

Opening Doors – Teaching English As A Second Language

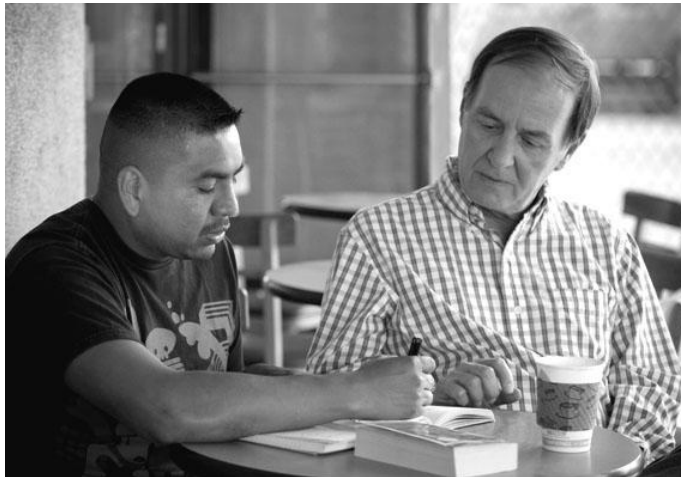


photo by John Fleming

Carlos Rodriguez, left, works with tutor Dan Jenkins.

## Carlos Rodriguez

by Dan Jenkins

I completed my Tutor Workshop training in early February 2009. About one week later I was assigned a student named Carlos Rodriguez. His application had two assessment notes that caught my eye – “Carlos speaks English very well” and “Carlos is quite motivated”. He certainly sounded like a perfect match for a tutor just out of training. I picked up the phone and called the number on his application to set up our first meeting.

Carlos answered his phone – speaking entirely in Spanish during that initial conversation. I spoke in English and he hung up on me! To quote the warden in “Cool Hand Luke”, “obviously what we have here is a failure to communicate”. This was not a good beginning, my initial limited confidence level sinking to zero. I waited about ten minutes and called the number again. Carlos again answered. Somehow during the ten minutes between calls he had determined who this stranger must be. Carlos had been waiting for a tutor assignment from the Literacy League for eight months – such is the League’s need for tutors.

During the second call we did communicate, although I didn’t understand much of his English. We were both nervous. We did manage to arrange to meet at the Coddington Library the next week. I gave Carlos my phone number just in case he  
(continued p. 5)

## Cracking a Joke – Tips from Dotty Joos

as told to Heather Thompson

“Never underestimate the power of a joke!” So says 19- year A.L.L. veteran tutor Dotty Joos (pronounced *Yohs*). “When you have been working with a student and you want to ‘push’ them to another level, roll out a good joke!”

Now, in case you might conclude that Dotty is a little inebriated or making light of a serious endeavor, let me tell you a little about her. Dotty, now retired, spent practically all of her professional career in a teaching situation – spanning from school classrooms to prison settings. That demanded of her a chameleon approach to the art of teaching. In 1992 she took the League’s training and worked with her first student for 18 months until the student returned to Mexico. By 1994 Dotty had become involved in other ventures and left the League, not wishing to take on a new student and then have to leave. However, she kept the League’s materials and continued to collect other relevant materials.

That move proved prescient -- and for the League, most fortunate. Years later, following her retirement, Dotty was invited to volunteer-tutor at the Graton Labor Centre in West Sonoma County. As she worked there with mainly Mexican students, it occurred to her that she could “donate” those hours to A.L.L. The League is grateful to Dotty for that.



Dotty Joos

Having worked now with around 100 students, Dotty has developed her own style of tutoring to suit the situation. I asked her for her “top five tips” on tutoring, to which she answered in her own inimitable style! (She reminded me the students are at the labor center to secure jobs, so attendance fluctuates, making lesson continuity impossible.)

(continued p. 3)

## President's Corner

by Karen Fleming

**Vincent Lombardi said, "The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual."**



Karen Fleming

Every success of the Adult Literacy League is due to the combined effort of a lot of volunteers. We mention some of these wonderful volunteers in each issue of the news-letter. In this issue you will read about Dan Jenkins and his student Carlos Rodriguez.

What is not mentioned in the article is Dan is also the League's Treasurer on the Board of Directors, he is our technical support in the office, and keeps our website up-to-date. He is invaluable. You will also read about Dorothy Joos and the work she is doing with her students at the Graton Labor Center. Her five tips are excellent! What is not mentioned is Heather Thompson who met with Dorothy and who wrote the article, met Dorothy at our last In-Service and found her so interesting that she asked if she could write an article for the newsletter. Heather is the Secretary of the Board of Directors and also coordinates our outreach program. I could go on and on about our volunteers and the work they do for the League and our community, but there isn't enough room in this newsletter. I want to thank each and every one of you for the time you spend volunteering for the League.

The Board of Directors continues to tighten its belt by closing the office for the month of December. December is historically a quiet month; however, we will have volunteers occasionally in the office returning calls and helping with tutor questions. Also, if a tutor needs a book from the library, we will set up a time for that to take place. In other words, our tutors should not be inconvenienced in any way. Also, since our fax machine was seldom used, we have shut-off our fax.

The League still is not financially secure and we continue looking for grants and new members. If you have any ideas, please let us know.

**There are a number of ways you can help the League without writing a check:**

1. **We are a member of eScrip.** If you are also a member, add the League (Group ID 500024540). If you are not, please consider becoming one. It's easy to do: [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com).
2. **We are still a member of Community Smart.** They have made some changes in their merchant list so be sure to take a look at their list of merchants. If you are not a member, please consider becoming one. Signing up is easy: [www.communitysmart.com](http://www.communitysmart.com).
3. **Ebay is another way to raise money for the League.** Do you have something hidden in your garage or closet that it's time to sell? We are registered with MissionFish and Ebay, so anyone can designate part or all of the proceeds of a sale to the League.
4. **We are registered with PayPal.** There is a link on our website so that individuals and businesses can easily make donations.
5. **Grants. It's often not what you know but who you know.** Many businesses and organizations in the community give grants and donations to local nonprofit organizations. If you know of one that will support the Adult Literacy League, *please* call the office.

**Donations.** Your gift may be doubled if your employer has a matching gift program. Please see your Human Resources Department today.

## Year-To-Date League Statistics

### 141 Volunteers:

100 Volunteer Tutors  
19 Tutors on Leave of Absence  
22 Volunteers (Non-Tutors)

### 147 Students:

97 Active Students  
50 Waiting for Tutors

### Programs

Completed 2 Tutor Workshops and have trained 25 new tutors with another in October  
2 1 In-Service for Tutors with another planned for October

## ♥ Thanks Giving ♥

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

**Pat Lennon** for the years you spent on the Board of Directors as well as coordinating the mentor program. The work you did is deeply appreciated.

**Susan Winer** for doing our taxes again this year. Thank you so much.

**Ginger Smith** for the calls you made to the churches and helping with researching businesses for possible grants. What would we do without volunteers such as you?

**George Lentini** for all the work you are doing in the office. We are all noticing your good work.

**Reverend Sue Fleenor** for the use of your multi-purpose room at the Knox Presbyterian Church for our June In-Service. The room worked perfectly and your generosity is appreciated.

**Mallory Gerard and George Dancisak** for being our new instructors at the summer Tutor Workshop. This was your "first" and we sincerely appreciate your hard work.

**Thank you to all the Human Race donors.** Because of you, the Adult Literacy League received \$2,063!! A special "thank you" goes to Rodgers and Nancy Broomhead for your work on this.

**Darlene Pacheco** for your ongoing support of the League as our librarian and Spanish interpreter.

**In Memoriam** ~ You met Patti O'Keefe last year in our Spring A.L.L. Newsletter. One thing you definitely learned from the article was that she was very proud of her three students: Ana Rodriguez, Demetria Suazo, and Lupe Soto. Patti passed away on June 21, 2011. She will be missed.

## Sponsors

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## Cracking a Joke from page 1

Tip 1: Take time to know your student and let them get to know you. She emphasizes that the students the League receives are adults who have made the conscious decision to leave their homelands, cultures and families to come to an unknown land -- not a light decision! They have a history, and they are interesting people.

Tip 2: Let the students come to know you. Dotty argues that students are curious and want to know Americans. The tutor provides that bridge and can encourage them to feel comfortable and 'open up'. She finds that by her occasionally trying to speak Spanish, her students come to see the difficulties they encounter with a foreign language are shared by her. She emphasizes to them that though she knows she is not fluent, she is willing to try and not let fear stop her. She models speaking slowly and clearly to help them understand her -- and she is always eager for them to correct her.

Tip 3: Keep the student motivated. In a group teaching situation, TEACH TO THE LEVEL OF THE FIRST PERSON TO SIT DOWN! In this way, she reminds students to arrive on time. She also encourages peer-to-peer teaching so they learn from each other. She is a strong advocate of visual aids. In fact, one of her prize aids in her 'magic' bag of visual aids (which she carries to every session) is a couple of toy cars and a simple street map! With an intermediate student, Dotty has her reading Danielle Steele, a novelist she knew from Spanish translations of the books.

Tip 4: Be prepared and use your intuition. Dotty is a strong advocate of teaching to the needs of the student in any session. What are their interests? Is there a pressing issue needing addressed now to help them in their daily life? In addition to preparing an adaptable lesson plan (and around 20 alternate outlines), Dotty is always ready to respond to the current needs of her students (how to use the bus; how to identify coins and verify they are being given the correct change; how to identify prices in advertisements or on coupons; how to relate telephone numbers or give/receive directions).

Tip 5: Roll out a joke. Dotty will draw out a student by teaching them a simple joke. She then cleverly tells them to return to their families or work situations and recount the joke. She then has them return the following week to tell her of their 'successes'. (Dotty emphasized to me that she is careful to select a joke which has vocabulary that the student is learning.) continued p.4

### Cracking a Joke from page 3

As you can see, Dotty Joos thoroughly enjoys her tutoring assignments. She has learned from all her years of tutoring, from the A.L.L. In-Services and from her students themselves. I dare say she makes the learning of ESL a pleasure for all her students!

## Winter and Summer Tutor Workshops

Congratulations and Welcome to our new Tutors !



photo by Gary Holm

**Winter 2011:** (In Alphabetical Order): Paige Armstrong, Bob Bergman, Bill Boorman, Donna Cherlin, Bob Garber, Charlotte Grech, Linde Lou Gwendolyn, Judy Iversen, Terry Junemann, Kathryn Kelsey, Katrina Killefer, Stuart Koehler, Carolyn Lepore-Duke, Lynda McGinity, Victor Ortega, Ruth Rubanowitz, JoAnne Silva, Katiana Sommer



photo by Gary Holm

**Summer 2011:** Victor Gonzalez, Jeffri Dumas, Claire Etienne, Paige Wickland, Kristin Mills, Linda Patterson, Janis Taylor

### 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.

## Next Workshop

The winter Tutor Training Workshop will be October 22 and 29 and we will soon be recruiting for new tutors. Please encourage your relatives and friends to join with you in our fight for literacy, and you are our best source we have for new recruits. You know the joy of watching someone learn and the reward of knowing you are making a difference by giving the gift of speaking, reading and writing English that will last a lifetime. We welcome your input!

## Spring In-Service

Our Spring In-Service was a success thanks to **Gretchen Werner**. The In-Service was held June 4<sup>th</sup> at the Knox Presbyterian Church. Gretchen's focus was on where sounds come from in our mouth and phonograms. It was an outstanding two hours with lots of interactive work. Gretchen asked that I remind all the tutors who attended the In-Service that you help develop correct pronunciation by building on what the student is already doing correctly, practicing what it feels like to make the sound, and if the student is a reader note the letter combinations that make the sound. Thank you Gretchen!!

Gretchen Werner, M.Ed., is owner and director of Werner Educational Services (formerly "Gateways, A Learning Center". Gretchen is with the North Bay Institute of Green Technology (employment readiness for at-risk and gang-affiliated youth in the green-collar jobs sector), Executive Board for the Sonoma County Literacy Coalition, Association of Educational Therapists, chair for the Windsor Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Committee, and a judge at the Healdsburg Science Fair. She is also a former member of the Board of Directors for the Adult Literacy League.

## Next In-Service

**Mark your calendar for Saturday, October 8th, 2011, 10:00-12:00. As soon as we have a location, we will let you know.** We are pleased to have **Mary Lowe**, Naturalization Supervisor with Catholic Charities Immigration Services of Santa Rosa, returning as our speaker. Mary helps individuals who are legal residents to become U.S. Citizens. She is also responsible for the citizenship classes to assist students to study and pass their interview with USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Mary will talk to us about the process and the test. The last time Mary was our speaker at an In-Service was in 2008 and many of our tutors, particularly our new tutors, have been asking that she come back.

had to cancel or changed his mind about English lessons.

I spent the next week in preparation – reviewing my training, thinking about how to assess Carlos’ English ability, and looking at various lesson plans. One hour before our scheduled meeting I got a call from Carlos. He told me he was at the hospital – his wife was having a baby! I wished him well and we set up an appointment for the following week. My wife, Mary, came home that evening and asked how my first meeting with Carlos went. “It didn’t. He canceled because his wife was having a baby. I wonder if it’s some kind of omen?”

Looking back on it all now, it was a kind of omen. Edwin Rodriguez was born during the time scheduled for my first English lesson with Carlos. Edwin couldn’t wait to make his arrival, so Carlos and I waited an additional week to meet in person. In the ensuing thirty months we have met close to 250 times – twice every week. We have failed to meet probably less than ten times – always due to work commitments, illness, or vacations. During our first meeting, Carlos shared pictures of his new son, born exactly one week before. And during our first meeting was born something greater than a tutor-student relationship – a friendship that has grown strong right along with Edwin.

Carlos and his family (wife Erika, daughter Karla, and son Edwin) live in Santa Rosa. During the entire time that I have known Carlos he has worked at least two jobs – one constant position with Red Lobster and also doing janitorial work, pool cleaning, granite work and other jobs. Erika works as a cashier at Lola’s Market. I have watched Karla grow from grammar school into middle school, and Edwin grow from an infant into a young boy enamored with the latest super hero. Yet Carlos’ commitment to learning has always been the rock of our relationship. A new baby, two jobs, childcare requirements, illness, or a thousand other reasons might force a less committed person to legitimately cancel a session. For Carlos to cancel it’s a last resort – and the unnecessary apologies that follow are numerous. I only wish I could know a hundred more people like him.

The application notes about Carlos were correct. Once I met him, I found that he did speak English well. He read and wrote English even better. He had taken formal English classes before we met.

He had a fairly solid foundation in English, making my job all the easier. Our work for two years now has focused on grammar, diction, vocabulary, and those other things that make English so very difficult for an ESL student. Our recent work has concentrated on that most frustrating of English language realities – idioms. Try translating “put one’s foot into one’s mouth” or “take the bull by the horns” into another’s native language. Carlos hears these idioms at work, on television, and out of the mouth of his daughter Karla. It’s so gratifying to see the look of understanding on Carlos’ face when the meaning of an idiom he has heard many times before finally becomes clear to him. Often he will comment, “That is really stupid.” He’s usually quite correct in his assessment.

During one of my initial meetings with Carlos, I asked him why he wanted English lessons. I expected his answer to be a better job or something similar. That made the list, but it was far from his most important reason. His number one reason was to be a better parent. His daughter spoke English in school, her friends spoke English in his home, and his son would soon join his sister as a native English speaker. He needed to know English to be a better parent. That simple statement spoke volumes to me. It was, and is, all the incentive I will ever need to continue to teach Carlos for as long as he wants to continue our lessons.

The frosting on the cake, however, has been the friendship. I look forward to every meeting with Carlos because I learn every bit as much as I teach – and probably enjoy the experience more than him. I’ve learned some Spanish. I’ve learned about Mexican customs. I’ve learned the fine points of soccer – so much so that I enjoyed the recent men’s and women’s World Cup tournaments immensely. Carlos and I have attended baseball and hockey games together – as I have attempted to teach him the finer points of American sports. They will never replace soccer in his heart, however. Mary and I have enjoyed Erika’s cooking – such good tamales and sauces. And I have laughed and laughed. Carlos possesses that rare gift of true wit – humor based on careful observation of the world around him.

To all you potential tutors out there – drop the ‘potential’ part of the title and let the Adult Literacy League find you a student. You’ll receive every bit as much as you will ever give.

**Are you a 2011 member of the League? If you aren't, please join the following members by donating \$25 or more now.**

Marlene Alves  
Paige Armstrong  
Anne Ausburn  
Charlotte Baird  
Patricia Bauer  
Leslie Bellis  
Bob Bergman  
Bill Boorman  
Julian Blair  
Donna Brandt  
Nicholas Brie  
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Lynn Camhi  
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Jane Eide  
Brian Erwin  
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Alice Webb  
Sharon Whitten  
Paige Wickland  
Susan Winer  
Katherine Wolf  
Edith Wong  
Jeffrey Wong  
William Zaner

## 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. This is a two-year commitment. The board meets eight times each year, two Saturdays and six Mondays.
- **Advertising Coordinator:** This position places advertisements in newspapers around Sonoma County regarding the League's programs and advertising for new tutors.
- **In-Service Coordinator:** This position plans and organizes three In-Service Workshops each year for our tutors.
- **Mentor Coordinator:** The Mentor Coordinator is an important position. We have four mentors and this position coordinates the assigning of mentors with new tutors. This position takes a minimal amount of time and has large benefits.
- **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.

### Small Group Teaching Opportunity

**Anita Vennell** has been teaching a small group of parents who have children in HeadStart programs. She will be taking a leave of absence from the League starting the end of September, and we are looking for someone interested in taking over her class. They are held at the South Park Youth Center in Santa Rosa on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00-10:30 a.m. If you are interested in finding out more information about the class, please call the office – 539-3848. **ANITA, THANK YOU** for all you have done in support of your students!

### 2011 Board of Directors


- President,** Karen Fleming  
**Treasurer,** Dan Jenkins  
**Secretary,** Heather Thompson  
**Director,** David Chung  
**Director,** Robert Picker  
**Director,** William Pitney  
**Director,** Nancy Schell

### 2011 Committees & Volunteers

- Librarian:** Darlene Pacheco  
**Nominating Committee:** Rodgers Broomhead  
**Publicity:** Vacant  
**Outreach:** Heather Thompson  
**Mentor Coordinator:** Vacant  
**Student Coordinator:** Darlene Pacheco  
**Tutor Coordinator:** Robert Picker  
**Taxes:** Susan Winer  
**Fundraising Committee:** David Chung, Karen Fleming, Heather Thompson  
**Tutor Workshops:** Mallory Gerard, George Dancisak, Corrie McCluskey  
**Webmaster:** Dan Jenkins

If you need to contact our Board of Directors or anyone on a committee or volunteer position, please call the office (707.539.3848) or email at [office@literacyleague.org](mailto:office@literacyleague.org)

### Mark Your Calendar

- September 5 – Closed for Holiday  
September TBD – In-Service for Tutors  
October 10 – Board Meeting  
October 29/November 5 – Tutor Workshop  
November 12 – Membership Meeting  
November 24, 25 – Closed for Holiday  
Month of December – Closed   
December 12 – Board Meeting

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Adult Literacy League of Sonoma County, Inc.

4908 Sonoma Highway, Suite B  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409  
707.539.3848 (ph) 707.539.3899 (fax)  
office@literacyleague.org  
www.literacyleague.org

### Office Hours:

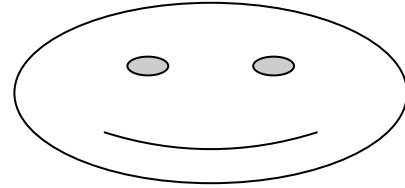
**Open** 10:00 a.m – 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday  
& Thursday

**Closed** Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays/Sundays,  
Holidays, *Month of December*

**NEW**

**Administrative Coordinator:** George Lentini  
**A.L.L.Star Editor:** Karen Fleming  
**A.L.L.Star Managing Editor:** Bob Parsons

## Wish List



**A reliable paper shredder**



ADULT LITERACY  
**LEAGUE** *of* SONOMA COUNTY, INC

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Santa Rosa CA 95409

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