



Local, free program teaches adults to read

June 1, 2017

When Sandra Vigil was a child, family chores and younger siblings took priority over homework. Reading didn't come easily to her, and without encouragement at home, Vigil fell further and further behind, finally dropping out in high school. By her 40s, Vigil was embarrassed because she couldn't read well, so she sought help at the [Rio Arriba Adult Literacy Program](#) (RAALP) at the Española Public Library. She wanted to be able to read stories to her grandchildren and understand written policies at work.

RAALP matched Vigil with a trained, volunteer tutor. The pair agreed to the program's guidelines of meeting at least two hours weekly in a public location. RAALP provided the pair with materials, such as low-level novels written for adults, and adult basic literacy workbooks. Vigil and her tutor recently marked two years of working together. During that time, Vigil registered to vote and voted for the first time. Just as empowering, Vigil was able to write out a shopping list, something she had never done before. Recently, she and her tutor have been working on reading restaurant menus, so she can order with confidence at an upcoming family gathering. They also practice reading training materials for her job. Vigil is now reading at a third-grade level, and her self confidence is growing.

A tutor and an English-as-a-second-language student.

An estimated 36 million adults in the US cannot read, write, or do basic math above the third-grade level. The Rio Arriba Adult Literacy Program, which is free, works with adults in Los Alamos and Rio Arriba counties reading at or below sixth-grade level and with new English-language learners. Volunteers take a full-day tutor training and receive on-going support and study materials. No previous teaching experience or foreign language ability is required. To volunteer, contact read@raalp.org, 505-747-6162, or visit raalp.org.

These newly trained basic literacy tutors come from Espanola, Chama, Los Alamos, Dixon, Pojoaque, El Rito, Abiquiu, and elsewhere.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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