



MAIN LIBRARY ON CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

## Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

First we want to make an important announcement.

We're pleased to announce our **Select Book Sale and Annual Meeting**.

They'll take place on **Saturday, May 21** at the Main Library's Whittlesey Community Room and veranda at 325 Civic Center, Richmond, 94804.

From 12 noon to 4 PM we will be offering books at discounted prices, along with a selection of special books. Buy a few for family, friends or your own collection. Come join us and have some refreshments as well.

At 2 PM we will convene our Annual Meeting to vote on key matters like officers and bylaws. At the meeting, our members can nominate an "at-large director" on the board. Information is in the mail to members, along with a brief survey.

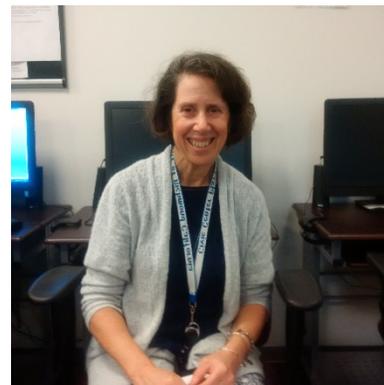
# FRIENDS OF THE RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY



FOCUS ON ADULT EDUCATION

## Leaping Ahead: Richmond and Adult Literacy

*By Christine Volker*



Sherry Drobner, LEAP Director

Spring is the season of new beginnings. It's an apt time to present the Literacy for Every Adult Program (LEAP), which helps adults to achieve literacy and education goals.

Sherry Drobner, director, explains the many facets of LEAP in this interview. Let's start.

### **What is LEAP and whom does it serve?**

This free program, under the auspices of the Richmond Public Library, is available to Richmond residents. It originally focused on reading. Now we also include high school equivalency courses and test preparation, English as a Second Language (ESL), math, computer literacy, college bound programs and the new online high school diploma program. Started in 1984, LEAP is one of the first library adult literacy programs in all of California.

### **LEAP has very few staff members and depends on volunteers. Where do you find them?**

They respond to our listings on the internet's volunteer sites, on social media platforms and by word of mouth. We're also active at public events and distribute flyers. Our longevity in the community works to our advantage as many people know about LEAP and recommend us to others.

### **Tell me more about these crucial volunteers.**

Some have been here for many years. One for twenty, another close to fifteen. Volunteers generally commit to two hours a week. The key quality that volunteers need is commitment. That relationship with the students needs to be respectful, caring and patient. Flexibility is a key quality as student schedules can change; they have a lot that comes up in their lives; they're typically juggling multiple responsibilities in order to carve out time for their learning.

### **How about the students? How do they initially come to LEAP?**

Many LEAP students have not had a positive experience with education. Something stopped them. Maybe it was in their personal lives, a lack of role models, poor influences, having to help the family, lack of belief in themselves and sometimes lack of support from teachers. Many need to overcome past traumas. We try to help them over the obstacles, showing them that learning is not

painful. A case in point is our "Math without Fear" class.

Most come to LEAP to get their GED so they can find a job or go to college. We work with them to grow their confidence and attain success, accomplishing this in small classes and one on one tutoring. This progress is important for them as individuals and also for their families.

Students come to us in multiple ways. They hear by word of mouth, referral from other agencies and community partnerships. One example is the nearby Richmond WORKS office, which assesses their skills and recommends us as a means for the students to obtain their high school diploma. One of our core principles is to build our community of students, so they coalesce, feel supported and are not isolated.

### **Tell me more about the completion of programs.**

We assemble a student waiting list of roughly 15 – 20 names a month. We're pretty creative in keeping students progressing as we gauge their interest and commitment to the program. We provide 12 hours of instruction and orientation over a few weeks. They take those along with prerequisite classes. This enables the students to build a foundation as well as partnerships and bridges. The students must have clear goals and strong commitments in order to ultimately experience success.

Most of our students are interested in obtaining high school equivalency, which now can be accomplished via the GED, HiSET and TASC exams. It can take anywhere from a few months to four years of on and off study for students to attain this goal; most of our students have attended some high school. Currently we graduate around 20 students from the GED program a year.

We're always looking at ways to retain more students. People have a lot already going on in their lives between family and work. Retention is difficult in adult education and runs around 30% for the GED program, meaning that is the fraction of

enrolled GED students ultimately completing the program. That does not count students completing other courses in line with their short-term goals.

To make educational goals possible for working people, we offer night classes Monday through Thursday from 6-8PM. In the daytime we have classes, like ESL for example, from mid-morning to early afternoon, after which time we concentrate on high school diplomas. We offer mentoring for high school programs as well.

### **How do you manage to deliver and broaden your programs in this period of budget constraints?**

We have a few types of funding sources. Roughly 50% of our budget comes from the City of Richmond, with another 50% from the state and federal grants. We consistently search for additional grants.

We strive to stretch our dollars. Although this might sound self-serving, I have to say that when I compare LEAP to similar programs in other places, we are doing more with our limited resources. We tend to find what we need. We're constantly juggling students, volunteers and dollars. We've been successful at putting together some student field trips, as an example, to make science come alive. For subjects like tech job training, it's not wise for us to duplicate expertise using our scarce budget dollars, so we made the decision to employ excellent outside resources. We refer students to the Stride Center and online via the GED Academy where teachers and courses stay current and relevant.

### **What's New?**

On March 1, the Career Online High School Diploma Program went live. Through this program, adult Richmond residents can earn a high school diploma and career certificate. To start, they need a library card, online assessment and interview. There are two weeks of prerequisites along with success measurement. After an initial period they will be eligible for a scholarship award. They'll also be given online coaching for career pathing, guidance and connecting with resources.

LEAP will provide tutors if needed, along with access to computers. We want those students to come into LEAP at least four hours a week to do some coursework here, to get additional support and encouragement, again, so they are not functioning in isolation. It'll take up to 19 months to complete the program. The students receive a scholarship from the state and along with that, LEAP must find monies to match the \$1,100 per person cost. We're looking to businesses and others to help sponsor a resident going for a degree. We will cover up to 18 student slots at this point.

We've had more than 100 inquiries. So far, 46 people have started the prerequisite class, with 10 already moving ahead into the full program. We are very excited about this and hope it will boost the graduation rates.

Another recent accomplishment is our Digital Health Project. We created learning plans to help people's internet search skills in order to find health information for them and their families. This ten hour curriculum involved English as a Second Language instruction along with Excel and general computer skills. Since September, 120 people graduated, half of them taking the course in Spanish.

### **What is your background and how did you come to LEAP?**

I first started working at the Alameda County Library in 1988 with a "Write to Read" program. At that point I had a Masters in Public Administration and a previous background as a community organizer training volunteers. Given my work at the library, I wanted to understand the field in depth. While working, I pursued and obtained an MA and a Ed.D. at UC Berkeley in Language, Literacy and Culture. I developed programs at Juvenile Hall as well as after school programs for school districts that used one on one tutoring. The LEAP job came up and the challenge inspired me, so I applied nine years ago.

**What are some of the obstacles holding you back from even more success? Besides the city's budget dollars, that is.**

Overall, adult education programs are not considered a priority in the U.S. That means less funding and fewer resources are available for us to tap. Other types of external support from the federal or state governments which would make it easier for the students to pursue their goals and attain them, are also scarce.

We want to upgrade our website. It's a key way for us to introduce ourselves to prospective students and volunteers.

**How about the future, beyond what we've discussed?**

I'd love to have 200 Richmond residents graduate each year with a high school education!

**Thanks for your insights and your work. Richmond certainly benefits, since roughly 26% of our adult population does not have a high school diploma or GED.**



Leap Graduation

**LEAP is located at 440 Civic Center Plaza**  
**(510) 307-8084**  
**Please consider volunteering, attending, or contributing:**  
<https://sites.google.com/site/literacyforever/adultprogram/home>

## The Changing Mission of Libraries

*By Christine Volker*

**In April, the Pew Research Center came out with an interesting study on "Libraries and Learning".**

**Their national survey of library users and community members showed the following highlights:**

- 71% of those surveyed agreed that libraries serve the learning and educational needs of their communities well/pretty well. The percentage was even more positive among women, African-Americans and Hispanics.
- Anywhere from 12% to 50% of community members don't know what else their library offers beyond books. (Examples: e-books, job and career-related online courses, with % varying among each).
- Most recent library users identify themselves as a "lifelong learner." They cite benefits such as feeling more capable, well-rounded, getting new perspectives on their lives, making friends, feeling part of the community.
- 12% of those surveyed didn't know if/how library helps the educational needs of their community and their family.



### McGraw Hill – Shifting Mission of Libraries Today

Their article (first link below) makes clear that gone are the old days when libraries only stocked printed books. Now they need to offer ebooks, Audio books, video, programing, makerspaces, training and more.

This calls for spreading a budget, even a materials budget, over more categories, pointing to more resource dollars needed as well as more library space.

<http://mcgrawhillprofessionalblog.com/shifting-mission-libraries-today/>

The second link below is a quick video and features two librarians speaking about the changed mission in a nutshell.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jctW\\_gh6iSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jctW_gh6iSo)

## More Upcoming Events

By *Christine Volker*

**Friends of the Richmond Public Library Board Meeting: Friday, May 6 at 12 noon**

Main Library's Whittlesey Community Room, 325 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, 94804

We'll be discussing the Library's request for program funds. As always, our board meetings are open to members.

**Financial Education Seminar: Monday, May 9 from 5:30PM to 7PM**

Main Library Whittlesey Community Room, 325 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, 94804

The topic will be "Take the Wheel: Get the Best Car Deal" Explaining how to determine what you can afford, deal with dealers and more. By Travis Credit union. Hosted by the Library.

**June 1. Start of the Richmond Public Library's Summer Reading Programs!**

These fun opportunities encourage reading for adults, teens and kids. Participant entry forms will be available at the Main Library (325 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, 94804).

In addition to enjoying reading, participants will be entered in a drawing to win prizes. For example, a lucky adult reader will win a Kindle Fire. Let your

friends and family know. Sponsored by the Friends of the Richmond Public Library.

**Book Reading and Author Talk  
Saturday, July 9 at 2 PM. Save the Date**

Local author Mary Monroe will read from her new book: *Every Woman's Dream*. Details to come. Sponsored by the Friends of the Richmond Public Library.

## Future Newsletter Features

By *Christine Volker*

Tired of getting squeezed into small seats on an airplane? Become an Armchair Traveler from the comfort of your own couch. We'll be featuring a column on libraries around the world for your fascination.

Almost as fascinating will be our survey results of members, underway and to be published in our Summer newsletter.

## Don't Forget to Visit!

Our website at:  
[www.richmondlibraryfriends.org](http://www.richmondlibraryfriends.org)

### Bayview Branch

5100 Hartnett Ave.

Richmond, CA 94804

510-620-6566



### West Side Branch

135 Washington Ave.

Richmond, CA 94801

510-620-6567

**The Friends' Book Nook at the Main Library  
Book Carts at West Side and Bayview Branches**

Book Bargains await you!

Only \$1.00 for hard cover, \$.50 paperback.

Payment at the Circulation Desk.

**"Grab a Bag" sales at Main Library on first  
Wednesday of the month (10 items for \$3).  
Next "Grab a Bag" is May 4.**

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Friends of the Richmond Public Library  
(510) 620-6555 or via email at  
[FriendsRPLCA@yahoo.com](mailto:FriendsRPLCA@yahoo.com)**

*We are seeking volunteers for book sorting. In addition, we welcome those with publicity, social media and technology talent. Email us at the above address.*



**Retirement Congratulations!**



Christina Nypaver and Shakiara Ward, Homework Help Tutor

As a Children's Librarian, Christina headed up the successful Homework Help program for many years. Fluent in Spanish and German, Christina initiated the Richmond Reading Heroes program last summer, boosting kids' reading skills. She will be missed. In retirement, Christina looks forward to perfecting her jazz guitar playing and continuing her study of Italian. Thank you for your public service, Christina!



**In Memoriam**

**Sonya Darling**

**From the West Side Book Group**

