

## Working Together to Make a Difference



Santa has been a learner with Partners in Reading (PAR) for several years. She perseveres because she has seen so many positive changes in her abilities over the years. She says, "I still have a lot of work ahead of me." Her tutor, Kathleen, has seen so many changes in the year and a half they've been working together, including Santa's ability to sound out words.

Since they started meeting, Santa is able to complete many literacy tasks on her own. She has written short stories about her family. She has practiced writing phone messages, and she now writes grocery lists. Santa is also able to independently read short novels and newspapers. Her goal for the next six months is to continue to work on improving her reading, writing, and spelling. During their lessons, Santa and Kathleen work on spelling and dictionary skills. Although they are not available to attend the PAR monthly book club, they read the current book selection and discuss it during their regular tutoring sessions.

Santa has really impressed the PAR staff by mustering the courage to speak in public on behalf of PAR. She has spoken to new tutors during Tutor

Training to inspire them and to answer their questions about tutoring. Another major step that Santa has taken is to apply for the 2008 Learner Leadership Institute. During this six-month leadership class, she will join other Bay Area adult learners to practice leadership and advocacy skills. The group will make a video to be used by California's library literacy programs. They will become advocates for literacy by writing to Sacramento legislators to ask for continued funding of adult literacy services, and practicing speaking skills so they can go out into their communities and give a face to adult literacy.

Kathleen became a Partners in Reading tutor because both of her parents were volunteers. "My mother was an English as a Second Language volunteer teacher, so teaching was the first thing that came to my mind when I decided to volunteer." For Kathleen, the benefits of tutoring include the friendship she has developed with Santa over the time they have worked together. Kathleen really enjoys sharing special events with Santa and her family. She also really likes Santa's cooking!

Kathleen is motivated by the challenge of remembering how she learned various skills and trying to find different ways of teaching Santa how to do them. She has to be very creative in working with Santa. Kathleen also realizes how much she takes for granted when she thinks about her own literacy skills. She likes to watch Santa learn and do new things. It is especially rewarding when Santa masters a skill or concept and can apply it independently.

Kathleen's biggest regret is that her work schedule usually prevents her from attending PAR events with Santa. This year's holiday celebration was a rare exception. Santa and Kathleen enjoyed good food, live singing, and colorful dancing. They also used the time to discuss recipes and make plans. It was fun for them because usually when they meet their time is limited and they are focused on their lesson plan.

Santa is opening up to many possibilities that will enhance her skills and that will make her world bigger. Both Santa and Kathleen encourage other people to join Partners in Reading so that they can make a difference. To become a tutor or learner, please call Partners in Reading at (408) 808-2361.