DISCOVERIES
The 2017 Collection of Stories
Written by BoulderReads Learners

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SMART DOG</td>
<td>ALI NOURIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MY DAD</td>
<td>DANA WOODWARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>ALL ABOUT BEST BUDDIES</td>
<td>DAVID ALLSHOUSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>THE ASPEN TRAIL</td>
<td>ERENDIRA SILVA-GARCIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2016: A VERY BUSY YEAR</td>
<td>FRANKLIN ESCOBAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CHRISTMAS WITH MY ADORABLE GRANDCHILDREN</td>
<td>KENJI IKEDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN</td>
<td>LUCILIA VALENTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>IMMIGRANT</td>
<td>MANOUCHEHR HOSSEINI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ANOTHER HISTORY</td>
<td>MANUELA LONGORIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–13</td>
<td>MOVING TOWARD MY DREAM</td>
<td>MAPUTO MENSAH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>STORIES ABOUT MY DAD</td>
<td>MEBRAT FIKAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>RADOUANE CHAHMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>MY STORY ON EDUCATION</td>
<td>NOEMI ROBLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>FOX AND THE HYENA</td>
<td>RACHEL KUIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>NEW BEGINNING</td>
<td>SUNITA SHRESTHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–21</td>
<td>AN EASY LIFE IS NOT MY TASTE</td>
<td>SHOAIB ZENATI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SMART DOG BY ALI NOURIAN

Rahmad always wanted to teach his son, Rostam, all he knew about farming. Rahmad began the lessons by irrigating the wheat fields. However, before they could begin, Rostam said he could not go as he must finish his school work first. Rahmad became perturbed by this and he asked, “What made you say that? You can do your homework later. We can irrigate one night a week and tonight is our allotted time. It is a long way to the head gate.”

As they walked in the moonlight, Rahmad saw a dog with pups under a bridge in danger of drowning in the ditch if the head gate were to be opened. Rahmad then placed the pups on higher ground before continuing to the head gate. One night, two weeks later, Rahmad heard a scratching at the front door. He opened the door and saw the dog from under the bridge with a pup in her mouth. When the dog saw him, she set the pup down and ran away fast. Rahmad did not know what was going on. He brought the puppy in to the house and cared for it. While the puppy was under his care, he wondered why the dog had left her puppy with him. He decided to find out what the problem was.

He left his farmhouse and walked around the adjacent area. He was walking up a nearby mountain when he saw a deep hole. At the bottom of the hole were the remains of many dogs. Rahmad believed he had discovered why the dog had left her puppy with him. The mother must have realized the litter was diseased except for one and decided that this puppy’s best chance for survival would be under his care. This dog was obviously very smart!
MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MY DAD
BY DANA WOODWARD

My dad died on August 18, 2015, but it took months for everyone to be able to get together for his memorial.

On March 15, 2016, I left Denver for Hawaii for our father’s memorial service. I was still very sad about not having a chance to say good-bye to my father before he died.

The rest of the family met us at Oahu. We stayed all together in a house in Nanakuli on the beach. We snorkeled. We cooked outside. We were all together as a family for a few days. It was a great time to be together.

On March 19, we all gathered at Punahou School. My dad had taught there for many years. We all grew up on Punahou School grounds as children. Many people there remembered us from those days. It felt very strange to see the place and all those people again. Everything and everyone had changed a lot.

People told stories about my dad. One of my brothers played the guitar and led us in a song. In addition, all of the close family were given leis, and another lei was put on my dad’s picture. Then we had a very fancy dinner.

The next day we went to Kailua to spread his ashes. We went out in outriggers, arranged the outriggers in a circle and strewed the flowers from the leis along with his ashes, after which we had lunch at a friend’s house.

That night we cooked out again at the house and spent the next day together. I left on the 23rd with Rick and Michael. However, there was a big blizzard in Denver, so we spent the night in Seattle and came home on the 24th. It was hard but it was good to have been together again in Hawaii.
This year for Discoveries, I want to talk about a program I am in called “Best Buddies.” Best Buddies is a non-profit organization that matches people with disabilities with people from the community in order to create friendships with nice people who are all different.

Best Buddies was started by Anthony K. Shriver in 1989. Shriver started Best Buddies because he had a disabled brother. Shriver wanted to create a way for his brother to make friends and meet different people. I think it is an amazing thing a brother would do for another person, to work so hard and spend so much time starting an organization that helps disabled people. Now, Best Buddies is world-wide. Through Best Buddies, people all over the world connect and spend time together doing different activities. All my buddies have been from CU. When I spend time with my buddy, we go out into the community. Sometimes we go to the movies, sometimes we go out to eat, or to one of the CU Ladies volley ball games. It’s fun when you see your buddy around town and you just run into them. You learn how many people in Boulder know each other. It’s nice to make new friends and

Best Buddies helps you not be afraid to talk to new people. We do things like bowling, playing games, making bracelets, and artwork.

The buddy I had last year was named Lauren. We still talk, text, and email. I tell her what I’ve been doing, and sometimes we go to a coffee shop and visit. One of my favorite things about the program is when I get to meet my buddy’s parents. I met Lauren’s parents at a piano and drum recital where Lauren was playing the piano. Lauren was from Chicago. When the Chicago Black Hawks won the Division Title, Lauren’s parents got shirts for me and my girlfriend Teri. One of my favorite things about Lauren was that she also played drums in the CU marching band. I knew three or four other Best Buddies who were also in the band. Another special memory was going to Lauren’s graduation.

When I first joined the program nine years ago, my first buddy was named Brooke, and she was a hockey player at CU. One Christmas, we exchanged gifts. My gift from her was an official CU Hockey jacket! The jacket fits perfectly and I still wear it sometimes. When I was buddies with Brooke, I met her
friends, teammates, and coaches. Sometimes we would watch the games together. Brooke is one of my favorite buddies.

In 2016, the Colorado organization did a walk-a-thon for the first time. The walk-a-thon was just for fun and was at the Fort Collins fair grounds near the Budweiser Center at “The Ranch.” We had a course on the sidewalk that we walked around. After that, we played fair games, did face painting, and created “Best Buddies” tattoos while we ate burritos. I got to drive a golf cart with my buddy around the course. We visited with different university chapters of Best Buddies from around the state of Colorado, including University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. There was a lady from the Fort Collins newspaper reporting about Best Buddies. She asked me questions and took my picture. I really enjoyed meeting other people from around the state and hearing that they do different activities than ours.

Best Buddies is a very important part of my life and will be until the day I die. I recommend the program to everyone who is disabled. It gives non-disabled people a better view of differently-abled people and expands their understanding of the world. I hope Best Buddies continues forever because it makes the world a better place.

David Allshouse and tutor Lindsey Anderson
I got off the bus. I looked around to check out the place. I saw a large beautiful lake with green and blue water and many aspen trees around it. What really caught my eye was a big rock at the top of a mountain. The tallest and widest of them all, the rock looked red and rusty on the corner and was sticking out from one side. I realized I had a long way to go. I was nervous as I started to hike. The trail was flat at the start. I had been walking for three miles and I was tired and thirsty so I took a break. I drank some water and enjoyed a delicious, juicy orange.

I got back on the trail. It got very steep. There were many loose rocks, so I had to be careful. I started climbing hand over hand. Suddenly my mouth was dry. I struggled more and more, breathing heavily. I was pushing myself. I was very tired and my legs were hurting. My body was saying, “Give up.” My mind was telling me, “Go on. Remember you want to explore the trail. You want to sit on the corner of the big rock and watch the meadows and sunset.” I listened to my mind. It was still steep, but it had become a gravel path. I stopped, breathed, and thought to myself, “The hardest part is over.” I saw aspen trees, green everywhere, and the rock. I felt on top of the world.

I sat down on the corner of the big rock. I could feel dust in my hands and warmth from the sun. I saw two mountains below and the lake, which was the size of a city block when I had stood next to it earlier. Now it looked the size of my tiny apartment. The sun was halfway behind the mountain. It was yellow with a little bit of red. I felt joy.
2016: A VERY BUSY YEAR
BY FRANKLIN ESCOBAR

2016 was an amazing year. It was full of learning, happiness, and some sadness but at the end, it was a very good year. I think that everybody needs to have some worries in their life because that helps us to enjoy the little things that make us happy. I learned a lot with Marcia, my tutor. I know that it wasn’t easy for either of us but I think we did a good job. She helped me so much with my reading and writing. We studied for the written part of the driver’s license test, and I passed it! Sometimes it was hard to attend class for one reason or another, but she always understood, and I really appreciate that.

I learned much more at work this year because I became a server at the restaurant where I work part-time. Being a server helps me practice my English with my customers and co-workers. Now I have found another good opportunity for a full time job in a factory, and I like the place and people that I work with. Also, this job offers me health insurance and is close to my house.

I moved out of Boulder to Superior, which was a hard decision because I love Boulder. But I think that it was about time to make a change and now I’m sure it was the right decision for me and my sisters. I’m in charge of the new apartment which is a big responsibility, but it is worth it because we love the new place!
CHRISTMAS WITH MY ADORABLE GRANDCHILDREN BY KENJI IKEDA

My thoughts were that Christmas day would be nice. I was so happy when my grandkids showed up, but it was very difficult spending Christmas with eight grandkids.

As soon as they got to my home, they immediately started fighting about who was going to sit by me. My sofa is only so big, so we all didn’t fit. They were crawling around and jumping, crying, and whining.

Most of the eight did not like the gifts that I gave them. The second to the youngest flipped out when he opened his gift and saw a pair of pants and a tee shirt. He was screaming that he wanted toys. Then one of my granddaughters was so happy with her gift. She thanked me over and over, telling me she loved it.

I asked my two oldest sons what they wanted to eat for lunch that day and they said green chili, rice, and beans. It’s a lot of work cutting meat, making beans, and just putting everything together. Everyone enjoyed the meal except my grandkids, so we got them a few pizzas.

The aftermath was bad. There was pizza crust on the floor, open soda cans half-full, cake frosting on the carpet, the sofa, the Christmas tree, and all over the games and movies. Wow, it was bad.

I love them all, but two at a time is better than all eight at once. So next year, we will be having the Christmas party at my son’s house, thank God!
When I was eighteen, I moved to England from Portugal. The hardest thing for me was that I didn’t speak the language. I felt so alone and lost. A few weeks later, my brother’s wife got me a job working as a nanny for a wealthy family who had two girls, ages 6 and 9. When I started this job, it was very difficult for me. I couldn’t understand when they tried to explain things to me about the job. We had to resort to sign language. I felt hopeless and lonely.

Luckily, they were very nice people full of compassion and kindness towards me. They sent me to a college to learn English, which they paid for. That’s when I really started to learn English. I had a very young teacher. She was sweet, kind, and also very funny. Not only did I learn to speak English but also began to read and write. I enjoyed every minute of it. It was one of the great experiences of my life.
I moved from Iran to the U.S. on June 15, 2014. My uncle lives in Boulder and applied for my father and my family to immigrate. It took 14 years for the application to be approved. We moved here because we wanted to have a better life. The U.S. is the land of the free and home of opportunities. I think the hardest part was leaving everything behind, such as my family, my friends, my job, my house, my home city, and all the good memories I made there. It’s very hard to forget about your childhood and everything that you learned up to a certain point only to have to start all over again. It’s very difficult to deal with a new language and a different culture. It’s like you were born again, except you are not a child anymore. You have to start learning new things over and over. It’s very overwhelming and scary, however it is important to be very strong to continue your way without having any friends or family, or any financial or emotional support. All of the sudden, you enter into a magical world that is so real, and you have thousands of questions but you don’t know who to go to and ask for help. In addition to all of our problems, my wife is outside of the country and I still don’t know for how long I should wait for the immigration organization to decide about her visa. We had to tolerate all the hardship together.

The good part about America is that it’s a welcoming place. They don’t care if you are black or white, man or woman, Christian or Muslim, we are all the same in this country. It’s amazing how they live together without having serious problems. This country is very beautiful and I am always surprised by how people have such a close connection with nature. The weather is so great and you can see four different seasons all in different colors. The people are all very friendly and say “hi” to you wherever you go.

I want to improve my English to know more about my rights and opportunities in this country. Hopefully, my wife will come here very soon and we will enjoy a better life here together!
I have been living in the USA for 20 years. As a mother, I think it is a good place for my children to grow up. I would like them to go to college and graduate here, but if we still lived in my home country, I would worry that this would not be possible. At fifteen years old, I made the decision to come to this country in order to help my family. I am the oldest of five children, back then my parents’ house only had two rooms. One for five children and another one for them to sleep next to the stove and the table. Also, the rooms did not have floors, it was all dirt. My father was a construction worker and he built the house with his own hands.

When I first came to this country my first job was as a nanny, then I worked cleaning offices and then at a hotel. Later I cooked in a restaurant, now I clean houses. 20 years of hard work. I remember I had two jobs at the age of 17. I would wake up at 5 a.m. and take the bus at 5:30 a.m. to get to work by 7:00 a.m., it was a restaurant and I got off at 2:00 p.m. Then, my next job started at 5:00 p.m. and finished at 10:00 or 11:00 pm.

That was my schedule for more than two years, until I got pregnant with my daughter. I worked until the last day of my pregnancy. It was not easy, but thanks to my hard work, I knew my parents would be able to build a better house. They added a kitchen, a bathroom, a living room, and they were then able to buy a new refrigerator, stove, microwave, and washing machine. Thanks to my hard work, I could also contribute to the education of my youngest brother who studied computer technology. My job did not end when my daughter was born, I just took 1 month off. I only kept one job so I could spend more time with my daughter.

As an immigrant, my experience has taught me that people who come to this country work hard to help their families. Similar to my situation, these people come here not just to help their immediate family but also to help other members of their family such as uncles, cousins, grandparents, and any other friends or relatives who need help. Recently, I helped my brother’s son who has cancer in one of his eyes. They had to take it out and put in an implant. They were having a very hard time and I wish I could have been there by his side, but at least I was able to send money to them, which is comforting to know.
MOVING TOWARD MY DREAM

BY MAPUTO MENSAH

Two years ago, I started a journey and thought it would be easy. I set out to create a better environment for teaching and learning the arts of African dancing and drumming in Kokrobite, Ghana, West Africa. When I was growing up in Accra, there were cultural centers where people could learn their own artistic heritage. But now there are no such places for people, either locals or foreigners, to go learn African drumming and dance. I am working to provide a new place for that.

I thought raising money for the Akpe Cultural Center would be a very quick process, because I have seen others raise a lot of money for their projects rather easily. And at our first fundraiser, we received a big check, so I thought it would be easy to raise the rest. I was wrong. Since then, the money has come slowly.

Another challenge that came up during the beginning of the project was dealing with dishonesty and lack of integrity. The first architect didn't keep his word; he charged me for work he did not do and he talked too much. He tried to convince me to give him more and more money. A third challenge has been protecting the valuable building materials. Everywhere in the world people steal from building sites, and Africa is no different.

I have found ways to overcome each of these challenges. While raising money is still difficult, we continue to get small donations from individuals and we are working to find grant money. When I found out how dishonest my first architect was, I replaced him and his contractor with a new contractor. The new contractor is very honest and trustworthy. I had heard from good friends that he was, and I also tested him by giving him money to go buy building materials, and he came back with a big surprise — a receipt and my change. I have done this many times and he always impresses me with his honesty. And to protect my building materials, I have a friend who is also trustworthy that I have given the valuable materials to so that he can keep them in his house until they are needed.

Despite the challenges I have had on the road, I have accomplished a lot. I could not have made so much progress without the help of BoulderReads, the Boulder County Arts Alliance, Logo Ligi (my dance troupe), my friends, my family, and members of the community.
BoulderReads has helped me improve my literacy, which helps me communicate in writing with the people in Ghana who are working on the project. The Boulder County Arts Alliance is my fiscal sponsor, and they make it possible for people to donate to the project and receive a tax deduction. Logo Ligi has helped with fundraisers and promotion, and so many others have given their time and money to help move the project forward.

This journey I have been on has taught me to be patient, cautious, determined, focused, and also very grateful and optimistic about the future. I am more and more confident that the Akpe Cultural Center will open, thrive, and serve the people of Kokrobite and the world.
These are very true stories about my dad. He was very a gentle man. He didn’t go to school at all, but he learned to read by himself. He went to the army when he was young. When he got married he made all his furniture, he made his own bed, chairs, stools, the door and the windows. More than that, he made all the buildings. That was his real job.

My dad was a very religious person. He went to the church early in the morning every day. After church every morning, he would make coffee for his wife. He sang with the choir at the church. The choir traveled through the country from village to village.

After he got married, his second wife was pregnant with a baby girl. That was me. My dad he wasn’t happy because he wanted a boy, but he didn’t say he was unhappy. After me, mom had two boys in a row, and he was so happy. After that he loved me so much.

My father was a very quiet, private and hard-working man.
Joshua J. Marine once said, “Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.” I agree with this. According to my experience, for me, a meaningful life is being curious and is about learning new things. Try to see what you can learn from my experience.

I was born and raised in Morocco, and lived with my extended family. At age 30 I was ready for a big change because I was curious to explore different countries and cultures. There was no reason for this particular timing; I believe it was destiny.

Since I moved to the United States from Morocco I have worked five jobs. Back home I had no job and no work experience. Learning how to work, hold a job, and study the English language was very challenging.

Through my job experience, I realized I have gained many skills for my future careers. For example, I worked as a barista at Starbucks for three years. At this job I learned how to make many coffee drinks, how to use the cash register, and various aspects of customer service, such as making eye contact and being friendly through conversation.

Moving to a totally different culture helped me become more independent, confident and responsible for myself. In the U.S. I have to do everything on my own, including the things that are usually done by other people in my culture, such as cleaning, cooking, and washing my clothes. I know doing all of this is the right thing. My work experience has also helped improve my confidence.

I would like to share my excitement of exploring new cultures with other people and inspire them to do the same for their self-confidence, to make them excited in their life, to be positive and keep going in their life because it is human nature to want to share what you want for yourself. I hope that by sharing my experience with you, you will feel motivated to seek out new challenges and explore other cultures.

Recently, my life is more interesting because I’m seeking a bigger vision. I decided to take GED classes so that I have more career opportunities available to me. These classes help me learn how to write essays and improve my critical thinking skills. I am excited to learn more and develop my experiences into a collage that makes my life meaningful.
Everyone should have the opportunity to be educated, but there are some people who for different reasons can`t access education. For some parents, it is really hard to give their children a higher education because of the lack of money, but we have to work on different ways to reach our goal. It is important for every parent to encourage their children to continue their education, because they will be the men and women of the future. Some people have serious obstacles going to school, such as long trails to walk, to go to another town and leave the family.

In Mexico, the country where I grew up, there was just elementary and middle school, so I ran into some problems when I wanted to go to high school. I had to go to another town to study, but my grandmother told my dad that women never need to be educated because when we grow up we just need to get married, to have babies and stay home. My mom helped me a lot because she persuaded my dad to let me go and he finally gave me permission. I went to live with my father`s brother in a town called Fresnillo, Zacatecas. My parents did not have money so I got my scholarship through an organization called Consejo Nacional y Fomento Educativo (CONAFE). They required that in exchange of my scholarship I would work as a kindergarten teacher for a year. It was a great experience; I got to work with the whole community organizing activities to raise money to build the school for kindergarten. I learned to valorize what I have and what I am.

When I was in my third semester of high school I failed physics because of the attitude I took toward the subject. I always told myself I couldn`t understand the teacher. The weird thing was that during the summer I had to take physics with the same teacher for one month and I learned more in this short period of time than in the whole semester. I passed physics during that summer; now when my children tell me that something is not working in one of their subjects I tell them my experience as a student and advise them to ask their teachers for help.

One problem that I have with my little one, Jenny, is that she loves to go to school, but she doesn`t like to do her homework. She is always complaining, yelling and crying, but I always help her, I tell her that education is really important in her life, that this is the most precious gift a parent can give to their children. A few nights ago I was working on this essay when she asked me, “What are you writing about mom?” I answered that I was writing an essay about education and she asked if she could help. I said, “Yes, you
can tell me what you want to say and I will write it for you.” This is what she said, “If you work hard you will get smart. When children grow up they can be anything they want as long as they work hard. A parent needs to help children study multiplication, division, science and language arts.” She was excited helping mom. I never thought she would say that because she is always crying and yelling when she does her homework. It was wonderful to hear my daughter`s point of view about education.

I think education never ends. For example I am now 45 years-old. I am still improving my reading, writing and speaking English skills. When I talk to a person who does not know English I encourage them to go somewhere to learn. There are different programs that help us. There are several things we need to do in our education; we are learning in our everyday journey. For example, I listened to a radio program (Alex el Genio Lucas) where the host said that sometimes parents make the mistake of giving everything to their children because parents don`t want their children to endure economic limitations as they did. The host said that the problem with the children who have everything is they don`t appreciate what they have and are always looking for more. This is a concept I already knew, but this program could help other parents to understand or learn the consequences of overindulging their children. That`s why I think education is everywhere, we can learn something from books, magazines or even the television, we have to make the right choices.

It is important to encourage our children starting when they are in kindergarten and so on because they are going to learn steadily then later will go to college. For example my daughter Nancy and I played spelling words in Spanish and English. We tried to help her as much as we could. She worked really hard, now she is at CU Boulder studying and I am proud of her.

I hope everybody would take advantage of their free time and help their children and themselves to succeed in their education. This would make the world much better, it would help us to get better jobs and have a better life. It doesn`t matter if we have to walk long trails or leave our family because we need to go somewhere else to study.
A long, long time ago, there were two best friends whose names were “Fox” and “Hyena.” They both lived together in their village. One day, Hyena went to the human village at night and he ate all of the baby cows and baby goats. When he returned from his trip, his best friend Fox was waiting for Hyena inside his house. When Hyena opened his door, Fox said, “What a surprise, best friend, where have you been? Can you tell me how your trip was, Hyena?” “Well,” Hyena said, “I know what you want to hear from me, Fox, but the reason you didn’t see me when you came to my house was because I was cleaning my backyard.” “Oh really? I thought you were the one who was eating up all the baby cows and goats because I heard that today. When I took my son to the dentist and I drove through the human village, they were shouting all about you, Hyena, and tomorrow they will be attacking our village because of what you have done,” said Fox. Hyena replied, “It’s not me. It must be somebody else. I already told you where I was.” “Okay, Hyena,” said Fox, “I am warning you, but I don’t think there is any other Hyena around here. You are the only one. I thought we were friends and would tell each other the truth, but if you feel that that way, then I will let you take a rest and I am going home.” Before Fox went back to his home, he was very disappointed in Hyena, because Fox didn’t like the way Hyena lied to him. The last thing Fox said before he left was, “Eating somebody else’s babies is not good, Hyena!”

Sometime after that, Hyena’s child became very sick. When Hyena saw this, he cried and called Fox to come and help him. Fox came to Hyena’s house and told him to apologize for what he had done. “If you don’t, then your baby will die,” warned Fox. Hyena apologized. He said, “Please cows and goats, forgive me for the bad things I did to you guys when I ate your babies. I know that you love your babies just like I love mine. So please, I will never eat your babies again.” Finally, Hyena’s baby was well again, and Hyena said, “Fox, I should have listened to you in the first place. Thank you. Your best friend is always part of your life.”
A NEW BEGINNING
BY SUNITA SHRESTHA

I interviewed my tutor, Jeannie, because I wanted to know why she moved away from her family before getting married. Jeannie moved out of her family’s house after her college graduation. Jeannie’s reason for leaving home was because she wanted a new beginning somewhere else. She had broken up with her boyfriend and she was unhappy at her new full-time job. She wanted a change.

Jeannie’s cousin, Susie, lived in San Diego so she decided to leave New York and join her in California. Susie helped her find a job and gave her a place to live temporarily until she found a job on her own and got her own apartment.

Many people need help getting settled when they move to a new place, just like how Susie helped Jeannie begin her new life in California.
In truth, our life has many obstacles. Consequently, everyone faces problems.

For instance, the writer of this paragraph has studied the English language since 2014. Despite this, he does not speak English perfectly, but he has faith that he will achieve his noble goal because he is on the right path. He has not given up and still studies English at BoulderReads.

The writer places in front of his eyes a nice proverb that is saying, “Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”

**One Day I Will Accomplish my Difficult Goal**

In fact, I am aiming to study Law in the USA; however, studying in America is very hard, most specifically for those whose mother tongue is not English even though, with the help of God, sooner rather than later, my English language will enable me to get admission to study law in America.

I believe in this following proverb: “Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”

**Overcoming Adversity Makes Me Proud**

When I was seventeen years old, I decided to learn how to drive a car. However, my father did not encourage me in this endeavor. He said, “O Shoaib, how can you learn driving in a crowded city like Tripoli? Not only is it crowded but also the streets do not have signs, and we only have one old car, not to mention the driving test is very difficult. As a result off all this, how can you expect to get your driver’s license?”

I decided to surprise my father by getting my driver’s license from my hometown in Tripoli. I tried hard, over and over again until I achieved my goal. At first, my father did not believe me, but when I showed him the evidence, he said proudly, “YOU GOT IT!” This made me think about how amazing it was that I had finally achieved my goal, thanks to all my hard work.
It is important to never forget the proverb,

“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”
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