

Program Views



From the Director's Desk

Our resource library is finally all here! Come to our 2205 Elm Street office to check out resource materials. We have a new system and sign out sheet thanks to Dale, our Administrative Coordinator and Traci Harpine our new Volunteer Librarian. I'd like to especially thank the administrators and friends at the Bellingham Technical College, for the years that you have generously donated your space in the Learning Center for our library and more recently for your assistance with the moving process. Tutors and learners if you are interested in seeing what we have to offer, check in with your coordinators, Charlotte and Jessica for recommendations. In addition, we are continuously compiling lists of pertinent websites and invite you all to share your web discoveries and insights.

Some Requests:

- Many of you have already updated us on your spring and summer hours. Please continue to report your hours on a monthly basis.
- Take advantage of the good weather

Learning More About Our Learners

You may have noticed that we have featured stories about Whatcom Literacy Council learners in recent newsletters. At WLC, we have the good fortune to work with many interesting people; some of whom moved to Bellingham from the other side of the globe, and some of whom were born and raised in Whatcom County. Each person who walks through our doors seeking help with their literacy skills has a unique story to tell, and we want to share their stories with WLC friends and volunteers.

As many of you know, collecting accurate data on hours and goals is very important to our program; we use that information to report back to our funders on our success. With that said, it is just as important to gather stories about our learners' lives that illustrate how important it is for them to grow their literacy skills. These personal stories help people understand the full impact that a tutor can have on someone's life. It is these individual tales of courage and perseverance that inspire people to become tutors or to donate funds to Whatcom Literacy Council. Each story brings the larger scope of our work into sharper focus, and brings an enhanced meaning to the work that we are all doing together.

Please consider submitting a story about

Program Views, continued

and feel free to incorporate outdoor tutoring sessions and/or make arrangements to meet up at interesting locations and events. (Please remember that all meetings must take place in public venues and no tutors and learners should carpool. *W.L.C. Policy*)

- Remember to ask your learners for writing samples and personal stories that they would be willing to share and then send them on to me or your coordinators.

Jessica, thanks for the very well-informed article on dyslexia in this edition. Tutors, please read her research to become better informed on this often misunderstood condition/label.

Happy Summer!
Gina Barrieau-Gonzales

more . . .

From the Director's Desk

yourself and your learner and what this experience has meant to each of you. We love hearing more about what you are doing and we may share that story in an upcoming publication. We will definitely share it with our staff and board members. Thank you for your help and enjoy the rest of summer! I hope to see many of you at our picnic on August 21.

Rachel

y'all Come!



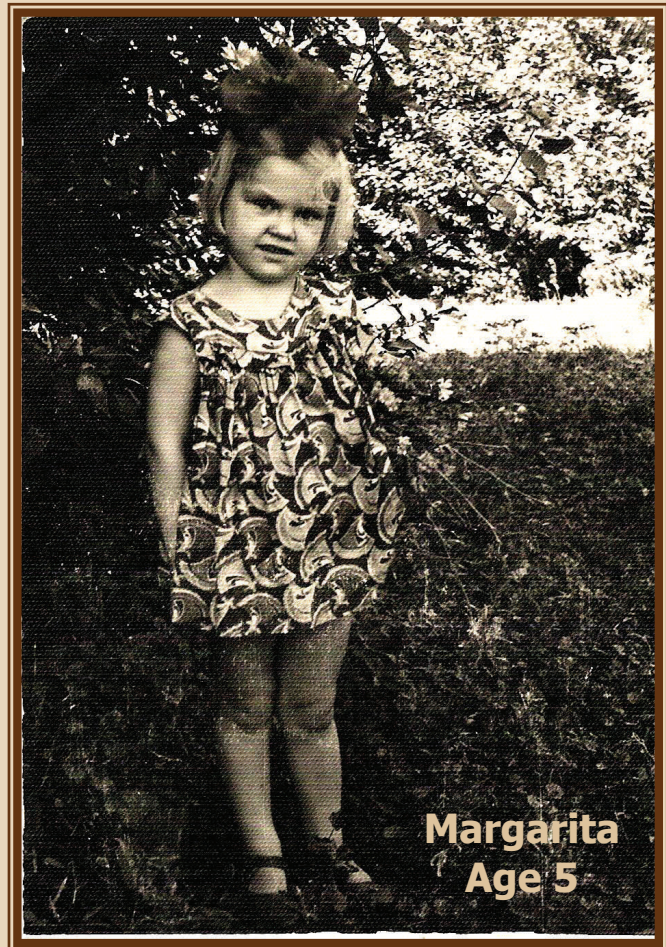
2nd Annual Potluck Picnic
Thursday
August 21st
At Lake Padden
4:30 - 7:30
Games * Music * Food * Fun!
RSVP/INFO: 647.3264
[by August 15th PLEASE!]

Learner Spotlight: Margarita's Misadventure

(In her own words)

Our memory has the capability to forget, but sometimes events are unforgettable even though they were a long time ago. When I was four, I attended day care and lived with my grandparents. My mother and stepfather lived in another city. An officer and soldiers came to tell us about the Soviet army on the Day of the Defender. They told us stories and showed us different stars that they wore on their uniforms. After their visit, we had a nap and a snack. As we were getting ready to listen to fairy tales, I noticed an officer's little star on the floor near a cabinet. I didn't have pockets in my dress, and I decided to put the small star in my mouth.

While I was listening to a story, I swallowed the tiny star. I asked our governess for permission to go to the restroom, and tried to cough. The star came out, and I promised myself that I wouldn't swallow the star again; I only would keep the star in my mouth. And again my star went down and came back after



coughing and again I told myself that I wouldn't swallow it. After swallowing it for the third time, I couldn't get my star back. I returned to the classroom to listen to the story, but I felt scared and cried. I didn't want to explain what had happened. When my grandmother came to take me home, I finally reluctantly told her.

My grandma couldn't understand how I swallowed the star. She asked what we ate for our snack. When she



heard that we ate some candy, she decided that I put the star into the candy and ate candy with the star. I remember how an ambulance took me to different hospitals and how we found my rescuer, a Doctor Martyenov. First, people in the hospital put me into a big sheet and bound my hands and feet, then they inserted a magnetic tube into my throat. I didn't understand what the medical people were doing with me. I wanted to speak, but I couldn't I wanted to cry, but my tears didn't come because the tube bothered me and didn't let me do that. Eventually, they removed the star and Dr. Martyenov showed it to me. After that procedure, my grandparents and aunts carried me home, but I couldn't understand why they did that, because I thought "I am a big girl" and can walk by myself.

At home, I felt hot and my grandparents made a bed on the floor for me. I couldn't sleep, and rolled around in pain. Later, I found out that I lost consciousness. Then I had some pleasant moments in the hospital. My governess brought my whole group to the hospital to see me through the window. They gave me their pictures,

colored pencils, albums and plasticine. I was very happy when I brought all my treasures home and arranged them. My grandma didn't want to upset my mother, so she wrote her that everything was O.K. with me, but she wrote to her oldest daughter everything that happened. Even though my grandma was not an educated woman, she liked to write letters. However, she usually asked other people to address the envelopes for her. Accidentally she changed envelopes and my mother got all the news about me.

Margarita

(Tales shared in an E.L.L. Talk Time Class)

August

❖ **WLC Offices
Summer Hours
Closed Fridays**

August 1st, 8th, 15th

❖ **Wednesday 20th
WLC Tutor Information Mtg**

Bellingham Public Library **6PM**
Information and sign up
for Fall Tutor Training.

IS THIS SYDXELAI ?

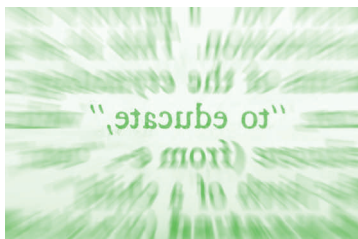
“I think my learner is dyslexic” a tutor said to me not too long ago. She went on to explain that she had observed her learner transposing letters in words. For example, the learner would read “was” for “saw” or “tip” for “pit”. Historically, this has been a marker for dyslexia.

The American doctor, Samuel Orton pioneered the study of learning disabilities (LD). In 1928 he conducted a study involving 14 children who had been failing in school. He found that these children had either average or above average IQ and shared similar behavior when trying to read. Orton noted that these children would frequently reverse letters or transpose their order. He coined the term strephosymbolia which means “twisted symbols” to discuss this phenomenon in his work.

Just as the word used to describe dyslexia has evolved so has our understanding of this learning disability. In this article I will discuss, 1) what we know about dyslexia today 2) how a tutor can help the learner and 3) where one can look for resources.

Researchers in the field of LD today believe that dyslexia is more than the confusion of visual symbols. In the November 2007 issue of Focus on Basics: Connecting Research and Practice, Sally and Bennett Shaywitz review the results of recent studies on dyslexia and reading in their article, “The Neurobiology of Reading and Dyslexia”. They cite many studies that show that dyslexic learners are not able to decode unfamiliar words automatically. In other words, the problem is phonological.

The evidence comes from functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This procedure takes a picture of an individual’s brain activity. From fMRI of persons with dyslexia, doctors could see that two of the three language areas involving decoding were not activated. When a learner can not identify (decode) a word easily, comprehension is affected. Think about a time when you had to read some technical information, such as an article from a medical journal, and encountered several new vocabulary



words. Were you able to understand it the first time you read it? Most likely you were not. This is the same challenge that dyslexic learners face with everyday reading material.

Like Orton, the Shaywitzs also noted that these individuals appeared to be of average or above average intelligence.

They wrote, “This pattern, a deficit in phonologic analysis

contrasted with intact higher-order cognitive abilities, offers an explanation for the paradox of otherwise intelligent, often gifted, creative people who experience great difficulty reading” (Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2007).

The body of research to which the Shaywitzs refer has broadened the criteria for identifying learners with dyslexia.

The following is a list of signs that are now associated with dyslexia. It was taken from the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) website.

- Reads slowly
- Experiences decoding errors
- Shows wide disparity between listening comprehension and reading comprehension

of some text

- Has trouble spelling
- May have difficulty with handwriting
- Exhibits difficulty recalling known words
- Has difficulty with written language
- May experience difficulty with math computations
- Decoding real words is better than nonsense words
- Substitutes one small sight word for another: a, I, he , the, there, was

If you suspect that your learner is dyslexic there are strategies that can be used to optimize learning.

Here is a list taken in part from the LDA website.

- Provide a quiet area for studying
- Use books on tape/CD
- Use books with large print and big spaces between lines
- Don’t make a big deal of spelling mistakes in “unpublished” work (i.e. journals, notes to oneself, etc.)
- Make use of technology when appropriate
- Use multi-sensory teaching methods (see different learning styles in your tutor manual)





Whatcom Literacy Council

Opening Doors. Changing Lives.

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IS THIS SYDXELAI ? continued

- Teach critical thinking skills instead of rote memory
- Present material in small increments

The next obvious question is, “*Where* can I find resources to help my dyslexic learner?” The Bellingham Public Library has a collection of several adult low literacy books that are of high interest. Many of them have large print and several titles have CDs. In addition, the WLC library has the Voyager series that presents information in



manageable parts and teaches critical thinking skills. These are features that are aligned with effective strategies for dyslexic learners. It is also worth noting here that learner’s with dyslexia have legal rights to seek accommodations in the work place and in the classroom.

As current research suggests individuals with dyslexia are very capable learners that just need the right educational approach. For more information on this topic, please contact me at 647.3264.

- Jessica Hilburn, ALP Coordinator