

# LiteracyLinks

The Portland Literacy Council Newsletter for Volunteer Tutors

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor

November 2011

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## Special Notice

PLC is proud to offer a \$500 community grant to a nonprofit providing adult literacy tutoring. See page 2 for more details. Apply via the [Portland Literacy website](http://Portland Literacy website).

## I Want to Sit Down & Write a Letter

By Cornelia Stanton, Voluntary Literacy Tutor, PCC Cascade

Rose Fobb's connection to the Portland Community College literacy program continues a journey she began several years ago at the public library in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her progress has been slow and steady, and although the end is not yet clearly in view, her goal is clear. "I want to be able to write my grandkids a letter — without any spelling help!"

Rose recalls early pleasant memories of walking the four blocks to her neighborhood school, but

also that it was, for some reason, hard for her to learn. It seemed that the teachers paid more attention to the students who didn't struggle, and that it was difficult to get enough of the one-to-one instruction that might have helped her overcome her initial learning hurdles. By the fifth grade, she began to skip school to help her mother and grandmother care for her younger siblings — she is the oldest of thirteen children — and nobody from the school seemed to notice or come to the home to investigate her absence. She never went to high school, but married, became a mother, and was employed in the community.

One of Rose's goals has always been to be able to write letters independently, but she did not know where to go for help. It was her husband who found literacy help in the New Orleans public library, a free program to help people earn a GED. He encouraged her and she attended twice a week sessions there. When the couple moved to Oregon, her husband also found the program at PCC and continued to encourage her.

Rose proudly says that although she is not quite at her reading goal yet, she is reading 100% better than she was two years ago. Her tutors have led her to look at things, such as signs, in a new way and to be able to break the words down

Please see "Rose" (page 2).



Cornelia Stanton & Rose Fobb

**“Rose”** (from page 1)

so that she is able to “read” rather than just to “look at” the printed page. Her goal is to keep going on the road of literacy. She reads biographies and novels for practice. “No matter how small the improvement is, it’s big to me. My hill to get over is to write an essay without any spelling help.”

As Rose’s tutor, I am amazed at her persistence and indomitable spirit. With her outgoing personality, she’s everybody’s friend. It’s an honor to help her on her journey.

*Cornelia Stanton, VLT tutor at Cascade, taught ESL in Portland Public Schools. She reports that in her third year of working with Rose on reading, writing and ‘rithmetic, their relationship has morphed into friend sharing with friend. Cornelia avidly sings **Shape Notes** and plays Scrabble.*

## The Secrets of Sister Mary Noreen

As told to Kay Talbot, VLT Coordinator, PCC Sylvania; Written by Peter Talbot, Volunteer

On November 7, Sister Mary Noreen O’Leary celebrates her 90th birthday. A 25-year veteran PCC Volunteer Literacy Tutor at Sylvania campus, she retired in 1987 from Marylhurst University. As a tutor, she has filled whatever niche coordinators needed, whether it was one-to-one or small group tutoring, leading a conversation group, or working as a classroom aide. She has touched the lives of hundreds of students, and donated over 2,700 hours of volunteer time.

A Northwest native, Sister Noreen graduated from University of Washington in 1943 and completed the fifth year of teacher education in 1944. In 1946 she joined the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a teaching order whose mission is “the full development of the human person.” With a master’s in Fine Art, Sister Noreen taught academic subjects and art from grade school through college.

Sister Noreen spent several years working with the Hispanic community in Los Angeles improving her Spanish and teaching ESOL. She was impressed by intergenerational cooperation within Hispanic families: teenagers helped younger siblings and seniors were valued and contributing community members. She feels American society tends to separate generations and could learn something from their model. She encourages students to get their children to help them with their English and to speak it whenever they can, as when shopping or visiting with neighbors.

Her advice for new tutors: “Enter into the student’s process. What do they find difficult? Make your teaching student-centered by building their confidence and love of language. Learning is an adventure in thinking! Making mistakes is part of learning.”



**Sister Mary Noreen O’Leary and “Treasured Gifts”**

Sister Noreen’s art works, including mosaics, paintings and relief designs, grace the Mary’s Woods residential complex and Marylhurst University campus. Her relief “Treasured Gifts” (above) depicts the beauty of nature — sun, water and trees — and allows the sight impaired to experience by touch.

Truly 90 years young, Sister Noreen belongs to an active senior community — which includes a 96-year old exercise leader and a vibrant, active, and independent 103-year old nun. She maintains an art studio and continues to offer art tutoring.

How does she keep so active? Part of her secret is her love of teaching. She says: “I love coming to PCC. I meet the world here,” and “Teaching is ever new.”

*Editor’s Note: “Team” Talbot are familiar faces around Sylvania Campus.*

## What's In Your Tutor Toolbox?

Sponsored by Jennifer Ruden, VLT Coordinator, PCC Cascade Campus  
November Highlight: [ESL Flashcards](#)

Tutors and students will find the files for ESL Flashcards [www.eslflashcards.com](http://www.eslflashcards.com) easy to choose from and easy to download. There is a huge selection of themes and PDF sizes. Once someone downloads the file and prints it, they can cut the paper and use the flashcards.

Personally, I think flashcards are appropriate for ESOL students levels 1-3. Even the simple alphabet can be used as a prompt. For example, ESOL level 1 students who say they are confident with the alphabet can have the homework of writing three words on the back of the "A" card, then "B", etc. They can share their answers with another student the first five minutes of class on the next day, or with their tutor the next session. Those three words are helpful for the teacher/tutor because it gives them an idea what words the students knows. If the student is

very low level, allowing them to use an Oxford picture dictionary and giving them a theme such as school or home would be helpful.

### **Editor's Note:**

ESL Flashcards includes 968 images and 2,904 flashcards. I sampled the health-related flashcards, and found sets on body parts, common aches, and pains, and medical objects — medicine bottle, scale, and hypodermic needle. The alphabet flashcards come in upper and lower case models, and include symbols: !, &, @, \$, ?, and ". Food flash cards come in plural and noncountable options. Flash cards are available in small, medium and large, and are available in color. ESL Flashcards is another great addition to our Tutor Toolbox.

*Jennifer Ruden recently completed student teaching in Bali. She has been VLT coordinator at PCC Cascade since 2010. She also belongs to the Sew Club.*

## For Your Calendar

### Volunteer Literacy Tutor Training

#### Registration Information

- November 12 & 19, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Cascade Campus, PCC
- January 21 & 28, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Clackamas Community College Campus - OIT  
7736 SE Harmony Rd, Milwaukie, OR

## Opportunities

### Communicating Across Language Barriers: Understanding Accents Workshop

Our United Villages, Conference Room  
Wednesday, November 16th, 6:30-8:30 pm  
3625 N. Mississippi Ave.  
FREE. Space is limited. [Register/RSVP](#)

**People-Places-Things** has two Saturday workshops in November. See their [November newsletter](#) for details.

## Thank You LiteracyLinks Contributors

Thanks, everyone, for the many ways you help with our newsletter.

- Audrey Lee, former board member, continues to provide assistance to LiteracyLinks, coaching on software issues and with photos.
- Cornelia Stanton, VLT tutor at Cascade, has generously shared the story of her student Rose Marie Fobb.
- Kay and Peter Talbot provided the wonderful article about Sister Mary Noreen.
- Each month VLT coordinators generously share ideas and tips for our Tutor Toolbox: Kathleen Holloway shared information for September and October, and Jennifer Ruden in November.
- Several board members provide editorial assistance with content, grammar and spelling, and graphic design issues.

The errors are all mine, so apologies for any that slip through.

Peggy L. Murphy, Editor