Project Read Update

Project Read: the Adult Literacy Program of the San Francisco Public Library

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The Tenderloin, San Francisco

by Neil Mills

I live on Post Street one block out of the Tenderloin. There is an ongoing debate where it starts and where it stops. The Tenderloin has always been a very dangerous and high crime area. Here is how it got its name. In the old days, the police that patrolled this high crime area received more money than the police in other areas of San Francisco. They received more money and they could buy a higher price meat (like Tenderloin).

I spend a lot of time walking through the area. I have seen the Tenderloin improved since I moved here from Washington D.C. in 1969. There are a lot of nice places to eat and some are very cheap. The corner grocery stores have great sandwiches to go. Through the years, Vietnamese families have moved in the apartments and opened up restaurants and coffee shops. You can see families taking their children to catch the school buses. It's nice to see children because it creates a nice atmosphere. The drug dealers, the addicts, street people and prostitutes are still there but with all that the area has improved. There is a lot to see just walking through the Tenderloin.

You can see the New Alcazar Theatre. It is Byzantine style and is one of the landmarks of the Tenderloin. It looks like a Mosque. It was built at 605 Geary Street for the Shriners. Glide Memorial Church at 330 Ellis Street provides meals for homeless and seniors. My friend Burl McNeiley has sung in the ensemble every Sunday there for 40 years. The City has now provided Sgt. John MacAulay Park at the corner of O'Farrell and Larkin. You can see children happily playing there and climbing monkey bars. As you are walking down O'Farrell Street you will see a classic building between Jones and Taylor. It's a Christian Science Church. Across the street there is a senior center where I have lunch on the weekends, a good lunch for $1.50.

Some information was obtained from the SF Chronicle's web site, http://www.sfgate.com.

What's inside ...

	Page
Learner Writing	1
Wedding Vows and Project Read	6
United Way Contributions	6
Welcome New Project Read Staff	6
Welcome New Tutors	6
Lab Tutor Opportunities	6
Summer Book Club for Families	7
Computer Lab Upgrade	7
Annual Holiday Party & Potluck	8
Thank you	8

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My Life in School

by Queen Amie Kurbally

When I was a little girl in Africa, I attended primary school called Infant One to Infant Three. School continued from Standard One through Standard Seven before high school. I realized how smart and clever I was when I started Standard classes.

Things started to change when we had a new teacher in Standard Two. He was mean to all the students. He would tell the class to run around in the school yard and get dirty. After that he would ask the girls to go and bathe in the garden. There were no bathrooms in the school at that time, except the Head Master's house because he lives in the school. Our teacher was a very tall man. He would stand at the front of the gate and tell us to take our clothes off so that he would have a good look at us. Anyone who tried to cover up would be in big trouble with him. He would beat you so bad that you wouldn't like to go to school the next day. All the students think that things will change when we all graduate to another class because then he wouldn't be with us. Surprisingly he continued to move with us to different classes. School was difficult when we had the new teacher because he was very abusive.

I kept going to school because of my father. He wanted me to be someone big in the future. My mother was not living with us then. My parents divorced when I was two years old. My father loved me so much. Even when I was sick he would sit on the side of the bed and cry thinking that I would die. He was a very good person. He loved people and always helped friends when they needed a place to stay.

At the time I was going to school, we had three people staying with us for free. A mother, daughter, and another woman were helping my father take care of me. He died when I was in Standard Two so I had to stay with one of the women at the compound. She was as abusive as my teacher was. Receiving abuse at school and at home was too much for me to bear. So I stopped going to school and ran away to be with my mother in the Casamance, Senegal.

I stayed with her for some time and then we went back to The Gambia to take care of the compound my father left me. I got married and had children. Continuing my education was something I always wanted to do. We don't have adult schools in the Gambia.

When I came to the States, I heard that adults can take classes. I was so happy I called Project Read. They asked me to come in and sign up. Project Read has been like a second home for me. They let me use the computer anytime and the staff is always helpful when you need them. They found me a wonderful tutor who tries so hard to make sure I reach my goals. I used to be very scared about school because of all the abuse in the past. Thank God that I'm not scared any more. Now I'm independent I can do anything I want about learning and I go to City College for my GED. This is all possible because of the love, help, and support I receive from the beautiful staff of Project Read. I have never been happier in my life. Thank you. May God bless everyone of you.

Queen presenting her artwork at a Project Read event

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My Name is Monica Barrera

by Monica Barrera

Celeste and Monica

When I was in Sunshine school for the physically handicapped, the teachers did not teach me how to read or write, so I did not know how to read a book or write a letter. Then when I went to middle school I couldn't do any of the class work, and I flunked all my classes. Then when I got to high school it got too hard for me. The school just kept passing me into the next grade, just so they could get me out of school even though I couldn't read or write. A friend told me about Project Read, after I looked into it I joined the program. Now I am 37 years old. So now I feel more confident to ask people to spell their name when they call to leave a message. When I go out I can read some of the signs. Sometimes I still have to ask for help to fill out forms. I feel better now that I can read.

Save Your Money

by Wonderful Wright

My Name is Wonderful. I would like to write about something very important to people who have any kind of insurance. When you have a change in your life, think about your insurance policies. Do you have a new baby? Do you have a new car? Or did you move? Or did you change policies? Be sure you call them and let them know about any change. **This is the key**: put it in writing and tell them to let you know when they receive your letter. Ask them about your refund.

Because this is what happened to me. I had a health policy and I changed over to MediCal and was still paying on the bill and no one told me to stop paying the bill. And so when I got the bill I called them. I told them about MediCal. And she said you have to write us and cancel. You must sign and fax it. So I hope this will help someone and save them money.

My Idea About Health Care

by Neil Mills

At the present time senior citizens pay about $50.00 a month for health care. They pay $100.00 for their first doctor visit. After that the government picks up the rest. The same type of system may work for working people.

I think working people could pay 10% of their wages into a general insurance fund and 1% for each child and 5% for their spouse. This entitles you to go to the doctor at will.

One percent of the insurance fund will help promising doctors and nurses pay for their education. This is only a start. Many other suggestions can benefit this program. Hillary Clinton could not do this, so why do you think I can!

Health Care

by Tim Long

I think health care is one of the most important things. I think everybody should have health care. We have all the knowledge and experience to make people healthier, but half the people can't afford it. I think that big companies should take it over and cut out insurance companies. The big companies should take it over because they employ most of workforce. The government should make sure the rest of the people have health care. Another solution would be to make it nonprofit. Both insurance and heath care are so expensive for everyone because companies are out to make a profit.

How to Control Guns

by Odell Mixon, Jr.

To improve San Francisco, we should make it very hard to buy guns. We should close gun shops and other places that sell guns in the city and maybe even the state. To buy guns we need to keep track of all the buyers: take their pictures, get their finger prints, and make them show their IDs before they can buy any guns (just like going to jail). If that's not hard enough we'll think of something harder.

My First Vacation

by Dayana Salazar

Today is Saturday and Franco, my boyfriend, is driving with me to Los Angeles or LA. It is a long drive. We saw a lot of farms and a lot of Latinos who were working in high heat. People don't realize how much work the farm workers have to do to get some tomatoes. I was looking at so many trucks carrying a lot of tomatoes, onions, strawberries and a lot of oranges.

I was happy to finally reach LA. We were going to go to Universal Studios but I woke up pretty late so we started driving late. It was ok for us to not go there. Franco doesn't need to spend the money. I liked staying in the hotel and it had a nice swimming pool.

My vacation in Las Vegas was really exciting because I saw so many buildings from different parts of the world and the USA. We stayed in the Treasure Island Hotel on the 22nd floor. It had a great view. I was able to see the freeway and the strip looking toward the north. The weather was extremely hot and humid.

We decided to walk around the strip and the different casinos. We walked for six hours on the first day wearing new sandals, and so as a result our feet were in pain. We went to some kind of drugstore and we bought some Band-Aids for our injuries. Before we went back to the hotel we ate some fried calamari and fish sandwiches and it was delicious.

The next day we took a lot of pictures and gambled just a little bit. I spent $10 and Franco $20 but we did not win anything. So we had a nice chat and we saw some shows and a lot of people losing money but they didn't learn the lesson. Finally, we walked more and we saw the Flamingo hotel, New York, New York, the Mirage, Caesar's Palace, Excalibur, Treasure Island, the MGM, the Venetian, the Bellagio, the Luxor and Harrah's hotel. At Harrah's we ate at a huge buffet, all-you-can-eat seafood. At the end of our vacation in Las Vegas, the one thing I can say is that Franco made my dream come true. Thank you my love.

Hot Dog Friday

by Larry Condall

My name is Larry Condall. I work at the Altamont as a desk clerk and I love it because I get to meet many people that live there, who need help and can use a friend to talk with. Now these people are good people they just had a few things going bad in their lives, so I try to be there for them. I thought it would be a good thing to start something around the Altamont where everyone can come together, so I started HOT DOG FRIDAY. Every Friday I go to Foods Co. to get the ingredients it takes to prepare come back and get started. It's nice to look out and see people who never talk to each other talk on this day; that makes me happy because I see so many people who just need to know someone cares. Hot Dog Friday has been going on since July 23, 2004 and it's a hit. I would like this place to be the nicest building to live in, after all it takes everybody to make it work, and that is what's happening love; that's what is all about.

P.S. I do these things as well as my duty as a Desk Clerk.

The Mayor for Two Decades

by Shedrick Ferguson

James Rolph was the Mayor of San Francisco for 19 years, longer than any other person was. He was a native of San Francisco. He took office in 1912 at the age of 43. Before he came into public life he grew up in the Mission and owned a shipbuilding business. Before he died he was Governor.

Rolph lived from 1869 to 1934. He was raised in the Mission District at 21st and Guerrero. After high school he and a partner started a shipbuilding business. They ran their business for about 22 years. Then in 1909 the public asked him to run for mayor. Rolph turned them down in 1909, but in 1911 he agreed to run for mayor. He won by a landslide. He took office in 1912. He was re-elected four times to be the Mayor of San Francisco.

While he was in office he helped to build the:

- Stockton Tunnel completed on Dec. 11, 1914
- Twin Peaks Tunnel completed on Feb. 3, 1918
- Duboce Tunnel completed on Oct. 21, 1928
- Bay Bridge completed on Nov. 12, 1936
- Golden Gate Bridge completed on May 28, 1937

In 1930 he ran for Governor and won. He took office in 1931 but during his term the Depression set in. He lost his popularity as people lost their jobs. At the end of his term he had a heart attack and died in 1934. The people of San Francisco gave James Rolph the largest funeral in the history of San Francisco.

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Vote or Die

by Dewayne Bradford

I would like to start off by saying I am glad I can write and say what is on my mind while we still have this thing called free speech. Although all may not agree with what is said in this article, I know most of these topics have affected everybody's life in some way. This election is one of the most important elections. A lot is at stake and there is a lot that the public has not been told. That statement stands true for all that think they are getting full information from regular news on public TV. If you want to hear truth, read the paper or listen to radio stations like KQED or CSPAN Radio. You will hear all that is going on and how we the people view what is going on right now and how we truly feel. Our freedom of rights and freedom of speech are at stake in this up coming election. During the Republican National Convention in New York, they had free speech zones, which is where protestors had to stand to get their point across on how they feel Bush has treated us and where he has taken the war in the last four years. President Bush's actions have shown how the government has twisted our rights and enforced its own laws without really getting the public opinion in most situations. Bush has recently showed us how he can overturn and enforce his own laws and send a country to war without voting on it. It is time for us, the public, to stand up for ourselves. People, this government works for us.

We the people can overturn this government any time if we don't like where it is taking our nation. That is why this election is so important. If you are like most people, and are not the wealthiest person, you feel the demands. Your pockets feel the demand of increased gas prices and increased healthcare costs. You know I can continue – those are just some of the issues. I believe it's time to reevaluate these laws. It's time we go back to our old Constitution. The public should know how important these laws are and how they will affect us in the future.

I also want to touch on John Kerry and his debates with President Bush on his war background and what is true versus what is untrue. We don't care. Do I need to say that again? We don't care! As we all know, we cannot change the past so why even touch on it? We care about change and how we and our children can live a healthy and happy life. Touch on the important things, Kerry, like healthcare, the education system and small business support. It's time for growth, it's time for change, it's time for truth.

My First Time Voting

by Lilton Powell, Jr.

Before I first voted in California there was a pending law that 18-year olds could vote. I can't remember if this law was nationwide or not but I think it was. The battle cry was if 18-year olds could be drafted and fight and die for their country, they should have the right to vote.

This new law was passed while I was in the Army. I got out of the Army in 1973, but I don't think there was any election going on until Nov. of 1974. I have been voting ever since then. I wish my children would become more active in the voting process. I'll keep after them and maybe they'll vote in the upcoming election.

The Future of California

by Elizabeth Hughes

The future of California will have no homeless and it will be safe on the street at any time of the day, as it was in the 1950s.

To the future President of the United States, the future Governor of California, and the future Mayor of San Francisco, we need jobs for many people in California. Stop sending our jobs overseas so that more jobs for these California people will be there. America's products are a lot better than overseas' products. If it keeps up we will lose the ability to know how to produce anything. We are looking for a better future for California with many jobs of all different kinds of pay, and vacation pay. Future President, future Governor, and Mayors of San Francisco, stop thinking of the people overseas and start thinking about the people of the United States.

Easy Voter Guide

For clear information about registering to vote, how to vote, and what the issues are - check out our friends at Easy Voter. You can visit them online at **www.easyvoter.org** or through a link on our computer lab home page. You can pick up a paper copy of the current Easy Voter Guide from the Project Read office.

Bride and Groom Celebrate Their Wedding Vows -- and Project Read!

Last summer, Ms. Dale Posner and Mr. Larry Swimer were married. Like all weddings, this was a joyous occasion. What made this ceremony especially touching and truly unique was the bride and groom's request that wedding guests make charitable donations to Project Read in lieu of the usual wedding gifts. Dale and Larry are longtime supporters of Project Read, but this gracious gesture was the first of its kind and is greatly appreciated by our learners, tutors, and staff. Approximately $400 was raised through this wonderful act. Thank you Dale and Larry – may you have many happy years together.

United Way Contributions

United Way contributions are an important source of funding for Project Read. If you are considering making a contribution through the United Way, remember you can designate your gift to Project Read by filling in **Project Read, San Francisco Public Library** as the Agency Name. That's all there is to it! Please tell others so that they can also choose Project Read as their designated agency.

Welcome New Tutors!

Christopher Balme
Nicole Cheslock
Sam Christie
Lindsey Dillon
Jane Field
Darryl Forman
John Paul Gauer
Ricardo Gomes
Melissa Lawrie
Shannon Little
Carol Mauro
Kathy McClanahan
Susan Miller
Susy Moorhead
Rebecca Percey
Amberly Polidor
Fedra Pouideh
Doug Sauder
Joanna Schaller
Alys Shin
Jen Wen
Vera Whelan
Denis Williams

New Project Read Staff

On September 1st, Rhonda Porter became the newest member of the Project Read staff as she began her duties as Office Manager. Rhonda is a seasoned library employee who has provided outstanding support to the Acquisitions Department since 1995. Although she misses her colleagues in Acquisitions, Rhonda tells us that the warm welcome and ongoing support of the Project Read tutors, learners, and staff quickly made her feel like a member of our community. So, if you haven't yet met Rhonda, stop by the office, say hello and welcome her to the Project Read Family.

The Few, the Proud, the Lab Tutors

We are in the process of upgrading the computer lab and revamping some of our materials and procedures. We are assembling a team of approximately 10 tutors who can volunteer in the lab for two evenings a month. This is a great opportunity to meet and provide crucial support to other members of the Project Read community. We will hold special training sessions to show all the ins and outs of how our new computers will be set up and how to best support learners and tutors as they use our lab.

If you are patient, flexible, and available, please give Brian a call at 557-4388.

This summer we held our 1st ever book club for families. In true Project Read style, we tailored it to fit the needs of the individual families who participated.

We spent quality time with folks and helped them choose from a vibrant selection of brand new, top quality books to add to their home libraries. We had a series of one-to-one and group sessions where we discussed many ways to make reading a fun and rewarding part of family life. Some of the topics we chatted about during this project are: using television and video as a learning tool, the joys and challenges of sharing books with siblings, using drawing and coloring activities with books, sharing books long distance with family members, strategies to make children active participants in maintaining a healthy diet, developing personal taste in books, connecting books to everyday activities, and how to access other services of the public library.

The book club lives on as members still come by and chat with us about the books they read and show us book related activities they've done or are still doing.

We thank the Project Read families who joined us this summer and we hope they enjoyed it. We also hope they enjoy the $20 gift certificates from Stacey's Books that we will soon present to each of them. (Special thanks to Stacey's for underwriting half the cost of these certificates).

Sadrina -- a young woman of art, intellect, and action

Melissa shares the Snoopy and Charlie Brown figures she crafted by hand for her book club activity

A close-up of our new pal Snoopy

Computer Learning Lab: Big Screens, Little Boxes

As many of you have noticed, we have beautiful new computer monitors in our lab. That is only the beginning. We are in the process of a full scale lab upgrade that will provide us with powerful, reliable, and compact equipment. In the upcoming weeks we will mount many of the monitors onto special multi-position arms, connect super-charged mini-computers, and add wireless keyboards and mice. This new equipment will free up desktop space and make it easier to use books and other materials when working in the lab. We will still offer all the old software favorites like Spell it Deluxe and Ultimate Phonics. We will also add improved versions of programs like Microsoft Office XP and the deluxe version of Read Please.

Please stop by the lab during the next few weeks to say goodbye to the trusty machines that have served us so well and welcome in these fabulous new techno-tools.

Mark Your Calendars for the Annual Holiday

Party & Potluck

Thursday, December 9, 2004

This year, Project Read members and staff will again come together to celebrate the holiday season with a festive party and pot luck on Thursday, December 9 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Don't miss this opportunity to sample some amazing home cooking and spend a fun evening with other tutors and learners. We will also have some special door prizes and FREE raffle gifts donated by local businesses.

We are looking for some fabulous goods or professional services that can be given away during the evening's free raffle. Please consider asking your employer to make a donation for this event. Here are some examples of previous donations: a magazine subscription, tickets for brunch at a local hotel, 3 free hours of professional organizing, gift certificates to a bookstore, movie passes, etc.

So mark your calendars for the evening of Thursday, December 9th. Invitations will be mailed to all of you in November. We look forward to seeing your there!

Project Read Staff

Thank you

☺ John Gildersleeve and Erin McAleece for leading the Wednesday Night Readers meetings. ☺ Friends of the San Francisco Public Library for their generous support. ☺ Tutor contacts Barbara Angus, Frances Culp, Susan Fink, John Gildersleeve, Jane Ginsburg, JoAnn Lopez, Cathy Morgan, Terri Ryan, Richard Sikes & Patricia L. Stone for providing invaluable support to the staff and fellow tutors. ☺ Patricia Coyle for proofreading this newsletter. ☺ Shaneika Henderson, Judith Coley, Anthony Brooks, and Jennifer Barnes for speaking at the July 13th Tutor Orientation.☺Gail Shen, Jennifer Barnes, Erin McAleece, Suzanne Stassevitch, and Monica Rutt for assisting with the California Voices Videoconference on August 10th.☺ Suzanne Stassevitch, Queen Amie, Erin McAleece, and Benny Hill for speaking at the September 14th Tutor Orientation. ☺Doris Osenda for office support. ☺Pat Murphy, author of *Rachel in Love*, for speaking to the Wednesday Night Readers Book Club on July 28th. ☺ Ingrid Nystrom and the staff of Stacey's Bookstore for inviting Leon and Randy to speak at their weekly lunch time speakers' series on August 19th and for their generous donation of gift certificates to our Families for Literacy book club.

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San Francisco Public Library

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