

# The Literacy Connection Newsletter

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Welcome to our Summer Newsletter! As we close the book on our 2024/2025 fiscal year, I'm filled with immense pride and gratitude for everything we've accomplished together at The Literacy Connection.

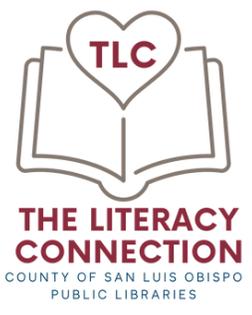
The theme of this past year was growth! We successfully launched and completed the first year of our Migrant Education program in partnership with the Lucia Mar School District, celebrating our learners' achievements with a beautiful graduation ceremony.

We introduced a new Storytelling Workshop at the San Luis County Jail, completed an impactful 8-week citizenship class, and established a new English Conversation Group at the Oceano Library, providing more opportunities for language practice and community building. We also hosted our first tutor training event, which was a wonderful opportunity for our dedicated tutors to connect, learn, and share their invaluable experiences.

As we embark on a new fiscal year, our commitment to our learners remains at the forefront. We're excited to announce that we will be launching a basic digital literacy class to empower individuals with essential computer skills, from navigating the web to protecting their online information. We're also creating a virtual English Conversation Group via Zoom, offering a safe and accessible way for learners to practice their English from the comfort of their homes.

I am incredibly proud of our learners' dedication, our tutors' commitment, and the impact we're making together. Here's to another year of growth, learning, and achieving new heights!

~ Michelle Haddad, Adult Literacy Coordinator





## Volunteer Spotlight

We're thrilled to spotlight Hector Resendiz, who joined The Literacy Connection in August 2023 as our very first tutor!

Hector, a retired Licensed Vocational Nurse and immigrant from Mexico City, has called SLO home for 35 years. Having completed Cuesta College's ESL program himself, he deeply understands the journey of learning English, inspiring him to help others.

For two years, Hector has consistently led ESL classes every Monday and Friday at the SLO County Jail, empowering 41 learners with vital language skills. We affectionately call Hector our "Unicorn" because he's truly the perfect volunteer to lead this program. His commitment, empathy, and personal experience make him an invaluable asset.

Thank you, Hector, for your heartfelt dedication to TLC and the profound impact you've had on so many lives. We are incredibly grateful for your service!

## Wellness Through Service

Research shows that volunteering offers substantial physical and mental health benefits, such as lower blood pressure, reduced depression, slower biological aging, and greater life satisfaction.

Beyond individual wellness, giving back also strengthens communities by fostering social connections, a sense of purpose, and even intergenerational cooperation.



The life you change  
may be yours.

Learn more by calling or  
emailing us at:

(805) 789-5077  
TLCinfo@slolibrary.org  
SLOlibrary.org/TLC

## Celebrating Success:

# STORIES OF GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT

• Olivia's finished not one but TWO books and is now reading two new titles with both her family and with me! She's volunteering to read more items around the house as well and is using those bolstered skills and confidence to advocate for herself at work.

• Roxana is frightened of being separated from her daughter. Last session we went through the Red Card, working on pronunciation and her rights!

• Natalia continues to improve on all goals. She memorizes new vocabulary and practices skills with family. She is able to read simple stories and shows good comprehension skills.

• Nacowa is concurrently drafting a children's poem that she is also illustrating.

• Listening to Martin read for the first time was a very special and emotional moment for both of us. Martin's humble reaction of pride and happiness was heartfelt.

• Rani is making great progress studying for the IELTS. We work on practice exams and strategies for improving her time.

• Anju wrote a wonderful essay on the American Dream for her English class! We are focusing on practicing speaking and listening in preparation for her TOEFL exam this spring.

• Jihee is ready to graduate from 1:1 tutoring!

• Miku continues to spend time connecting in the community. She recently navigated switching preschools and has gone on playdates at her (English-speaking) friend's houses.

• Irma is waiting for her interview date. She has memorized so many facts and information that it is incredible. Her writing skills are excellent. She is very focused and is ready and eager to learn more English and pass the citizenship test.

“Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible to the visible.”

- Tony Robbins



Celebrating Success:  
CONTINUED:

• I admire Aurora for her dedication and the example she sets for her 7 year old daughter.

• Tania's improvement with speaking and comprehension is evident during the conversation class. It was great to see her contribute and not shy away to participate.

• Martin surprised me this month by taking the initiative to get a library card. He asked for help at the library, got one and checked out his first three books!

• Athena made progress with improving her conversation skills by practicing self-introductions, small talk/hobbies, and learning some idioms. Athena also made progress with phonics as we work on unlocking the ability to sound-out unfamiliar words.

• Noemi set goals in our first meeting and is working on reading each evening. She has been trying very hard with books in English and we finally found a book about Pablo Neruda (The Dreamer) that she likes and is both challenging but also available to her.

• Louise is working on writing projects describing her life and family. She is learning to use present and past tense as well as using articles such as 'and', and 'the' in her writing sentences. She is steadily improving.

• Da has been working diligently in and out of our sessions. She is becoming familiar with being able to read different street signs. Our most recent lessons have focused on improving her financial literacy and familiarizing her with the American health insurance system.

• Kanna is working on practice speaking questions for the TOEFL test. She is feeling more confident on timed responses and finding mistakes in her answers.

“With  
languages,  
you are at  
home  
anywhere.”

-Edmund De  
Waal



**Thank you tutors for your monthly reports! This information helps us inform the State of California Library Literacy Services of the literacy accomplishments in San Luis Obispo County.**

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# A Letter to the Library

We're incredibly moved to share a letter from Ashley, a participant in our storytelling workshop at the SLO County Jail. Ashley writes about the workshop as a cherished escape and the unexpected

creativity it has ignited within. Her letter is a powerful testament to the human spirit's ability to find light and expression even in challenging circumstances.

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San Luis Library,

My name is Ashley. I am currently participating in the creative writing class at the jail. I thought that writing was boring. Also, I believed that things I say and think did not matter. When I heard about this class, my first thought was, "Do I get time off my 6-year sentence?" HAHA.

Seriously though, from the first day I came and started writing, I have had a blast. There are stories in my head and feelings that turn into poems by accident. I write as much as I read books. It's been an escape from the day to day monotony of this current life.

Mr. Rotondo is insightful and funny and makes this class fun. I recently was able to take some feelings of grief and turn it into art with the poem, "Our Turn."

Anyways, the class is coming to an end but I would love to stay in communication with the library. Is it possible for someone to put me on the list for newsletters and correspondence? I would love to submit some of my projects. Once again, I loved the class!

Sincerely,  
Ashley



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## Our Turn

by Ashley, TLC Learner, SLO County Jail

The fluorescent light  
A constant drone  
I drift through memories

Our last days  
Color and hope  
Everything I still see  
You let me take the picture

Lost and found  
Found each other  
No bars no doors  
The rules never did apply

Westward over mountains green  
Wildflowers on the breeze  
A view of the ocean  
A queen on her throne

Running from something  
While running together

Sunshine behind strawberry hair  
The illusion of a golden crown  
A blue tank top with tiny white  
flowers

Sings compliments to her skin

Words spoken  
Promises made

The warrior claimed  
By the lady of shadows

Whispers in a lovers ear  
Our names written  
An offering in the sand

Taken by the tide

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## STORIES OF IMPACT: GABRIELLA JIMENEZ

Arriving in a new country, settling in and being new in a community is a familiar process for me. My husband and I have been teaching in international schools in different countries around the world for over 20 years. This time, life brought us to California, where my husband and I have been settling in for the last year.

I am sure that meeting Michelle and Alexis was not a coincidence. From our first meeting, I was received with the warmth of an old friend and their empathetic listening about my journey as I settled in and sought out 'my community.'

I cherish a conversation I had with Michelle as we drove to Nipomo Elementary School for the Migrant Education Program. We shared thoughts, experiences, reflections of the world, and the call we feel to contribute in a meaningful way. As we parked at the school that afternoon we agreed: 'Today we start here, it might feel small, but we will do our best.'

A few days later we joked about a 'sign' we both saw - an incredible rainbow that seemed to rest right on the school, signifying the hope we both felt and the impact we can make to this community.

I have tremendous gratitude to all my students. I learn from them every day through their examples of bravery, commitment and optimism. These individuals are such an important reminder of how much we need each other as a community. Through our alliance we can open the borders in our minds to extend deep justice, dignity and solidarity. 'Today we start here, it might feel small, but we will do our best.'



## Stories of Impact: Martin

Martin personifies warmth and resilience, a man who shows courage and commitment to learn to read and write in Spanish at the age of 65. His kind heart and curiosity are present in every class. Martin is filled with emotion when he accomplishes a goal, like reading short, simple paragraphs and writing to his wife. Truly, he is the reminder to find joy in what we can consider the simplest acts.



## Stories of Impact: Tania

Tania personifies strength and stamina. She is learning English as her one-year-old is busy discovering everything around us. Her sweetness and patience highlight her motherhood and her strong will pushes her to work towards her goals. Tania is a risk taker and has shown steady progress to better communicate her ideas and gain confidence using English. Our conversations go beyond language learning, as we share our wonderings, thoughts and challenges.



## Stories of Impact: Ricardo & Leanna

Ricardo and Leanna personify courage. Their warm smiles and positive approach to life are inspiring. They are new to learning English, yet their interest to learn a new language and a new culture is evident as they work hard in every session. The intrigue of English spelling and pronunciation brings chuckles - but they go along with our practices. Their persistence drives them to take every opportunity to grow.



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## What We've Been Up To:



### Tea With Tutors Event:

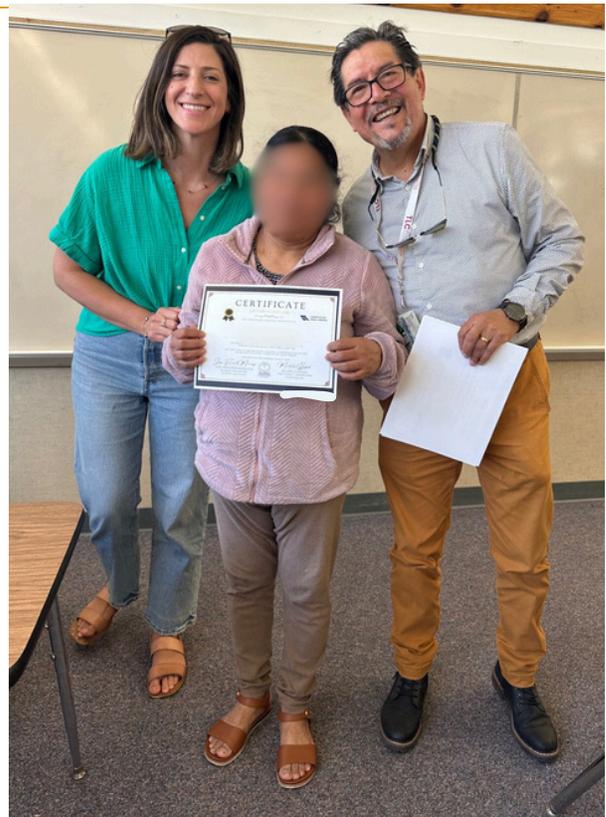
A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us for our very first in-person tutor training! It was such a joy to see so many of our dedicated volunteers in person, many of whom we've only had the chance to see only once or speak with over the phone until now. We enjoyed sharing inspiring stories, sipping tea, and snacking on some tasty treats as we connected and learned together.

The training was designed to support both new and experienced volunteers by sharing helpful tools and resources. We introduced Ellii.com, a fantastic digital platform that offers ESL lessons for all levels, and Padlet, our ever-growing resource board filled with tips, tools, and inspiration to help you thrive in your tutoring journey.

### A successful first year for our Migrant Farmworker Program

Earlier this year marked the completion of our Migrant Farmworker Education program, offering ESL, Spanish Literacy, and Family Literacy classes. After working through challenges and bringing together an incredible team of tutors and volunteers, we're proud to share that the program supported over 75 adults and children. We look forward to starting again in the 2025-26 school year.

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated volunteers and to our amazing partner, Fernando Moncayo from the Lucia Mar School District, who generously provided dinner and thoughtful lessons each week for our students.



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# Free Programs at the Library



## English Conversation Group

We are happy to announce a **NEW** English conversation group at the Oceano Library every Friday from 10:30-12:00 pm.

- Improve your English skills
- Meet new friends
- Gain confidence in speaking English

**Oceano Library:** Friday 10:30-12:00 pm

**SLO Library:** Wednesday and Saturday 10:30-12:00 pm

No pre-registration required. Just drop in and join the conversation! All proficiency levels welcome. Ages 18 and up.

## Virtual Conversation Group

Can't make it to the library? No Problem! TLC is now offering a Virtual Conversation Group for anyone interested in practicing conversational English. For more information and to sign up, please visit our website and click the link to enroll in the Virtual Conversation Group.



[slolibrary.org/TLC](http://slolibrary.org/TLC)

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# Citizenship Preparation

## Interested in Citizenship and Immigration Services?

- Work 1:1 with a private tutor
- Learn the history of the United States
- Practice for the written and oral exam
- Practice with vocabulary flash cards
- Fill out the N-400 Naturalization application form
- Completely confidential



For more information on private tutoring, please call (805) 781-5077

## Digital Literacy Course

This 6-8 week course teaches adult learners the essential computer skills and confidence they need to navigate digital devices, be more technically proficient in the workplace, and access resources they need to thrive.

Students learn how to:

- Operate a computer
- Use a mouse and keyboard
- Use and search the internet
- create and use email
- Create documents
- Search for jobs and resources online
- Participate in video calls
- Use the internet and computer safely.



Don't miss this opportunity, classes will start in the fall!

For more information, please call (805) 781-5077 or email [mhaddad@slolibrary.org](mailto:mhaddad@slolibrary.org)



Conversations



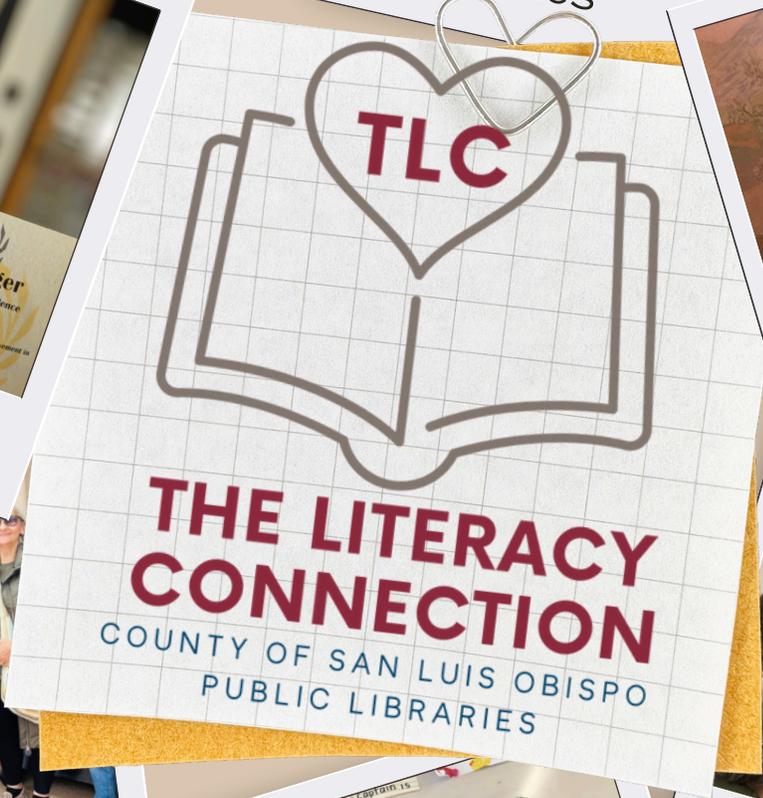
Games



Friendships



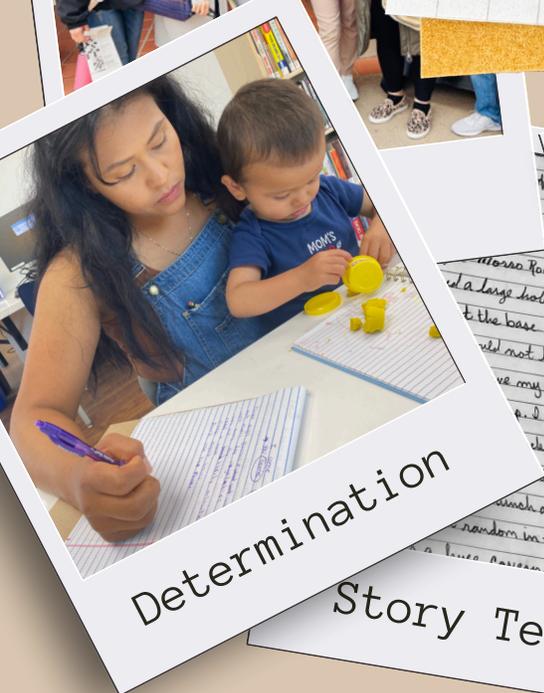
New Skills



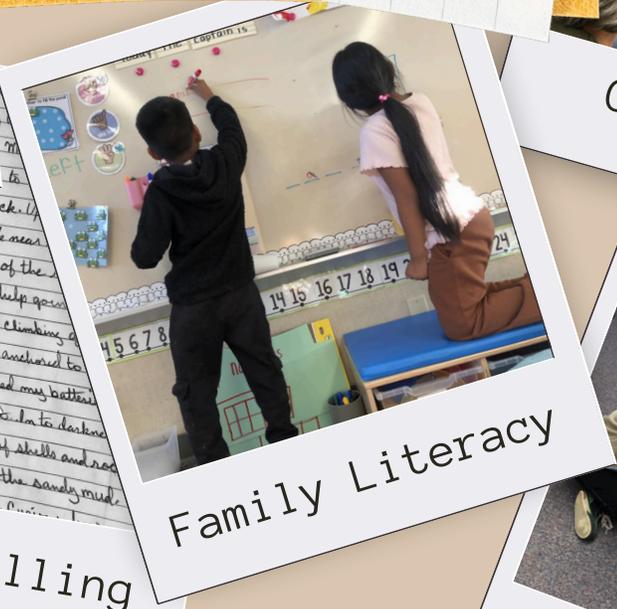
Outreach



Community



Determination



Family Literacy



Story Telling



Play