

# LEARN

# Alive!

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

Fall/Winter 2010

## SO LONG FRIENDS

In January of 2006, LEARN received its first volunteers from AmeriCorps, a federal program which addresses needs in the community ranging from building affordable housing to fighting illiteracy. Since that time many AmeriCorps volunteers have dedicated at least one year of service to our program as literacy tutors and class instructors. The end of summer 2010 saw the departure of LEARN's four AmeriCorps volunteers: Desiree, Nick, Raquel, and Sarah. They joined AmeriCorps and LEARN seeking the challenge of making a difference in people's lives. We are grateful for their commitment and perseverance and wish them the best in their future endeavors! Here are their farewells in their own words . . .

If I had to sum up my year with LEARN in one word, I would truly have to say *life-changing*. There have been so many weeks, days, and moments that highlight what has made my AmeriCorps year with this program so unforgettable.

An experience that has particularly touched me has been my time tutoring an outstanding learner in reading and writing for the past seven months. Everything from her achievement of a longtime goal of reading a book she was given in 1987 to celebrating the literary knowledge she is now able to share with her granddaughter, has been a joy that words cannot express.

Throughout this past year I have grown tremendously, both professionally and personally. This is definitely a result of all the amazing learners and tutors I've interacted with, the wonderful SDCL staff members I've worked with at a number of branches, and of course the remarkable LEARN staff I've had the privilege to work alongside on a daily basis. The LEARN program staff have become not only my friends, but a family that will always hold a special place in my heart.

Having the opportunity to teach, tutor, and work with members of the San Diego County community in a variety of capacities has allowed me to see not only what I am capable of contributing; but what I am also able to gain through the life experiences and lessons many people have shared with me.

This year as an LEARN AmeriCorps member has been a journey that could never be replicated. It has both enhanced and reignited my passion and confidence in using education and community service as a means of public transformation.

—Raquel Sojourner  
AmeriCorps Volunteer

As I write this article, I am little more than 24 hours away from completing my term of service with the AmeriCorps and LEARN programs. What can I say that will summarize my time and experiences working with the San Diego County Library? I could talk about my students at the Bonita English Conversation Café: how our topics of conversation usually steered towards the subject of food but always involved a heavy dose of laughter. Or I could write about the experiences I had with my four students this

past year and a half and the progress they made, some of them jumping several grade levels in math, reading, and writing. Or I could pontificate on the significance and generosity of all of our tutors and the differences they have made, the countless lives they have touched.

However, as amazing as all of these things are, the truth is that my time with the LEARN program is more than the sum of its parts. As hokey or cliché as this may sound, it is an experience I know I will take with me the rest of my life. From days spent in the office with Kevin and Raquel, brainstorming volunteer recruitment strategies as well as chiding each other's music selection, to lesson-planning class curricula with Jason while he admonishes my wardrobe

selection, working with LEARN has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Even if I can't think of any one word or instance to summarize my time with LEARN, I am happy knowing that, whenever I think of the County Library's Adult Literacy program, I will be wearing a smile, warm in the presence of my memories. And that is enough for me.

However, if I did have to use one word to sum up my time with LEARN, it would be "magic." Or "disco." Disco is good, too.

—Nick Crosby  
AmeriCorps Volunteer



For article submissions, please contact LEARN at learnstaff@sdcounty.ca.gov or 1-888-466-0668

I feel very thankful for my time with LEARN! I am sad to be moving on, but I am so appreciative of all I've learned and the people I've met during this year.

I am thankful to all my learners for their dedication and for sharing a bit of their lives with me. I loved learning about their home cultures, their languages, and their food! I am proud of how their English has improved and of how much American history and government they have learned for the Citizenship test. They are truly an inspiration to me.

I am also grateful for the fabulous staff at LEARN who welcomed me and made me feel at home so quickly. It has been a pleasure working with them. They have taught me not only about working for the community, but also how that work becomes so much more when you combine it with a heart for helping individuals.

Lastly, I feel blessed to work with the staff in Vista, San Marcos, Poway, and 4S Ranch libraries. You have been extremely gracious and accommodating!

Thank you all!

—Sarah Seene  
AmeriCorps Volunteer



**Need something to do in 2011?  
Become a LEARN tutor!**

Tutor Training:

- Sat., Jan. 22 @ Vista Branch Library
- Sat., Feb. 6 @ El Cajon Branch Library

Call 888-466-0668 to register

**Do you know LEARN offers  
free citizenship classes?**

**4S Ranch Branch Library**  
*every Monday 6:30-7:45pm*

**Vista Branch Library**  
*every Monday 6:00-7:30pm*

This past year has truly been amazing for me. I have worked for non-profit organizations before, but I have never been involved in the face-to-face interaction of it. To help someone in a tangible way, to see them understand and improve, is fuel for my soul. I loved agonizing over the best way to teach my computer classes in Vista and Encinitas, scouring the internet for ESL game ideas, and searching for the perfect book to use when tutoring. My heart soared when one of my learners from my Citizenship class came in, envelope in hand, stating that he had passed his Citizenship interview and would become a U.S. Citizen. I couldn't have been more proud.

To share the joys and pains of this work with other like-minded souls (the LEARN staff) has been awesome. I will miss everyone very much and wish them the best in the future (especially Jason, Hector and Kevin—don't work too hard!).

Finally, thanks to the coastal libraries—Encinitas, Cardiff, Del Mar, Solana Beach—as well as Vista and San Marcos libraries for making my time at each branch comfortable.

Thanks to everyone for the fun and memories. Blessings!

—Desiree Garcia  
AmeriCorps Volunteer

