

Who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Maria Reyes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Yesenia

Is optimistic, happy, responsible, and honest.

Wife of Manuel A.

Chinchilla.

Sibling of Mario, Remberto,

Marina.

Daughter of Angel Escobar

and Laura Madrid.



Yesenia Rodriguez

Lover of my God and my family.

Who feels blessed and grateful.

Who gives love and friendship.

Who fears snakes.

Who would like to see my brothers and his
children.

Who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Yesenia Rodriguez

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Guadalupe Saldana



Guadalupe Saldana

Is happy, honest, friendly,
and beautiful.

Girlfriend of Mijael
Gonzalez Morales

Sibling of Pompilio Saldana
Trejo and Francisca Saldana
Rojo.

Lover of my parents, my boyfriend, and my life.

Who feels blessed, proud, and loving.

Who gives time, love, and smiles.

Who fears snakes, mice, and dogs.

Who would like to see movies, God, and
the moon.

Who has lived in Dallas, Virginia, and now lives
in Oklahoma.

Guadalupe Saldana
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Eduardo

Is positive, honest, happy, and friendly.

Husband of Francisca Soto.

Father of Daysi, Keyla, Layla, and Brianna.

Sibling of Ricardo and Juan

Lover of my women, family, and my car.

Who feels sick, happy, and tired.



Eduardo Sandoval

Who gives time, love, and money.

Who fears scary movies and tornadoes.

Who would like to see President Obama and the ocean.

Who lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Eduardo Sandoval
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Don't Give Up Hope

The best thing about learning to read is knowing you can achieve your goals.

Learning wisdom is like watering a plant, the better you take care of it the more it grows.

You will be amazed at how happy you will be, by all that you can achieve.

The blessings that come from reading are gifts
indeed, that you will continue to receive.

So much of life's mystery will continue to open up
after you open a book.

Then ... turn the pages one after the other, over
and over, again and again.

Explore life's immense brilliance and someday
you can help others to read.

As long as you never give up hope and you
continue to want to succeed.

Jason Douglas Smith
Lakeside School, Granite

Gloria

Going to run

Learning new words

Outside the weather is
warm



Gloria Solis

Read my book

Improving my English

Amazingly agreeing with my partners

Gloria Solis

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Time

As I sit here in this prison, eroding away
from time;

The time that passes me by, leaving me behind,

I was sitting in a cell thinking how close this
could be to hell,

But I'm here and waiting... waiting for what
or anticipating.

The moment to leave this little paused session
or—wait!

I think I forgot or missed the lesson.

Is this punishment for me ... or for my family?

Michael Taylor
Lakeside School, Taft

A Poem

Just like a song you would play over and over,
or the same as the intensity of the storm with its
 destructive gusty winds;
just as powerful is the feeling I get,
when I look through your eyes
that window to paradise.

Looking at the deep blue sky,
I am not able to get out of my mind
the sparkly tender looks of your bright blue eyes;

The sunrise unleashed the calm breeze of
 the morning,
and the hope of travel to the wide deep blue sea
 comes alive,
when I stare at the wonderful color of your eyes.

At night when the moon light shines
and the dark sky is full with twinkle stars;
like two expensive diamonds
I treasure all those feelings inside of me,
sensations that will be awakened next time
when I get to see the color of the sky
in your tantalizing blue eyes.

Eric Torres

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Samuel

Is happy, honest, positive,
and exhausted.

Father of Samuel Jr., Arturo,
Esteban, and Mayra.

Lover of my daughter and
my kids.

Who feels sad, positive,

happy, and weak.



Samuel Torres

Who gives love and time.

Who fears losing.

Who would like to see China, Colombia, Peru,
and my family.

Who lived in North Carolina and now lives in
Oklahoma.

Samuel Torres

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Who Retains My Love

So much of my love; all my love

Is in this garden of mine.

In life, I see them wither each day,

But I always prefer to pluck the flowers.

Silvia Torres

New Dimension Literacy Council, Ardmore

Sonia Elizabeth

Is friendly, honest, and an overachiever.

Daughter of Mario and Agustina.

Sibling of Mario Alberto, Gabriela,
and Emperatriz.

Mother of Marina Elizabeth Reyes Vazquez.



Sonia Vazquez

Wife of Roman

Reyes de Paz.

Aunt of Andrea de Leon

Vazquez and Alexander.

Lover of my daughter,
my husband, and my
whole family.

Who feels happy, hungry, and enamored.

Who gives love, money, and smiles.

Who fears losing my daughter and storms.

Who would like to see my parents and a new car.

Who lives in Oklahoma City.

Sonia Vazquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Challenge and Reward

I came to America to learn
And confidence is what I
need.

For a new language I
really yearn,
But English is not easy to
speak, write or read.



Daniel Villazana

English pronunciation is hard,
It has a lot of words I cannot say.
The language seems to have a big guard
That makes my learning a very grey day.

The language also has its pattern,
But it's hard to say the words and not stammer.
All the complaining you do doesn't matter.

There's no rule about English grammar.

Whether you start this journey early or late
What matters is giving everything you've got.
My success depends not on destiny or fate
Knowledge and will are what I brought.

I can say my life has taken a path,
English language was the reason.
Going forward and not giving up,
To find in life a better season.

If you come from a different land
American culture you may find rare.
At first, it's difficult to understand,
But in the long run the reward will be there.

Daniel Villazana
Northwest Oklahoma Literacy Council, Woodward

Spring: A Haiku

Flowers are growing

The birds are building their nests

The sun is shining

Betsy White Eagle
Rogers County Literacy Council, Claremore

Learn with Literacy

When I wanted to read better,
I asked for help at the Altus Public
Library.

With my tutor we got
together weekly, no
matter the weather.

We enjoy reading the
newspaper, what a great
way to learn for now and
later!

When keeping up with the news, you'll never
be done

The comic section is also full of fun.

Keeping up with the news is something we
choose.



Harold Wilson

Reading makes our days better when my tutor
and I read together!

Literacy has helped our health,
Reading is the real wealth!
Coming to the library is fun even if I am late and
have to run!

Harold Wilson
Great Plains Literacy Council

Hope

The hope

Hope, light in my darkness

Peace for my soul, you are my rescue.

You've never let go.

All my hope is in you, all my strength

Is in you with every breath, my soul will rest in you.

Here is my weakness.

Always the same,

Your love is my shelter, your life is my way, also my
hope is you.

All my strength is in you with every breath, my soul
will resign,

All the earth, beneath you.

Alma Zavala
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Fight

I have ice in my veins but love in my heart

I have these memories in my brain but they all fall
apart

I draw them on canvas with paint from my tears

Over family and friends that I've lost through the
years

I am cursed at the soul that's been lost in this hole

When will I ever crawl out, I'm not sure, I don't
know

I have nights full of pain and my days are the
same

I try and see sunshine, but my life's full of rain

But still I stay strong and fight to live on

Because if I don't, I know my mind will be gone

Bruce Perez
FCI El Reno Literacy Program



O • K • L • A • H • O • M • A



LITERACY RESOURCE OFFICE

For information about literacy efforts in Oklahoma
please visit www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy or call
Literacy Resource Office at 1-800-522-8116



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