

March 2025

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# Literally Speaking

Empowering adults to achieve greater success in their lives through literacy skill development

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## IMPORTANT DATES

**\*Writer to Writer Due\***

Friday, March, 28th

## UPDATES

**\*NEW Volunteer Tutor Training\***

Saturday, April 5, 2025

**\*Volunteer Appreciation Celebration\***

Saturday, April 26, 2025

(Must RSVP)

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY**

to some of our fabulous  
Volunteers!

**Chuck**

**Barbara**

**Donna**

March 2025

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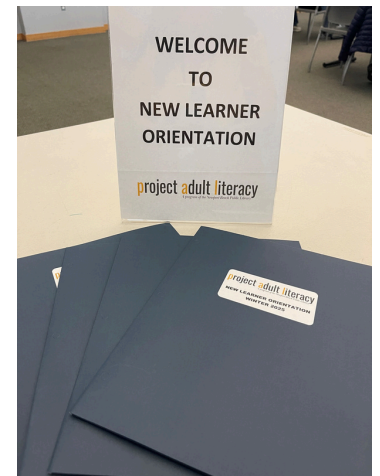
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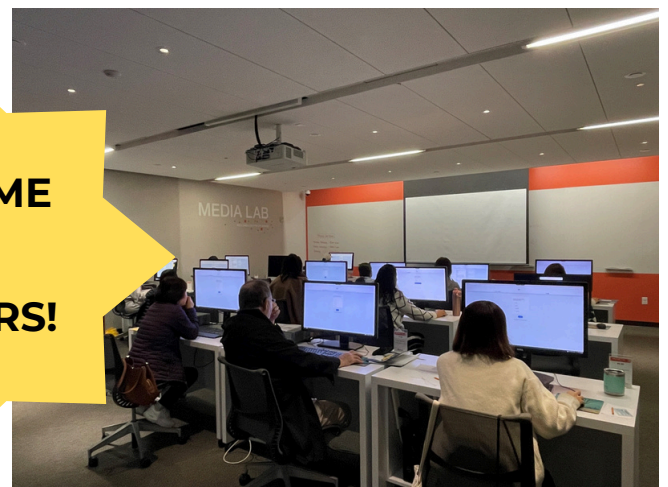
## RECAP: New Learner Orientation - Winter 2025

Last month we had 25 NEW learners complete our first New Learner Orientation of 2025! Our two-day orientation consisted of discussing PAL's mission, learning how to write SMART Goals, explaining our small group classes and much more. On the second day of orientation, learners took an online assessment, which allowed us to learn more about their individual learning styles as well as understand where they are at with their current English reading, listening and writing skills.

Please join us in welcoming our New Learners!



**WELCOME  
NEW  
LEARNERS!**



**Literacy is an essential skill that empowers -- not only by providing a foundation of academic knowledge but quite simply, by changing lives.**

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## Learner Highlight: Susan Manzoor

Susan has been a professional photographer since she was 18. She was born and raised in Iran before moving to France when she was 20. While Susan lived in France, she studied and worked as a professional and art photographer. In 2005, she moved to the USA. She joined PAL in 2019 and has taken multiple classes over the years. Susan is currently enrolled in our “Writing Your Stories” class, which focuses on improving learners writing skills. Below is an essay Susan wrote for her class in January 2025.



### My Joy and My Happiness

by Susan Manzoor, PAL Learner

Happiness and joy are different feelings, even though they are both uplifting emotions. Happiness is temporarily triggered by external circumstances. Joy, however, is a long-lasting feeling deep in the heart of a person, resulting from contentment and faith. Somebody can have joy in his life, despite of challenges and struggles.

My joy is based on my faith in the Lord, the only hope for humanity. I believe God is in control of my life and everything in this world.

I am content. He has always provided for all my needs, and I know He will never forsake me. By the same token I have learned that instead of expecting ecstatic events, I must appreciate small moments of happiness. I have also learned that we live now and in this moment, and I only live a full life, when I live entirely in the moment.

There are thousands of things that make me happy and grateful every day.

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## Learner Highlight: Susan Manzoor continued

In the morning when I wake up and see the rays of sun passing through the kitchen window, touching the dining room wall, I feel happy.

The smell of coffee,

The silence of the early mornings,

The sweet smell of the food cooking slowly in my kitchen,

And then when I go for a walk, something starts to penetrate to my soul.

The beauty of nature like a calming melody,

The sight the sun rising over the lake,

The sun's reflection on the lake, creating thousands of sparkling stars, dancing in a great harmony,

Then I visit my little garden and a sweet breeze caresses my face,

The radiant sunset's light, swaying through the orange-reddish leaves,

The gentle scent of jasmine in my patio,

A tiny hummingbird coming to call,

The soft perfume of wild roses,

And now my daughter's sweet voice and a rush of joy.

Then a short fleeting moment to share with a friend.

And then there are days that I pick up my camera and my concerns, and I go to the beach. Now I can communicate with God. Like a prayer, my camera is my hunter of inspiration, and beauty. I receive these moments with thanksgiving.

Then I sit on a rock at the beach, and I watch the ceaseless waves embracing the shore.

The comforting warmth of a blanket wrapping me up when I feel cold and alone.

Then my heart fills with joy when I think about my life and how I survived, despite of all my scars.

But above all these happy moments, there is one thing that makes me extremely delighted and that is when I see my son smiling.

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## Learner Highlight: Susan Manzoor continued

Sometimes my mornings are hard. I have to wake my son Kiya and get him ready for breakfast. Preparing breakfast, I have to check on him several times, pushing him to be faster. He is always slow to do each task. He is obsessive and compulsive. In those blue mornings, waiting for him to come down, thousands of thoughts race through my mind, making me unsettled and anxious.

However, Kiya is a very sweet man. I am always thankful for his gentle heart. Even though he is unable to express his feelings and his thoughts verbally, his face expresses many unsaid words to me. Most of the time I don't know why he is sad or happy. I often have to guess. He doesn't tell me if he is hungry or thirsty, if he is cold or too hot, if he is tired or has pain somewhere. If he had a good sleep last night, if he had dreams.

Then he arrives downstairs, and he has a heavenly smile on his face and then the world smiles at me. I look sometimes at his angelic face, and I feel blessed. I am blessed because I am his mother. God loves him so much that He has given me to him to love him and take care of him, to become patient, compassionate, and loving, without expecting any return.

## Volunteer Tutor Remembered: Brett Ahern



Brett Scott Ahern was a devoted volunteer in our literacy program for almost 8 years before moving to Alaska with his wife, Cory, in 2016. He was an advocate for helping people and had a passion for our program. He assisted with learner assessments as well as special events. Brett unexpectedly passed away earlier this month. Our thoughts are his family during this time.

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## PAL Update: New Classes

As you know, we offer a variety of small group classes throughout the week to learners in our program. Each class focuses on teaching learners English literacy skills including reading and writing as well as speaking and listening.

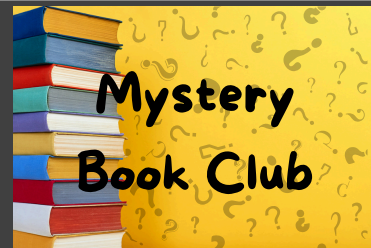
**Get ready for two new book clubs starting soon!**



### **Rom-Com Book Club**

***(For Intermediate Learners)***

Do you enjoy a good love story with a happy ending? Join us for a fun and engaging Rom-Com Book Club where learners will explore reading romantic comedies and discuss American language and culture. In this class, you will improve your reading and English-speaking skills while discussing characters, plot lines and sharing your thoughts and feelings about what you read. Discover new authors, connect with other learners and fall in love with reading.



### **Mystery Book Club**

***(For Beginner Learners)***

Is someone missing? Were they murdered? Join us for a suspenseful Mystery Book Club where learners will read intriguing short chapter books, learning new vocabulary and improving pronunciation. In this class, you will improve your reading and English-speaking skills while discussing characters, motives and clues, while trying to solve the crime before the detective does. This class is great for beginning learners.