

ADULT LITERACY COMMUNITY

Quarterly articles, features, and highlights



American Culture Corner

March 17th - From the U.S. to Mexico

In the U.S. and Mexico, March 17th is significant, but for different reasons.

In the U.S. March 17th is celebrated as St. Patrick's Day. Traditionally, it celebrates the day Christianity was first brought to Ireland. In the U.S., it is mostly a reason for people to celebrate their Irish **heritage**. In America, a little over 1 in 10 people have Irish **heritage**. The day is celebrated with all things green, shamrocks, parades and **leprechauns**.

The north **White House** fountain is dyed green every year for St. Patrick's day (right).



In Mexico, every third Monday in March is celebrated as "Benito Juárez Day", a national holiday. This day celebrates the birth of former President Benito Juárez in the 1800s. This year it takes place on Monday, March 17th.

Benito Juárez is a national hero in Mexico. He was the first **indigenous** president of Mexico and was known for his fight for **social justice** and **democracy**. He is highly respected in Mexican history for his role in **reforming** the country and securing its challenged independence during a **turbulent** period.



Antonio González Orozco's *Symbol of the Republic Against the French Intervention*, 1972.

Glossary

heritage: something transmitted or received from a previous realtive (legacy)

leprechauns: a small mischievous elf of irish folklore that some believe will tell where treasure is hidden

White House: where the president of the United States and his family live and work

indigenous: originating from the earliest inhabitants of a particular place, native

social justice: the view that everyone deserves equal rights, opprotunities, and treatment

democracy: a system of government where people vote to choose their leaders

reform: to change into an improved form

turbulent: unstable

an undeniable dish: someone considered very attractive by all

sex therapist: someone who helps people improve their sex lives

frank approach: a way of expressing oneself in an honest, sincere, and truthful way

cheeky: very bold or disrepectful even in a playful or appealing way

stick with it: to not give up

oil painting: painting technique using pigments mixed with oils that will dry slowly

acrylic painting: painting with fast-drying pigments

non-toxic: not poisonous

water-based: water is the main ingredient

centuries: hundreds of years

razing: completely destroyong

Who Were They?



Maggie Smith 1934 - 2024

Maggie Smith was a multi-award-winning British actress known for dramatic and comedic roles on stage and film. Her acting career spanned over seven decades beginning in 1952 and includes her highly recognizable roles as Professor Minerva McGonagall in the Harry Potter film series and Violet Crawley in Downton Abbey.

Commenting on her ability to receive acting roles later in life, Smith told NPR that as a character actor, rather than a "dish", she was able to age into roles as mothers and grandmothers while still developing her talents instead of losing them. The interviewer noted that Smith had, in fact, been called "**an undeniable dish**" by a reviewer while starring on Broadway in the 1960s.



Ruth Westheimer 1928 - 2024

"I certainly believe in the need for sexuality education, (and) I do believe that it has to be taught based on scientifically validated data, and it has to be taught with some kind of humor."

"Dr. Ruth" was an Internationally acclaimed **sex therapist** who revolutionized the subject of sex with nonjudgmental and good-humored public conversations.

She became famous in the early 1980s when she was in her 50s, for her **frank approach** to discussing sex on her popular late-night radio show, Sexually Speaking, and she continued her work on TV with *The Dr. Ruth Show*, attracting more than 2 million viewers a week. In her work, she was an outspoken supporter of safe sex, birth control, gay and abortion rights.

In childhood, Westheimer was orphaned at the age of ten when her parents were killed in the Holocaust. She lived in several different countries, learned multiple languages, and immigrated to the United States in 1956, where she worked as a maid to put herself through graduate school with the help of a scholarship. After completing her doctorate degree at the age of 42, her work as a sex therapist began.

In addition to her work on radio and TV, she shared her knowledge in dozens of books including *Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex* and *Sex for Dummies*. She focused on reminding people that there is nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to discussing sex. Her **cheeky** catchphrase was "Get Some!"

Happening Now!!

Writer to Writer

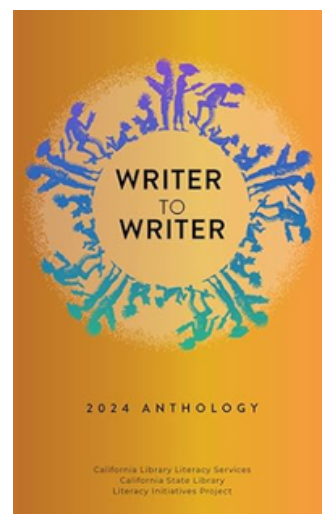
Writer to Writer is a state-wide writing challenge for adult learners. It's a wonderful opportunity for learners and tutors to focus on writing goals. Simply put, learners read or listen to a book in English and write a letter to the author following the challenge guidelines.

Complete instructions and an application that the learner must fill out is here:

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/clls/initiatives/#w2w>

The deadline at the Adult Literacy office is February 21, 2025.

Need some inspiration? Check out and read last year's Writer to Writer anthology winners from the Adult Literacy office!



Adult Learner Leadership Institute (ALLI)

The Adult Learner Leadership Institute or ALLI is accepting applications now for sessions ranging from January to July 2025! During each of these sessions intermediate to advanced English speaking learners can expect to:

- learn and improve their confidence and self-esteem,
- learn skills such as goal setting, advocacy and networking,
- build public speaking and presentation skills, and
- develop leadership skills.

Each session is designed in-part by past ALLI graduates.

March session: March 13, 20, 27 – Thursdays – 2:00 to 4:00 pm (deadline 2/26/2025)

May session: May 10, 17, 24 - Saturday – 10 to 12 noon (deadline 4/24/2025)

July session: July 15, 22, 29 - Tuesdays – 4:00 to 6:00 pm (deadline 6/30/2025)

Applications are available online or in paper form, upon request. Contact

literacy@sonomalibrary.org to request an ALLI application

Get To Know Tutor Kathleen Taggart



Kathleen Taggart

What are your favorite things to do in winter?

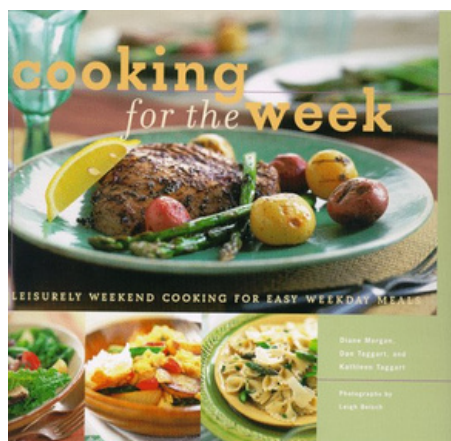
My favorite things to do in winter include swimming outdoors (in a heated pool), cooking, reading, and taking walks between the rainstorms.

What was the last book you read?

I just finished reading *Trust*, which won the Pulitzer Prize a couple of years ago. I regret I hadn't read it sooner. It was outstanding.

Who has inspired you most?

My **Nana** was my great inspiration.



One of Kathleen's cookbooks available for check out with your library card

Kathleen Taggart is the award-winning co-author of six published cookbooks, and a respected figure in the retail housewares and giftware industry. She is also an English Language Tutor with the Adult Literacy Office. It was her love of writing and reading that led her to consider being a tutor. "Throughout my work career, I did very little volunteering," she says. "I am grateful to have the time and good health to do it [now]. After retiring and then doing some part-time work, I was looking for a volunteer opportunity that would match my interests. Reading has been a strong love for me throughout my life."

Kathleen has been involved with the Adult Literacy Office for three years. She has worked with learners in both of our programs, Adult Literacy and English Language Partners. "I particularly enjoy the ability to work one-on-one with the learner," Kathleen says. "Being involved in the Literacy program has given me joy."

In addition to the pride she takes in her professional achievements, Kathleen is also very proud of her 53 years of marriage. She counts her marriage, her family, and her basic enjoyment of people as the sources of her strongest motivation.

When asked what advice she would offer to the learners in our programs, Kathleen says "My best advice to adult learners is to be patient with themselves. Improvement doesn't always come as fast as they would like, but it does come if they **stick with it.**"

Sticking with a goal—persisting despite challenges—is something Kathleen knows well. In 2008 she had surgery on one of her feet, and the foot did not heal correctly. It had to be redone 14 months later. "It was a very difficult year," Kathleen says. "I was not sure I would ever be able to walk correctly again." Thankfully, the second surgery was a success. Kathleen can walk properly again, and she mentions hiking as one of her favorite activities.

So, if you ever feel frustrated with something you are trying to learn, or with a hardship you are experiencing, please remember Kathleen's advice: "Stick with it." Don't give up!

Get To Know Learner Elena Jauregui



Elena Jauregui

What is your favorite type of music?

80's music in English – it brings up positive memories of when I was a child.

What book are you currently reading?

Atomic Habits by James Clear

What is your favorite book?

I don't have a favorite book, but I love short writings that provide a positive message.

What is your perfect day?

When I finish everything I set out to do that day.

What is your fondest memory?

My family in Mexico.

What is your favorite food?

Pasta!



The sign in Elena's front room

Before starting the Adult Literacy program 18 months ago, Elena Jauregui was shy about using her English. Afraid that no one would understand her, she often kept quiet hoping that no one would ask her a question. However, with the help of her tutor, Marti Simon, she has grown confident enough to speak even if she doesn't have the right words. She has "lost the shame" and embarrassment she once had and now feels comfortable telling people to slow down or repeat themselves.

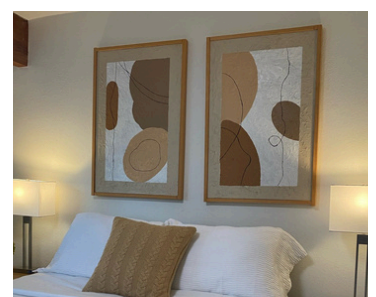
Her original motivation for joining the program has not changed: She wants to become independent in her English communication. When asked if being in the program has helped her confidence, she said "Yes, being in the program gave me more confidence to communicate. I am fortunate to have an excellent tutor in all aspects, who helps me, corrects me and is a great friendly human being."

During the wintertime Elena loves baking. She makes all kinds of creations such as empanadas filled with guava, muffins and ALL kinds of cookies. She takes pride in her baking, but most of all, she takes pride in her son, "I have had things that make me feel proud of who I am, but having my son is a special pride for me." Elena shared that her son is what keeps her motivated to keep going every day.

One of Elena's hobbies is turning other people's trash into treasure. She transforms things that people have thrown away, such as an old frame or a couple of outdated paintings, into something new. A frame gets a new coat of paint and fabric reading "Bless this home and all who enter" replaces the old image, and is hung in the front room. Outdated paintings get painted over with new, more modern art, are re-framed and hung in a place of pride. "For some people there are things that are useless...and I show that they can be useful; you just have to put creativity and love into them, and you can make them feel different."



Before



After

Student Writing

We love to publish learner writings in our Community Newsletter. If you want to send us something for publication, please email it to us at: literacy@sonomalibrary.org

Oil Painting

By Sook Ja Yoon, Tutor Lisa Bruzzone

I like this **oil painting** because it's the second oil painting I have ever done (right).

I had thought about oil painting occasionally when I had time. Then, in early 2017, I searched online for the basics of oil painting. From watching videos, I learned about the tools and how to use them.

After that, I bought the necessary tools for oil painting and then I started painting with oil at home. I started by doing a portrait of my husband and I as my 1st painting (below). From then on, I mainly painted pictures of flowers.

Now I would like to switch from oil painting to **acrylic painting**, because acrylic painting dries faster and is **non-toxic**. When I have time, I plan on joining an acrylic class and learning a little more about painting.



Sook Ja and her second ever oil painting



Sook Ja's first painting, a self portrait of her and her husband

Did you know?

Acrylic paints are **water-based**, which means they dry quickly but do not last as long as oils. Oil paints take a while to dry but can last for **centuries** if kept in a safe environment away from the light.

Celebrate Your Work Together

All entries generated from tutor reports -

THANK YOU!

- My learner partner has indicated that she feels much more confident and comfortable speaking English now with her children and at her volunteer work at a local non-profit food and clothing pantry. She and her husband went to an appreciation dinner for volunteers recently where English was the only language, and she spoke freely to others at her table! That's a breakthrough!
- The Learner prepared and presented the work on her Journal to the Napa College English class she is taking there. She wrote in the journal in English. The presentation was excellent, with a great perspective on her experience as an au pair in the US.
- Learner voted for the first time as a US citizen in the 2024 general elections. We're both proud of this accomplishment!

Get to Know the Conversation Class Facilitator



Carol Smallen (left) with daughter Erika (right)

Interviewed by Leti Soria

Carol found the Adult Literacy Program in the Fall of 2023 after reading a post on the Sonoma County Library Facebook page. "As a retired pharmacy technician, I was interested in doing something meaningful and local. My background is not in teaching, and I was a little intimidated about being a one-on-one tutor." Carol decided to facilitate English Conversation Classes instead of tutoring because it "seemed like a good fit."

Her past experiences served as motivation to help people improve their English language skills. "My decades-long career as a hospital administrator in a New York City public hospital gave me the opportunity to interact with many patients and staff whose first language was not English," says Carol.

Working in the mental health and chemical dependency department, she saw the need people had for interpreters and translators. "I saw many people struggle to navigate the healthcare system due to language difficulties. This taught me the importance of listening, preparation and respecting each person's culture and abilities."

Carol's favorite thing about facilitating conversation classes is "working with a different group of learners each month, with a variety of first languages and levels of English-speaking ability. There are repeat learners, but I never know who is going to show up." She encourages conversation practice by discussing idioms like "**dressed to the nines**" and she appreciates when "learners help each other find a correct word in English." A year into being a volunteer facilitator, she's happy to say: "It turned out great!"

What was your proudest moment ever?

My proudest moment was the birth of my daughter. I had names for a girl and a boy picked out and was ecstatic to call out her name in the delivery room when I saw she was a girl.

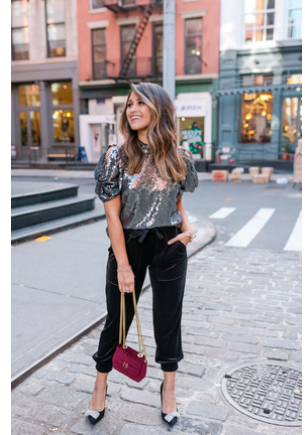
Idioms

Each newsletter, we will bring you a new English idiom.

Dressed to the Nines

(to be wearing stylish or elegant clothing, especially for a special occasion)

To wear to the 2025 New Year's Eve party, Emily chose a silver sequin top, black velvet pants, and a cape and gloves, along with sparkly shoes. She was **dressed to the nines** to ring in the new year.



What's Cooking for New Years?

We wanted to share some different food-related traditions associated with New Year celebrations!

Longevity Noodles symbolize long life and are thought to bring good luck and prosperity. They are eaten at any Chinese celebration such as birthdays, weddings, baby showers, and especially during the Chinese New Year feast. In traditional Chinese culture, any type of long noodle symbolizes longevity, but Yi Mein noodles are most traditional.

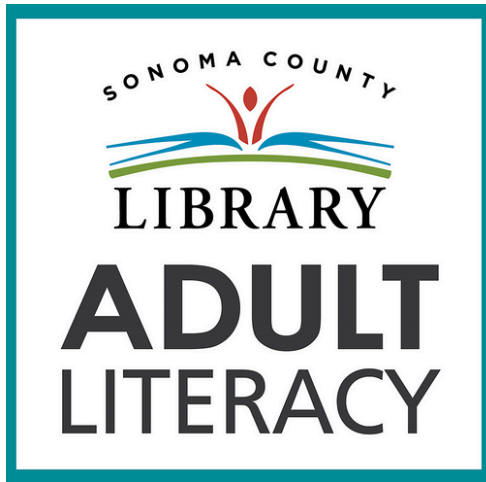


Black-eyed peas are also traditionally eaten on New Year's Day as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. The practice of eating them for luck is generally believed to date back to the Civil War when the Union army from the North ignored the fields of black-eyed peas while **razing** or stealing other crops because black-eyed peas were seen as food for livestock and for enslaved peoples in the South. During the subsequent winters, the Confederate soldiers survived on what was left of the black-eyed peas.

There are many ways to eat black-eyed peas to bring in luck such as:

- with collard greens, mustard greens, or any other type of greens. In this instance, the peas represent coins and the greens, paper money.
- Cornbread, represents gold.





Adult Literacy Office

Our office is located inside the
Central Santa Rosa Library, 2nd floor
211 E Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Adult Literacy Hours

Our office is open Monday - Friday
10 AM - 3 PM
You can reach us at (707) 544-2622 or
literacy@sonomalibrary.org

How to Submit Your Work

Submissions to the Adult Literacy Community newsletter are welcome! We cannot guarantee publication, and materials cannot be returned. Please include your name, address, and phone number. Student writings and photos can be sent by email to: literacy@sonomalibrary.org

How to Get Involved

New Learners: Call 707-544-2622

New Tutors: Call to preregister for an upcoming new tutor orientation. 2025 trainings are posted:
sonomalibrary.org/visit/locations/adultliteracy/volunteer

Ongoing Classes Open to All:

Join our Conversation Classes for
practice speaking English at all levels.
Classes take place on Zoom on the
following days:

Wednesdays 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Thursdays 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Register for classes at

sonomalibrary.org/conversation

Upcoming Library Holidays 2025:

January 1 - Library Closed - New Year's Day

January 20 - Library Closed - MLK Jr. Day

February 17 - Library Closed - President's Day

March 3 - Library Closed - Cesar Chavez Day