Celebrating Our Journey

Volume 10
Celebrating Our Journey

Volume 10

A Collection of Life Stories written by Oklahoma Adult Learners
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Foreword

It is always a joy to introduce the newest *Celebrating Our Journey*, and this 10th volume is indeed a cause for celebration!

This time around, adult learners chose from five different writing categories to relate their Greatest Successes, describe their Favorite Places or their Favorite Days, and tell us about the Heroes in their lives. Some of them dip their toes into the art of Poetry, discovering that they can take those words that they now can read and weave them into a creation of their own.


Story after story, I am amazed at the tenacity of spirit these adult learners exhibit as they strive for a better education and a better life.
And as they reach for their goal, they never forget to express gratitude—for their faith, their families, their friends, and for those who are helping them master new skills. In turn, they teach all of us what it means to confront challenges with grace, humility, hope, and hard work.

So, here’s a toast to the writers of this 10th collection of life stories by Oklahoma adult learners. We can’t wait to see what the future brings your way.

Susan McVey
Director, Oklahoma Department of Libraries
My Favorite Day
My Favorite Day

My favorite day is when my daughter was born. She was born in Bogota, Colombia on November 4, 2005. My daughter’s name is Sara and she was born at 6:00 p.m. Everybody was there; Sara’s father, my parents, my family and my friends. She was born by cesarean.

When I had her in my arms, it was the best day of my life. But, I believe that every mother who has her first baby feels the great fear of responsibility. I felt a great and deep love, but also the fear of not fulfilling God with the task of being a mother. It was a difficult and long day, but wonderful.

Thanks to God, it was my happy and blessed day. I am the proudest mother to remember my favorite day.

Sonia Alba
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Day

My favorite day was when my son was born. My son was a baby who was very desired because I had some health problems.

Every day was a triumph for me, so when he was finally born, that was the greatest day for me.

Now in the whole house you can see the presence of him. I really love him.

Laura Alvarado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

One of my favorite days was last year. My family and I visited the Grand Canyon.

It was the first time we were there. I never imagined the Grand Canyon. It was indescribable. I wanted to cry. I felt very little compared with the nature.

My children asked, “Did God do all this?” I answered,
“Yes, He did. For me the Grand Canyon is like a sculpture, someone had to sculpt it.”

My children enjoyed the day a lot and they liked to see many squirrels. One squirrel followed us. I think maybe she was hungry and wanted something to eat, but my son gave the squirrel a leaf. She didn’t want a leaf. She wanted food, and the squirrel tried to bite him. Everybody laughed. It was a nice day.

Lorena Baizan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

I am in Intermediate English. My favorite day was when my husband asked me to marry him. It was very beautiful that day, because he was very loving and tender when he asked me. I will always remem-
I will always remember the day of my 15th birthday party. I could not believe that I was fifteen already. I waited my whole life for that amazing day. Before it, my parents always told me that I would have a big party with all the people I wanted, a big princess dress, high heels, a crown, and beautiful make-up. It took me 1 year to be ready for my party. It was on April 16, 2016. I had a dance with 14 boyfriends and another with 6 girlfriends. It was beautiful. It took me 2 months to learn the dances. I was so excited, because all my friends helped me. I chose everything I wanted for my party. I invited a lot of people. Everybody who was invited, went to my party. The
invitations and the place were pretty nice. I invited approximately 700 people. Everybody was surprised, because my party was very fun and beautiful. The most important part was, I was very very happy. My family was very happy too, because my party was one of the nicest parties they had ever seen. My friends, most of the time, were dancing and looking at me. They said that I was so pretty that day. It was definitely the best day of my life. I will never forget the day. When I woke up that morning, I could not believe that it was the day; the best of my life.

Kasandra Barraza
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Going to the University
Was the Best Day Ever

The best day of my life was the first day of being in the university. I will always remember this day. I traveled to another city and became a part of a
new community, new people, and new life. On that day, it started in the morning. I traveled to my university in another city. I used the train to reach the campus. I met my uncle, who is a very great man. He helps me more than any person and is my hero.

The next day I went to see the city. I went to the lake, and after that, I went to the museum. In the evening, I went to the theater. I liked the new city. The new city was very crowded. After one week, I completed my registration. I joined the university, and started my class.

Sadig Bushra
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day is my birthday because I love to receive gifts; also because I like that my friends send me texts; also because they call me, and I feel that I am remembered by many people in a day.
Another reason is because I like that my husband surprises me. I love the birthday cake, put on the candle and make a wish.

Sincerely, I love my birthday!

Martha Camberos
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day would be my wedding day. My fiancé would surprise me with a ring. Then, I would choose a fantastic dress—short in front, but long in the back with a train. I would wear a pretty tiara in my hair.

For the ceremony, I would have a traditional wedding, but outdoors in the fresh air. I would invite family and special friends.

For our honeymoon, we would go to the beach and spend 2 or 3 weeks there.
Then, we would start our new life together with a plan for a wonderful life.

Deysi Canizales
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

I Remember the Day

I will always remember the day when my daughter was two months old, and she had RSV along with some other viruses. She had to be hospitalized because she couldn’t breathe and would turn purple.

After arriving at the hospital, she was admitted right away. She was turning purple and her oxygen level was really low at 79%.

Her immune system was really low too, and she had to have blood transfusions. She was not responding to the medications, so the doctors had no choice but to intubate her.

She was on life support for about three months. We
weren’t even able to touch her. It was just so heart-breaking. The doctors would tell me to be prepared for the worst. They gave her a 50% chance of living, but God is so big and always there for us.

After those three long months, she woke up and started moving and opening her eyes. Doctors removed those tubes that she had in her mouth, and she started breathing on her own.

Two weeks after she started breathing on her own, she was able to go home with us. I will never forget that day. She is my little miracle.

Marlen Carpio
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

I am a housewife. Most people call me Jane. I moved from Thailand with my family, and I stay home every day. I’m lonely when nobody’s at home. My husband is a truck driver who works Monday through
Friday. My son goes to school, so he is gone all day too. But everybody is home on weekends!

Saturday and Sunday are my favorite days because my husband and son are home. I don’t have to stay home alone all day long. In the morning, I cook breakfast and we have breakfast together. We often go shopping or out to lunch somewhere. We sometimes go to my mother-in-law’s house to see her and my sister-in-law. We enjoy hanging out with them. After dinner, I help my son with his homework. After he finishes his homework, I take him to his bedroom to sleep. After that, I watch movies with my husband.

In the spring, the weather is fine and the temperature is nice and warm. This is a good time to tend our garden. So, on weekends, my son likes to plant seeds and flowers with me.
In the summer, when the temperature is hot, we usually go swimming at the gym near our house. In the evening, when the temperature cools down, we often take walks in our neighborhood, or play in our backyard. Even though we usually have dinner at home, we sometimes go out to have dinner at the restaurant by the lake. Seeing the sunset is very beautiful. I really love to spend time with my wonderful family on the weekend.

Jongjit (Jane) Caudill
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

I will never forget the day I adopted Jessy, my best friend and companion. Adding a new member to our family was not an easy decision for us, because we move frequently to different countries, but we were ready for it. We decided that the best option was to look for an adoption center and go through
the adoption process. Also, we needed to think about the adaptation process for the family. That is why the day we adopted her was my favorite day.

After an exhausting journey looking for a different adoption center, we finally found an adorable creature. We saw her in a small bed and fell in love immediately. She looked defenseless and fearful. But, when we took her in our arms, her eyes changed and we knew she was the one. We were so happy that we decided to adopt her in that moment.

We completed the requirements until finally she was ready to go with us. What a moment it was when I got her in my arms! Nevertheless, reality was in front of us. We needed to go home and start the adaptation process. We encouraged her to explore the house, but she was so frozen that she stayed in the kitchen. I prepared her bed, putting a warm
water bottle and a clock in it to simulate her previous environment. We thought she would have sleeping issues for all the changes that happened to her. We stayed awake all night thinking about it. To our surprise, she was sleeping and we were exhausted! She adapted better than we thought.

The decision to enlarge our family and give a new opportunity to a sweet dog is a wonderful experience. When I look at her, I think we made the correct choice.

Valeria Compañ
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

The Best Day of My Life

My favorite day will be the day of my dream wedding. It will be on the beach on a sunny day, with all my family and my special friends. I want that day to be the most important day in my whole life. I want to remember it, every single day, as a day
with the most beautiful dress and make-up ever. I also want to give my guests a special memory—a delicious meal, special drinks and an unforgettable party. As a Latin girl, I want to have a party with authentic Latin music. I want my father to take me to the altar and give my parents the proud moment of seeing me get married.

I want my wedding to be different from other weddings. That moment has to be the most special in the world, with a funny dance just for my husband and me. I also want to have fireworks, live music, and masks for the guests. I would like to give my husband a recording of our relationship with all our special moments, because I want this to be his favorite day too.

Luisa Devia
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Day

My favorite day was my first day in the United States, when I arrived to fulfill my American dream. Now I have my own house, a good job, a family and a better life.

I thank this wonderful country for giving me the opportunity to have a better life, full of opportunities. I have found good people that have offered me great help, like learning English, and I have developed better in this country.

That was my favorite day, but more than that, it was my lucky day!

Guadalupe Diaz
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Thanks to God

My family and I are from Mexico. We arrived in Buffalo, Oklahoma in the month of July in 1999. It
was our hope and faith in God that he would always keep us together. To this day, I thank God, who has kept me and my children together.

Six months after arriving in Buffalo, I began working at Grace Living Center, where I worked for 16 years. Today, I am retired. In September of 2016, I became a U.S. Citizen.

My happiness is every weekend when all my children reunite at my house. I love my friends and family very much. I see myself always being reunited with my family. Thanks to God!

Gloria Garcia
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

Tuesday

The best day of my life is Tuesday because it was when my daughter was born. My child was the most beautiful girl that God could send me.
I will always remember the day when I first held her in my arms. I never imagined that such a small thing would make me so happy. Even from the first moment, I enjoyed her company.

My family celebrates her birthday every year. It is a special day for us. This year, 2017, we will celebrate her 6th year.

Irma Gonzalez  
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

I am in Intermediate English class and this is my story.

My favorite day was when my daughter was born. She was born on September 7, 2001. It was the happiest day of my life. When I saw her eyes for the first time, it made my heart beat very hard. She was beautiful. I felt like the luckiest mom in the world.
I had my little girl in my arms. It was a special moment for my husband and me. We will never forget this special day. Years have passed, she is now a teenager but she will always be our baby. She is very smart in school, she always has good grades. She likes to dance and she is a cheerleader. I am very proud of her.

My Favorite Day

My favorite day was when I first found out I was pregnant with my daughter. I was at the emergency room, waiting to get evaluated for an in-patient center, because I was tired of not getting professional help. While my grandma and I were waiting for the doctor after they did some tests, the doctor came
back in and said, “Your pregnancy test came back positive. We’re going to do a couple more tests and an ultrasound to be sure.” We had to wait for another hour or so, but I was in complete shock that I might be pregnant. I was wondering how I was going to take care of myself and my baby. I wasn’t ready to be a mother; I was worried about school and how my parents would feel about their first born having a baby. Would they take it well? Or would they tell me to have an abortion?

The doctor came back in with an ultrasound machine and did the ultrasound. Then he said, “Well you’re pregnant, but from the looks of it, I’d say you’re about 5 weeks.” I looked at my grandmother; she didn’t show any sign of being surprised about my pregnancy. I decided to call Casey, the baby’s father, and tell him about my pregnancy. He was
shocked at first, but then it was like he knew about my pregnancy. While I was sitting there thinking about my future, I decided to change myself for my baby. I decided to do everything I can for myself and my baby, to give her a life I never had. I wanted her to have a chance at life. I loved her from the start.

Alissa Hair
New Horizons Program, Shawnee

My Favorite Day

My favorite day was the day I started college. My friends and I went to psychology class to learn how to help children with many problems. I remember I was excited, because I really wanted to learn about the different types of disorders.

I love to help people, so for me, learning how to understand kids was incredible. After the class, I
could really understand the importance of a child psychologist.

I hope I can put into practice what I learned that day and be able to help the children or people who need it.

Katy Herrera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Sunday Is My Favorite Day

Of all the days of the week, Sunday is my favorite day. My four grandchildren call on that day in the afternoon. I also like Sunday because it is a relaxing time. Every Sunday gives me a chance to learn by reading and watching TV.

The telephone is busy every Sunday when my four grandchildren call me and my wife, Judy, since they live far away. The youngest granddaughter, who is four years old, lives in Washington. Also I can count on my other granddaughter, age 10, and her two
brothers, ages two and eight, to call from Washington, D.C. They cannot speak Chinese like me, so we speak English. They always have family stories to tell, so I usually do more listening to their young voices. I love hearing from my grandchildren every week.

Relaxing is part of Sunday activities. I get to sleep longer in the morning. Walking around the Altus city reservoir on Sunday before lunch is part of my favorite day. I usually spend most of Sunday at home, relaxing.

Sundays have more time for improving my education. Reading history books are what I like. I have time to watch Taiwan and Hong Kong TV programs on my satellite TV.

I get to enjoy Sundays 52 times a year. I look forward to my four grandchildren calling on the telephone. Life is much calmer and more restful on Sunday. I
try to learn more on this day by reading and watching TV. Sunday is so special to me.

Robert Hu
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

Wedding Was More
Than a Dream

July 17, 2016, will always be my favorite day. I got married on that day to Faton Jakupi, the most handsome man in the whole world! He was living in the United States, and I lived in Kosova.

After 5 months of talking on the phone and through the Internet, he told me he was coming to visit. Faton had secretly arranged with my brother and sister to take me to dinner two days before I thought he was to arrive. They never mentioned that Faton was joining us. We laughed and talked on our first date; that was a year before the wedding. Just thinking about this makes me smile.
On the third day, which was Sunday, he wanted to meet my family. The next day we started to make plans for my wedding before he went back to the United States.

After being engaged for a year and being away from each other, we got married on July 17, 2016. Our special day came to reality! Like other brides, I was realizing my dream. I had a grand wedding with 450 guests. I worried about my plans, reservations, invitations, special tobacco, traditional music, the food, and my wedding dress that I made to surprise my husband.

The moment came when Faton came to take me as a bride. Faton and I were so excited and had waited for this moment with such love. We were met by musicians playing special drums. We walked slowly toward the party and were greeted with applause. After hours of dancing and a pleasant dinner, came
the cutting of my beautiful cake. Everyone wished us endless happiness.

On July 17, 2016, I felt like a princess to the man I love. I am happy to have a man in my life, a friend, and a partner!

A Story About My Favorite Day

I’ll always remember this day. It had been so long since my kids and I had spent time together. I was so excited to see them. My heart was pounding while waiting for them to show up. Seeing my kids means everything to me. When they arrived, we sat and talked for a while before heading to the zoo. Seeing the smiles on their faces was joyful. My daughter and sons wouldn’t leave my side. My oldest son paid for the tickets. We walked around just talking about how long it had been since we had been to
the zoo. We all decided that we will get together at least three times a month. As my kids were walking in front of me, I was thinking about how proud I am of them. They jumped every time an animal came out. The looks on their faces were great. They were filled with joy and happiness.

Samantha Johns
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Favorite Day

When I was young, my favorite day was always Lunar New Year. Some call it Chinese New Year, but the Vietnamese call it “Tet.” Tet has 3 days, the first three days of the Lunar year. I always liked Tet so much because, on these days, I would receive new clothes to wear. I also got money from “Lixi,” a small red envelope containing money from relatives or friends. We also prepared special meals for Tet, with fruits, vegetables and meats. I liked to eat
it all, especially sweet sticky rice cakes, sweet dried coconut, sweet dried lotus, and sweet dried ginger.

Before Tet, we were very busy preparing our homes by cleaning and decorating them with Leopard and Sakura flowers. During Tet, we enjoyed special meals and visited friends and relatives to wish them the best. We also went to the entertainment place to play games or see the sights, enjoy the scenery, and take pictures. We enjoyed many interesting things.

Now I live in the U.S. However, when Tet comes, I always think of the good times I had with my parents and relatives. I miss them so much. I love celebrating Tet. It is such a good memory and reminds me of my old country.

Tran La
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Day

My favorite day is August 31, 2009. This day my son was born. My life changed and was extraordinary. When he talks and plays, we cry because we are happy. I like that he is a good person. I remember how happy I was and I still am. I am glad tomorrow is Mother’s Day. He is my hero because he changed my life. My greatest success was when he came and inspired change in my life.

Isabella Luna
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day...

...was the day I got affordable health insurance. The day I turned sixty five, I received my Medicare card. I stopped paying four hundred fifty a month for health insurance. With Medicare, I began paying $98.00 a month. It was a saving of over three hundred fifty dollars a month. It was the biggest raise
I ever had. At the same time, I received my Social Security card. With the savings from the health insurance and the Social Security check, I was making more money than when I was working.

When I first retired, I worried for several months if the Social Security checks would keep coming.

For the American workers, I think these are the greatest benefits.

I hope they don’t screw it up for America.

Jim McKenzie
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

I will always remember the day when my husband asked me to marry him. Everything was like a fairy tale. I never imagined that something like that would happen to me.
He knelt, took the ring out of his pocket, and told me he wanted to marry me.

OMG! It was the maximum! I started to cry. We threw ourselves on the floor and we held each other for a while. It was a dream I will never forget. It is a bright spot in my life, and whenever I pass by there, I remember it as if it were yesterday.

Silvia Medina
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day is Sunday, because my family and I wake up early. My husband makes breakfast. Eating together at the table, we talk about where we are going to eat after church. After Mass, we are going to eat at a restaurant together. When we return to
my house, we watch TV on the Netflix channel, eat popcorn, and go to sleep.

Yolanda Medina
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Birth of My Son

When I knew I was expecting, I was the happiest woman in the world. My pregnancy was hard for me because I was sick during almost all of it. Try to imagine how I felt—I only wanted to eat apples with chili powder and coca. When I was 7 months pregnant, my doctor finally gave me medicine to stop my vomiting. After that, I enjoyed my pregnancy. I ate all the food that I liked. I loved my belly as it grew and grew. I was anxious for my child to be born. All of my pregnancy, I thought that my first child would be girl and her name was going to be Melanie. But, soon after that, I had a dream, and in my dream I was expecting a child who was
a boy. After that dream, I spoke to my husband and told him that we were having a boy and we should name him Jonathan. When my child was born, he was the same as in my dream—a beautiful big boy and I love him with all my heart.

Nidia Mendoza
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Daughter’s Special Day

I will always remember the quinceañera of my daughter. It was a very special event. She wanted her party in Mexico. It was difficult for us to organize from here. My husband and I planned the party one-year in advance, working hard and saving money.

My daughter wanted a special music group “Extenso.” She had the dress on that she dreamed about.

It was a joy to see my daughter’s happiness. That was how the weeks and months passed; and the big day would come.
My family in Mexico was happy to see us again. It would be a great event, mainly meeting with our family and friends and thanking God for our daughter’s birthday.

Finally, came the day. My daughter was beautiful like a princess. She was wearing a pink fuchsia dress and silver shoes. When we arrived at the church, full of colorful flowers all around, it was beautiful.

After we went to the event room, there would be a delicious dinner for all the guests. Then we would go to the dance hall where my daughter would dance her first waltz with her dad.

All the family and friends were applauding for the beautiful moment of the dance. That day was the happiness and blessing of my life to look at my daughter, full of happiness and sharing her joy with all the guests.
At the end, she left and shared her cake and thanked everyone. We all had fun. It was unforgettable.

Maria Montoya
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day was when I met my husband.

It was when I was in Mexico. I was studying in the college. He went to visit his grandfather, and after that he visited me every day.

But he had to return to the USA and I thought he was not coming back anymore.

Then one day he returned to visit me, and after that, he went to Iraq because he was in the Army and he was there for one year.

He called me. I never forgot him. Then he returned to see me. One year later we got married and we had a baby, and finally we came to live here.
We have three kids now.

I am very happy with my family.

Mariela Montoya de Aquino  
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

I live in Duncan, Oklahoma, and I’m learning to read. My favorite day is reading day because I am busy! I have Tai Chi and line dancing. Then I come to class. I like it because I am learning a lot and because I want to be smart. I like my teacher. We laugh a lot, we have fun, but I am learning too.

Margo Morales  
Duncan Area Literacy Council

TET

Of all holidays, I like Tet the most because Tet, or Vietnamese New Year, is the most important and popular celebration in Vietnamese culture. It occurs
on the first day of the first month in the Lunar calendar. Tet is an opportunity for everyone in the family, plus friends, to meet and express their best wishes for the New Year ahead. It is also a chance to show respect to elders and remember our ancestors.

Tet begins on Luna New Year’s eve: the last second of the old year. The Vietnamese believe it is the most spiritual moment in the year because it is the time to let go of all the bad and welcome a new year arriving with luck and prosperity. My family celebrates the New Year by gathering in front of the altar to give thanks to God for the past year, and asking God’s blessing until the next New Year’s eve. Then, we express our wishes to our family members and share toasts. Children receive red envelopes that contain money, which represents good fortune.

People believe that on the first day of the New Year, the first person who walks in the house will bring prosperity and luck for the entire year. My family
has always chosen a good family member or friend to visit my house. In an effort to get rid of the bad things of the old year, people will also clean their homes. People believe what they do on the dawn of Tet will determine their fate for the whole year. Hence, people always smile and behave as nice as they can in hope of a better year.

I love this time of the year the most, because Tet brings hope for the future and happiness for everybody.

Hoang Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite days were my wedding days—two special days in January 2017—the 9th and 10th. Our parents strongly believed these were the best dates for my future husband and me after asking a fortune teller.
The first wedding day, which was the day before the official ceremony, the groom’s family and relatives brought gifts wrapped in red paper to my house. The gifts were similar to those of the engagement: moon cakes, wine, tea and fruit. We decorated everything for the wedding party, including my dress, with red, which the Vietnamese think is the symbol of luck. Nowadays, the bride and groom do not go from table to table to collect envelopes with money from our guests. We put a wedding box behind the main gate, and people who attended the party put envelopes with cash inside the box.

The second day was the official day of the wedding ceremony. It was only for family. This time, I wore a white dress and my husband wore a black suit,
like the American tradition. The groom, his parents and their relatives came to my house. The groom’s family introduced themselves and asked permission for their son to marry me. After that, I followed my groom to his house. When we arrived at the groom’s home, it meant that the wedding ceremony was over and we would have a party at his house. There was a band to play music and people enjoyed refreshments. Some guests sang songs on the stage. During the party, my husband and I went to each table and received best wishes and congratulations from everyone.

Today, many Vietnamese couples have modern wedding ceremonies, like in America. However, the two days of my wedding in January were my favorite days.

Loan Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
Saturday

I wake up later than usual at 9 a.m. My wife makes coffee and breakfast foods. Sweet aroma of coffee, and the aroma of foods wake me. We eat breakfast, and talk very happily. Then we go to the gym, shopping, supermarket, and take lunch at a restaurant.

I cook Vietnamese food for dinner. I eat all day with my wife, very happily. I work in my yard, watch TV, and listen to music. I do what I like. My favorite day is Saturday.

Nghia T Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

Christmas Day is my favorite day because on this day I get to spend more time with my family. One day, as we were preparing for Christmas, I received a call from my brother in Mexico City. He told me that he was going to visit me in Oklahoma City and asked if
that would be okay. “Yes, of course,” I answered him with emotion. I was excited also because we were going to go to Dallas, Texas. I couldn’t, however, go on the Dallas trip because one of my children at that time was sick; but when my husband and my brother came back from Dallas, Texas, I was very happy.

When my brother got here to Oklahoma City, he gave me a big hug and tears ran down both our faces. That day we talked all day. The other days were spent touring the beautiful spots in Oklahoma City and waiting for Christmas Day to arrive.

We shared many special dinners during this time, until my brother had to return to Mexico City. This is why Christmas Day is my favorite day.

Alicia Nunez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Day

My favorite day was May 10, 2015. It was the best day of my life and the biggest thing that happened to me and my wife. It was my baby boy, Easton. And my wife is the best in the world and we are the best team. Easton is the best baby, but now he is going to be a big brother and we know that he is going to be the best big brother in the world. My wife and I hope the second baby is as calm and relaxed as Easton was. And the second baby is coming around November 2017. My wife and I are going to have a Reveal Party. But we don’t know who to tell to keep the secret. We have a lot of people to choose from, and we need to figure out how to do the Reveal Party. We are looking forward to our new addition to our family.

Steve Ouellette
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Day

My favorite day was when my children were born, because my life changed. Since that day, my home was happy. My husband and I are happy. It’s a very big responsibility when they are bigger. But I have many beautiful memories: when they started to walk, when they had their first tooth, when they started the first day of school, when they started to eat alone, when they started go to the bathroom alone. I have many memories after the day they were born.

Viridiana Pacheco
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

I’m from Vietnam. In my country, Tet, or Vietnamese New Year, is a special day. It’s an occasion for family reunions. Everyone usually returns to their families during Tet. Before Tet holiday, Vietnamese
people prepare a lot of things in my family. I help my mom cook delicious food, cakes, candies, and clean the house.

My father decorates my house with bonsai and flowers. Tet is an occasion for everyone to get together in a warm atmosphere. At Tet, spring fairs are organized, streets and public buildings are brightly decorated. During the New Year’s Eve, fireworks displays are everywhere. In Tet holiday, children have lucky money from adults. It’s so great!

Relatives and neighbors give each other best wishes for the New Year. Everyone has a good time thinking about the past year and the next year.

But now I live far away from my parents, and I wish I could return home to visit them every Tet.

Loan Pham
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
The Green

The first day of spring is my favorite day. Spring is the season and sign that life is coming. All of the green life is waking up after the cold winter. The color green appears everywhere.

In the morning, when I’m still in bed, I hear the birds singing outside. I have a feeling that everything is going to be well. I feel happy. I feel stronger. Looking at the Asian apple tree in my back yard, I see blooms appearing on the branches and they give the tree a new life, a new beginning. I love the warm weather and smelling the grass and seeing how green it is. I walk on the grass and breathe in the fresh air that spring brings. I walk around my garden and start to plant my vegetables. I feel like a new life has begun for my garden. It becomes very strong. My tomato plant is full of leaves and tomatoes, and my garden grows bigger and bigger every
day with tomatoes, onions, peppers and more; as well as my beautiful lilies, roses and other flowers. The green makes me happy, gives me hope of new life and the beginning of everything green.

Phuong Phan
OCCC Adult Literacy Center, OKC

Sunday Is My Favorite Day

I love Sundays because, on Sunday, I go to the church to give thanks to God.

For me, Sunday is now a day of rest from cooking. I like to eat at the restaurant with my family, and take walks in the park. Sometimes, I will go out to see a movie, but otherwise, Sunday is my day to stay at home and do nothing.

When I was a child, we used to visit my grandparents every Sunday. We all got together as a family
and we played baseball. Baseball was my cousin’s and uncle’s favorite game.

We also enjoyed visiting my grandparents’ house because it is a very large place. They sowed vegetables and fruits there, and later they sold them at the local market.

I have memories of every Sunday that we visited the house of my grandparents.

Maria Elena Pina
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

I love birthdays, because I always celebrate with my family. Everybody cooks different dishes; for example, enchiladas, tamales, beans, pozole, mole spaghetti, and soup. For dessert, they fix jelly, choco-
flan, brownie, chocolate with strawberry, pineapple, watermelon, kiwi, grapes, and chocobanana.

My Aunt Nayeli makes cake tres leches. It is so good. I love how she makes the middle; she pushes strawberries and peaches into it. It is really good.

Usually we start the party at 5 p.m. on Saturday. When everybody is present in the house, the party begins.

We eat approximately for four hours. After that, guys prepare the piñata, kids make two lines; one for girls and one for boys. They break the piñata, and everybody starts singing for forty minutes. It is broken and explodes. We see a lot of candy on the floor. Each person runs to take the candy.

Now we are ready to sing Happy Birthday. This part is my favorite. Why? Because sometimes the person cries because it is their birthday. I think they are very happy on their day.
After the party, we dance and drink beverages. We talk adventures and what we think will come in the future. We finish the party by cleaning up.

Rosa Rangel
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

Sunday, November 18, 2012, was one of the days in my life that I will never forget because I got to go to my very first Thunder game in person, thanks to my tutor’s daughter, Angela Parker. Her birthday wish was for me to go to my very first Thunder game.

I got to meet Bryan Davis and John Rohde, a reporter from the newspaper who remembered me from when I was a little boy in the Special Olympics. He remembered me even before I said who I was. That was so amazing that he would
remember after that many years since I was a little boy and he did stories on me for the newspapers for the Special Olympics.

I will also never forget the special treatment the Thunder organization did for us. They interviewed me on the TV and I have a CD of it to this day. They also gave me a personalized Thunder jersey that says RAINS on the back. It has the number 1 on it, too. I got to go onto the court before the Thunder and Warriors game and meet some of the Thunder players and they signed my jersey. Their names were Nick Collison and, even though I don’t want to say this player’s name anymore, Kevin Durant signed my Russell Westbrook jersey and gave me his warm-up off his back and signed that also. John Rohde told me that jersey will be worth a lot more in the future because Durant always signs his own jerseys and nobody else’s.

The Thunder storm chasers came where I was sit-
ting and gave me a tee-shirt with all the Thunder storm chasers’ names on it, and Rumble gave me a water bottle and a bag.

This day I will never forget for the rest of my life.

Andrew Rains
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day is on Sunday because it is the day my family stays together. In the week, my husband works every day and my daughters are in school all week from Monday to Friday. On Saturday, Vanesa goes to music class at 5:00. She is also learning piano.

But on Sunday I’m sharing with all my family. We go to church every Sunday at 10:45 AM. After, we go to eat lunch at a restaurant. In the afternoon, I make food for my family at home. At night, we watch TV.

Elvia Ramos
Community Literacy Centers, Inc, OKC
Sunday Is My Favorite Day

Sunday is my favorite because I go to church on Sunday. I also praise the Lord on Sunday. I really like going to church because I go to Sunday School and read and learn about the Bible. I also learn about Jesus Christ. After Sunday School, we go to the worship service.

James S.
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day to celebrate is Christmas, because this day brings us together. We eat a lot of food and we pray for all people that are sick in the hospitals, and for all people that do not have food in their houses, and for all people that do not have houses to live in either. We talk and play Bingo and Snakes and Ladders. We eat dessert; we dance and talk all night into the morning. Everyone is ready to open
presents. After we open presents, we go to church for prayer and back to my home to eat together again and start to party all day long. So I think this day is so special because, for Catholics, the church is born. It is God’s child.

Alma Sanchez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Sunday is My Favorite Day

My favorite day is Sunday because it’s a day where we can do different things and spend time with the family. Without a doubt, all the days of the week are important, but other than Sunday, I think it is a routine of equal activities.

Monday and Tuesday start at 7 a.m., getting the kids ready to go to school. Then I go to my English classes.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday begins the same.
I get up early to take the children to school, and then I go to work.

On Saturday the children rest, and it is a nice day for them, but I work that day. Sunday is the day where we are all together at home.

My children, my husband and I can get up late. Then, when we are up, we have breakfast while we decide what to do during the day. That’s why Sunday is my favorite day, because I can enjoy my family all day.

Claudia Santiago
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Wedding Day

My special day was June 8, 2013. It was the day I got married to my soul mate.

Since the first time I saw him, I felt something special and different, but I didn’t understand my feelings. Now, I know that he makes me a better person.
The way he treats me and the way he shows me his love every single day makes me happy.

Our wedding was a traditional ceremony in our country, Nicaragua. The church was arranged with natural flowers, and a beautiful red carpet from the entrance to the altar. Our friend sang during the ceremony.

My husband wanted me to have the wedding that I had always dreamed of, and it was a dream come true.

At the party, we had a Mariachi, a musical group to brighten up the party. When the Mariachi arrived, we had tequila, and our guests toasted us. Our dinner had five courses, including four kinds of desserts. The cake was really special for us because it was made by my mother.
We really enjoyed our wedding, and especially the idea of being together for the rest of our lives.

______________________________
Annieska Saravia
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

Every Tuesday morning, my day off, I like to exercise, call my mom, and clean the house. I make lunch and dinner, wash and iron the clothes, mop the floor, empty the trash, and clean my car. I go to the supermarket and buy some food and snacks for my husband; he likes to drink sweet tea when he mows the lawn. Before I go to school, my sister and I go to the church every Tuesday.

______________________________
Kimberly P. Lang Schrouf
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Birthday

My favorite day is my birthday. Last week was my
24th birthday. I did not realize that my friend gave a party for me. They cooked a lot of Chinese food. We ate and talked with each other. I had a lot of fun. Finally, they gave me a surprise. They made the cutest Hello Kitty cake in the world. After that, we went to play bowling. That was my first time to play it. My friend taught me how to shoot ball. I am really happy I learned a new skill on my birthday. And many friends posted birthday messages on Facebook. Thanks for all the best wishes. They made my day.

Hao Sun
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Going Home

My favorite day will be the day I am blessed and I walk out of federal prison in January of 2018. I have been incarcerated for 10 years and I have waited on this day for a very long time.
This day will be my favorite because I will finally be headed home to El Paso, Texas. My home is a beautiful home with palm trees in the yard and a back yard made for grilling and entertaining friends and family. I will be returning to my father and my little brother, Don. They both make me very proud. My dad has fought diabetes for many years. He is still fighting it each day with the same amount of effort as when he was first diagnosed. My little brother Don is a special education teacher. He motivates me to be a better person and to always stay positive in any situation, no matter what.

When I get home, I plan on spending my days working on my new profession as a welder. I am told that my area has plenty of work for welders. My evenings will be filled with spending time with my family and thoughts of my beautiful daughter. My daughter lives in a different state, but I will try my best to spend as much time as I can with her, calling and
e-mailing her when I can’t. I hope that I can make up the lost time and be a better dad by having her in my life more.

I plan on making up for all the time I’ve lost, and not taking anything for granted ever again. It will begin with my favorite day, the day I go home.

Danny Tarin
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

Celebrating our Journey

I will always remember the day I gave birth to my son; he completes my family. My girls finally have a brother of their own! It was a long road and decisions were made. I dealt with depression, anger, sadness, and being mad about this pregnancy. When it was all said and done, I will always remember the day I brought him home. I thought it was going to be hard, but my girls really stepped up and helped out a lot with the feeding, diaper changing, dress-
ing, undressing, and bathing. Oh, he didn’t like me at all! He preferred his older sister to bathe him. We all work together to make our family function.

I feel peaceful when I go home to Wichita, KS to visit my mom, although I would never move back to KS. I take my children and my grandchild when I go. I enjoy watching my kids make my mom smile and her face light up. She enjoys seeing them. I love my mom so much. I’m grateful she is still on this earth. It makes her happy to see how much her grandchildren have grown. She loves her grandchildren. We always hit the Golden Corral for a family dinner. We sit around and talk about the good old days. Now those days are rare.

I was so proud when my daughter gave birth to my grandson. He gave me love, not from a child I birthed, but a grandson. I am a proud grandmother indeed! But I didn’t make it easy for her. I wanted her to know that having a baby is not easy. Of course,
I helped out with the clothes, the formula and the diapers. However, the daily care was all on her.

Donna Taylor
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Favorite Day

I love to wake up when my body does not want the bed anymore. I have a hot coffee and sit and read the Bible with my husband. Next I like to prepare a delicious breakfast.

I fix something in our house with my husband, take care of the garden, and make some change in the decoration of the house.

I like to go with my husband to the mall for clothes, shoes, and gifts for my family, and things for the house; the kitchen store is my favorite because I want to have all the best.
I go with my husband to a restaurant. I like Olive Garden because our first date was there.

Then we like to go home and take a nap, and then we watch a movie and eat ice cream.

Before bed, I like to call my children or my mother on the phone to know how her day was.

I like to drink tea before bed while I pray and watch TV until I sleep.

Iraidis Tineo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Very Special Favorite Day

I appreciate this great opportunity to write about one of my favorite and important days for me and for my family too. I believe that it’s not only a favorite day for us, but also a favorite day for thousands and thousands of people around the whole world.

I am talking about Christmas Day. On this very spe-
cial day, my family and I all celebrate the birth of the most important person in the whole universe. That person is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who I also consider to be the hero of my life for all he has done for me and my family. I LOVE HIM with all my heart.

Christmas is a beautiful season, full of peace, joy and love, where we spend a wonderful time with all our family and friends.

Maria Trejo
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Days

My favorite days are the weekends because they are the only days we are together as a family—my children, my husband and me.

I like to go to the park for my children to have fun.
Every Sunday I like to go to church. I like to go to visit my brother, sister-in-law and nephews.

On weekends, I like to do activities that I cannot do during the week.

I like to spend time with my children, take them to the library, read stories to them and help them in what they need in school.

My family and I are going to different places. I’m friendly with different people.

Marisol Valles
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Day

Saturday is my favorite day. Every day is always special to me, but Saturday is my favorite day, because I might go to church, and that is important to me. Another reason I like Saturday is because I have plenty of free time. Besides church and free time, I
can make Saturday great by spending time with my family and friends. It is always good to spend time with friends I care about. It makes me feel good. I really enjoy going out and having fun on Saturday. Stress and hard work from Monday to Friday, so I am blown out tired. That is why Saturday is my favorite day.

Son T. Vo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Day

My favorite day is my wedding day, on April 30, 2015. We married in Dong Nai, Vietnam. The wedding lasted two days. The first day, my family and friends went to the bride’s side of the family. There were 150 friends, neighbors and family. Everyone ate together. We met at my aunt’s house for this celebration.

The second day, everyone returned to the bride’s
house. There were friends, family and neighbors again. Some came from far away. It’s the day of the wedding. The groom wore black and the bride wore a long white wedding gown and veil.

A game is played before the ceremony. The bride is locked in her room at home with her four bridesmaids. The groom, with his four groomsmen, can only enter by having a certain amount of money. The money must be placed in a red envelope. It was exactly 9999.00. (That is worth $60 in American money.) The money got the groom inside the house to release his bride. The groom took his bride and four bridesmaids out so that the wedding ceremony could start. That is our Vietnamese custom.

Paul, the groom, gave me an orchid necklace, matching earrings and a ring. The ceremony lasted over seven hours. A large feast came after the wedding. Table of 10 toasted us, the new couple. Many people sang and danced to a band that played all kinds
of music. My wedding day was my favorite day!

We flew to Thailand for five days for a honeymoon. I liked the white sandy beaches there. There are golden museums and golden statues everywhere. Even the doors and ceilings are painted in gold. All famous people are buried in the museums, like presidents of the country.

Helen Vong
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Special Days

My family celebrates every occasion there is to celebrate. First, we commemorate everyone’s birthdays. At this time no one has birthdays in January, July, September or December. But, there are birthdays in the other months.

The recipients select what they want to do and decide what kind of cake they want. At the present time, everyone seems to favor the cookie cake that
my daughter, Melissa, makes. On these occasions we make an effort for the event to be on Saturday or Sunday, so we can all be there together.

Secondly, individual accomplishments are honored with gifts of money so they can purchase what they will need. At this time, we are celebrating my granddaughter’s graduation and her acceptance at Yale College located in New Haven, Connecticut. I am happy for her, yet at the same time I am worried for her because of the things that go on at colleges.

There are other significant achievements honored in our family such as new births, graduations from the military, kid’s school celebrations, etc. Some of these events are celebrated together, but sometimes everyone can’t be there. Even though we aren’t always together physically, in our hearts we are.

Catherine Wade
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Day

September 1st is the first day of the New Year in my country. The first day of September is a holy day. In my Christian religion, that holiday is John Holiday from our bible. My birthday is the first day of September, and my favorite day is September 1st. Every birthday with my family is best. My name is from my birthday.

I left my country five-years ago, but I still celebrate in the United States. The first of September in my country is September eleventh in the United States. The terrible incident with Islamic terrorists in the US means almost three thousand people died in New York City on the same day I celebrate my birthday. After this incident, I have remembered, every year, the people who were victimized in New York on September 11, 2001. After I left my culture and my lovely family, I celebrated at different places. The government in Eritrea is a problem for ninety-
nine percent of the people of Eritrea. I pray to God, “Help my family and my country.”

I am from Eritrea, the Eastern horn of Africa. People in Eritrea asked the United Nations for Independence. The United Nations said to continue under Ethiopia. After this decision, the people of Eritrea started war. Now, the government is a dictatorship. That is why I am in the United States.

I am learning English (Intermediate Level). I love my class and the people. My work permit expired, and I was not going to be able to continue my class. Our teacher had a very grand idea. Now I ride with Reniery and Gledis from Edmond until my new permit is here. They are from South America and Central America. They are VERY nice people and helpful. God Bless them!

______________________________
John
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Day

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all staff of OCCC and to my teachers (Mrs. Rady Foster, Mr. Brett Dickerson and Mrs. Rita Wally). Thank you for your dedication and patience with us. Thank you to the security staff, because they always are watching for our safety. Since I started to attend English class, I met a lot of people; beautiful people, by the way.

I like to share with the readers a very funny experience. One day I went to a restaurant to eat breakfast. On my way to the restaurant, I watched a big truck hauling a big and beautiful mobile home. I observed a sign: “Oversize Load.” For some reason that sign was recorded on my mind. When I was in the restaurant and had been seated, the waitress
asked me for my order. I ordered the plate I wanted. This plate included eggs. The waitress asked me, “How would you like your eggs?” I responded fast and very sure, “over-sized,” instead of “over easy.” The waitress looked at me with a strange expression on her face. In that moment, I realized my mistake and we started to laugh together.

I hope this story made you smile too. Thank you again to each person that I have met. Thank you for you being wonderful people.

Anonymous
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Place
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Lake Eufaula in Oklahoma. It’s my favorite place because I go to the beach with my family. I go to the gym. I go shopping in Oklahoma with my daughter. I like to play volleyball with my daughter and son. My daughter has a nice time running in the park in Oklahoma. My family goes to the lake in the summer.

Rola Aldaker
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is the beach, because I stay with my family and do fun things.

We play, swim, and visit new places and relax. We go to the beach on vacation or on some special occasions. My family, my husband, my son, my daugh-
ter, my mom, my dad, my sister, me, and on some occasions, some friends go to the beach.

Jaqueline Alvarado
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

Last summer, I went with my kids and husband to a beach in Pensacola. It was the first time my kids saw the sea. They enjoyed it a lot. We saw dolphins, turtles and many fishes. We were there for four days only, but enjoyed it a lot.

The only bad thing is that it is very far and we got very tired.

Tatiana Ayala
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Happiness Wherever You Are

I’m from Guatemala. It’s a beautiful country. I’m married, and we have two amazing sons. We came
to the USA with a promise from God that his plans for us are good and not evil, and he will give us a future and a hope. I’ve learned in the process that I have to be happy wherever I am. God has blessed me with lots of blessings: salvation, joy, family, etc. One of those is that I am a lawyer in Guatemala. My wish is to be a lawyer in the USA. In fact, I have to pass some tests. My first step is learning how to speak and write in English. I’m so thankful for my friend Patsy Chasteen, who has been so nice and patient to teach me English. I know that step-by-step I am going to achieve my goal, but in the meantime, I am going to be thankful and happy waiting for the promises.

When you have a dream from God in your heart, you don’t have to struggle and try to force it to happen. You don’t have to be worried or frustrated wondering if it’s going to happen. You have to be in peace
and enter into the rest of God, a place of total trust, knowing that God is in complete control and, at the exact time, he will bring your dream to pass. If you don’t have it yet, it is because you don’t need it yet. The happiness that we are wanting is inside of us. If we have Jesus Christ as our Lord, we don’t need any more. We can be happy wherever we are now and nothing or anybody can take our joy, which is our choice. You can always have peace despite the circumstances, because God has already overcome the world. Every day I trust in Him and I tell Him, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart. You are my Lord and Savior.” Be happy 😊

Alejandra Barrios
Westcentral OK Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Fishing Spots Are My Favorite Places

My favorite place is any fishing spot or area. I like
to fish for three reasons. First, fishing can provide food for me and my family. Fishing is very enjoyable. There are many places to fish, so it is not far to drive to find public fishing.

I fish for perch, carp, and catfish, and even sometimes I catch a turtle on my fishing line. My children like to eat fried fish, but I like fish in soups better. It costs me $25 a year for a license to fish, and I am able to fish for our family’s food. Sometimes women, who fish near me, will give me their fish to take home, as they only fish for fun and don’t like cleaning the fish.

I like to spend time fishing because it is enjoyable. It is relaxing or restful just sitting, standing, or walking along the edge of the water without a lot of talking needed. For fun, I like to take my wife and children
when school is not held. Early morning or late evening are the best times, as it is not so hot.

Oklahoma has many ponds, lakes, and rivers for fishing. Two places close to my home to fish are Tom Steed Lake by Snyder and Lake Altus-Lugert, north of Altus. There is even a reservoir in Altus for fishing. I don’t go to rivers to fish because it is dangerous to fish on the bridges. I have to get permission to fish on private land next to rivers.

Fishing spots are my favorite places to spend time. I can catch fish to help feed my family. Fishing gives me time to think and wait for a big fish. There are many fishing places in Oklahoma and several close to my home in Altus.

Jose Benitez
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Okinawa, Japan. I’m from there.
All the islands are in the subtropical zone, and it has a deep blue sky, emerald green seas, and beautiful coral reefs that can seldom be found elsewhere in Japan. Activities like scuba diving, surfing and other marine sports are very popular.

There was once an independent nation known as the Ryukyu Kingdom, a small but prosperous nation renowned for its trade relations between China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea and southeast Asia! For example, Shuri Castle is very much like an old Chinese castle.

The result of forming such close trade relations with many nations is a unique Okinawa culture that differs from Japan.

The culture, foods, music and words are very different.
It has many US military bases so there are also American cultures. It was returned from the United States to Japan in 1972.

Ocean Expo Park and Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium—are located on the site where the international ocean exposition was held in 1975.

In the park, there is the world’s largest aquarium! They have three whale sharks.

There is also a tropical dream center with orchids of world class rareness, a home village where old Okinawan houses along the street are re-created, and a dolphin theater where you can enjoy dolphin shows.

Mina Berkshire
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

I am in Intermediate ESL. My teacher’s name is
Robin Teske. My favorite place is on the beach in Texas. I like to go to the beach in the summer with my husband. This is my favorite place to spend our holiday. The sea is so nice with her blue color. We walk together, we swim. The sun was shining and the birds flew. I like the sea. It allows me to refresh my brain. On the border of the sea we sit and play. We met some friends and played soccer together. There were a lot of restaurants near the beach. We went to the restaurant to eat a big fish. We drank some coconut water. We lay down on the ground for rest.

Gisele Brindou
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place in the world is where I was born—a magical country, with the name of a woman and an amazing history. The name of the magical nation is
Venezuela. I like the natural places, foods and people where I grew up. There are beautiful beaches, amazing mountains, rivers, lakes, a forest, and the world’s largest waterfall. The weather is always perfect. I would say I am blessed for being born in my country. I carry my flag with pride and honor wherever I go.

Never have I forgotten where I am from. Maybe for now, my country is in a terrible crisis, but I know that, together, we will get out of this.

Today, April 19, 2017, my people defend our dignity and many people go to protest for democracy. We have many reasons why we fight, but hopefully, we will see peace and freedom soon. I wish I could be there, but although I am miles from my home, my heart is with them.

In 1810, on this day, April 19, my country gained its independence from Spain. I hope today we will get another type of independence.
God and virgin protect my people and my country!

Eukarys Graterol Collantes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Learning Is Great

I have been in the literacy program for several years now. Since I have been in the program, I have learned so much. My learning is getting better and better even though I am still learning myself.

I was able to attend a workshop and take classes so I could tutor other students to help them learn.

I am now tutoring a student once a week. I am constantly encouraging him to stay in the program and not to give up. He is doing better with each lesson, and seems to be enjoying reading and learning to write.
Each year, I have been blessed to be able to attend the literacy conference. Each time I attend I have a great time being around other adult learners. I like to hear about their lives, and what they have gone through in their learning experience and about their struggles in life. We also talk about how the literacy program benefits them.

Going forward I will continue to volunteer for the literacy program as long as I am able to. I love helping others in the program when I am asked. I also enjoy the tutoring I receive as well.

I also speak to other tutors from time to time in a group. I try to encourage them about how they can help others learn.

I would like to encourage other students to continue learning everything they can to be able to help themselves as well as others.

Billy Colson
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa
The Altus Public Library is my favorite place to enjoy. I came to the library to sign up for literacy tutoring. The literacy service there has friendly people. I like coming to the Altus library because it has many services for the public.

I needed to be tutored in English. I spoke only Spanish as I was raised in Guatemala and went only to the ninth grade there. I have been helped by different ESL tutors in the two years since arriving in Altus, Oklahoma. The weekly lessons have helped me with speaking, writing, and reading at my jobs.

The Great Plains Literacy Council is located at the Altus Public Library. The literacy workers are so helpful and enjoyable. My first meeting was with the literacy staff. Elsa Garcia and Aleida Burchett
were bilingual, but Mrs. Winters only spoke English. I currently meet on Friday evening with my tutor, Kelly Baker. All these women have made me feel welcome, not only to the library, but to life in America. They have all given me assistance to my learning. Other adult learners have become my new friends.

The Altus Public Library is a nice place to visit. It is close to my home. I feel safe at the library. With my library card, I am able to use the library books, videos, computers, computer programs, and Internet services. That saves me money.

Since I came from a Central America country, the library is a well-liked place. I am learning the English language in my tutoring sessions. The literacy staff, tutors, and other adult learners are real treasures for me. The library is a very pleasant place to visit.
and learn. No wonder the Altus Public Library is my favorite place.

Elizabeth Cuin
Great Plains Literacy Council

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is the lake. We camp there. We tell stories of fear and eat sweets. We can sleep late with the family. We go fishing in the river and go on a boat. We swim all afternoon. I ride in a quad with my husband and my daughter. We eat all the food my family takes. We relax in the water all afternoon and watch the sunset. My husband, my daughter, my whole family, and some friends go to the lake. I really love camping in Chihuahua Julimes.

Giselle de Santiago
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place was California. When I went to California it was because my parents and I were taking things to my sister’s friend and we were going on vacation, too. When we got to California, I got to see my sister’s friend’s place and their big farm. After we spent a couple days at her parent’s farm, my parents, myself and my sister’s friend went to different places in California. We went to the William Randolph Hearst castle; his house was so big. William had one big pool that was blue with gold in it and he also had his own airport. He had a newspaper flown in to him every day. After that, we drove up the coast and went to San Francisco, and then went to Alcatraz. I also drove through the Sequoia Park and saw the really big trees.

Eric Detjen
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Holdenville, my home town. It is where my favorite people live and my favorite things happen.

My favorite person is my friend Passion. I have known her since we were in Middle School. Last year, Passion moved to Oklahoma City, but she didn’t tell anyone. Her family was scared. They called the cops. The cops came to my house to ask me if I knew where she was. Then they put it on Channel 4. She was with a family in Oklahoma City. A few days later she called her parents to say she was okay, but she hasn’t come back to our town. I miss her, and I will keep praying for her.

My favorite event was a contest to make a sculpture out of trash. On Earth Day, my tutor’s church has a sculpture show. I made a sculpture called “A Tall Drink.” It was a very big soda bottle with a straw in
it. My Dad helped, and we won third prize. It was lots of fun.

My favorite day was March 6, when I went to see my tutor at court being sworn in as a special advocate for abused children. She will work to keep children from being hurt. I was proud to be there and watch.

My favorite success was the day when I got an Award of Excellence from The Oklahoma Literacy Coalition. I was nominated because my tutor said I had worked really hard and learned a lot. We drove to Oklahoma City to get my certificate. My Dad took pictures. A few days later, I was interviewed by our newspaper for a story about my award. They printed a nice story and a picture in the Sunday paper on October 23.

That is why my home town is my favorite place.

Cassie Dupree

Wes Watkins Technology Center, Holdenville
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Mexico! It is Mexico because I was born in Mexico and all my family is Mexican. I am from Zacatecas, Mexico and it is a very beautiful and touristy place. I like the food, and Mexican customs. I like the houses, countryside, and to walk freely in the streets; to be by my parents and my brothers, to go out with family to walk and to know different places.

My childhood was very pretty because everything was fun and I played with my friends in the parks or visited them in their homes. It was fun.

In Mexico, one lives freely and you can go freely everywhere and walk out to the shops!

Marcela Gallardo
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is at the lake in Mexico. It’s my favorite place because it’s beautiful there and I see my family there.

It’s my favorite place because I go to the beach with the whole family. I go to the lake every summer. I go with my husband and children.

Luz Fabiola Gonzalez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

This place is my home because here is where I can spend time with my husband. Even though we do not have anything special to do, it is beautiful to share my time with him.

I would rather be at home than elsewhere because it is comfortable and relaxing.

Nisa González
My husband is very funny, so all the time is spent laughing. I think my favorite part is in the morning, at the start of the day, because it is always a challenge to get out of bed.

Nisa González
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is in Mexico. It is called Los Ramirez. It is a place I went.

I was with my father. It was beautiful.

He taught me how to grow vegetables in the plot.

The place is so green and colorful, with distinct scents, flowers and fruits.

The birds’ song makes the place magical for me.

That was my favorite place when I was a child. I still remember it.
Now it is not the same place. But when I was back home in my country, I went to the place I used to go with him, and I feel the place is still the same for me in my heart.

This was one of my favorite places when I was a little girl.

Now, I live in the USA and it came to be my favorite place to live and to have my family here.

There are many places to visit, many parks and a lot of opportunities here.

That’s why now it is my favorite place.

Thank God I live here.

Raquel Gonzalez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Miguel Auza Zacatecas, México.
It is my favorite place because I see all my family
and it’s where I was born. We always go shopping and visit different places. We visit this place on vacations. We visit this place with all the family. Last year, we visited Fresnillo Zacatecas to observe a church where the “Holy Child of Atocha” is celebrated in a religious act that we practice every year.

Where my heart is...

When I was a child, I loved the end of the weeks. Actually, I just enjoyed Saturdays. On these days, I could do plenty of activities, particularly spend time on a farm.

Sometimes, my family and I went to a picnic, to climb mountains (or more accurately, hills), or just
to walk through woods. Other times, my parents sent me to my grandparents’ farm.

Truly, those days were my favorite. I loved everything on this farm: my lovely grandfather, my sweet and beautiful grandmother, all the animals they had, and especially the horses. In every corner, I found my place, and I was so happy. I jumped from one animal to another, then I fed chickens. All day I stood on my feet. It didn’t matter if I was hungry, and it didn’t matter if I was tired.

I enjoyed every moment I spent there. They were such great times that, once back home, I wore an unhappy expression on my face, which only disappeared when I talked about my journey in class.

Things remained the same until my grandparents passed away. In the present days, I still visit this place once a year. It has become like a pilgrimage for me.

Amina Hammi
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Place (Gym)

This place in particular is special for me because, when I am working out, I feel like the strongest man in the world. It is a special temple to work the soul and the body. When you work out your body and concentrate your mind, sometimes you’re going to feel how your blood runs in the veins and how your muscles seem to explode. I think it is magic when, after a long day of work, I am tired but just in my mind. The only thing I want to do—I want to go to the gym, because my mind wants to feel the pain. I know not everybody likes the pain, but this is different pain. The pain is a feeling of life. When I start my work out, put my headphones on my ears, I play my favorite music, and I feel like I’m in another world. A place where only I and my dumbbells live, nothing more exists. Every pull, every push, every breath, I give all of my body and my soul. But the gym is not only for the pain, because some people go to
de-stress, some for cardio (running), others walk or just do yoga. Finally I want to say my experience at the gym is a wonderful place to discover what one is able to do for your body and your mind, and to focus on what you want. Nothing is impossible.

Mateo Hernandez  
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is the library. It is so quiet and peaceful. The library here in Altus, Oklahoma, offers free English classes through the Great Plains Literacy Council. Special health literacy programs and some tutoring materials give information about wellness.

My library is a nice place to come to at various times of the day. I enjoy being able to think and read without being disturbed.

My husband encouraged me to come with him to
the library for tutoring. I am going to English classes at the Altus Public Library every Wednesday afternoon. I was very timid and afraid that I would never learn the English language. I’m 70 years old. It is very difficult for me because I have trouble seeing close up. I came from Taiwan, so it was very difficult speaking and communicating with anyone in America. I have been coming to class for two years. My learning has improved and my communication is much better. When I started I could not read or write English. We study English together with a very nice, patient teacher. I know I have a long way before I can reach my goal, but I will learn the English language!

I want to say that learning at the library has helped me get healthier, by participating in health literacy programs and reading about health. Last year and
this year, we participated in “Tai Chi” workshops at the library. I also participated in the “Healthy Brain, Healthy Mind” sessions because I forget things, but I have found that keeping my mind busy helps improve my memory. After English classes, my husband and I go walking for an hour. I am so happy for my special place, the Altus Public Library, and for the Great Plains Literacy Council in Altus.

Judy Hu
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Favorite Place

My favorite place to go, whenever I have the chance, is the library. I started going there in 2003, visiting the Ralph Ellison branch a few times a week, eventually going almost every day. I mainly go there to surf the internet: browse YouTube to watch clips from the late-night shows, watch clips of stories featured on The Young Turks, and search for vintage promo
breaks from various premium channels. I also sometimes edit Wikipedia pages (usually those related to television, and occasionally those about meteorology), and do armchair storm tracking.

Since I began attending OIC, I’ve been going to the Ronald J. Norick branch downtown on most days after school, making the short walk north on Gaylord Avenue after the #18 bus reaches the Embark terminal—but making sure to leave in enough time to catch the last #2 line going outbound from the terminal.

Though I haven’t done it very often, I have checked out books and videos about subjects that interest me. Many of them were related to weather. Among them was *Night of the Twisters*, a youth fiction novel by Ivy Ruckman (set during a freak tornado event that hit Grand Island, Nebraska in June 1980), which inspired a 1996 made-for-cable film.
The library is where I go to blow off some steam after a long day or just to kill time when I have a few hours free.

Taye Hughes
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

Thankful for Education

I am thankful for TANF Literacy and all the help that I am getting in the program.

I am working on reading, writing, and math. My math has improved and I think my reading has improved a little.

I want to better my education and get my GED or HiSET to make a better life for me and my kids.

I am thankful for all the help from the teachers and students.

Danielle Lunsford
Literacy Council of Leflore County
My Favorite Place

I have been traveling a lot in my life since I was young. I like seeing new people, exploring new places, learning other cultures, and challenging myself. It might seem like I’m addicted to travel.

My favorite place is Iceland. It’s different from the forty countries I have already visited before. It is a beautiful landscape and it has many natural attractions, especially the Blue Lagoon thermal pool. It’s like heaven on earth. It is surrounded by mountains with naturally heated water.

Even when the weather is freezing, you can swim in the outdoor pool. I was so lucky to catch the Northern Lights, even though early April is late in the season. I saw them appear for a moment in a colorful string shape. They waved, then danced, and then disappeared like the wind. It was worth it to walk up to the highest point to see the Gullfoss waterfall view. It is a breath-taking view. Here the
wonder of nature enraptures my soul and all I can say is “wow!”

Iceland is famous for its furs. You will find a variety of furs: rabbit, lamb, sheep, wolf, and raccoon. I was surprised when my eyes caught a complete wolf’s fur, torn from the animal. It’s extremely soft and comfy. I guess no one wears it on the street except Icelandic farmers or local hunters.

Lamb is popular. It can make soup, hamburger, and barbecue. I tried all of these and love the taste of it—fresh and smooth.

There are so many interesting places in Iceland I have yet to visit. This is the country I definitely want to return to see. I would like to see the glacier and swim between two continents. I’m looking forward to another visit to Iceland in the future.

Thuy Vân Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning, Center, OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Beavers Bend State Resort Park.

On July 2013, my family and my friend’s family went to Beavers Bend State Resort Park.

We booked a cabin with three bedrooms, one living room and one kitchen. We had already bought a tent for ten people, snacks, potatoes, corn, shrimp, beef meat, charcoal, ready-cooked roast chicken, and spring rolls.

I remember that we started on our trip by car at 6 a.m. The road which led to the park was cool and beautiful. We arrived about 11 a.m. and went to the office to take the tour. We had a picnic lunch before we checked into the cabin. After check in, we went to Broken Bow Lake. A lot of people came to Broken Bow Lake for trout fishing. We tried to fish, too. The water was so clear, but we didn’t get any fish. We met some friends that came there from Vietnam. Later
that evening, we had a barbecue outside the cabin, sang, and talked together until midnight.

The next morning, we returned to the park. My husband, my daughter, and my friends’ family bought tickets to go horse riding. I am scared of horses, so I didn’t join them for this; instead, I took some photos for the group. After that, we took a trip by train around the forest.

On the third day, we rode some paddle boats to get around the lake. Then we swam and had lunch before going home. Although tired, we were very excited.

If you have time, you should visit Beavers Bend State Resort Park.

Jane Nhgiem
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
I am from Chihuahua, Mexico. When I arrived in Oklahoma, I went to a town called Laverne, Oklahoma. One day, I went with my husband to a pharmacy. There were many very nice things there. I saw a glass with a straw, and I liked it. The saying on the glass was, “I love teaching.” I didn’t know what it said, so I asked my husband. He told me it said “I love tea,” so I decided to buy it. When I went home, I saw the glass again, and I asked myself, “Does it really say ‘I love tea?’” So, I looked it up in the translator, and I was surprised that it actually said, “I love teaching!” It was certainly a more appropriate glass for a teacher, and I angrily complained to my husband. He said he was trying to be funny.

It is complicated for someone, who has recently arrived in a foreign country without the basic words,
to be able to communicate. I did not even understand something as simple as words written on a glass, t-shirt, etc. Every day, I try to learn a new word from the country where I am living, the United States.

Along with my husband, Luis, we have a daughter, Khione. We have lived in Buffalo, Oklahoma for three years. I have been going to English class for a year. Now, I feel more comfortable when speaking English in public, like at the bank, post office, and grocery store. I am glad I don’t have to rely on my funny husband to translate for me anymore!

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Pilar Nuñez
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is the park in Guatemala. It is my favorite place because I can be with my childhood friends. I go with my friends to walk, to play soc-
My Favorite Place

I felt peaceful when I went to visit Jamaica. My friend won a trip and she invited me along. As soon as we got off the plane we were treated very nicely. We had to go by boat to get to our hotel. The hotel was huge. We swam and saw sharks. They scared me, so I got out.

They also had a place to watch movies, so I went and watched one. I also went shopping. Then, at night, we went dancing.

I met a friend named Alfred Smith who lived there in Jamaica. He treated me like a queen. I really liked it.
Since my friend treated me, I want to go back and treat her this time. I really liked being treated nicely. It made me feel special.

Dorothy Pettis
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is and will always be any place where my family is. They are the people who fill my soul with joy. Any place they go, even if it’s just school, if I picture them there, that place becomes my favorite place. When I picture my children at school, I picture everything they are accomplishing and this fills me with happiness and comfort.

If one of my family members is at work, I picture them at work, and suddenly realize how special they are making that place, and quickly that place becomes my new favorite place.

My family makes any place my favorite place. When
my family finally returns home, they bring with them stories; some happy and some sad, but at the end of the day we manage to be happy just because we are together and have each other.

I know that in the future, I’ll have many more favorite places, because as my kids grow, and move forward, I’ll be adopting every new place they set foot in as my favorite place.

Mercedes Piñón
Westcentral OK Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

The Gorilla

My family and I love to go to the zoo in Mexico. My wife is a veterinarian and she makes our visits more interesting because she knows many things about the animals. Last month, we went to the zoo in Oklahoma City. It was the first zoo we visited in the United States. We could never imagine the surprise that was waiting for us.
We were walking in the zoo about two hours, when we went to the zone of the gorillas. We saw a marvelous animal. It was a big male gorilla, and he looked majestic, strong; and the most amazing thing is that he was a just a small distance from us. The thick glass was the only thing that separated the gorilla from us. I started to feel inexplicable emotion and I was astonished. I felt how my heart accelerated and I wanted to jump for joy. I couldn’t explain why, but I tried to relax. I found a place where you can sit at the bottom of the glass, and I put my hand over the glass in the same place that the gorilla was scratching the glass. He looked at me, then looked at my hand, and just turned around. He took a seat close to the glass also, no more than six feet from us.

My family and I stayed for a long time, just looking at him. That was a very special moment for all
of us. I never felt this emotion in Mexico. The animals in the Mexico zoo are far from the people. You couldn’t have the opportunity to see them up close, just in pictures.

I am waiting for the next time that we visit the zoo in Oklahoma City and we can see again the marvelous gorilla.

Juan Carlos Castro Ramirez
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

My Favorite Places

I like to go to Mexico for summer vacation because I go to many beautiful places. I also go with my family to the beach and mountains. I enjoy this time. It is relaxing at the beach. I like the sand, sun, and waves of the sea. I like to make castles of sand and collect seashells, too. I like the sunset on the beach because it looks very nice and can make the best pic-
tures. I like the food. There is a very delicious special fruit. I don’t like it when the vacation is finished.

I spoke of another place. That is the mountains in Mexico. I like camping, picnicking, hiking, and collecting rocks. I remember a little history. I went camping in the mountains of Mexico. The weather was perfect when suddenly it started to rain; we were all wet, and yet we were playing baseball. Then we ate a rich soup. I like the fresh scent of mountains, cool and unique. I like hiking because it is good for health. I enjoy every moment. My family, too, looks very happy and a little taller.

For this summer vacation, I am going to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. I see the pictures of Vallarta. They look beautiful. I am so happy for the new adventure with my family at the beach. Problems hap-
My Favorite Place

I really like parks, the forest, and nature in general; but now I love any place where I see my children (who are three and four years old) happy, running, discovering things, trying new things, and appreciating animals; that I enjoy very much.

Since I was a child, I have always liked wildlife, rivers, lakes, and the forest. I enjoy being there, and I want to instill in my children this same love and respect for animals and nature.

I appreciate the opportunity to live in Oklahoma. There is a lot of open space here, without the clutter of buildings (it’s not a concrete jungle). Before
coming to Oklahoma, the only animals I knew about were those I saw on TV or read about in books.

The next step is to go camping with my family in a forest and enjoy the nature of Oklahoma. This love for nature also has me worried. We are killing nature. I would love for people to care for the planet.

Moises De Alba S.
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Oklahoma

When I came to Oklahoma a few years ago, I didn’t like it! Unlike most people who come here excited, I arrived here sad and mad; sad at leaving my family in Iran and mad at my husband’s decision. I was not happy that this happened to my life. I remember when I first arrived, around 9 PM, it was rainy and I didn’t see anybody on the streets; nobody! I was amazed about that and just wanted to cry.

I came to Oklahoma from a big city with a large
population. I was used to seeing many people, many cars, and many tall buildings. Now, I just hear the sound of wind and crickets. I remember having strange feelings, like I don’t belong here. I wanted to go back to my hometown. My English was not good either. I could talk and understand others only a little. All of those things bothered me very much.

Year after year, I began to like it here. I have to say that at first everything bothered me so much; now I like it! I like the peace and quiet. I like that there is no traffic. I like Oklahoma’s small population. I like Oklahoma’s winds and the sound of that, especially in the fall, when the cool wind hits my face. I like to hear the sound of crickets during the night. I enjoy Oklahoma’s thunder and lightning sounds, and rain. That strange feeling has now changed to a lovely feeling. Right now, when I go to my home
country, I miss Oklahoma very much, because half of my heart is here. I think it was my destiny to come to Oklahoma. Now, I believe I belong here. I like Oklahoma more than any other city or place, and I call it my Oklahoma!

Sima Saidi
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Favorite Place

My favorite place to visit is Galveston, TX. I like this place because of the weather, beach and a restaurant called The Spot. My family goes about every year in the summer and stays for a week in a beach house. The trip takes two days and I sleep or look out the window most of the ride. About three-fourths of the way, we stop at a hotel near Houston for the night. Once we get to Galveston Island, we go to our favorite restaurant there called The Spot. It has a great view of the beach and has the best chicken.
My family rents a beach house for a week that is literally ten steps from the beach. It has a balcony with a great view of the ocean and a jetty with ships and boats going by often. This is where I mostly spend the week.

The beach looks different every day because of the weather. Depending upon the weather, the ocean current can change the way the sand looks. Most of the time the waves are quiet and fun to swim in. When I’m not in the water, I’m building creative things in the sand or collecting shells which are everywhere. It typically rains every day, usually in the afternoon, just a little.

The weather, beach and food are the reasons why this is my family’s favorite place to visit on vacation. We go every year to Galveston, Texas

Brayden Slater
Community Literacy Centers, Inc, OKC
A Cruise Ship in the Caribbean

A cruise ship is my favorite place to spend vacation. You can swim, play video games, scuba dive, and even get a massage on a ship. I like to go before hurricane season.

My family and I like to plan nice vacations in the summertime with one another. We enjoy doing things as a family. On the cruise, we like to spend money, shop, eat, and play. My favorite thing to do is ride in the submarine. It allows me to see everything at the bottom of the ocean.

Going on a cruise is a nice way to see some of the most beautiful islands in the world. It is a way to see how other cultures live and what they eat. It is a fun way to interact with one another.

Kenneth Smith
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Place

When I first came to the United States, my mother-in-law gave my husband and me a small house. It is small but I really love it. I also love the outside, too. The backyard is very nice. The grass is always green. I have a little garden. I planted some tomatoes, cilantro, and green onions, too. In the front of the house, I have some roses. The color is red. It makes my house so beautiful. The fence around is very tight. It makes me feel safe.

The neighborhood is good. They are very friendly. One day, my mother in-law, just kidding me, said, “Would you like to move to another place?” I answered her right away, “No, Mom. I am sure I love this place.”

Kate Lancy Stone
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
I’m from the Tom Thumb of the Americas

I was born in El Salvador, better known as Tom Thumb of the Americas because it is only 21,041 square kilometers in size. But Salvadorians take pride in our Tom Thumb that carries the name, Our Savior of the World.

I am originally from a town called Cojutepeque, that etymologically means “Cerro de las Pavas.” Also, it is known as the “City of Mists,” due to the height. It is a city quite cold, and there is often presence of fog. Cojutepeque has been the capital city of the Republic on four occasions (1832, 1834, 1839 and from 1854 to 1858).

In my dear Cojutepeque there are many typical dishes, pupusas, chilate with nuegados, etc., but the most known are the sausages (chorizos, butifarras and salchichones). We also have a hill in which is located the Sanctuary to Our Lady of Fatima.
According to the story, the image of the virgin was donated by the country of Portugal, and in 1949, the Sanctuary was inaugurated; it was built in a rock cave, where they installed the beautiful image. And since then, in his honor, a pilgrimage is celebrated on May 13. Every year it attracts many parishioners, not only from the territory of El Salvador, but also from the other Central Americans countries.

In the month of January is celebrated our Patron Saint Festivities in honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and Saint Sebastian Martyr. A typical day is celebrated with the crowning of the Queen of the Sugar Cane, since sugar cane is the heritage of the Department of Cuscatlan, in which the City of Cojutepeque is the capital.

Yanet Tevez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is school because I didn’t get school when I was a little boy. I was in a car accident. I had problems when I was growing up.

I had 2 brothers and 2 sisters in the home and they were older than me. My daddy was always looking out for them but I got up every day to go to school and I liked it.

But I have problems. I went to school and I have problems. I like school because I would like to read much better in life.

Focusing about school is my life. Thank you.

Luther Thomas
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Favorite Place

I grew up in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. My dad came from Cape Cod. So my sisters and brothers
and I spent our summers there at my grandmother’s house. We would spend time down at the dock watching my cousin’s fishing boats come in.

On Sunday mornings, I would listen to the sound of people walking on the sand and talking on their way to church, and I would listen to church bells ringing. Sometimes we would go uptown to the main beach to watch the whales or go clamming.

We would take the clams home to mother and she would make clam chowder and clam cakes. When I was young, the sea was so blue and clean. People would throw coins into the water and the boys would dive down and get them. My memories of summers on Cape Cod are the best.

Lois Thurston
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is where I grew up, a little ranch in Mexico with only nine or ten families living there.

I remember too many things of these days; time with my family, school, friends and neighbors.

I miss the tranquility of that place, the days when the only things that you can hear are the sounds of the animals and trees. I miss the strong storms with noisy lightning and, next, see the rainbow across the mountains and the bright sun.

This place is my favorite because all the people know each other. When it is getting dark, the people go outside and they sit down in front of the house to talk about how their day has gone.

Things like these are the ones that make me miss this place.

Maria Urena
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Place

I feel peaceful when I go to visit my country, my home town.

There is a special place to me at my mom’s house, specifically at the patio. There are two trees called lilacs. And I remember I used to play all the time with my sister Araceli. She always played with me. We spend a lot of time talking and playing. We pretend we are comadres (female friends).

And have conversations about the future, like what we are going to do in the future if she’s going to marry someday, how many kids she is going to have; and I like to remember those happy days.

When I go to visit my Mom’s house, I always go to see those tall trees, and I say, “Hey, I’m here, thanks for the great moments in my life.” I will never forget my happy childhood, everybody together.

Rosa Isela Valenzuela
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
My Favorite Place

My favorite place is Clinton, Oklahoma. It is my favorite place because I like to go jogging with my family and take my girls to swim. I have a nice time with them in Clinton, Oklahoma. I like to enjoy the nature of the lakes and to enjoy time together with the family.

Erika Vazquez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Greatest Success
My Greatest Success

In the Bible, it talks about the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest success as a teacher. In the Bible, my Heavenly Father talks about joy, peace, kindness, love, healing, and the living Word. He is my Great Teacher. He taught me to better my life and to be saved by him; and he taught me about love, joy, kindness, faith, peace, and how to get along with people and to be a Christian person.

Pat Aimes
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Greatest Success: My Family

When I was 18 years old, I had 4 children of my own to raise—3 girls and one boy. I was 13 when my first child was born. My children are now ages 33, 31, 30, and 29 years old. I always made sure my kids got what I did not have. Having dyslexia, I never got
help to learn to read in school. I attended all my kids’ parent-teacher meetings. I always made sure my kids did the reading their teachers sent home. I kept up with their grades and report cards. It was hard since I could not read, but I got my driver’s license and drove them to school to keep track of them. I volunteered to go on many field trips with their classes.

I made sure my daughter with dyslexia went to special classes. I was a protective Mom.

I have a mother’s sense—I love my kids. Kids are our future. I was able to set them straight when needed, making sure they did not pull the wool over my eyes. I took my kids to church and Sunday school most every week. I became the choir director for church.

All my kids graduated high school and have their own families. I love my 15 plus grandkids. Having temporary custody of some grandkids for 3 years,
I did everything with them. I took them to church and went to all parent-teacher meetings. I volunteered for field trips and went to the zoo with them and loved it. All their teachers knew my name. I have taken care of other peoples’ children also and count them as family—3 are in the army.

Mom’s 70th birthday celebration was at church with my family. I read her birthday message in front of everybody. Family is my greatest success. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Zoe Anderson
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

Courage

My first language is Spanish. I moved to Oklahoma in 2001, but I made the commitment to learn English in 2004. Here are some of the reasons I wanted to learn English.

First, my daughter’s school charged $50 to translate
at Parent/Teacher Conferences, and they didn’t even translate for me, as I needed. When I asked about my daughter, they would not answer my questions.

Second, we moved to another town, so my husband could find a new job. His new job was at a dairy farm, but his boss was not a nice man. My husband was supposed to be paid every other week, but the boss often paid everyone late, except one other person who knew how to speak English better than the others. So, because I started learning English, I went to the boss and asked him why? The boss said that no one else was complaining about their pay, so my husband decided to get a different job.

Third, when I arrived where I now live, my first job was at a pizza restaurant. A customer snapped her fingers at me and said “Andale! Andale! Bring me my food; it is why I pay you!” She did not think I
spoke English very well. Later, she asked if I could do some work for her, I replied in English, “Only if you pay me up front.”

Fourth, I worked in a grocery store. The boss was not a nice person to anyone, but especially to those who didn’t know English very well.

Now, my English is much better and I work for myself. I understand all of my clients and they understand me. I can also help my kids with their homework.

That is my history, now my question is...am I courageous? I think so!

Maria Arredondo
Northwest OK Literacy Council, Woodward

Greatest Success

I am the Executive Director of the Hispanic Outreach Center.
I came to the United States in 1999 with a lot of dreams, two kids, my husband and $100 in our pockets. I was determined to work helping the Hispanic Community, but I did not know how.

I eventually found my sponsor in Bartlesville, Oklahoma in August of 2000. I came here to work for Mullendore Cross Bell Ranch.

At first, I volunteered as a translator for the Washington County Hispanic Community. I led meetings around town to inform people about different resources in the community and the proper way to use these services.

One day, M’liss Jenkins from the Washington County Health Department came and asked me, “what is your main purpose and what is your vision for the future?” Mrs. Jenkins and I started to visit with various community leaders and found that there was a need of interpreter/translator services.
In 2004, ConocoPhillips Hispanic Network, Washington County Health Department, Siemens, and the Bartlesville Community Foundation established the nonprofit Casa Hispana Hispanic Outreach Center. We opened our doors on January of 2006. This was the beginning of my future with Casa Hispana.

Casa Hispana partners with the Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services offering English as a second language and citizenship classes taught by Norma Seabolt, ESL Assistant. Casa Hispana also offers many other services.

This year, in 2017, I went through the process of becoming a citizen. I was very nervous when I had to study for and then answer the required 100 questions.

When I found out I passed the test, I was very excited. On May 23rd, I attended a swearing in cer-
emony and was proud to become a United States citizen.

Milagros Cappelletti
Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services

The Story of Veronica

I would like to thank all of the people who take all of their time and effort helping people that need help with their reading and their writing.

At first, I did not want other people to help me with my reading or writing. I was too embarrassed of myself because I did not want anybody to get in my business.

I was trying to learn on my own until I saw some of your flyers.

At first I did not want to do it; but somewhere in my heart told me to do it, but not just for me but for my husband too, because he needs my help. If
anything happened to him, I would be there to help him and be able to help myself too.

I really enjoy my teacher, Beverly. We have a tremendous time together and we both have an exhilarating time when we discover new things. I have never thought about giving up because I would be wasting my time. I would be letting myself down, and my husband down. I would be missing out on life and all the things I could have known in those days or years.

I would be letting myself down and those around me. So those of you who are out there, never give up on yourself.

Veronica Chavez
Duncan Area Literacy Council
My Greatest Success

I was proud to get the honor of Excellent Financial Manager when I was working for the Bank of China.

I came to the United States from China in 2014. I worked at the Bank of China from 2007 to 2014. When I first started there, I was just a teller. I worked hard to fit into my new job. I was in charge of reception of customers and provided the best service for them. The customer is always number one! I had a good performance as a teller.

Three years later, I got a promotion, and I became a counter staff! In China, the bank counter must be proficient at all banking tasks and have the qualifications necessary to effectively handle the responsibilities of the position. I was a very responsible person, getting along well with my coworkers. I woke up early and went to bed late every day to update my professional knowledge of banking.
About a year after that, I was promoted again because of my outstanding performance. I became a financial manager! I helped my customers to better manage their assets. Besides that, I helped them use the network, apply for credit cards, and buy insurance from our bank. The professional knowledge of a financial manager must be more extensive. In order to become an excellent financial manager, I kept learning to supplement the gaps in my knowledge of banking.

Finally, I did it! I got the honor of Excellent Financial Manager. This was what I was hoping for. Up to now, it is the greatest success of my career.

Right now, I’m living in the United States. I need to study actively to improve my knowledge and skills. I want to be more and more successful. Making
greater efforts will help our lives become more valuable!

Yanyan Chen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Greatest Success

It has been so good to be in this country. It made me work to help my mom financially and to learn to speak English. It has not been easy, but I’m succeeding. Because after 12 years of working every day and night, I found the love of my life, who I have been married to for 10 years. After a year of marriage, our first child was born. We were very happy. And after two years, the second child was born, another baby boy. My husband and I always wanted a baby girl. After four years, my beautiful girl was born. Our girl’s name was Trinity Luet. She was my love. I love all of my children.

For two years we struggled with the doctors trying
to find out what was wrong with her. After two years of fighting and appointments with the doctors, she was fighting for her life. On January 3, 2015, she died. It was the saddest day of my life. After that day, everything was sadness. But, after two years, God gave us another beautiful child. The child that God has given us has given us joy; he’s already 1 year old. We thank God it has not been all sad. But the good thing is that I can still help my mom financially and watch my children grow and take care of them and continue in English school. I also thank my teacher for helping me and having patience. I am grateful for all my accomplishments.

Carmen Comer
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

America Offers Much Success

I was born in the Dominican Republic and lived there for 28 years. I feel that coming to America
has been my greatest success. I was able to play college baseball here. Living in such a big country is wonderful. Best of all, I met Nancy, and she has become my wife.

The Western Oklahoma State College recruited me to play baseball for the team here in Altus, Oklahoma. I was thrilled to be a pitcher on the team. That was an opportunity to attend college classes. It was also fun getting to travel to several states just to play ball.

The Dominican Republic is a small country. It felt so good to be able to live in America—such a lot of space and good people. I like living in a rural city in Oklahoma. I want to see more places in the USA, because my home was only a small tropical island with many tourists visiting the coast cities. After I
left the Dominican Republic, I have been so happy to be a permanent resident and live in Oklahoma.

Another important success was getting married to Nancy. We met at college here in Altus. We have been married for one year. She is my love.

Success can be in getting a better job or education or other outstanding work, but my success has been in coming to the USA and living in Oklahoma. That has helped me to be able to play college baseball. I really like the many kinds of open, beautiful country. Coming to America has given me a chance to marry a wonderful person. I have several benefits living in this country.

Sidercio de los Santos
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Life ... And Greatest Success

My greatest success is becoming a Mother, which gave me personal and spiritual growth.
I have three beautiful children: Gabriela, Carlos and Ximena. They gave me the most important experience in my life, and at the same time the experience of feeling a great responsibility to help them grow. They lived in an environment of love, respect, honesty, and good values. They received tools to learn how to live a life with respect of themselves and others, and they learned how to fight and achieve their goals and dreams. I see in them again the love of God, and the beautiful relationship that gave them life. It made them honest and respectful children, affectionate and with a great heart.

Now Gabriela and Carlos give me a lot of satisfaction because they obtained Bachelor’s Degrees and I am so proud of them. Ximena, my youngest daughter, is on the same path deciding what she wants to do in the future, but she is a girl with a big heart and
dreams. She enjoys helping kids with special needs and she is a determined girl. I am sure that she will achieve her goals. My children are my greatest success in life.

I am grateful for the greatest success God has allowed me to experience in my children, and I would not change it for anything. Although I have lived through unpleasant situations, I faced them with determination and courage and turned them into positive experiences of personal growth.

My children are one of my biggest motivations to keep me going forward. They can see that it is never too late to continue in the search for new and better knowledge, and this is my legacy for them.

Belinda Z. Rivera de Rodriguez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

I Am What I Am

July 25th, 2011, at 5 p.m., a friend
called and told me that there were demonstrators in Tahir Square protesting the corrupt government that had destroyed the Egyptian economy. So we went there. In the beginning the protest was peaceful until we criticized the president, which prompted the police to shoot tear gas and start arresting people.

I went home exhausted and asked myself, “Do I feel the freedom? Are we a free country?” No, they treat us as slaves, so I decided to continue protesting. The next day we grew to 2,000 people, and then the third day we were more than 3 million. At that moment, I felt freedom and revolution until the police began killing demonstrators. We spent 18 days in the streets, fighting until finally the president stepped down. I felt the power of people united, fighting for freedom.

I moved to Kuwait to work as an architect. In 2015, I visited Egypt for vacation, but in the Cairo airport, they arrested me. The police accused me of plot-
ting to overthrow the government in 2011. After four hours of questioning they let me go. I decided to fly back to Kuwait the same day.

Three months later I was accepted for a masters in New York. I travelled to New York, and in April 2017 my friend told me that the government had released a warrant to arrest me. My only crime is the desire to see Egypt strong and free. I refuse to let them ruin our economy. We just want to live a better life. Is that so wrong? I have a pending asylum case and I cannot leave to see my family.

Always the question is in my head, “Are we free? Do I feel the freedom?”

I am? What am I?

Nour El-Din
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Greatest Success

I remember 20 years ago, studying for a college degree in Business Administration and Marketing. I never imagined living in another country and performing successfully with a foreign language.

After an economic recession in Mexico where my husband lost his job, we made the decision of immigrating to the USA. My husband already had a legal status and a stable job at Bar-S Foods Company in Altus, Oklahoma. My son Emanuel was two years old when he and I moved three months later to be with my husband. At that moment I had to face my biggest fear: “What am I going to do in a new place with a new language other than Spanish?”

When I got here, I was 28 years old. I did not know how to speak English at all. At my college I had English courses, which represented a real challenge for me because I could not assimilate the language.
Later, I discovered my second challenge; the high risk of my second pregnancy with my son Guillermo and a high possibility of his dying at childbirth. Thank God, I survived the first pregnancy and I knew that I would survive the second, but how would I communicate with my doctors if I did not speak and understand the language?

Fortunately, I had heard about the adult literacy program at the library. I am very grateful to this program and to my tutor Lynne Collingwood. Thanks to the program and Lynne, I learned English very quickly. It allowed me to communicate with my doctors during my pregnancy. They also helped me to obtain my citizenship in America. Lynne and others have seen my progress from the very beginning.

I am extremely fortunate because over ten years I
have been blessed with many successes and achievements.

Perla Galaz
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Greatest Success

I would like to tell my story. I was born in Mexico, but I have lived in the United States since 2004. I am married and have two beautiful daughters. When we arrived here, we did not have anything. We lived in a small apartment without lights for two months. We were cold. However, we did not live that way very long. My husband got a job and I started working as a dishwasher in a restaurant for a couple of months. Later I found another job at a nursing home, but not for very long. My daughters were
growing and going to school. One of them will graduate next year.

Now my husband is a boss in his job. I am so happy for him. We are improving. As for me, a couple of years ago, I started watching make-up videos on the Internet to learn how to become a make-up artist. Now that is my job and I love it.

Nelly Garcia
OCCC Adult Learning Center

My Greatest Success:
Overcoming Obstacles

When I left my daughter’s dad, I moved in with my grandmother. I got a job at Braum’s! I worked for about six months. I was saving money for a place of my own for me and my three-year-old daughter.

By the seventh month, I had saved $1,500 dollars. I thought it was time to start looking for a house. I had been working at Braum’s for eight months when
I found my own house! I moved in right before Christmas. I had paid all my bills and was doing really well on my own for about a year.

Then I met my son’s dad. It was a good relationship for a while. Then my son’s dad became verbally abusive. When I was seven months pregnant, I thought it was best for my kids and me to move away from my son’s dad.

I moved in with my sister and worked a job for seven months when they laid me off. I went to DHS to ask for help. They then told me about the program called TANF. I was able to get on TANF, and I am now going to school to get my GED. I also have my housing to help me with having a steady place to stay. Thanks to my son’s dad, I got a car. I went from being a divorced single mom to losing a house and
having to start over twice due to my bad relationship choice.

Now my main goals in life are to work on getting my GED and keeping all my bills paid. I plan on going to school to become an RN. My journey has not been easy, but I try my best, and I am going to continue on this great road I am on!

Jackalyn Gunter
New Horizons Program, Shawnee

My Greatest Success

I feel proud of myself. Just a few weeks back I had to go to court. I was nervous that I would fail in understanding in entirety what was asked or told to me.

I thought that I would be accompanied by a person to interpret, but I decided not to. I did not want fear to rule me.
I proved to myself that I could do it alone, by myself. I thank God that everything went well.

Juliana Hernandez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Greatest Success

This is how my story unfolds. I had been in my apartment for four years and everything was wonderful. Life was great, but in my heart, I really wanted a house. But, I did not think I could afford it. One Sunday, I was at church and the pastor was talking about the words that come from your mouth will produce a harvest in your life. Well, I really didn’t understand that at first, so I researched the Bible and I found Mark 11:22-26. It said to have faith in God, “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea, and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I
tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you received it and it will be yours.”

So after this, I still didn’t know how to address it. About a month later, I was on my knees praying to my Heavenly Father and meditating on the Word and I put it to use. I went around to different places trying to get approved and then I found out I had a red flag on my credit report. I knew that was not good. My lease was up and the apartment people wanted me to sign a six-month lease. I didn’t want to doubt God’s word, so I talked to my mother to see if I could stay with her for a little bit until I could get the red flag off of my credit report. It was about $5,000 and I knew it would take me awhile to pay it off.

So, I moved in with my mother. My mom didn’t ask me to help her pay for bills at all and in my mind I thought that was great, but I had to give her some-
thing. Then my truck motor went out and I worked in Norman and my mother lived on the northwest side of Oklahoma City. I kept my faith and God blessed me with good people to help me get back and forth to Norman. So, after 11 months, God blessed me with people that aren’t here anymore, but I got my truck fixed and the next month, I moved into a new house. So, I will tell anybody that Jesus is Real. I am a living witness that God’s word worked for me.

Darryl Jenkins
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

Paulina’s Struggle

I’m from West Africa. I am 51 years old. I came to America with no education in 2004. My husband used to tell me that I can’t succeed in America because everything would be reading and writing. And I couldn’t read or write. I was very discouraged
because of what he told me, and I believed it. I wanted to go back. So many days I just stayed in my room and felt sorry for myself and cried.

One morning my son came into the room. I can’t remember the day, but it was cold and there was snow. My son asked me, “Mom, what’s wrong? Why are you crying?” “I want to go back home to my country.” Then he asked me why. I told him his father told me I can’t fit into society because I can’t read or write. He said “Mom, this is the United States. There are people from all over the world.” Then he took me to the temp agency and I applied for a job.

I worked for the agency for three months. The company was called Sodexo. They said they liked me, and they hired me full time. I worked for them for two and a half years, and I went to literacy classes. Later, I stopped because I didn’t have transporta-
tion and it was too far to walk. I knew if I continued my education I could succeed. I started again a year ago, and I’m studying how to read, how to spell, and how to do math. I give thanks to my school and my teacher. In this world if you put your mind to it, you can do it. You have to believe in yourself.

Paulina Moore Kumeh
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Days at School

I went to school in Bentonville, Arkansas. I did not care for that place at all. I did not like school either. I dropped out of school at an early age and went to work at some dead-end jobs for a while. I got married and had some babies. My husband would leave us for a while and then come back home. He did this seven times. After the seventh time, I decided that I had to do something different to make a better life for myself and my kids.
By this time I was living in Oklahoma, so I went to the DHS Office and applied for TANF. The case-worker sent me to a literacy class to help me learn to read better. I attended the class for about six months, but my mom got sick. I had to drop out of the class to take care of her until she got better. After she was able to take care of herself, I went back to the DHS office and applied for TANF again.

I am back in the literacy class again and love it. This time I hope I can keep learning until I am able to take the GED test. Education is the only way that I can get a good job and make a better life for myself and my family.

Jennifer Long
Delaware County TANF Literacy

My Greatest Success

My greatest success is overcoming all the obstacles in my early life. When I was born, I only weighed
1 lb. and 8 oz. I was premature and born 3 months early. The doctors told my parents that I wouldn’t be able to talk, hear, walk, or see. I was so small that I could fit into the palm of my dad’s hand. My mom made clothes for me because the smallest size was too big for me. I was in the incubator for about 2 months, and it was another 3 weeks before I was allowed to go home.

I am a miracle baby! Without God, I wouldn’t be here today. I had to go to physical, occupational, and speech therapy classes. I’ve accomplished so much in my life and can do all the things the doctors and everyone else said I couldn’t do. I’ve graduated high school and have two jobs. I’m attending these adult literacy classes because my next goal is to successfully pass the Compass Test. I want to become a dental assistant so that I can help others, have a career, and be financially stable.
I’m so proud of all my success so far, and I look forward to many more in my life. I’m thankful for the love and support of my family, God, my hard work and dedication, and Community Literacy Centers!

Mareah
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Greatest Success: Overcoming Dyslexia

I had two very encouraging teachers that supported me all the way. One in particular told me that when I graduated she would be up there cheering me on. She was! I graduated with my CDA (Child Development Associate) in 1990 and she was cheering when I walked across the stage. Then she told me I should get my Associate Degree in Early Childhood.

I told her, “maybe.” I decided to take off a semester and then I decided to go back. I asked for her
and they told me she had passed away with cancer. That encouraged me even more to finish. I could hear her cheering me on! I graduated with my Associate Degree in Early Childhood in May 1998.

My English Composition II teacher helped me a lot, too. For our final, I wrote about dyslexia. I had a lot of fun writing it and learned a lot about famous people who had dyslexia.

In 2010, I went back to school to get my director’s credentials for day care centers. I graduated in 2011. I got involved in teaching Sunday School and volunteering in other areas at my church. I received a Teacher of the Year award. It meant a lot to me.

I found CLC (Community Literacy Center) while I was unemployed. In a workforce class, I came across a flyer on CLC. I called and started attending in August 2014. I have been in this reading class for three years. It has improved my reading and
boosted my self-confidence. It has also helped my writing skills. So thanks CLC!

People can overcome dyslexia if they want to and if they put their mind to it. Most people can lead a normal life with dyslexia.

Janet Martin
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Great Success

A year ago I was down on my luck. It seemed like I was down on myself as well. It was a problem for me because people were judging me for some of my mistakes and taking me for granted. I made bad choices and things, but when I was homeless, I never thought that I could become a better person in life. It hurt sometimes for me to realize that all things are possible for me to do better in life, but that I almost lost my life over nothing.
I want to go on with my life and make it better for me and my family because now I can live with myself. This is to show thanks to everyone who helped me learn again. Thank you Community Literacy Centers, Inc.

James Merritt
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Greatest Success

My greatest success, I think, was to learn to read and write by myself when I was five years old. My Dad gave me one set of single vinyl disks (records) with songs and stories about each letter of the alphabet. We had an old stereo, and I started to listen to the disks. I made some writing exercises by myself. My Dad worked all the day, and my Mom took care of me and my little brother and did chores. I was a lonely girl and listened one and two and three times
a day to the disks. The summer ended and I started elementary school.

I will never forget the first day of school. The teacher arrived at the classroom, and wrote her name on the blackboard. She asked us, “Who can tell me what is my name?” I raised my hand up. She said, “OK. What is it?”

“Dora.”

“Great job. What is your name?”

“Gabriela.”

“Who taught you to read?”

“Nobody.”

I learned to read and write by myself, I think. The teacher gave me some books to read. When the class was finished, my Mom came to get me. The teacher talked to her about my success. She couldn’t believe it. When my Dad saw that I could read and write,
he started buying me books and I have devoured one after another since that day.

Karla Moctezuma
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Greatest Success

My greatest success in life, I would have to say, would be what I am doing right here in this moment. I have overcome so many obstacles to get where I am today, and I’m not going to let anyone or anything stand in my way. I want to be able to show my children that whenever you want something bad enough, you shouldn’t let anything stand in your way of obtaining or pursuing your dreams.

I am set on getting my GED this year. I want to be able to give my children a life I never had. My children are also my greatest success because they make
me so happy, and I love teaching them the right way in life. I teach them to never give up on their dreams.

I never had someone teach me right from wrong when I was growing up. I had to learn the hard way. So, I stand by saying that my greatest success in life is right here in this moment.

Stephanie Overturf
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Life

All through my life I have struggled to read and spell words. I was in an LD class in school, and I really tried to do my work, but it just didn’t come together. When I was young, our family was in a very bad car wreck. I got a lot of brain damage from the wreck. This has caused problems throughout my life.

I became the mom of three wonderful children. On February 29, 2016, my daughter was killed in a car wreck. I thought that my world had come to an end,
but I’m a survivor, and I will go on with my life and plans even though it hurts every day.

In December of 2016, I decided to go to DHS to get some help. The caseworker put me on TANF and sent me to the Allied Jobs Program. This is a very good program that helps with career decisions and provides training. I liked the class, but I just felt like something was missing. I was not quite ready to train for a career and go out into the real world at that time.

I talked with Robin, the coordinator, about how I was feeling. She suggested that we meet with Dana, Gail, the instructor of the literacy class, and herself to come up with a satisfactory solution.

I was transferred to the literacy class and have learned to read much better and understand what I’m reading. I’m proud of myself and feel successful.
I want to thank Dana, Robin, and Gail for working with me to get the help that I needed.

Cherokee Page
Delaware County TANF Literacy, Jay

My Life in the United States

I felt excited when I was told I could be the secretary of the church where my husband was taking a call to be a pastor at a Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City.

Six years ago I moved to Washington State because of my husband’s calling. One week later, I went to the “Casa Hogar” in Yakima. I was teaching sewing and doing childcare and different things! Also, I took different classes in “Casa Hogar” such as English and computers.

One year later, I went to the community college to continue these courses. After that, I started to study English and math, science and social studies; this was for my GED. After that, I did my test to obtain
my diploma and I did it! I really love that I passed the GED. This is, so far, my greatest accomplishment.

I’m very proud of myself for having achieved this goal and I thank God for it.

I came to Oklahoma in 2014. I was happy when they gave me the opportunity to be the secretary of my church.

Wherever I took my children to school, I would study dressmaking. Then I worked one year as a manager for a sewing workshop. After that, I studied cosmetology and worked one year in a beauty salon.

My time in Oklahoma is wonderful with my job because I’m active. I like to volunteer every Wednesday making quilts. I also help children with their homework in a program called “whiz kids.” I like to be involved because I can learn and practice my English, but I continue to study English at the
college to do a better job and for good communication with the people in my church.

Dora Leticia Perez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

God's Days of Blessings

I want to tell the history of my life. One day my mom told me, “You need go to the doctor because you look different.” I made a doctor’s appointment.

When I went to the doctor, he told me I had a thyroid problem. I did not feel bad, but my body looked different, my eyes were popping out; I was nervous all the time, and afraid. The doctor told me you can’t get pregnant because the medication was too strong. I took medication for two years.

After two years he told me, “You are ready for surgery.” But, I was pregnant. When I talked to the doctor, he was very mad at me. He stopped the surgery.
After I had the baby, he waited four months. In 1991, I had the surgery. The doctor removed my thyroid gland.

My life changed after that. God gave me another chance. Because when I was pregnant, the doctors always told me, “When you have your baby you will die because you didn’t have the surgery. Your thyroid gland is very big.” I was afraid, because I did not want to die, but God is so beautiful. He took my hand and walked with me.

I will always remember the day. It has been twenty-six years after the surgery. I love my life. I have two sons and three beautiful grandbabies. I feel very happy.

Pabla Sanchez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Never Too Late to Learn

I was born in Tehran, Iran in 1943. When I left
my country to migrate to America, I was 65 and I couldn’t speak English at all. No one believed I could learn English, because I was old and retired; also I didn’t have enough contact with American people. However, a famous statement helped me to overcome these obstacles—It’s never too late to learn. I started to study the English language by myself and I tried to have more contact with Americans. After that, I was in a better position to enroll in the OCCC Adult Learning Center ESL Program; this was in 2015.

I was always the oldest in class but, I tried to be more active and never gave up. I always worked just as hard as the young students did. As a result, I have learned enough English to make life easier. My goal is to continue to improve my English.

I enjoy learning more English, and at the same time I learn important life skills.
And thus I continue to believe that it is never too late to learn.

My Greatest Success

I like to read and write and spell.

My favorite book is Chicken by Charlie, written by Tana Reiff. I also like going to OIC/CLC where I spell and write and learn to read better.

I would like to thank my teacher Mrs. Lightfoot and my tutors Blair, Beth, and Nita from CLC/OIC for helping me.

Thank you to OIC and CLC for letting me have classes there.

Thank God for making it possible for me to get here.

James Simmons
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC
My Greatest Success

In 2010, I started going to the library to learn how to read better, and I enrolled in the adult literacy program. I have been paired with six tutors and with my current tutor, Ms. Gwen, for over a year. I started out reading and comprehending at a first grade level. I test every year and get better each time.

My tutor is good at teaching and giving lots of homework. She always says words create sentences, sentences create paragraphs, and paragraphs create pages. One thing I enjoy is writing sentences using proper grammar and punctuation. I realized I like using the dictionary to find the meaning of words and how to spell words correctly.

Another thing I like is reading and working from the lesson books. My tutor helps me with spelling and using vowel sounds. Learning phonics is the key to reading better. She helps me read compli-
cated words. Then I have to circle the words I do not understand and look them up in the dictionary.

I always ask for homework and Ms. Gwen acts shocked every time, but I know she is so happy to hear that. Sometimes I get too excited with my homework and start rushing, which causes mistakes. I have learned it is better to take my time. At first, I did not like spelling words on my own. I know now that practice really works.

I have set these goals for myself. First, I want to pass the 8th Grade Assessment Test. Second, I want to get my driver’s license. Third, I will be able to drive to class for my GED. These goals always seemed impossible to me, but now it is within my reach. I plan to attend college, and that would be my greatest success.

Terrill Smith
Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa
Overcoming Obstacles

I have a sister, DiAnna, and two brothers, David and Michael. All of us were removed from our home for abuse. We were put in foster care. My sister and I were adopted by our second set of foster parents.

I had a difficult time in school. After we moved to Grove, I started to go to a private school. I graduated from the Academy but lacked the confidence to take the GED test.

I met a guy and got married, and three days later he went to jail for nonpayment of child support. I then moved to Tulsa, and got my first apartment. I lost that place, so I moved back home with my parents. I met a guy online that lived in Belgium. I traveled there to meet him. I’ll never do that again!

After my daughter was born, I applied for TANF. After a short time, I thought I didn’t need the literacy program. I thought that I could do it on my own,
so I started at NTC and took CNA, HHA, and CPR classes. When I finished these classes, I dropped out of TANF and went to work at Grand Lake Villa. I had to quit work because of health problems.

Being a CNA is very demanding and a lot of hard work, so I decided that I needed to get my GED and further my education to get a better job. My daughter’s head start staff suggested that I go back to TANF and get help with my education, career training, and life skills. I am so happy to have been accepted back to the TANF program so I can further my education. I want to be able to provide a safe and secure home for my daughter.

Mary Crossley Tallman
Delaware County TANF Literacy, Jay

My Greatest Success

My wife and I have been married for 38 years. We have four children: a daughter and three sons.
Our family came to The United States in 2003 from Saigon, Vietnam. In Oklahoma, I was a machine operator for a machinery company, which produced equipment for an oil company, for 13 years. My wife was a cook for a restaurant. We have done our best to take care of our children so that they could go to school.

Our daughter married in 2012. Two of our sons were students of computer engineering at the University of Oklahoma (OU). They finished Master of Computer Engineering degrees in 2008. After passing the Citizenship Test, they applied to work for the US Air Force at Tinker AFB.

Our third son was born in 1988. When we came to the United States, he was fifteen years old. He was a ninth grade student at Putnam City West High School. Four years later, he was a student of Chemical Engineering at OU. After graduating with a degree in Engineering, he continued his educa-
tion. He passed the MCAT, the Medical College American Test. So, he became a student at the college of medicine at the University of Oklahoma. He graduated on May 21, 2016. Now, he is a resident at Mobile hospital in Alabama.

At the present time, I am 73 years old and my wife is 68. Both of us are retired. We are satisfied with what we did. We completed our duties which God assigned us. We give thanks to God that he guided us in how to take care of our children, giving us good health and jobs, and continues to bless us.

Without God, we have no “Greatest Success” today.

Tien Tran
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My New Life and Dream in America

I’ll never forget how excited I was to start my new life in the US in 2010. I wanted to own a salon as I
had in China. I learned the law required me to have a license. English was my biggest problem. I was very sad. I had lost my way in the wild forest.

One day my husband came home happy. “Baby, I found an ESL class for you in town and it’s only 3 miles away. When your English gets better you can do whatever you want!” Encouraging words bring hope.

In class I felt like a young child asking, ‘why this, why that?’ My tutor was patient and kind. She found interesting ways to learn. I read, wrote, played games, watched cartoons, even cooked. She helped me find job information online. This helped me decide what I want to do; become a nurse. The healthcare field will continue to grow in the next twenty years because the baby boomers, the largest generation in the US, will be retiring.

I got my driver’s license and CNA certificate in
2012. I had a full-time job at a nursing home for three years, and now work for the hospital. In 2015 I became a US citizen. I went to school for my phlebotomy certificate in 2016.

The literacy program helped me with their loving, caring, cheerfulness, patience, encouragement, and attention. Rain or snow they are always there, and never give up. This kept me strong and focused to move toward my dream.

I want to thank them for giving me this chance to learn and finding me the best teachers to help me. I appreciate my teachers’ efforts and hard work throughout the years. I’m blessed to have you in my life.

Chunlan Tromsness
Miami Public Library Literacy Services

My Greatest Success

My greatest success was at McDonald’s, my first job
in the United States. Because there I learned to work and live together with different people and because it is a nice place for family. It is my greatest success because I was sent to study for manager and I didn’t speak English. I remember that, on one occasion, they left me alone in the restaurant for an hour in the morning. I gave the customers breakfast because I did not know to take the order or open the register until another manager helped me. That day, I cried and I realized that I was lucky to have that experience. I worked there for the next four years. And now, I go there to eat with my grandchildren and my daughters sometimes, and to greet my former bosses and I am happy.

Ernestina Vital
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
Learning to Drive

My Uncle Charles bought a Polaris to go hunting in with his friends. He lets me drive it in our yard. It was not scary for me to learn how to start it, but I can’t drive in the rain. It is fun to drive. I can go over rocks and little ditches. I drive over molehills too. Sometimes I can drive it by myself. I would like to have my own Polaris. I am going to try to save my money up to get my own Polaris. I would like to get a blue one because it is my favorite color. I have blue stuff. Maybe one day I can learn to drive a car because that would be my dream. My family would be so proud of me. Me—driving a car at age 33 years. Wow!

Paula Watson
Creek County Literacy Program, Sapulpa

My Favorite Hobby

As a kid growing up, I always had a fascination with
classic cars. For years, I have worked on cars and have always considered myself a car enthusiast. Throughout the years I have bought and restored many cars, including my first car, a 1963 Chevy Impala I purchased when I was just 22 years old. The rewards and accomplishments I felt from restoring that vehicle and getting it into perfect running condition inspired the dream I have today. I never thought that one day my passion for restoring classic cars could be the vehicle for being able to give back to the community I love so much. I can actually turn something I love into something so much more.

By the year 2023, my plan is to start a car club for troubled teenage kids. This car club will provide them with the same opportunities I was granted at an early age in life. They will experience the rewards of restoring a classic or antique car and eventually
being able to call it their own. My plan is for the club to use donations to purchase cars that need restoration. Kids will learn the skills needed to restore a vehicle from the ground up. Upon completion, the senior member of the team will get to keep the car as their own, with the condition that they stay out of trouble. Hopefully, my plan will provide troubled youth with confidence and a sense of self-worth needed to be a productive member of society.

Jaime Zapien
FCI El Reno Literacy Program
My Hero
My Hero

I was born in Baghdad, 1984. I started in elementary school in 1990, and in that year the study stopped for a few months because of war.

Then we moved to another city because it was somewhat out of danger. After the war ended we went back to our house. I was so happy because I saw my father. I missed him so much.

After that, my sisters and my brother and I completed our studies, but life became very difficult after the war and the economic blockade. My father was taking full responsibility and my mother was a full-time mother. I have three sisters and one brother, and my father and my mother—this is my family.

I graduated from high school and started studying the business management in the college at the
University of Baghdad. In 2003, unfortunately, another war started. The study stopped for four months. Then we returned to the college.

When I reached the fourth and final stage, I missed my father. He was killed by terrorism on November 20, 2005. I never forgot that day. I remember every detail of that night. I loved my dad so much and still love him and I did not forget him.

After I graduated from college, I searched for a job, but I did not find any. I tried to work anywhere. After one year, I found work at a pharmacy. I have been practicing for a year and have gained experience. In this period, I met my husband, and we married and had three kids—one daughter and two sons. This is my new family and I am very happy to live with them.

Raghad Abdullah
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Favorite Hero

My mother is my hero because she was always with my sister and me. She never left us alone and always gave us good advice. She took us along the path of good, and we were always together, the three of us. Now I fight alone to encourage my sister forward.

My mother was an extraordinary woman, and I miss her a lot. She passed away ten years ago, and I still miss her so much. I would have liked for her to have lived many more years by my side. I miss her now, and I will always miss her until we are back together one day, forever. I love Mom forever.

Monica Alvarez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Grandpa, My Hero

When I was a little girl, my father was never around; but as I grew to be a little older, I realized that a father isn’t always a paternal figure in your life.
Instead, it could be an uncle, brother, cousin, or even a grandfather that you had always looked up to.

Through the years of my childhood, my grandpa was always there. He did what he could to make sure that my brothers and I had what we needed, even if that meant giving us his last can of soup or the shirt off his back. Whenever he had a moment to spare, even if he was exhausted, there he was asking if we wanted to go fishing or swimming. Grandpa never missed any of our school events. He was the one person we could count on growing up. I remember every weekend that grandpa came to visit; I wanted to show him the good grades I had gotten.

One year—I remember it so clearly—it was Christmas Day, and under the tree, three big trash bags full of presents. Each one had a name on it, and all from Santa himself. But we all thought it
was grandpa anyway, because, well, he looked like Santa with a long beard and big tummy.

Later, I learned that our grandpa had put himself in debt to make sure he could help provide for us kids. I never realized how much he had done for us. I know it must have been so very hard on him. If it wasn’t for this extraordinary man, life could have been a lot harder for me growing up. I hope and pray that I am at least half as good of a parent to my children as he was to me.

Elizabeth Andrews
Literacy Council of Leflore County, Poteau

My Hero, My Dad

A hero is not always someone who has an amazing and supernatural power. When we were kids, we often thought that is what happens. We want to be like Superman, Batman, Spiderman, etc. But when we grow up, we understand they don’t exist,
and we realize the real heroes are the people close to us, like my dad.

I can tell you so many stories about my dad, but I will never finish. I have one story, my favorite. It is the difference between real and imaginary heroes. Eleven years ago, when my mom died, my dad sat us on the stairs and talked to my brother and me. He said:

“When you feel alone, look at the stars, and the brightest one will always be her, looking at you, looking at you, even in the darkness. She will always be shining for you, she will be always there for us.”

In that moment, that was exactly what I needed to hear, someone who told me everything will be better. I will not be alone. He will be with me always. For me and for many people, our dads are our heroes. They will be with us on the good, bad and worst days. Heroes come close when you are in trouble,
and they can fix it, fighting with the bad guys to save the world.

My hero is something like that, but the difference is he did not fix it; he helped me to fix it by myself. He didn’t fight with the bad guys, he taught me to do it. He didn’t save the world. He just tried to do better for me and my family.

Erika Anguiano
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero is My Mom

When I was five years old, my father was very abusive; it took everything my mother had to protect us kids. She promised that no matter what, she would protect us. We eventually had to go to a safe house where our father could not find us. My mother had to go to court and the judge said she had to send us back to our father. We dealt with abuse for about ten years. One day, while at school, I heard, “Ana,
is that your mom?” I turned around and there she was, smiling and crying. I ran to her and gave her the most intense hug I had ever given. She looked at me and said, “I love you and I’m so sorry.”

I started to cry profusely. After that, I never had to see my father again. I was with my mom for 14 years. One morning my sister told me she had passed away. I did not want to believe her. I ran to my mom’s house and there I found the cops and an ambulance. I went to her room, I fell to the floor, and I held her in my arms for so long. My sister had to calm me down and tell me, “mom loves us, and remember what she said— we will be okay as long as we have each other.” She then took my hand and I fell into her lap crying. It has now been almost a year since she has been gone, but I will always remember her smile. My mom was the strongest, most caring, and
loving woman in this world. That is why she is my hero, because no matter what, she always kept her promise.

Anastaisa Barton
Literacy Council of Leflore County, Poteau

My Hero

The idea I always had of a hero was someone strong, big, etc. However, on November 09, 2007, this idea changed for me.

That day, God sent me one little, tiny, and beautiful hero. He taught me to believe in the incredible, to find faith where it did not exist, and to never think that I can’t do things. This day was the day my son Isaac was born. He was born sick and was in NICU for 28 days. They were the hardest days of my life, but at the same time, the days that taught me to be strong and believe in my son’s strength. Sometimes we disparage our kids because we look at them as
if they are very fragile. This idea is false. They are super strong and can overcome anything. My boy taught me that he is a warrior, and that every obstacle is a challenge, not a problem.

He proved to me that I was wrong when he was born. My idea that he was going to die was totally crazy. Even though he had many health issues, he was able to overcome every single one. After every surgery, he was ready for the next one, with the same positivism.

At this time, he has already had 16 surgeries. The people around us think Isaac’s life is too complicated, but for Isaac and me, it’s a normal life—some extra visits to the doctor, but a normal and very happy life. Some heroes are real and tiny—like my lovely son.

Beatriz Adrianna Becerra
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Hero

My hero would be my son. On July 4, 2015, I found out about my son, Elijah. He saved my life and saved me from my own self harm. I was almost 3 months along when I found out. I thought I messed him up. I had been on meth and drinking pretty badly. On this day I stopped everything. My child was worth more than my next high.

Everything I’m doing now I’m doing for his future and mine. I’m back in school getting my GED. We are getting our own home. I’m trying to get my driver’s license. I have to show him that no matter where you come from, or what you have been through, you can always make a difference and change your own life.

This was the day my hero made me a better person. As time went by, I got sick during my pregnancy, but it was all worth it. My son was born on February 19th, a month early, and it was very scary.
His heartbeat dropped. If they hadn’t rushed to do a C-section, I would’ve lost him. Since the day I held him for the first time, I knew that God gave me another chance. He gave me a purpose: to take His blessing and make my son thrive in so many ways.

I do not know where I’d be today if it wasn’t for him. I’d probably be on drugs somewhere at somebody’s house, or in somebody’s car doing God knows what; so when I say my son changed me for the better, I say that with my whole heart. He means everything to me. I thought I’d loved before, but it was nothing like this.

Syndar Brummett
New Horizons Program, Shawnee

“Shero”

The definition of a hero is a person who is admired for their achievements, courage or noble qualities. My hero is Michelle Obama. I could say I admire
her because she is African American, but just being African American is not reason enough to admire someone. My admiration for Mrs. Obama goes deeper than the color of her skin.

Before becoming First Lady, Mrs. Obama created a reading program for the manual laborers’ children who attended her school. Mrs. Obama and I have a couple of things in common. Both she and I were born in Chicago, Illinois. Also, I would like to start a reading program helping anyone in my community who would like to learn to read—from children to adults.

The courage and strength Mrs. Obama has is like no one I have ever seen before. When Mrs. Obama walks into a room, she completely owns it. Mrs. Obama has taught me to love the beautiful shade of black that I once was ashamed of. I’m asked all the
time, by both men and women alike, “Who do you get your personality from, or the independent strut that you have?” I got it from all the strong women who paved the way for me.

Mrs. Michelle Obama was not only the perfect example of a First Lady during her family’s time in office, but also a great wife and mother to her family as well. My “Shero” has shown me that a life dedicated to education can lead to a position in the White House. On her rise to the top, she has never forgotten to help the people who needed it the most. That is why Mrs. Obama is my Hero.

Tanya M. Burrell
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Hero

My hero is my daughter because she is the inspiration for me, because she is so smart. I am proud that she fights for her dreams and works very hard.
We support her and hope that she has a career and a good future. She works to make her career. She is studying to be a nurse.

Marisela Carrasco
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

Thomas Edison is my hero because he is the inventor of light, inventor of the battery, and of machines that printed the newspapers. He was one of the most important inventors. He invented the machines that play movies. He is most famous for the inventions of the light and gas lamp. The light stays on for all of my life now, and we can enjoy it forever. I think he spent his life inventing many things. I can’t imagine my life or house without these many things. He is a very important person for the history of the world. Maybe if he was still living, he would be thinking of new things to invent. Some people say the inven-
tors don’t take showers for a long time, they do not sleep very well, and they don’t have a social life, but I don’t think that is true.

Soledad Cerano
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

My hero is my mom because she always listens to me, and she is my hero because when I need something, she helps me.

I look up to her a lot because she is very hard working. I like when she teaches me how to cook, but I love when she cooks because I like her food.

I love when she teaches me a lot of things because I’m learning good things. When I lived with her, I liked it because there was always someone to play with. My sister is fun. But I miss playing with my sis-
ters because now everybody is married, and it isn’t the same because we don’t play anymore.

Martha Cervantes
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Hero

My favorite hero is my daughter Angie. She is my hero because she has given me joy when I need it. She gives me love and much happiness. She came into my life to make me a better person. My hero is my daughter and I am very proud of that. Just to see her laugh changes my world. Next to her, the hours seem like minutes. She is the person who makes me happy, is the person I love the most, and is the person for whom I would give everything!

Stephanie de Santiago
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Beautiful Mother

My Mother was very lovely with me. She was the light to follow in my life. When I was a child, she protected me, always. She taught me about good feelings, about God, and she believed in me. She always talked about being a good person, but always put God in first place.

My Mother always helps her family (siblings and relatives). They came to our house to live, because in their little town they did not have opportunities to go to school (high school or college). My mother gave love, food, books, and money to help 50 families’ children during 35 years, and many of my cousins. (Never did they give money.) That was a good example for me, to serve people when they don’t have enough money. Some went back to their little towns to help more people (families). My mother,
all the time, talked about helping, and giving love, comfort, and peace when people need this help.

She was a smart woman. She usually used her mind to remember numbers. She closed her eyes and moved her fingers in the air to get a telephone number. It was very awesome. When I was studying at the university, before taking my exams at 3 a.m. or 4 a.m., she asked me if I needed coffee. When I said, “Yes,” my Mother made coffee for me. When I was in medical school, I didn’t eat all day, and she brought food for me at 10 p.m. My classmates thought my Mother was special. Never did they receive this attention.

This was my Mother, my beautiful, special Mother.

Reniery Espana
OCCC Adult Literacy Center, OKC

My Hero

Usually everybody has a hero in his or her life; that
certain someone who inspires you, who motivates you to be better and no longer surrender.

My hero, despite being smaller than I am, always seemed very big. He dreamed big, and there were no ‘impossibilities’ in his life. He was always very friendly and surrounded by many people. He had a contagious madness.

He taught me to enjoy the little details that life gives you, and that there are things in life that money can’t buy, like climbing a tree, lying down at night on the grass and just looking at stars shining, and finding figures in the clouds of the sky. Above all, he taught me that dreams come true! He had a great personal commitment to himself.

He really wanted to be a boxer. He kept training hard until he reached his goal. He had his first fight, making his whole family proud.
This is how his new path as a real boxer began. He became a national champion, and then he exceeded his expectations. He had a date at the international level. Just one week before his international fight, my hero of almost nineteen years old swapped his boxing gloves for huge wings.

It was time to say goodbye to my little brother, to my super hero. His journey in this life was so short. Nevertheless, he still taught me invaluable things that I will never forget.

He taught me that heroes are real and live among us; that life was meant to be enjoyed; that life is unrepeatable; that dreams, when combined with desire and dedication, come true; and that we are here in this world to leave a mark!

Angelica Estrada
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
Venezuela: the Struggle of Teenagers

In this moment, and for ever and ever, the youngest people of Venezuela are my heroes. These young students and workers are going out to the street, in every state of my country, to protest because of the coup d’état by the government of Nicolas Maduro. Unarmed, shouting slogans for the rescue of democracy, they have faced soldiers and mercenaries who shoot and launch tear gas.

Up to now, about 30 young people have died because of the killer bullets; some 300 have been injured and more than 500 are in prisons in Venezuela. But the Venezuelan people, who have filled the streets and avenues of the main cities of the country for more than a month, continue the struggle to win elections and to elect a new president—for the liberation of all
prisoners and the creation of an emergency device to receive food and medicine from the international community because Venezuelan children are starving to death for lack of elementary medicines.

Venezuela, an oil country, and therefore with ensured economic income, is in the most serious crisis in its history; in the hands of Nicolas Maduro, the political son of Hugo Chavez, who came to power in the year 1999 and died in 2014, leaving Venezuela plunged into violence, poverty and uncertainty.

Today his successor pretends to liquidate what little democracy is left, and it is the teenagers who have the courage to fight for the return of freedom canceled by Chavez after the country lived the best 40 years of its history under civilian and democratic governments.

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Roberto Giusti
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
The Important Man

The most important man for me is my first grandson. He is an intelligent young student. He is 20 years-old and studies at the university in Venezuela, and he has been doing practices with Park Meet at a laboratory. He doesn’t like the smell. He said, “I do not like the smell, but I like to work with animals.”

When he finishes his career, he wants to be a Park Farmer. I believe that he will be a very good professional, because he works a lot, and he has a lot of gifts. He is my hero. I am very proud of him. He looks like a person who is thirty-years-old. I am very proud of him. His name is Sebastian, and I think he is a very handsome man.

Gledis Gonzalez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

When speaking of a hero, people often speak of a
role model or fictional character that inspires them. But they are often wrong! Inside a community, where so much is negative, there is only one hero. It doesn’t matter where you are from, your ethnicity, or who you are. We all have something in common.

Come around my way and see the evidence on everyone’s face. You can see the vibrancy of the community; everyone is busy. In this environment, everyone has to be a super star, being the best at what they do. We all have one common goal and one hero.

In this community “hood,” you have a lot of different faces and you can see such promise and hunger. On some, you can see that they have “it” and are on their way. Those faces, you tend to like and try to support. In this community, we want people to do well, go to school, or whatever it takes to become this hero.

Everyone has a choice of which road to travel. You
have to take what life throws at you. You’ve got to take the bitter with the sweet and push on. As I write this from prison, I have many regrets for the choices I’ve made. I chose this path, and as a man, take full responsibility for my actions. I took the wrong road to be my hero.

Success is a favorable or desired outcome; gaining wealth and fame. Doesn’t everyone want this? It doesn’t matter whether you work a 9-5 job, shine shoes, or play sports, everyone wants to be successful. Life is full of pot-holes which cause you to stumble, but you must continue to strive to accomplish your goals.

Success is my hero.

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Marcus Hardy
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

My Hero: Tawlik Hassan

My loving father is my hero who inspires my soul.
He has taught me many wonderful things growing up. He is a great father and an amazing teacher. My father has so much experience in teaching people. When I was learning to read, he had the patience to educate me. I remember the day I read my first word. I sounded out all of the letters, and wrote them down. We started with a word made of three letters. I read it wrong so many times and he just kept smiling. He was trying to show me I can do anything by myself as long as I have the basic tools.

At last, I read it. I was so happy. I continued to read the next one, and the next. I read every word I saw in front of my face no matter how I said it, right or wrong, big or small, long or silent. Sometimes, I read aloud, and others, silent.

Spending time with my father made me happy. I learned many things from him that changed my
idea about the life I live. If I face problems or challenges, he gives me the courage to find solutions. No matter what or when or where, I feel my life is not complete without him in it.

Abdalrhman Hassan
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

My Heroes

I want to tell you about my hero. I have had this hero since I was a baby. I’m actually lucky because I have two wonderful heroes, my mom and dad.

It wasn’t until recently that they both became my super heroes. It started about four years ago when my dad got really sick with bacterial meningitis. My mom stood beside him, no matter where he went, while my sister and I stood beside her. This was a very hard time in our lives. Some would say a scare of a lifetime.

It was hard seeing my dad, my hero, sick, and there
was not a thing that I could do to help him. My mom helped him work through this by being there and encouraging him to just push a little harder and go a little further. Seeing how determined my mom fought for my dad made her become my other hero.

My dad did not want to just give up, so he started asking himself what did he want to accomplish in life.

Each day, just seeing what that man has accomplished and is still accomplishing amazes me. He has done all the things that the doctors said he wouldn’t be able to do. He has proven to us and the world that he can get through this. He truly is my hero.

In all honesty, seeing how my parents have overcome the odds, beating the odds, so to Speak, has shown me that fighting for what you believe in and standing together can work miracles. Everything you set your mind to can be conquered.
We have had our ups and downs and have fallen on hardships, but somehow we have come through. That’s why my parents are my heroes.

My Hero

My hero is a sweet lady by the name of Miss Lynn who I called Ladybug Lynn. She was my counselor at a rehabilitation center where I was placed for nine months. Miss Lynn was a one-of-a-kind person. When I got there, I really didn’t care for anybody, including her. I felt as if I didn’t need to be there and I thought I didn’t have a problem with drugs. Well, Miss Lynn thought otherwise. I would tell her I don’t have a problem and wasn’t going to join in her activities. I would go to class and turn my back against...
the group and wouldn’t join. So after a few months went by, I began to join the groups.

Once I joined the group, Miss Lynn made me realize that I had a problem. My problem wasn’t so much my addiction—it was my pride. I had not yet opened the door and allowed anybody to help me with my addiction out of pride. Mrs. Lynn helped me see how going through life thinking like this can cut off some very important people that may be trying to help me. She taught me that denial was normal, but the first thing that a person must do when dealing with an addiction is to acknowledge it. I learned that I was a lot smarter and stronger than I gave myself credit for. Miss Lynn helped me go down the path in the right direction and I will always remember her soft, sweet encouraging words.

Tawanna Hill
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC
My Hero

My hero is my father. He passed away last May. I now know that the one who loved me most in all the world has left me forever.

My father was an orphan, and pretty much grew up on his own. He walked for twelve days from his hometown to a city when he was 12 years old. He worked as a gold digger, later as an apprentice. Finally, he met a gentleman who hired him to take care of his daughter. A year later, my father joined the army, and then he became an officer. He waited and waited until the gentleman’s daughter grew up, and then he married her. Because my mother prefers the country life, my father retired from the army and moved to the countryside where there is beautiful scenery and pleasant weather.

I was born in this place. I knew I had a hero in my life when I was a little girl. My father was the one who taught me to write my name; he’s the one
who fed me pectoral at midnight; he’s the one who respected my every choice, whether my major or my husband; he’s the one who encouraged me to do everything to follow my heart; he’s the one who cleaned my room, even the bottom of my pan; he’s the one who took my son from my tired arms and got the child off to bed; he’s the one who appears before me whenever I need him.

He’s my Superman, saving me from troubles. Superman doesn’t exist, but my father is my real hero.

Spring comes again, but my hero is gone. I think that death can take him away, but nothing can ever take away my precious memories.

Xiaoyi (Emily) Long
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Heroes and Heroines

My first childhood heroes were Bugs Bunny, Daffy
Duck, and my favorite, Yosemite Sam. Daffy never stopped trying to outsmart Bugs, and no one got away from Yosemite Sam. They never gave up.

As a teenager, my uncles were heroes as athletes, with the most beautiful girlfriends. My grandparents were migrant workers migrating from South Texas to Illinois and Michigan. They taught me how to live off the land by trapping, hunting and fishing. We were poor, but rich in love, laughter and dreams.

Now, as I look at my life, three ladies and a gentleman stand out. My mother taught me about life, love, loyalty, and respect; not only for myself and others, but in my gifts. My partner, Tina, taught me physical beauty may be the start of a relationship, but it doesn’t guarantee lasting relationships. Lasting relationships only come to couples who are committed to building long-term relationships. She
lifts my spirits when I am down, and reminds me that “This too shall pass!” when times are difficult. Ida Fay Winters, my literacy tutor, helped me study for my GED. She never allowed me to give up on my dream of getting my GED. These ladies are heroines in my life, and I thank them.

Simon, my greatest male hero today, was severely injured in an oil field accident. His doctors told the family that he had less than a ten percent chance of surviving the injuries or the surgeries needed to mend his body. The doctors told him that he could never live alone or drive a vehicle. After years of rehabilitation, Simon purchased a home and passed the driving test after 21 attempts. When diagnosed with terminal cancer, Simon prepared his own funeral arrangements and provided for the family left behind. Simon is my brother.

Martin Maldonado
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus
My Hero

Many years ago, although I was still a girl, I never believed in the heroes. I grew up believing that I was my own hero; but over the years, life taught me that it was not that way. In life, we need somebody to help us get ahead.

When you are young and proud, without anyone who has guided your life, it is very easy to make mistakes. It was what happened in my life, but when I needed more, someone appeared. Without asking and without knowing it, I found my hero in the person who would save my life; someone who never thought that he would become most important to me. He changed my life completely and I thank God that he put that person in my way. But I made a mistake with him. I did not realize that he was also a human being who makes mistakes; that heroes also need to be saved by someone. He does
not know that he has been my hero. I never told him. I will always admire him.

Today, I want to say goodbye to my hero and welcome my husband, who was my hero for many years without knowing it. Nothing is forever. Everything lasts as long as we learn from mistakes. Thank god for these experiences of life and for giving me the knowledge to understand the difference between a human and a hero. The human being will always be in my heart, and the hero in my most beautiful memories.

Mayra Martinez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Heroic Mother

What is a hero? To me a hero is a person who is loving, caring, brave, ready to sacrifice for others, and is strong through sufferings. My mother is my hero.

My mother is a hero, not for what she brought to
the world, but what she gave to me and my siblings. She gave us happiness. When we were young, we wanted to go to a neighbor’s house to watch a TV show. My mother suggested my father say the family prayers earlier than usual so that we could enjoy the show. Every morning my mother woke up early to prepare breakfast for the family. She cooked many delicious dishes.

My mother is very brave. One time, when my sister and I were playing outside, a snake suddenly crawled towards us. I screamed, but in an instant my mother quickly picked up the snake with a stick. When I was 10 years old, I did not know how to eat vegetables; my mother used her heroic skills to make me eat all the vegetables. This actually taught me lessons of learning to eat vegetables and the self-discipline to perform my responsibilities.

One day my father fell from the stairs and was paralyzed. While taking care of my disabled father, my
mother still had to work to feed us and to provide us with a good school. My mother struggled to care for my father for eight years without complaining.

Today, I still remember vividly when my mother had liver cancer. She was in a lot of pain, but she stayed positive. She later had a stroke. Her pain was more severe than ever, but she did not cry. That’s why my mother is and will always be my hero.

My mother died two years ago, and I will miss her forever.

Thuy Thi Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a Catholic nun of Albanian origin. She was a naturalized Indian, who founded the congregation of “The Missionaries of Charity” in Calcutta in 1950. She is my hero because she had a wonderful heart and goodness
of soul. She dedicated her life to serving the poor and sick people. One of her phrases that I like the most is, “The peace begins with a smile.” I think that at the present time we all need more peace in our lives. The World, in fact, really needs us to practice peace more. Beyond religions and political opinions, human beings must love, respect, honor and help the neighbor; and do as Mother Teresa of Calcutta did it. In this sense, as she well said, “To make a lamp, always be it.” We must not stop putting in oil. Let us be that light, but also, give oil to whoever needs it.

She teaches us, that in spite of difficulties, we must always maintain faith, self-confidence and work arduously for the goals or purpose of life. She devoted all her life to religious work, but beyond the walls of a convent or building. No failure should be discouraged, as long as one has a clear conscience
of having done what is within reach. We must work hard for our dreams, too.

Pope Frances approved the canonization of Teresa of Calcutta in 2016, after the congregation recognized as extraordinary the healing of a Brazilian man; this being her second miracle.

Claudia Nunez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Learning to Read
A Dedication to Mrs. Lily Hope

After I graduated from high school, I was not on a reading level that I wanted to be on. I had even stopped reading and writing a lot. My friends, Debbie and Justin Williams, told me about the adult literary class at the Midwest City library. First I had to take some tests to figure out what level I was on. Afterwards, I met Mrs. Lily Hope, who was my first tutor. She worked with me to go through the work-
books and I was slowly improving with her help. Ms. Lily became my friend. My friend Justin and I studied together and Mrs. Lily tutored us both. She told me that she had tutored there many years. So I imagine that she helped a lot of other adults to learn to read and improve their reading skills. I believe that she is the one person that got me to the level I am on now, but I am still not where I want to be. Ms. Lily always showed me her patience and encouraged me to keep working. As things went, I met my husband at the Midwest City Library when he was there studying. We had gone to school together, but that is when we started dating and then married. He’d help me and would sit at my table. I had to stop for a while because I had a daughter, but I never stopped talking to Mrs. Lily. I would call her on the phone all the time. I would tell her about my daughter, and Mrs. Lily told me stories about herself when
she was a girl. I appreciated those conversations! I went back to the literary class in August, 2015, when my daughter enrolled in pre-K school. Even though Mrs. Lily couldn’t be my tutor anymore because of her health, she was very excited that I went back to my literacy class. I have a new tutor now, and I like her very much. I told Mrs. Lily about my new tutor, and that I am doing good. Ms. Lily said, “I am very proud of you for going back to the program, and I want you to keep up the good work.” It made me happy when she told me that. That was the last time I talked to her, as she went to be with her Heavenly Father. She is gone now and I will always remember her encouragement, and I will never stop reading!

Vicky Patterson
Literacy Link, Midwest City
My Heroes

I consider my parents to be my heroes. They took care of my siblings and me. Even though they were still young, they taught us everything, from learning how to walk to being independent adults. Ever since I was a boy, I knew that I wanted to follow their example. They taught me how to be a better person, to be polite and never be rude to others. I know that my parents gave and sacrificed everything for us, to the point of not eating so that we could. They taught me that a parent is capable of giving everything up for their children, never expecting anything in return.

I know that my parents will always have my back, and will continue to love me even after I’ve made mistakes, or even if times are bad. My parents taught me to be a better person, to be hard working and responsible, and without them I wouldn’t know who I am.
Watching my parents struggle for us, sometimes not sleeping because of us, has made me realize how much I love them; and how, without them knowing, they turned into my forever heroes.

Jesus Nieves
Westcentral OK Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

My Hero, My Son

Heroes may be any age. My hero is my son Lavell, and we call him Mackavelli! I will never forget the day I gave birth to my son in April 2014. It is now 2017, and my little hero turned 3 years old on April 18th. I will always remember the day he was born and when the nurse placed him on my chest. I never even knew how to hold a newborn baby before his birth. I held him, and his little brown eyes looked up at me as I gently wrapped him in a soft baby blanket. As he lay on my chest, I could feel his heartbeat. I know he felt mine too. He drifted off and
went to sleep four minutes after he was born. My little hero is three feet tall and weighs 45 pounds. If I need to carry him, I will pick him up wherever I go, even though he is half my size. It makes me happy to watch him sleep so peacefully, and to wake up to him every day and see him smile. He will always be my baby, my hero, my king, and the love of my life.

Christina Payne
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Mother

My dear Maria, her name. My mother was born in Mexico, April 6th, 1921. She was the 5th daughter of Jose Zamudii and Maria Zavala, both born in Moroleon, Gto, Mexico. She didn’t go to school for a long time because there were not many teachers. She was very sick at the age of 10. Her father bought a coffin if she passed away.

She got married at age 18 to Jesus Magaña. They
had 13 children: six boys and seven girls. All of them were born in Mexico. She was a brave woman because she had many sons and daughters. She was a housewife. She lived in different cities of Mexico. She had many diseases: arthritis, high blood pressure, and many surgeries: kidney, gallbladder, hip. She never complained or surrendered. She was happy with us. She passed away at age 89.

She was, is, and will be always, my hero.

Luz Perez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

Heroes may be any age. My hero is my beautiful little girl, Ayelen. She is 6 years old. She is my first baby. When she was born, it was the best moment in my life. However, I had a strange feeling. The postpartum depression was the most horrible thing I’ve ever felt; it was as if nothing mattered and I did
not care about anyone. Everything hurt me and everything made me cry. I became another person, more screaming, angry and unpleasant. She had to endure all that.

She makes me stronger with her innocence, love and tenderness. She helped me with this disease.

She survived that terrible stage at an early age, but that does not matter. She is the best daughter in the world, very loving and happy. For all that and more, she is my little hero and the love of my life.

Ana Cristina Pimentel
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

I would have to say that my hero is my husband. My husband’s name is Alberto. Ever since I met him, I’ve watched him work hard to accomplish everything he wants. For him, life has never been easy, but he has never given up, and when he sets his
mind towards a goal, he never ever stops until he accomplishes it.

At the beginning of our relationship, Alberto, who was only 17 at the time, moved to Arkansas where he worked. Even though he was away from everyone and everything he knew, and still extremely young, he managed to be responsible and never stopped working for the things he wanted.

After Arkansas, he came back because he found a job close to home. At his new job, Alberto had to start from the bottom, and because of his hard work, he slowly worked his way up in the company. He is the perfect example of someone who was not handed anything. Instead, with his work, he had to prove he was one of the best.

As time passed, we decided to get married; and ever since, I know that he tries his best to provide our family with everything we need. In all honesty, all I want is for him to continue being the amazing per-
son he is, and never change his kind heart. After all, I love him for who he is and not for what he has.

Ivana Piñón
Westcentral OK Literacy Coalition, Weatherford

Granddaughter of a Hero!

If people ask me who I looked up to as a role model or as a hero, I definitely say my grandmother. Just like my mom, my grandmother has been there for me whenever I needed someone to turn to. Growing up, my mom was known as a workaholic, so she didn’t really have time for me because of the fact she had to be at work on time or do fill-ins.

Whenever that started becoming a habit, my grandmother stepped in and spent time and did a lot for me. I know she has said she made tons of mistakes as a young teen/child, but don’t we all? She even
encouraged me not to make any of those same mistakes, and just shows me so much love and support. I honestly don’t know what I would do without my grandmother. I honestly wouldn’t be the person that I am today because of her.

Lashawnie Railback
Opportunities Industrialization Center of OK County, OKC

My Hero

My hero is Mother Teresa. She is my hero because she was very helpful to everybody. Many loved her, especially people from India. She was very kind to poor and sick people. She was the only one. You could be Muslim or other religion and she would help you. She was the only one.

There was no one else like her. She helped all people. She loved everybody. She is history.

Mohammad Ramzan
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Hero

I want to take this opportunity to talk about my hero. When I was a child, I heard a lot about heroes. I dreamed and wished to have one in my life. When I grew up, I heard about Jesus and my dream came true. Jesus is my hero. He saved me. He forgave me. He gives His life on the cross for me. With Him, I can have eternal life. I hope that everybody can have this hero in his or her life, because Jesus is the only real hero. If people could stop having fake heroes, this world would be so different. Jesus changed my life and now I know the truth. I have faith in my real Hero. Thank you, Jesus!

__________________________________________________________
Angelica Rivera
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Father

My hero is “Mi Papa,” my father. Why is my father my hero? Growing up in Mexico was hard. If your
family didn’t have money, it was hard to get an education. So many families had to work hard labor. My grandfather taught my father many different ways to make money to support his family.

My father was a hard worker. He worked from morning to night. He believed that a man should work for his family. My father was always teaching us different ways to make money, just like his father taught him. Even though my father worked very hard, he still had time to spend with his family. Every night when he came home, he would make sure we did our homework. He would also talk with us to see if we were doing okay. He could always tell if something was wrong with us. My father told me that I should always find time for my children, teach them as much as I can, always be there for them, and make them feel important.
As a father I did, because he taught me—my hero, “mi papa.”

Antonio Rodriguez
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

My Hero

Jesus is my hero. At the age of nine, I gave my life to Him. It has been fifty years. Without Him I am nothing, and all my faith is in Him. In life, we have trials and challenges, but with Christ we have everything. My faith and trust are in Him.

In the most difficult moments of my life, Jesus is on my side to sustain me. It is a question of faith. I remember the day when my mother passed away. It was the worst day of my life. I felt that my life ended with her, since my mother was everything for me. She died in my arms and with her, half of my heart and life died too. At that moment, I sought refuge in my faith, and Jesus helped me. It was a dif-
difficult moment, but with Christ everything is possible. He is my strength and my shelter.

Another moment of my life was the day I confirmed that I was pregnant. I had spent a year in treatment trying to get pregnant but with no result. I remember that the doctor told me, “I have tried everything and I suggest now that you try in-vitro.” My answer was, “God did not bring me into the world through in-vitro. I don’t want that.”

I forgot the issue, but always prayed to God, asking for a girl if that was His will. God answered my petition. I never cease to give thanks to Jesus for everything that he gives me every day of my life!

Maribel Rosario
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
My Hero

My hero is my mom. She is very brave. She has been a single mother all the time. She works too hard.

She is very intelligent, funny and a good person. She loves my brother, sister and me. She always takes care of us. When we were little kids, she gave us everything! On the weekends, she lets us sleep late and she brings us breakfast in bed. Usually she can’t go to the parties or places with us because she has work, but she lets us go with our family. She works too hard for a long time to pay for our school. We study kindergarten, middle school and high school in private school. She always told us we must study because this is our heritage.

Now she is alone. We told her when she was young to look for a man, because someday we would have
our lives, but she didn’t want to. I hope that she can find somebody.

Monserrat Sanchez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My Hero

I can tell you that my hero has always been my mother, the most wonderful lady that brought me into this world. She has been there for me through the good times and the bad times. She raised me to be a good man, even though I have made some bad choices in the past. I am still here because my mother kept me in her prayers. My mother was never a person to judge me, but always told me that it was going to be okay because God has me. My mom took care of me, my sister, and my brother. She made sure food was always on the table and clothes were on our back to go to school. But today, my mother is in a better place. She is with our father
in heaven. I miss her so much. I thank God for giving me an opportunity to spend some time with my one and only hero, my mother.

Patrick Theus  
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

My Hero

The hero in my life is my stepdad. I lived with him until I was seven, and during those years he taught me the difference between right and wrong. At seven, I was taken from my mother and stepdad by my birth father, and for the next few years lived with him. Life was unbearable and I became very rebellious. Fighting became my life. When I was twelve, my paternal grandfather, who was the only glimmer of light in my life, passed and I lost all hope in life and in myself.

One day, an argument with my father ended in a fight, in which he did not fare well. He called a
friend who was a police deputy, and when I fought him too, I was arrested and ended up in JDC.

During my year there, no one came to see me. I felt abandoned and alone. At the end of the year, my birth father came to bring me home. Instead of home, he took me to Tulsa’s Parkside, which was a mental institution.

I spent the summer there, two months in solitary confinement. The director was very kind to me and so was my case worker. She eventually called my mom, who immediately came and brought me home. My stepdad welcomed me home and has mentored me ever since. He soon realized that the mere mention of my birth father made me very agitated, and so kept that to a minimum. I know that all my anger and emotion stems from the years with my birth father.

My stepdad has shown, with great patience, that life can be better. We go camping, swimming, and fish-
ing together. He has treated me as his son. I admire him for his work ethic, because even though in pain, he still works hard to support my mom and me.

Devon Thomasson
Duncan Area Literacy Council

In Christ Jesus

The Lord Jesus is my hero. He is love, and he loves others. Lord Jesus helped me to get through my mother’s death.

The Lord Jesus showed me in my dreams that I will get through this hard time. All I have to do is believe in HIM, and He will save me from myself. He told me to live again.

Now, I am very happy to know that God is here for me and will always be. This is how I was able to deal with the pain in my life. I believe death is not easy for anyone to accept, but with God and prayer it can be done. Now, I can help others with things
that are going on in their life. I let them know that if you believe in God, your life can be better. You need to believe.

Carolyn Webb
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

A Hero for Literacy

One of my heroes is Jackie Henson, a tutor for the Great Plains Literacy Council. This woman has not only been a tutor, but an encouraging friend as well. She has had patience in teaching me to read better. Jackie believes that everyone should keep up with current events to be informed.

Since January 2012, Jackie Henson has been my volunteer tutor. She has never given up on my learning. I like her friendliness and kindness. Jackie doesn’t pull my hair like my 6th grade teacher did! I guess that’s why I’m getting bald as an adult. Not really! She has used her time and education to help
me without any pay. My tutor is 90 years old, but she makes all efforts to meet me at the Altus Public Library.

I needed help in learning how to read better. She has taught me to break down words to pronounce them correctly. Spelling is another area where she helps me. Worksheets and easy readers have been provided. Jackie believes in homework and pop quizzes at times to keep me challenged.

It is easy to stay in one’s little world, but my tutor wants me to know current events. Weekly, we read highlights of newspaper articles about local, state, and national news. Jackie has shown me how to use the weekly “News for You” online on the literacy computer and on my phone. She even has enrolled me in several library/literacy programs such as “Healthy Brain, Healthy Mind” and “Financial Fitness” to attend with her.
Jackie Henson is my hero for many reasons. She is more than a tutor or friend. Her tutoring has taught me so much. I find it easier to read information. I appreciate her teaching me to study current events. I thank her so much.

Harold Wilson
Great Plains Literacy Council, Altus

My Heroes

I thank my Heavenly Father God for His unconditional love. He sent His only beloved son Jesus Christ.

The year of 2010, I had a very severe asthma attack. I had to go to the hospital in an ambulance. I will never forget that year and day, October 23, 2010.

My sons said the doctor and nurses had to put me on life support. I stopped breathing. The doctor asked my sons to call the family. I was not going to make it through the night.
I remember hearing my two son’s voices, praying. They are God’s prayer warriors. These two young men love Jesus Christ and they know our Heavenly God is true to His word.

He answered their prayers. Hallelujah.

I remember hearing the Lord’s voice speak these words to me—three times: “You shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord!” Then my eyes opened and I heard the nurse shout, “Her eyes are open.”

The nurse asked me, “Do you know how many days you’ve been here?” I nodded yes, thinking it was Monday. She said, “No, you’ve been here four days.”

The nurse told me one of your sons just called when you were opening your eyes. The nurse told me
your sons have been up here every day when they get off work and call every day. She said, “Your sons love you.”

My two sons walked in the room, tears running down their faces. One son asked, “Do you know you died?” I answered, “Yes!”

I told my sons I heard them praying, and my sons said, “Yes, we were!”

I said the Lord Jesus Christ sent me back. Hallelujah!

Thank you Father God for your mercy and grace. I just can’t stop thanking Him.

Sandra Wilson
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
Poetry
Don’t Give Up

Never give up on your dreams.

Never give up on yourself.

You just have to believe in yourself.

Start somewhere, it doesn’t matter where.

Life is not easy. Life is tough.

Take it easy. Don’t be rough.

Never too late. Never be ashamed.

Never give up on your dreams.

Never give up on yourself.

Stop looking for excuses.

Stop being lazy.

Stop being afraid to change.

Start working on yourself.

Don’t give up. Don’t give up.

Live in peace. Live in Love.
Life is short. Don’t waste it on abhorring.

Never give up on your dreams.

Never give up on yourself!

An Up-Hill Climb

Everyone has a story to tell

That makes them stronger

That helps them to get to the top.

At the top of the mountain

There’s a tunnel and in the tunnel

There are stairs

Because life is a climb.

At the end of the tunnel there’s a light
And at the light your future is waiting for you.

Elizabeth Bishop
Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

AMANDA
A—April celebrates my daughter’s birthday
M—My name is lovely
A—After morning cooking lunch
D—Day by day I pray for all my family
A—Always thinking how to help people

Amada Borunda
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

QUANG
Q—Queen Bee is unusual
U—Unusual because of its big stinger
A—Anyone don’t drive it away
N—Not many people love it but we need it to survive

G—Go about doing something for nature

Quang Xuan Bui
OCCC Adult Literacy Center, OKC

ARTURO

A—Amazing cities in the US

R—Remember me, beautiful landscape

T—Towers, buildings, seas, and more

U—Unfortunately the rain is coming

R—Rest for a moment and continue

O—On your way when the sun comes again

Arturo Blanco
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
ANICETTE B

A—Arrival on foreign land

N—Nurture your spirit of courage

I—Ivory Coast is my land of origin

C—Care about your parents back home

E—Expedite your everyday life to your parents that miss you

T—Tolerate justice in your host land

T—Think of your God before all acts

E—“Everything will be OK” (have this sentence daily with your breakfast)

B—Be a good person

Obey God

Yield your problems with strength

About your life, God is the solution

Anicette Boya

OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
Nothing Hits as Hard as Life

The wind blew day and night.

It stripped all the leaves off all of the branches.

It snapped its branches and pulled at its bark,

Until the tree was tired and stark.

But the tree held its ground,
    while other trees fell all around.

The mighty life wind spoke,
    how can you still be standing?

The tree said, I know you can break

All of my branches into,

Blow every leaf away,

Shake my limbs and make me sway.

I have roots stretched deep in the earth,

Growing stronger since my birth.
You’ll never touch them; for they are the deepest part of me.

Sometimes life takes sudden turns without using its turn signal. Hang on and hang in there! Always try to remember that you’re stronger than any problem you encounter or any disappointment you encounter or any disappointment life blows your way.

Stephen Butz
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

JUAN

J—Job, Health, and Family

U—Using God’s word to give help

A—Adding good moments and things we like

N—No one should be Godless or Hungry.

Juan Corona
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
FELIPE GARCIA

F—First place we have in football

E—Enjoying my family

L—Looking for a better future

I—Inspired to have something for my family

P—Place to live of my own

E—Enjoying what I’ve done in my life

G—Give something to those in need

A—A special moment when I saw my first baby walk

R—Remember when I lived in my city

C—Counting my goal and blessings in my life

I—Interested to learn more English

A—Always remember when I was young and happy

Felipe Garcia
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
IRMA GARCIA

I—Interested in learning something new always

R—Remember to respect elders

M—My goal is to be a good person

A—Always keep good memories in mind

G—Growing older and more sentimental

A—Always trying to be a good person

R—Remembering my good times

C—Counting my blessings

I—In peace with everybody

A—A happy, peaceful and blessed life

Irma Garcia
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

MANUEL

G—Grace to understand myself
Celebrating Our Journey

Never thought the day would come

I’d have to grab my kids and run

At first he was all loving and kind

But over time, he lost his mind

That day was the day, that I grew tired

Our relationship had long been expired
How could he beat me, with no just cause

That day was the day I left it all

The cursing, yelling, living in constant fear

That day was the day I cried my last tear

My son yelling,
“Don’t kill mom in front of me,”

As my head hit the wall, I trembled with fear

I remember thinking, “Was my life ending?
Was my death near?”

My head started spinning, I couldn’t breathe

I realized I’d blacked out
while he was choking me

I gasped for air, thinking I’d surely die soon

In front of my kids in the living room

My son begged, and pleaded in every way

I thank God he released me that day
We moved two states away, hiding in fear
I have since moved on,
    and I refuse to shed a tear
I’m grateful for the opportunity to learn
Graduating is something I’m working to earn
TANF class has changed my life and path
Twenty years later I’m relearning math
Yes Life is a Journey, but you must go on
I’m a friend, daughter, also a mom
Be wise, be careful, the person you choose
Or one day, your family may get the news
Some women don’t make it out alive
I’m stronger, I’m wiser, and I Will Survive!

Lucreshiea (Lucy) Gilkey
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa
My Favorite Place

Sitting here fishing and the sun’s getting low.

I caught me a big one, but I let him go.

It sure feels good just to watch him stretch my line.

Got me a lifetime of memories out here fishing.

Just my dog June Bug and me.

Sure feels good just to watch him stretch my line.

Just when I had him by the gills, He turns around and takes off with my rod and reel.

Sure feels good just to watch him stretch my line.

Even if they’re not biting, while sitting on the bank
I still like going to the Honey Hole
just to clear my soul!

Tim Green
FCI El Reno Literacy Program

One Nation

We only should have one nation
Where we just see progression
But in this world is more destruction
That we don’t have the appreciation
To the things that really matter
That is love and a bunch of flowers
The children are crying
For the people that are lying
They have to have their happiness
And we the people need to
have more kindness
If we all love one another
In this world we all are brothers
And all the chaos will end
With hope, love and faith.

Adrian Grimaldi
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

SILVIA

S—Saul is my best friend, who I met at my uncle’s house.

I—I am afraid to swim.
    I never learned when I was little.

L—Living in a small house is uncomfortable for more than two people.

V—Vegetables are so healthy for our body and I eat everyday with some meat.

I—Insects are all over the earth, some more when spring comes.
A—Airplanes can fly so high and I can barely see them.

Silvia Harvey
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

Beautiful Distraction

You are my beautiful distraction

With your glory everywhere

Shining through the darkness

Taking away despair

You are my strength and my joy

Filling me with hope

Jesus you are my beautiful distraction

And I am in awe of who you are

My life, my days and my nights are filled with you

You are the one who pulls me through
Oh what a beautiful distraction I find in you

Maureen Hickman
Opportunities Industrialization Center of Oklahoma County, OKC

VUNGH L KHAM

V—Volunteering is very important

U—United States is a big country

N—New York is in the United States

G—Group of people is organization

H—Hectic, we are always busy

L—Lovely

K—Kindness for others

H—Human resource (abbreviation HR)

A—All the people follow the law

M—My brother also follows the law

Vungh L Kham
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
Essence

In the beginning only dust, gas and energy were present, but a strong interaction between them caused a precious gift.

The first unicellular being appeared living in the water and in good conditions soon other multicellular plants and animals developed.

Then with many years of evolution, finally our feet walked the earth. A new species was born, “The human being.”

We populated the continents, and developed different characteristics like color of the skin, eyes, hair, height...

But we all together have the same essential genes. We are intelligent beings, but we need air to breath and food to eat.

We all have the same functions and reasoning. We all deserve peace, respect and love.
We belong to this amazing and beautiful world and we must preserve it.

Laura B. Malagon
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

IRMA

I—I am very happy!
R—Remember that life is beautiful
M—My happiness is to be alive one more day
A—And for all the blessings that God gives me

Irma Marrufo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

BEATRIZ

B—Beautiful life that God made for me and I share with my family
E—Every day I am enjoying my kids and grandkids
A—Always becoming a great person due to the people in my life

T—Training to be the best I can be with others

R—Rest on Sundays

I—Inspired to learn more and change bad things in me

Z—Z is the sound of the bee inside of me

Beatriz Martinez
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

I Like to Learn New Things

Very intense, love to read

Innovative and knowledgeable

Loved by everyone

Terrific student, outstanding and fun

Lawana McCalister
Listens to others, enthusiastic and appreciated

Restarted my life, always nice to everyone

Has a noble personality, energetic and wonderful

Tough when needed to be, loves meeting people, treats my learning with integrity

A very natural person, grateful and a survivor!

Lawana McCalister
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

ISMAEL

I—It is the time that I enjoy with my sons

S—So, I enjoy it to the maximum always

M—Moments are precious when I hear their laughter and hurtful cries

A—Alone in the house I feel is lost time

E—Educating them is my priority in life
L—Love them forever

Ismael Mendoza
OCCC Adult Learning Center

RUTH

R—Roots, my roots are

U—Under God

T—Thanks to his Grace and

H—His Mercy I’m saved

Ruth Moreno
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

ERNESTINA

E—English is hard to learn.

R—Rosalia is my middle name.

N—Nothing will change my thoughts.

E—Every day is special to me.

S—Self-employment is difficult.
This life is beautiful.

Important is the love for children.

Nursing is a sweet profession.

Adopt a pet.

Ernestina Montes
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

THUY

The teachers are helping me learn English and my English is better.

Having studied English, I feel good and more confident about myself.

Use English when I work and I believe I will have a better job.

Yesterday I went to the library to borrow a book for the summer.

Thuy Nguyen
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
HUGO

H—Humility, Respect, and Joy in life make a better person

U—Use my skills in my work

G—Great moments have happened in my life

O—Oh, I always have in mind my whole family

Hugo Pacheco
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

She Believed She Could, So She Did

I remember that day,

When you came up to me,

With a beautiful smile on your face

You said to me,

You see that blue sky?

The clouds are so high,
Believe you can fly,
Believe in success, and you will progress.

Jessica Ortiz
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

The Best Gift

The best gift I’ve received
It’s this angel of heaven
That God gave me
I love her
And she’s my only daughter.
She will be forever my daughter,
Brianna the Rose,
The most beautiful,
The best star,
The song.
The one that gives meaning to my life,
That takes me to the moon,
To light up my nights,
That fills my eyes,
Melts and touches my hands.
She touches my heart
And my mind softly
With her love.
My girl, it’s you,
My beautiful daughter.
One day I doubted
That you would be born.
Now, I can laugh at myself.
God blessed me in this life my child.
Thank you for existing!

Araceli Ramirez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC
SARAI

S—Seriously! I’m a nice girl.

A—Almost kind of strawberries box, lol.

R—Remember when I was a little girl, yes.

A—A lot, A lot,
    my mom made for me some fruits.

I—I love it, she is the best mom in my life.

Sarai Ramos
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

A Beautiful Feeling

Knowing you made me discover
    the most pure feeling,

With your words, your details,
    our long talks...

They made me fall in love with you.

In you, I found a man different from so many
That completely changed the meaning
Of what I believed was love.
With you I learned to love
For real.
This one was unique and wonderful.
Although, for my parents
It was madness.
For me, you were my dream come true.
This I feel for you
Is so great
That I cannot explain.
Simply, you are here
In every beat of my heart,
And In my thoughts you live...
When I do not
Have you near,
I have the need
To hug you, look at you
And tell you how much I miss you!
That I need you, to be happy...
Just to see you
Fills me with joy.
And I love life even more...
I thank God so much for it...
To have you
By my side.
Beautiful and pure feeling,
You will live in me
Until the last day of my existence.
Simply, because I love you
With your strength, simplicity, maturity,
and humility
That can give a true love.

Forever and ever together....

Elizabeth Sanchez
Community Literacy Centers, Inc., OKC

CRELIA

C—Collecting thoughts before speaking

R—Remember when I was a little girl

E—Education is my priority

L—Love family forever

A—A lot, a lot, my mom made for me some fruit everyday

Crelia Ruiz
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

ALMA

A—Always I buy

L—Lettuces to diet on
M—Mondays but

A—A lot of people say it’s not a good idea

Alma Staples
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC

My ABC’s of Life

As I journey through my life, there are a few positive affirmations I like to use to guide me along the way. These give me hope, courage, and strength to get through my everyday life! I call these my ABC’s of life:

A—Accept who you are on the inside and out!

B—Believe wholeheartedly in yourself!

C—Choose to always do what’s right!

D—Discipline your emotions, mood, and mouth!

E—Excel to strive for excellence. This is a virtue!

F—Fellowship with God and allow Him to guide you in all things!
G—Greatness is my goal!

H—Honesty is the BEST policy!

I—Intuition is great insight, pay attention to it!

J—Joy is spending time with my family!

K—Knowledge is the key!

L—Live everyday as if it were your last, LOVE abundantly, and laugh lots and as often as possible!

M—Mistakes are lessons to be learned!

N—New days bring new ideas and new beginnings!

O—Order is God’s perfect plan!

P—Pray always, prepare purposefully, and pursue persistently, and always have patience!

Q—Quietness and rest is necessary for a powerful mind!

R—Respect yourself and others will respect you as well!
S—Satisfy a healthy nutrition!

T—Trust God and the process of life He has planned for you!

U—Unexpected doors have been opened!

V—Volunteering is victory!

W—Wisdom is using what you have!

X—X-pect the BEST always!

Y—You are the light of this world!

Z—Zealously be happy! © My ABC’s for life!

Maria Stevens
Ruth G Hardman Adult Literacy Service, Tulsa

My Hero

My hero doesn’t live on this wicked earth.

He lives in the heavens above.

He is not like us human beings

Hurting each other for sinful fame.
My hero is all about true love

“He died on the cross for my sins.”

I read His Holy Scriptures
Each and every day
So I can repent, turn away
And don’t do it again.

We idolize, worship, and will bow down to
each other

Instead of bowing down
To my hero, Jesus Christ.

And He is the one
Who will help me get my mind right.

He had to drag His cross
As the godless people ridiculed Him,
Spit on Him and called Him all kinds
of bad names.

And He kept on dragging that cross
And felt no shame.

When my hero, Jesus Christ,

Was hanging on the cross

He was in so much pain

And only death would He gain.

He said, “Forgive them Father,

For they know not what they do!”

And if you don’t believe me, read the Bible

And you will know that it is true.

Now my hero sits at the right hand of God

The creator of us human beings, and the creator of this earth.

There is no other like Him!

So you can stop your search!

Reuben Thompson
Community Literacy Centers, Inc. OKC
DIANA

D—Dearly felt love all the time
I—Interested in my family
A—Almost always think of helping
N—Never will stop helping people
A—Always like to cook for my family

Diana Trejo
OCCC Adult Learning Center

Never Give Up

If you study, you will get a good score. Never give up and you will go far.

Follow your dreams, they will take you to your destiny.
Never give up.

Keep your dreams alive!

Dee Trumm
Literacy Council of Leflore County, Poteau
MARIA VO

M—My life, from the power of English class

A—After class finishes, I go home to practice speaking

R—Remember my class, my friend

I—I like my teacher

A—Always helping me read English for good

V—Very Nice English Teacher

O—Open the book and read every day

Maria Vo
OCCC Adult Learning Center, OKC
For information about literacy efforts in Oklahoma please visit libraries.ok.gov/literacy or call Literacy Resource Office at 1-800-522-8116