

LEARN

Alive!

Libraries Empower All to Read Now
Adult Literacy Program
Phone: (888) 466 - 0668
Email: learnstaff@sdcounty.ca.gov

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WITH EVERY ENDING, THERE IS A NEW BEGINNING...



“What is AmeriCorps? AmeriCorps is an opportunity to make a big difference in your life and in the lives of those around you. It’s a chance to apply your skills and ideals toward helping others and meeting

critical needs in the community.” (www.americorps.org)
I really did not anticipate what an amazing year it would be. AmeriCorps is not only an opportunity, it is a life experience. I have grown in so many ways this past year and have developed a renewed sense of purpose and confidence in myself in such a short amount of time. These past twelve months have truly flown by. At the beginning of the year, I quickly acclimated myself into the literacy environment. L.E.A.R.N. opened a new world for me. I received my first adult learner in February. Soon I was tutoring regularly, helping to facilitate the training of others, and sharing my knowledge. I began conducting basic computer classes and actively promoted L.E.A.R.N. to recruit volunteer tutors and create awareness for our program.



I really started to come into my own and rediscovered my passion not only for helping others but engaging them. While I was living my AmeriCorps experience, I was working hard to create experiences for

others. This past year alone, I was privileged to organize meaningful events that highlighted the importance of literacy in our lives. The Union Tribune’s Race for Literacy, our 1st Annual Tutor Appreciation Picnic, the Adult Summer Reading Program, Jumpstart’s Read for the Record, and the McDonald’s Family Literacy Nights were all a great success! What I will always remember is the excitement of being a part of something special, even if it only touched a few people along the way.

This is what my year has consisted of. I am so grateful and happy to be able to reflect on this experience that has even rekindled my own love for reading and writing.



Thank you to Janice Wilhelm for sparking my enthusiasm for Janet Evanovich books, and especially to Kevin Vigil, Jason Romano, and Hector Ortega for always inspiring me by your talents and your vision.



AmeriCorps Member — Erica Abbey

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”

- Winston Churchill

OLDER, WISER, AND MOTIVATED



Joe Bernal

Hi, my name is Joe Bernal and I am 26 years old. I live in a group home for adults and have worked in security and as a dishwasher at the zoo and a stocker at Toys R Us. I would like to work repairing computers.

In high school, I had many problems. It was difficult to learn because I was not motivated. Now I am older and wiser and I am motivated to focus and I have a goal. My goal is to improve my reading skills so I can get my GED.

I want to say thank you to all the people who helped me get to this point, Joe, Harvey, Bonnie and Kevin. Also thanks to my sister Julie and thanks to Nena and Krinisha.

THANK YOU!

On November 19th, many of the students from the El Cajon Library’s ESL class – presented by the Grossmont Adult School – experienced their first Thanksgiving in America thanks to their teacher, Lynn Brooks. Our staff would like to thank Lynn for planning the event to give the students — mostly recent refugees — a taste of Thanksgiving. Special thanks also go out to the **Downtown Café Bar and Grill** (182 East Main Street) for the terrific mashed potatoes and to the **New York Bakery** (245 East Main Street) for the wonderful homemade pumpkin pies.

For article submissions, please contact Jason Romano at
jason.romano@sdcountry.ca.gov or (760) 643-5144

THE TRUTH ABOUT DYSLEXIA

Although dyslexia is the most researched of all learning disabilities, misconceptions about this neurological difference are still highly prevalent. Most people familiar with the term *dyslexia* believe that it is nothing more than a condition characterized by sequencing difficulties (letter reversals like *rat* for *art*) and mirror writing (e.g., confusion between *b* and *d*). These types of errors, although common, are only two of a multitude of symptoms associated with dyslexics. Other far more serious symptoms include problems with correctly associating letters to the sounds they represent, breaking up a word into its sounds, and blending sounds together to create words. In essence, these symptoms show a lack of phonemic awareness.

In 1994, the National Institute of Health (NIH) published its findings on their 14-year research project which succeeded in dismissing once and for all some persistent myths about dyslexia. It revealed that about one in five children, as many girls as boys, are affected by dyslexia, that dyslexia is not due to visual deficiencies but to a problem with language processing, and that it does not correlate with intelligence, among other findings.

The latest research has gone further and suggests that dyslexia is not even a condition that is separate and unique among poor readers. In the traditional view, dyslexia is associated with people of average to high intelligence, whereas the cause of poor reading skills of those with developmental disabilities is said to be due to low IQ. The British documentary, *The Dyslexia Myth*, challenges this assumption and argues that all poor readers exhibit the same set of symptoms, whether they are labeled dyslexic or developmentally disabled. In the words

of the documentary's narrator, "It's comparable to being a little color blind, or a bit tone deaf. It has nothing to do with intelligence."

If all poor readers are indistinguishable as far as symptoms and ability to respond to intervention, what is it that they all share in common? "Over 600 separate research studies have converged on just one answer," asserts the narrator. "This is that in children who cannot read, a bit of the brain is not working properly. It is an area of the brain which allows children to distinguish the tiniest sounds in words. If it is working properly, children will learn to read almost regardless of how they are taught. If it isn't, they will have difficulty." A concise and yet effective way to assess and identify individuals who may have this type of language processing problem is to ask questions such as: If you take away the /p/ from *pen*, what are you left with? Do *cat* and *kiss* begin with the same sound? Whereas most people are able to answer these questions correctly and effortlessly, some people are not, and these are typically the ones who struggle with reading and writing.

In the six months since I participated in the Norton-Gillingham encoding/decoding seminar, I too have observed the same recurring patterns in all our learners who struggle with the basics of reading and writing, whether they appear to be developmentally disabled or not. During the seminar, we were taught that even though the Norton-Gillingham Approach was designed for dyslexics, it is also an effective methodology for developmentally disabled poor readers. Even Barbara Wilson, the author of the popular Wilson Reading System, uses the terms *dyslexia* and *dyslexic* in her training videos to refer to anybody who lacks phonemic awareness. In light of this view, it appears that the term *dys-*

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- **Tutor Trainings**
 - *Vista* (1st & 2nd part together)
January 10 (10:00am-4:00pm)
 - *El Cajon* (1st & 2nd part together)
January 31 (10:00am-4:00pm)
 - *Encinitas* (1st & 2nd parts separate)
February 10 (10:00am-4:00pm)
February 11 (10:00am-4:00pm)
- **Learner/Tutor Workshop***
 - *El Cajon/Vista*
To Be Announced - * New Format
- **ESL Café**
 - *El Cajon*
To Be Determined
 - *Vista* (10:30am-12:00pm)
January 14 and 28
February 11 and 25
 - *Lincoln Acres* (6:30pm-7:30pm)
December 23 and 30
January 6, 13, 20, 27
February 3, 10, 17, 24
 - *Bonita* (9:30am-11:00am)
January 2 and 16
February 5 and 19

lexia should be used to refer to all poor readers, or otherwise be replaced with a new term. Since phonemic awareness is at the root of the ability to read and write perhaps a term like *dysphonemia* would be more suitable.

Library Associate – Hector Ortega

LIBRARIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

On a beautiful Saturday afternoon, a boisterous crowd gathered on the corner of San Pasqual and Ocean View Boulevard collectively chanting, "No branch closures! No staff layoffs! No reduction of hours!" Many concerned citizens, friends, and patrons of the MountainView/Beckwourth Library in the City of San Diego demonstrated their support for keeping their precious library open. The rally succeeded in raising awareness of one of the seven planned library closures that Mayor Jerry Sanders has proposed.

Students, volunteers, parents, and library employees gathered, signed a petition to keep the library alive, and marched up the street with signs in their hands. They all

have different reasons for keeping the library open, but everyone agrees it is a beloved resource that is integral to the community. One middle school student mentioned that his mother really trusts the library to be a safe and positive learning environment for her son.

"The event has been inspiring to see that people care about the library, it gives us hope," said Beckwourth's Branch Librarian and former LEARN Coordinator, Janice Wilhelm. Libraries have always provided hope and a safe haven for children and adults. Libraries truly do make a difference.

AmeriCorps Member – Erica Abbey

