



# LiteracyLinks

The Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor  
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## Kay Talbot -- Mentor to Many by Kay and Peter Talbot



Kay Talbot with Emily Or at Kay's recent retirement party.

Kay Talbot's response to a 1999 newspaper article led to her career as a PCC Senior Volunteer Literacy Tutor Coordinator. Along with her husband, Peter Talbot, she began tutoring and found that she loved the work. In 2001, she became a tutor coordinator at PCC. Kay retired in September. She has stepped in as Treasurer of Portland Literacy Council, and will remain active in the VLT community.

Over 14 years, Kay worked with an average of 70 tutors and 200 students each year: that's nearly 4,000 lives she has touched. *LiteracyLinks* asked: What has kept you going?

### ***What has been your guiding philosophy or motivation?***

I have always had a desire to help others, especially those who have difficulty learning. I have a passion for helping children. By helping the adults in their lives, I can help improve the quality of children's lives.

### ***What was most memorable about your work with students and tutors?***

Watching a dedicated tutor and a committed student become a team. The

See page 2, Kay Talbot.

**Kay Talbot (from page 1)**

tutors are inspired by their students, and the students are inspired to succeed. Having initial success allows the student to progress to further achievement and a sense of confidence that his or her goals are attainable.

**What has been the most important thing you learned about adult learners?**

The spectrum of adult learners is huge, from people who never had a chance for any formal schooling to professionals with advanced degrees from other countries. It is always humbling to realize the courage and dedication it takes to master a new language and adapt to a new culture, and I always wonder if I would be as successful if I found myself in a similar situation.

**What is your most important advice for new or experienced tutors?**

In a word: listen. Listening is active and participatory; it is not a passive activity. Listening is an act of love. Part of the VLT mission is to give people a voice; by listening, we allow them to be heard.

**What are some of your biggest accomplishments?**

I have had the opportunity to act as a mentor to a number of students who began at a pre-college level and advanced to four-year degrees and are now acting as mentors in their own communities.

**What most helped you through difficult times?**

Having the constant support of my co-workers and volunteers and knowing that when a need arose, someone would always step up to help.

**Do you have any words for volunteer literacy tutors and adult learning advocates?** Although this is a difficult time, with budget cuts and shrinking resources, we need to remain optimistic. As Noam Chomsky says, **“Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so.”**

**Editor’s Note.** *In retirement, Team Talbot (Kay & Peter) are making music —she the violin, he the ukelele. They plan to travel to Alaska, to see the Aurora Borealis, and Italy is beckoning. In December, they’ll attend their daughter’s wedding in Chicago.*

## What’s in Your Tutor Toolbox?

**The Voter Guide as Language Practice**  
by Patrik McDade (patrik@pptpdx.com) Founder & Program Director, [People\\*Places\\*Things](#)

One reason we get excited about teaching English to immigrants and refugees is that it’s part of their journey towards citizenship. We make new Americans! Once they are naturalized, one of the next stops on their journey will be voting. Though many of our learners cannot vote yet, there is immense practical value in exercising voting skills.

The process of voting is just as important (and complex!) as the content of what’s being voted on; and as a tutor, showing your learner how to vote can be a very relevant and special way to practice English together.

There is an election coming up on November 4th, and in Oregon, we receive our ballots by mail, so we can vote even earlier. Consider showing your tutee your ballot, and model filling it out. After secretly casting your vote, seal it in the envelope and take it to the ballot box. You’re doing democracy a big favor.

No matter the level of your learner, you can use the voter guide and ballot to practice language (and culture) skills:

- Tutor says words appearing on the document, and the learners point to them.
- Learners read names, phrases or sentences out loud.
- Tutor dictates phrases from a document that are visible, and learner tries to write them.
- Tutor dictates explanations of words, phrases, or measures as language practice.

Unless your learner is skilled enough to converse with you in English, avoid lengthy explanations. Focus on the spellings and the sounds — especially names like the governor’s name.

Modeling voting is an excellent tool to encourage civic involvement for new Americans.

**Editor’s Note:** *Patrik regularly presents at the Annual Tutor Conference, and has facilitated our Awesome Tutor Workshops. We thank him for sharing his expertise.*

## Easy Voters' Guide

Wading through the maze of online and printed guides for election is daunting for the best of us. For readers with lower literacy levels, The Easy Voters' Guide, may help them understand candidate platforms and ballot measures.

The guide begins with a straight-forward recap of Oregon voters' bill of rights, including voting choices. It identifies who may (or may not) help with voting, the rights of homeless, convicted felons, and others to vote. Also included are voter requirements, how to register, and registration deadlines.

Explanations of ballot measures include number and official title, current situation, what the measure would do, and short recaps of pro and anti comments. The explanation also tells the result of a yes or no vote, and the cost of the measure.

Candidate pages list the office the person is running for and the top three things the candidate wants to do. Candidates may provide a photo, email address, and list their qualifications. (Responses have word count limits, and some candidates responses end in mid-air.)

Online [Easy Voters' Guides](#) are available at the League of Women Voters website. In Multnomah County, print copies are available at library branches.

## Elections Civics Toolkit

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office has a series of [elections lesson plans](#) available on its website. The lesson plans are designed for 17-24 year olds.

Ten lessons including citizen responsibilities, political parties, initiative-referendum referral, and the influence of the media and special interest groups are available.

*Editor's Note: Sharp-eyed readers may notice that the Tutor Toolbox column has switched locations for this issue. The review of "The Easy Voters Guide" and the Civics Toolkit are offered as a companions for Patrik's suggestions for using your ballot as a teaching tool.*

## For Your Calendar

### Tutor Training

Do you know someone who is considering becoming a volunteer literacy tutor? Interested volunteers can learn more about tutoring on the [Tutors](#) page of the Portland Literacy Council website. Access online registration via the Tutors Page.

### Upcoming workshops

- November 8 and 15  
PCC Willow Creek Center  
241 SW Edgeway Dr., Room 225  
Beaverton  
Registration is open
- January 17 & 24  
PCC Southeast Campus  
2305 SE 82nd Ave.  
Portland  
Registration opens December 22

## Opportunities

### Citizenship Classes

[Registration](#) is now open at Multnomah County Library for Citizenship classes. Pre-registration is required; access registration via the Multnomah County Library website. This class meets on six Sundays.

- November 9, 12:30 pm  
Rockwood Library  
17917 SE Stark

### GED Success: Plan of Action

[Registration](#) is also open for MC Library's revamped workshops on how to study for the GED; access registration via MC Library website.

- November 15 (Saturday), at 1:00 pm  
Gregory Heights Branch  
7921 SE Sandy Blvd

### ORTESOL Fall Conference

"Voices of Oregon: Students and Teachers Speak Out"

November 14 & 15  
PCC Sylvania Campus  
Membership is required to attend  
[ORTESOL's Facebook page](#) is offering reduced registration fees for volunteering at the conference.