

Zhisheng Qi

By Tom Buckley

Few people voluntarily take greater risks than families who relinquish all of their tangible property and come to the United States without so much as a scrap of English.

Zhisheng Qi and his family came from a rural area south of Beijing, China. Less than two years ago, Zhisheng and his son, Carl, arrived in the U.S. to join his wife, Rita, who had come earlier to work as a registered nurse at the Petaluma Valley Hospital. It took Shen and Carl three years to

complete China's rigorous emigration requirements. The Chinese government has very strict regulations about what can leave the country, and the Qis had to leave all of their tangible property behind. Zhisheng put this requirement to excellent use, seeing it as an opportunity to provide for his parents in their old age. He was able to leave them a number of assets that will insure their retirement.

Like his wife, Shen is highly trained in medicine. He graduated from a medical school in China and was licensed as both nurse and physician specializing in internal medicine. His academic record is impressive. Yet, he came to America with no English language skill. Fortunately, he soon learned of the Adult Literacy League. I was lucky enough to be paired with him, and we have become best friends.

I first met Zhisheng Qi a year and a half ago, in the foyer of the Petaluma Library. We smiled at each other and immediately began laughing. He spoke no English, and I spoke no Mandarin. At first, we used sign language and drew pictures on large sheets of construction paper; but Zhisheng was determined to learn quickly. He studied independently; and when he arrived for a tutoring session, he would open his notebook to pages filled with English expressions and sentences which he wanted to review. Due to his initiative and hard work, he has made amazing progress in a very short period of time.



Zhisheng Qi, left, studies in the library with his tutor, Tom Buckley.

Photo by John Fleming

Shen has had excellent support from his family. His son, Carl, enrolled in Harvest Christian School in Petaluma and quickly picked up the language; and Rita, whose English language skills are outstanding, encouraged Shen to master the challenge. I knew if he had the discipline to graduate from medical school, he could learn English.

We augmented our library sessions with hiking and many trips to stores like Home Depot and Lowes, where he could use his new skills. He and Rita bought a foreclosed home that required a great deal of repair

work, and we labored side by side for several weeks doing a renovation—always using English in a practical way. Shen went on to speak at several Rotary Club meetings about his experiences in coming to the United States, and his confidence exploded.

Shen knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish, and his commitment to achieving his goals has not wavered. His focus, determination, hard work and perseverance have paid off: He recently secured his first job, taking care of individuals with Alzheimer's—and he is now enrolled in Pacific Union College, where he is studying to take the nursing board exams so he can once again serve in his field of expertise.

This family's commitment to each other is impressive, and their appreciation for the opportunity to quickly integrate into America is inspirational. They clearly demonstrate what can be achieved by setting firm goals, working hard and taking the necessary risks.

Thanks Giving

To Volunteers, Donors and Sponsors

It is with a great deal of gratitude that the Board of Directors thanks its sponsors, donors, and all of the tutors, mentors and volunteers for their time and support of the League. Without you, the League would not exist.

Thank You, Volunteers!

The League is very grateful to each of the following:

- **Sandy Martensen** for 12 years of volunteering as the League's librarian, and **Darlene Pacheco** for volunteering as the League's new librarian. Sandy, we can't thank you enough for all you have done.
- **Barbara Ramirez** for untold hours over the years, helping to match students to new tutors.
- **Christine Slaymaker** and **Graciela Lopez**, our extremely helpful contacts at Community Action Partnership - Headstart. We could not have held the fall tutor training workshop without them.
- **Christina Rosorio**, our AmeriCorps volunteer, who is making those crucial phone calls to update student applications. Christina is bilingual and bicultural in Spanish and English.
- **North Bay Copier:** Ed Rubin and Daryl Hawkins generously performed a diagnostic inspection of our Sharp copier at no charge. Remember these folks when you need help with a copier. 585-5955.
- **Marjorie Friedrich:** In our last newsletter we "wished" for a new paper shredder. **Marjorie**, a long-time League supporter, gave us an excellent shredder that helps us protect the League's privacy.
- The mailing crew for our fundraising letter: **Armie and Dan Scarlett, Muriel Smith, Patricia Hewes, Sunny Bircumshaw, and Richard Parry-Jones.**
- All who helped staff the booth at the flea market: **Tom Buckley**, CEO and heavy lifting; **Gretchen Werner**, originator of the "buck-a-bag" sell-a-thon; **Karen Fleming, Ruth Maloney, Pat Lennon, David Chung, and Bob Parsons**, merchandising experts. And to all the people who donated their treasures to stock the booth—thank you!
- **Pat Lennon** and **Diane Brown** for sharing their personal tutoring experiences with the fall training group. First-hand information of this sort is invaluable to new tutors.
- **Ginger Smith** for her careful and thorough work as our bookkeeper. Ginger has retired from this position for personal reasons. The League will miss you, Ginger!
- **Chamundi Sabanathan** for her regular "five hours on Fridays" office support.
- **Gretchen Werner**, board member and owner of Gateways Learning Center, for all her help this last year with the League's advertising efforts.

Thank You, Donors!

- **Wal-Mart** of Rohnert Park for their grant of \$1,000
- **Medtronic Foundation** for their grant of \$5,000
- **National Book Fund** for \$1,275 in books
- **Plus, many of you have already responded to our fundraising letter.** We are very grateful for your generosity, especially in these trying times.

A Special Thank You to Our Sponsors!



Visiting the League Office?

By Bob Parsons

We know your time is valuable; for many of you, getting to the League office is one of many errands in a busy day.

However, *please don't park in the reserved spaces for Goodwill*—not even for "just a minute." Those reserved spots are for Goodwill leadership personnel who come and go frequently, and they need their parking place available at all times. Goodwill has been most generous in allowing us the use of part of their building, and we must be very careful not to inconvenience them in any way.

I can help you by coming downstairs and meeting you in the back parking lot with whatever you need. Just give me a call when you get here—539-3848.

Thank you very much!

Volunteers Needed

- **Board Members:** Have you been a board member in the past, or are you interested in being on a Board of Directors for a non-profit organization? The Adult Literacy League is seeking individuals with a passion for adult literacy who are interested in serving on the board. A couple of seats are available, including Secretary of the Board. This is a two-year commitment. The board meets seven times each year, two Saturdays and five Mondays.
- **In-Service Coordinator:** This position plans, organizes and attends three In-Service Workshops each year.
- **Community Outreach Liaison:** This person will represent the League at community functions such as Chamber of Commerce meetings. The Liaison will also attend meetings of local organizations and speak on behalf of the League.
- **A.L.L. Students for Speakers Bureau:** Would your student be interested in being part of the League's Speakers Bureau? Your student will be trained to speak before groups of people. This is a wonderful opportunity for those who wish to develop this skill.

If you are interested in serving in one of these positions, please contact the League office at 539-3848.

Summer Tutor Training Graduates

By Nancy Schell

The Adult Literacy League warmly welcomes and congratulates our new tutors—the eight dedicated alumnae of our Summer 2009 Tutor Training Workshop. Our new tutors come from varied places and backgrounds: Seven of the new graduates live in Santa Rosa and one in Penngrove. Several have had teaching or tutorial experience, and others come from a business background. Larry Henzerling is an accomplished “speaker” of sign language, and Irene Pino is fluent in Spanish.

With the help of many volunteers, teachers Nancy Schell and Eleanor Welch successfully concluded their summer tutor training on Saturday, August 8, 2009. Ruth Maloney, executive director, welcomed trainees and explained the operation of the Adult Literacy League; Pat Lennon introduced the mentor program and shared her experiences as a mentor and tutor; Diane Brown told about her tutoring program with mothers from Kenwood Public School; and George Dancisak shared information about the Workplace Literacy Program.



Bob Parsons

Bob Parsons

How do you begin to thank someone like Bob Parsons? Bob has been a mainstay of the League for five years. During that five years, he has been selfless, committed, and invaluable. He has been the face of the organization.

Anyone calling or visiting the office has received prompt and courteous attention. When tutors call needing help, Bob either provides immediate assistance or thoughtfully redirects them to someone who can help. His technical expertise has kept the office running (in so many ways), and his careful attention to detail has made the tutor workshops run smoothly.

Bob has submitted his resignation. He is retiring so he can pursue some of his passions, such as photography and gardening. In a recent email, a board member wrote, “Thank you for all you’ve done to promote adult literacy in Sonoma County and best wishes for whatever the future holds for you. We’ll miss you more than you know.” That’s for sure!

Mark your calendar for December 18 (Bob’s last day), between 1:00 and 2:30. We will be having cake and coffee/tea and thanking Bob for all he has done for the League. If you

would like to contribute toward a thank-you gift, please call Ruth Maloney at 539-3848 or e-mail rmaloney@sonic.net.



Congratulations to our summer Tutor Training Workshop graduates! Pictured, left to right, are Larry Henzerling, Kay Mahafey, Donna Autrey, Irene Pino, Julee Fullenwider, David Lynch, Charlene Goodrich and Ricky O’Kane.

The unusually small class size permitted time for frequent questions and lively discussions, allowing Nancy and Eleanor time to clarify curriculum and ease the new tutors’ concerns, especially regarding initial meetings with their students. Bob Parsons matched the new graduates with the students they will be tutoring and offered valuable suggestions on connecting with new students and holding the first introductory meeting. He also discussed office and library procedures and explained the League’s need for tutors to consistently turn in their monthly reports and six-month evaluations.

Winter Tutor Training Workshop

The winter Tutor Workshop will be February 6 and 13, 2010. As always, we have a large student waiting list; tutors are needed throughout Sonoma County. If you have a friend, neighbor, co-worker, or family member who is interested in being a tutor, please have them call the office: 539-3848.

Tutor Tips

By David Karp

Mock interviews: Many A.L.L. students are learning English in order to find a job and communicate with co-workers.

Help your students by conducting mock interviews, and encouraging them to present an

organized, informative biography for the interviewer. Questions such as these help the student put his or her thoughts in order: “Why should we offer this job to you?” “What skills do you have that make you a good candidate for the opening we have?” Before doing the mock interview, have your student write out his or her job objectives and the reasons he or she would be a good candidate for an opening. Discuss such topics as what an employer looks for in a job candidate, how to make a good first impression, and issues that should not be mentioned—such as personal life or past job problems.

Importance of the League

Recent research has shown that parental (especially maternal) literacy is the primary indicator of a child’s success in school. Twenty-five percent of Sonoma County’s population speak English as a second language, or not at all—and 45% of our youngest schoolchildren come from such households.

Mark Your Calendar

November 14 – Membership Meeting, 10:00-12:00
November 26 & 27 – Office Closed

December 14 – Board Meeting, 9:30-11:30
December 21 – Office Closed for 2 weeks

January 4 – Office Opens
January 18 – Office Closed

February 6 – Tutor Workshop, 9:00-3:00
February 13 – Tutor Workshop, 9:00-3:00
February 8 – Board Meeting, 9:30-11:30
February 15 – Office Closed

For Your Information

Adult Literacy League of Sonoma County, Inc.
651 Yolanda Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95404
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literacy@sonic.net
www.literacyleague.org

Office Hours

Closed Mondays (NEW!)

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. WThF

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays

Closed Saturdays, Sundays & Holidays

Executive Director: Ruth Maloney
Administrative Coordinator: Bob Parsons
A.L.L. Star Editor: Karen Fleming

Please don't forget to report your monthly hours to the League office!
Fax, e-mail, phone, or snail mail—they A.L.L. work.



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