disc overing the w orld through reading

DISCOVERIES
The 2015 Collection of Stories Written by Adult Learners of BoulderReads

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Cover illustration by Dana Woodward
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For many years, I have dreamed of building a cultural center in Kokrobite, Ghana, that will preserve and promote West African music and dance.

When I was growing up in Ghana, life was not easy for me and my family, because my parents had no money. But they did have music and the arts to give to their children. We used music and dance to communicate with each other and with our ancestors. We also used it to heal our emotional wounds and comfort ourselves when there was no food. Music and arts taught us how to respect ourselves and others.

When I was growing up, there were many cultural centers where people learned our traditional arts. These cultural centers brought the community together and kept the kids out of trouble, while also teaching them the traditions of their culture.

Of all the cultural centers, the Academy of African Music and Arts (AAMA) was the best. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to study, teach, and perform there for 14 years. AAMA drew a wide variety of people, including international students and artists such as Stevie Wonder, Steve Coleman, Rita Marley, and Isaac Hayes.

I remember that every weekend there was a traffic jam of cars coming to Kokrobite from Accra and elsewhere to stay at AAMA and watch the entertainment. Most of the visitors were high-ranking officials and diplomats. AAMA had excellent African and European chefs, and I can still smell the food. I can still see bonfires and all the different types of people on the beach, dancing, partying, and sharing a sense of community. For me that time felt like paradise. Unfortunately, AAMA had poor financial management and in 2006, it began to collapse. That was when my idea to build my own cultural center was born.
That same year my brother and I started taking American students to Kokrobite for a month each summer to learn our traditional arts and culture. When the local people saw us teaching, they would approach us to ask if we could provide a place for them to learn those arts, too. Every time I heard the request, it made my heart beat fast and made me want to build my own center even more.

Last summer I decided to begin to build my dream. I hired an architect to design my cultural center and we dug the foundation.

The new center will provide master instruction in dance, drumming, and storytelling. It will also provide performance space and opportunities for social gathering.

There will be accommodations for people who come from around the world as they came to AAMA. Akpe Cultural Center will also provide a place for local kids to learn about their own culture and to embrace its positive values with open arms, as I did. The word Akpe means gratitude in the Ewe language to acknowledge what our parents gave us. I hope to give these kids and people from around the world the same gifts.

The world today has more and more technology, but less and less peace and happiness. The arts of my culture can heal the world’s wounds in a way no digital device can. So, I am building this cultural center to restore the happiness and joy I experienced as a child in Ghana and to share those things with people around the world.

Maputo Mensah is from Ghana, West Africa, where he performed and taught with the Akrowa Cultural Performance Ensemble at the Academy of African Music and Arts for 14 years. He shares his talent and boundless enthusiasm for African dance, drumming, and the culture that surrounds it as he teaches African dance at Naropa University, CU, other dance studios in the Boulder area, and in workshops around the country. He and his brother Mawuenyega also take a group of local students to Ghana each summer for a month-long immersion in the arts and culture of West Africa. When he arrived in the U.S. in 2000, Maputo spoke English as well as four different African dialects, but due to spotty schooling in Ghana, his reading and writing were not where he wanted them to be. Working with BoulderReads, he has made much progress in those areas, with an ultimate goal of passing the GED and pursuing higher education. Maputo is currently also hard at work building his own cultural center in Kokrobite, Ghana.

Merilee Eggleston considers herself lucky to be Maputo’s tutor and is learning at least as much as he is in helping to support his goals. She is a former editor and writer who has lived in Boulder for 40 years. When she’s not busy planning lessons or revisiting her own education, she enjoys hiking with her husband, Jere, and her dog, Dottie, seeing more of this beautiful world, and sneaking in as much fun reading as possible.
I was twenty years old, a U.S. Marine stationed in Hawaii. I was in the squad bay, in my cube, when my two new friends, Delgado and Ross, were talking about boogie boarding in the ocean. I told them I’d never been swimming in the ocean. Ross and Delgado said at the same time, “What? Cordova! You haven’t lived until you ride a wave on a Styrofoam board.” Delgado said, “We have to go.” Then Ross said, “This weekend.” So we made plans to go.

The weekend was four days away. Four days of hearing all the horror stories they could come up with and it seemed like everyone was in on teasing me. I would be standing in the chow line and someone would shout out loud, “Hey, Johnson, you hear about that shark attack last weekend?” Then Johnson said, “Yeah, and the one on the weekend before that! So far it’s been two for the month.” Someone else would say, “Yeah, and Jaws is looking for his next meal and Jaws’ favorite food is a Marine from Colorado that can’t swim.” Then everyone would laugh out loud, pushing and light punching me. Ha, Ha.

We chose a beach on base, a very beautiful beach with very deep, fine sand. I looked all around me and then out into the ocean for the very first time in my life thinking, I am here to play. I was feeling so happy but as I looked at the Pacific Ocean (the same ocean that covers a very big portion of the earth and by her powers has shaped and reshaped the earth over time) I felt scared but I didn’t want Delgado and Ross to know it. I was thinking, “Great! At least I have a board. All I have to do is to hang on to it.”

As I looked up and saw the waves, the butterflies in my stomach were all on the move, and Ross hollered, “Cordova! Look at the size of those waves.” Delgado said, “It’s not too late to run, Cordova!” The waves in front of us were very big waves, ten feet and higher. My inner coward was screaming, “No way! I am not going. No way!” All I had to do was tell them I was scared. How was I going to get out of this and stay close to shore? At the time, it all looked scary. Those waves were humongous and my stomach was turning. How could I tell my two friends (the same two friends that I had trained with for many dangerous situations over the past two years) that I was afraid? Suddenly I realized, I can do this.

Delgado laughed at me and said, “We are going to start on the smaller waves over there.” “Yes,” I said, “the smaller waves. Yes, yes, we can start here.” I was so relieved seeing the smaller waves. That news had calmed my gut and mind. With his board in his hands, Delgado hollered, “Last one in is a bleeping, bleeping, idiot.” He was running, lifting his legs as high as he could, and then he put his board in front of him and dove out as far as he could. It looked like it was going to be fun. Ross and I grabbed our boards and raced to the water. The water was colder than I thought it would be. I slowed down some. Ross was swimming out. I stopped to look around and took in the sounds and smells of the ocean and beach. Delgado and Ross were out where the waves started to pick up and swell. They were sitting on their boards giving me the sign for double time, to get moving fast. I was just enjoying the moment and then they were up on a wave and coming in fast. All you could see was their teeth. Their ride stopped right by me. They were laughing and hollering, “Come on, Cordova, get your ass moving! You don’t know what you’re missing.”

I took a full breath, aimed my board out to where the waves were breaking, dove in and started to swim. When I made it out, Ross and Delgado explained how to pick out a wave a
and how to catch a wave. Ross said, “Like this one,” and a wave came up moving through us and Ross was gone. Delgado said, “Cordova, here comes your wave. Point your board and start swimming like all hell.” So I did and before long I was moving fast. Wow! I was up on a wave and it was a great feeling to be playing in the sea. We all ended our ride in the same place. We laughed and hollered about how great it was. The smaller waves weren’t scary after all. They were just pure fun. We rode lots of waves and swallowed lots of salt water before heading back to camp to eat and rest.

After we had eaten we sat around the campfire telling stories about our rides and we watched the seagulls gracefully playing. We ended our break, put out the fire and got ready to go back out, this time to ride the big waves. The swim out to the biggest waves was hard. Swimming under a big wave is frightfully scary. The thought of it was tying all kinds of knots in my gut. We sat on our boards between the smaller waves joking and laughing but not this time. I think my friends were feeling fear in their guts, too. Our plan was to all catch the same wave. Ross said, “Cordova, timing is everything out here.” So we spread out. Delgado screamed, “This one!” We started swimming. My two friends were up on top of that wave very fast. I missed the wave.

I sat up on my board and looked all around me. I felt so small in the ocean so big. Then my mind went to *Jaws* and my whole body goes tight. I grabbed my boogie board so tight, so full of fear, that I felt sick. In my mind I thought, “You fool. What the hell are you doing out here?” I knew I had to take a deep breath and stop that panic attack before it took me over. Next I heard Ross yelling, “What the hell happened to you, Cordova? You missed out on one hell of a ride.” We all got set up for the next wave. I was not going to miss this wave; I was ready. Ross yells, “This one!” We started swimming and we all three were up on top of that wave. It started to move very fast. We were screaming and smiling at the same time. It was one of the most exciting feelings I have ever had. The wave ended and we wanted more.

We rode a lot more waves until I thought I was a pro. I was on my way back out thinking that I had kicked the Pacific’s butt when I mistimed diving into a wave, a big wave.
big wave hit so hard it felt like a Mack Truck hit me. Before I knew it my boogie board was ripped out of my hands, my goggles were ripped off my face, my swimming trunks were hanging around my knees and I was at the bottom, kissing the floor over and over as my body spiraled with the force of that very big wave. I thought my life was over. I had no control over anything. That wave owned me. I was terrified but then the tumbling and thrashing came to a stop. I was helpless, just something the ocean had picked up along the way like seaweed, sand, wood and parts of shells.

I needed air badly! I noticed bits and pieces of debris floating in the direction that I hoped was up so I pulled up my trunks and started to swim that way praying I was right. Next I noticed the water was getting lighter so I knew I was going in the right direction. I felt I couldn’t hold my breath any longer, when my face felt cool air. Yes, air, I tried to get as much of me on top of the water as I could. I was so happy to be back on top. I got my bearings and started swimming to land, desperate to get to shore. I swam and swam and swam but I was not moving. I just wanted to get back to land but I didn’t know how. Then I remembered Ross saying, “Don’t fight the current, go to the side,” so I did. When I finally stood on shore and looked out I felt so lucky to be alive. I had a new respect for the mighty Pacific Ocean.

Gene Cordova (Elueto Eugene Cordova) was born in Colorado, the second born of five boys. After high school he joined the Marines, married, had two daughters and now has four grandchildren. He spent over twenty years as an auto mechanic and for the last ten years has been doing body work. He loves travelling, especially to the ocean. He has lived the first fifty years of his life by the mountains and plans on living the next fifty by the ocean. He enjoys nature and does a lot of walking and hiking. He says that joining BoulderReads is one of the best things he has ever done for himself. Before BoulderReads, he was terrified when asked to read or write and now enjoys doing both. He says that he finds himself picking up a book instead of turning on the TV and even tinkers with writing stories.

Gene’s tutor, Jeannie Connelly, grew up in New York City but has been a Boulder resident since 2003. She spends her spare time creating art and singing, and really enjoys hiking around the beautiful foothills of sunny Colorado. Jeannie loves volunteering for BoulderReads and has been a tutor since 2011. She finds her sessions with Gene to be a learning experience as well as a teaching experience.
My Family

My family lives on a farm close to a little town named Comalapa in El Salvador. My mom and dad have been together for 28 years. They have eight offspring and work hard, day by day, to give us everything we need, and what they think is good for us. The most important thing is that we always have food on our table.

Most of the time my mother works from home. She takes care of everything, including cooking all of the food, playtime with the kids, and making sure homework is done before they go back to school. She always finds time to talk with us, to see if we need anything, or if we have any problems. She is more than a mother to us; she is our best friend.

My dad works as a farmer. He grows beans, rice, corn, and pineapple. He also works in masonry and a lot of people like his product. My dad is the best father ever. He has advice for me and my sisters and brothers that helps us become better people. My cousins love him, because he spends time with them and that makes them happy.

My sisters are extremely special to me and we love each other like kids love candy. Yory is the oldest sister at 27 years old. She finished college three years ago, and now she works as a teacher at the school near my house. Before she goes to work, she helps my mother cook breakfast daily. Cecilia is my other older sister. She finished college last month, and I am happy for her and proud of her. She is my angel. She always listens to me when I have trouble and she helps me. I’m the third child, and I came to the United States when I was 16 years old. Thankfully, I made the decision to come to the United States, to work hard, assist my parents with the financial costs of my brother’s healthcare, and sister’s college education. My other two sisters, are also here with me. Ester and Raquel help me and help my parents in El Salvador. The older of my two younger brothers is Geremias. He is special and really strong. Helen is my little sister, and I miss her so much. She is 15 years old, receives only A’s and B’s on her 10th grade report card. Camilo is my littlest and youngest brother. He is 8 years old and in the second grade. He always comments that he wants to be here,
in the United States with me.

We are not perfect, but no matter what happens, my family will always be there for each other. Family is like a tree. My parents are the stem, my brothers, sisters, and I, are the branches, and the fruits are what we reap in the future.

**Franklin Escobar** is 24 years old. Franklin moved to the United States in 2007. He currently works as a busser at Zolo Grill, enjoys playing soccer and hiking in Chautauqua Park, and enjoys his reading tutorials. He hopes to become a server at Zolo Grill within the next three months, earn his GED®, and desires to have his own business in the future.

**Denise Knutson**, Franklin's tutor, is a Certified Athletic Trainer at CU Sports Medicine and Boulder Community Hospital. As a 17 year Boulder County resident, she enjoys cooking the day away, traveling with several books in hand, considers the Rocky Mountains as the finest playground, and always has her Canon within reach. She has enjoyed tutoring Franklin and witnessing his progress over the past 6 months.
Good evening, everybody! I am Mayra Rivera. I am a Latina woman who moved to this land of opportunity when I was 15 years old. I have been with BoulderReads for 8 years. Because English is my second language I used to struggle being able to write at the level I wanted to. Sentence structure, grammar and writing were my main challenges in school. Then one afternoon after a long day of work I discovered a flyer at my house telling me about BoulderReads. I made an appointment with Eleanor and a short time later BoulderReads matched me with a tutor. Thanks to my tutors who inspired me to read more, I now read for the love and enjoyment of it.

BoulderReads made and keeps making a difference in my life. BoulderReads is an amazing organization that is helping me make my dreams come true.

My biggest challenge was learning a new language in a new country without the presence of my family. Even though they were thousands of miles away I was able to earn my GED®, a banking certificate and an associate’s degree. But I want to learn more and I want to achieve my goals.

Thanks to BoulderReads I was able to take my first step toward success and they provided a personal tutor who helped me improve my writing, grammar, and communication skills.

Thanks to BoulderReads I met a tutor four years ago who inspired me to fall in love with reading. By saying so I want this to be an example of how well BoulderReads matches a tutor with a student. They knew I loved to read and they placed me with a person who felt my desire to read. Before BoulderReads I wasn’t confident in my writing skills, but with the help of my tutor my confidence and my grades improved. I didn’t feel alone; someone was there to support me. They allowed me to improve my writing so now I can function without a tutor. Through BoulderReads I discovered an online course at the Boulder Public Library website that I am currently enrolled in.

When you really want to succeed, you must try, and work hard. I did it, so other people can too!

I believe that by helping others our community can become a better world. At one time I was a volunteer at Harvest of Hope, a local food bank. My responsibilities were helping people shop for food and assisting the Spanish-speaking customers understand how the system worked. By doing so, I was able to help others and give back to the community.

Whenever my mom and I have extra money we go to thrift stores or yard sales and gather shoes or clothes for people in need, especially kids. We then send it to my native country, Mexico. I enjoy helping the community by giving time, love, and myself. I am a happy person and love to share that with people. Currently, I am helping an 80 year old
woman by visiting her and talking, drinking tea, reading, and laughing. I love being able to share my time and love with her. She has become one of my best friends.

Dreams and goals are indispensible for me to keep growing as a person. I want to continue educating myself. I want to create my own foundation for children in need. Also, one of my dreams is to have my nephew--that wonderful kid over there--have more opportunities than I had. Whether it is his masters or PhD I want him to know he can achieve whatever he wants. I don’t want him to go through what I did.

I have many more dreams and many more goals in life that I haven’t finished yet. I have only just begun.

Mayra Rivera graduated from high school but joined BoulderReads because she felt she needed to improve her writing and spelling skills. She has been with BoulderReads for more than 7 years, working with several different tutors.

Monica Munguia works in the biotech field and worked with Mayra for almost three years. She enjoyed their weekly meetings because of the laughs they shared and because Mayra’s inquisitiveness kept her challenged.
My grandma, Carmen Hernandez, raised five of her grandchildren in Texcaltitlan, Mexico. She sold food downtown every night that she made during the day in order to support all of us. She started cooking every day at 1:00. First she made the pozole. It took five hours to cook in Mexico. The hominy she was able to buy was dried, and had to cook a long time! Then she made the casseroles: chicken, bean and potato. She also prepared lettuce, hot salsa, and cheese. At six o’clock we packed the pozole, casseroles, tortillas, lettuce, hot salsa, and cheese. We also took a large table, plastic plates, and silverware.

We carried everything in bags for two miles to the downtown area. When we arrived, we set up the table, brasero grill to keep the food warm, and the food along the street. People came by and asked for: pozole, tacos, tostadas, quesadillas, and pambazos. We all helped serve the food. Everything smelled so good! My favorite was the pozole! We had our dinner there when we finished selling the food. Any extra food we took home and ate for breakfast.

Grandma sold her food for thirty-five years along that street. Three years ago when she died, at the funeral mass, the bells from the church rang out throughout the town for her.

Carmen Rojas was born in Texcaltitlan, Mexico, and has lived in Colorado for 24 years. She and her family lived in Boulder for 12 years, and now reside in Erie. She is married to her husband, Jesus, and they have four children. Christian is 24 years old, Getsemani is 21 years old, and the twins, Melissa and Bianca, are 14 years old.

Carmen discovered BoulderReads through a coworker and has been a student for almost three years. This article is her second contribution to Discoveries! She likes
BoulderReads “because it has taught me a lot about reading and writing.” Carmen was not able to continue her education past ninth grade in Mexico because her town did not have a high school. She tested and received her GED® four years ago. Besides improving basic reading skills such as comprehension, fluency, and increased vocabulary, Carmen is now able to communicate better with her daughter’s teachers and with the two young girls whom she nannies. She is a regular reader of the New York Times On-Line and many children’s books!

Carmen’s tutor, Sandy Barnes, has been working with Carmen since May 2012. She lives in Boulder with her husband. Her daughter is a freshman in college. She has been part of BoulderReads for four years. Sandy is retired and is pleased to be able to help others learn to enjoy reading as much as she does.

### Pozole Recipe

5 lbs. pork
2 6-lb. 12-oz. cans of hominy, drained and washed
1 lb. California peppers, dried and cleaned
2 whole cloves of garlic
1 whole white onion
1 tbsp. salt (more to taste)
1 lemon, peel grated
½ onion, chopped
oregano
½ small head of cabbage, chopped

First, put the pork in a big soup pot. Add a gallon of water. Add salt, garlic and whole onion. Cover pot. Boil for 1 hour.

Then put peppers in a second pot with enough hot water to get them soft (10 minutes). Put the peppers in a blender and liquefy them.

When the meat is cooked, add the hominy and cook for 30 minutes. Add the liquefied peppers. Simmer another 10 minutes.

Serve in a bowl topped with some grated lemon, chopped onion, chopped cabbage, and a sprinkle of oregano.

ENJOY!
I have waited years to write this story on food. Because of my diet I had to change my approach to making my meals.

When I cook I think of what is available in my kitchen to blend together. Sometimes my meal depends on the herbs or spices that I have on hand. Opening a box or a can is rare for me. Because of my allergies and other diet issues I need to be cautious of what I eat.

For example, at breakfast I wanted eggs and did not know what to add that was not a starch. I wanted a vegetable. So I looked in the refrigerator to see what I had from the farmer’s market. The white turnips can be substituted for potatoes because I like vegetables at all meals. So I cut about 2 cups of turnips in 1 inch pieces then diced 1/3 cup of onions and sautéed them with 2 tablespoons coconut oil and with 2 teaspoons of thyme and pepper for 2 minutes. When the vegetables were almost done I put 2 eggs on top and covered them with a lid. It was done in two minutes. Sometimes you don’t have to have a normal breakfast, just a healthy one!

**Corinthia Turner** graduated from high school but says that her best year was 5th grade because she had a teacher that knew how to help her learn and she craved that method of learning. Now, as an adult, she thinks that if she had that training throughout her schooling she would have had a better base for her education. BoulderReads has opened her to a better future in getting her Cosmetology and Barber’s licenses. Now she is working on her CNA (Certified Nurse’s Aide) license. Next will be Culinary School!

**Christine Smock** worked for many years in Boulder as a counselor to middle and high school students through Mental Health Partners. In 2007, she left here to go back to Chicago to help her parents as they got older. While there she volunteered at a literacy program and discovered that she loved passing on her passion for reading. She came back to Colorado last year and immediately found BoulderReads which helps her to continue to share her enjoyment of words and books with others.
My morning started in pretty much the usual way. The alarm had not yet gone off. And yet I was awake wrestling with the desire to keep sleeping and the need to answer the call of nature. Nature won.

I then went down stairs, switched on the TV, and put on the news. I was still feeling tired so I decided that I would close my eyes and try to grab 20 or 30 minutes of unconscious bliss. I was just about to enter dreamland again when the doorbell rang.

It was my friend’s mother from two doors down. Her morning was starting off on the wrong foot. She had stepped out of the house into the garage and closed the locked door behind her. Upon hearing the “click” of the lock, she realized she had left her keys on the counter. We tried calling her son so that he could come to her rescue. But all we got was voicemail. She works just a couple of miles down the road so I told her it would be no problem for me to take her to work.

She was embarrassed about the situation, so I told her about when I had a similar setback. This was about 7 or 8 years ago, the first thing in the morning. I got up at 4:30 to start my day. It was February and there was about 5 inches of snow on the ground. I opened the sliding glass door to the back porch and let my Alaskan malamute “Mojo” out. I followed him out so I could put food in his bowl and check his water. I closed the door behind me so I wouldn’t let the cold air in. I started to measure out Mojo’s food and I heard a noise behind me. In an instant I knew what it was. It was the sound of the security bar falling into place. I turned around hoping I was mistaken. I was not.

I was now standing barefoot in my bathrobe locked outside the house. Mojo was looking up at me with a perplexed look on his face. Why had I stopped filling his food bowl and why did he sense a great deal of anxiety in me? I finished filling his bowl and gave it to him.

The porch is enclosed so I wasn’t yet standing barefoot in the snow.
and I did not want to. I was hoping to find some sort of tool and “MacGyver” my way back into the house. I found a scrap of sheet metal and I tried to squeeze it through the two glass doors. I bent it this way and that way. This was a futile effort. I could not budge the security bar. I had now spent a fair amount of time at this and my feet were beginning to get painfully cold standing on the ice cold tile.

There was no escape from the unpleasant task before me. I now had to leave the enclosed porch, step barefoot into the snow, walk across the back yard, go through the gate, across the side yard, across the front yard, across the other side to get to the door leading in to the garage. I then crossed the cold concrete floor to the deep freeze, rummaged through it and found the container with the hidden door key.

To add insult to injury, when I was crossing the front yard my next door neighbor was just driving by. I smiled and waved. When doing something stupid it’s always nice to have an audience. Later that week my neighbor and I laughed about my ordeal over a beer.

David Anderson is 51 years old and a student at BoulderReads. He has worked in labor-intensive jobs his whole life and the wear and tear on his body is becoming noticeable. It feels imperative to him that he broaden his horizons of employability. This, he feels, will only be possible by greatly increasing his literacy and computer skills. He feels he is making very good progress towards his goals through BoulderReads.

What he is also very happy about is how much he is enjoying a lot of the books that he is reading. His reading speed has increased greatly and so has his comprehension. This means that his pleasure in reading has greatly increased. Several times, he has stayed up late into the night reading, even reading all night long once “with no idea how much time had passed until I noticed light coming in the window from the sunrise.” He is very happy with the progress he has made towards achieving his goals. He is also happy with how much more he is just enjoying reading better!

Cindy Taraska has been working with David for over a year. She loves learning with David and sharing new books, ideas and writing together.
My Story on Education

Noemi Robles

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

Maddie Hosack and Noemi Robles
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, and 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.

Noemi Robles grew up in Mexico. She has been living in Boulder for fourteen years and has been married to her husband for twenty years. She has three children. Her little one, Jenny, is 8 years old and is in the fourth grade. Her son, Oscar, is seventeen and is in his senior year at Fairview High School. Her eldest daughter, Nancy, is nineteen years old and is a freshman at CU-Boulder. Noemi has been in the Boulder Reads program for many years and believes it is a wonderful experience and would like to thank everyone involved.

Maddie Hosack is currently finishing her last year at CU-Boulder, double majoring in English Literature and Humanities. This is her first year tutoring with BoulderReads and she feels lucky to have such a committed student as Noemi.
In 1880 in Leadville, Colorado, there was an old farm house next to a church cemetery. There were old, dead trees that made spooky shapes in the howling wind. The house was run down, with peeling paint and rotten wood. The windows of the house were broken and dingy and dead yellow-brown leaves littered the property. There were no other houses for miles. The church’s minister, Father Brown and his wife, Clara, daughter Susie, and son, Benjamin, lived in the house, but they did not have enough money to fix it up. When they moved in, the house was full of spider webs. There were days that the electricity went off. The only things they had to entertain themselves with were an old static-filled radio and an out of tune piano. The mother knew how to play, but not very well. Some nights, they heard creeping noises in the house.

One day, Father Brown went to work at the church; he and Clara worked until midnight cleaning the church and getting it ready for services. A lightning storm came up. They had finished their work and were getting ready to go home. As they were leaving, Father Brown stopped suddenly in the doorway; he turned around and saw the room lights blink on and off. Suddenly there was a flash of light, and then the room went black. Father Brown and Clara crept outside to get back to the house. The moonlight was partly blacked out by clouds, and the light made the graveyard look black with smoky grey shadows. The night turned the gravestones into spidery shapes. Father Brown felt his bones shivering. He wondered why the cemetery became so spooky and creepy at night. As they started toward the house, they heard creeping, rattling noises behind them. They turned around to see what it was. Coming towards them were grayish white-faced people, grumbling and slowly dragging their feet; their clothes were ripped and dirty, as if they had come out of the graves. The minister called out to them but there was no answer, only grunting sounds. Suddenly, Clara shrieked as the bodies came closer and closer. Father Brown and Clara turned and ran towards the house. They made it as far as the porch before two zombies grabbed Clara and pulled her away from the house into the weeds. Clara screamed as the zombies started biting and chewing her flesh. Father Brown tried to beat the zombies off, fighting them deep into the dark. After that night, Father Brown and his wife were never seen again...

A year later, a newspaper article appeared in *The Herald Democrat* that explained what they think happened: “The investigation into the disappearance of Farmer Brown and his wife, Clara, has been concluded, and the events are still rather mysterious. Police discovered that the couple’s children, Susie, ten, and Benjamin, eight, were sleeping when they heard some noise coming from outside. Susie went to see what it was. She saw strange people outside, and wondered why they were dressed in ripped clothes and chains. She heard the chains rattling and grunting sounds. Susie screamed and shook her brother out of bed. The children were trying to get out of the house. Through the window, they saw the strangers coming toward the house, up the porch steps before banging on the door and trying to break the door down. The children ran out the back door and jumped on their bicycles, screaming for help. First they rode to the church, but discovered their parents weren’t there. They rode to the Mr. Jackson’s house, half a mile away. They saw he was not home,
so they rode into town. When they got to town, they found it was dead. They saw a shadow in one of the stores and rode their bicycles over, screaming for help. The lady turned and around and she had a pale face and chains on her hands. As she crept toward the children, they screamed and ran back to the street and saw the zombies coming toward the town. Susie and Benjamin screamed, “Ma! Pa! Where are you?” They suddenly recognized Mr. Jackson and called for help again, but he didn’t answer! The children realized he had the same pale face and was carrying a shovel. He was grunting and groaning like the rest of the strangers! They jumped on their bikes and raced toward Mayor Tabor’s office, and ran inside. In his office, there was a man sitting at a desk with two children next to him. Susie and Benjamin hollered again for help. He turned around very slowly, and his chair creaked. They saw that it was Horace Tabor, the town’s first mayor. They walked towards him; at first they didn’t realize what had happened until they got closer to see his face in the moonlight shining through the window. He had the same face as everyone else!! His suit was filthy and torn. The mayor called out with a screechy sounding voice, grunting,

“Whaaaat dooo youuu waaaant?” Susie and Benjamin ran to the front door, and pushed their way outside. Surrounding the building were children from all over town, carrying clubs and rocks; other kids had rakes and hammers. “Come join us! Come join us!” they called to Susie and Benjamin in a grunting voice. Susie and Ben looked at each other, knowing the only way they could stay alive and find their parents was to join the zombie children!! They started walking down the street and suddenly, they saw their parents in the crowd; Father Brown and Clara were acting strange: calling out their children’s names. Their faces were scarred and pale; their hair was grubby, and their clothes were torn. They all
walked back to the cemetery, leaving the town to decay."

Two years after that, another article appeared. A reporter named Frank E. Vaughn from a neighboring town found an old map labeled with shop owners’ names for each store on Harrison Avenue, Leadville’s main street. By looking at the map, he realized that the people who owned the shops were the zombies; everyone had been turned—there were no humans left. In his research, Frank had found photographs and the old newspaper article along with the map. Frank figured out that the zombies did not to leave because they didn’t want the town to change. He wondered if the zombies would ever return again.

Afterword: David was inspired by history, mystery, and suspense. This story could be called a work of historical fiction; this means that David used a real town in Colorado as the setting for events that did not actually happen.


David Allshouse’s story writing has gotten better because his spelling has improved while in the program. He knows how to use his imagination to be creative and fun. He’s not afraid to do research on his own for the stories he writes. He is also more confident about writing and sending texts. David has been in the program for many years, and has a good job with Family Housing/Dining Services at the University of Colorado.

Lindsey Anderson has been volunteering with BoulderReads since 2008. She has been working with David since 2009. She earned her M.A. in Poetry from Naropa University in 2008. She loves living in Colorado.
When we lived in California there was a big earthquake. At that time, our daughter was living with her husband in Aspen, Colorado. Sometimes we traveled to Colorado to visit them. When the earthquake happened, my wife told me, “We have to move from California.” We filled the car with Iranian food and left early one morning. On previous trips to Colorado, we would stop in Las Vegas and gamble. This time, we didn’t stop until we were 300 miles past Las Vegas because I wanted to arrive in Colorado in the daytime. I drove fast. When I crossed a small river on a bridge, I lost control of the car. The car began to shake wildly. My wife said, “Oh! The earthquake is following us!” Suddenly, the car’s tire passed us by and we ended up in the desert. We got out of the car and saw the back tire out in the desert. We stopped there.

Fortunately, one person stopped. He had a big American car and a long brown beard which scared my wife. He turned out to be a nice man. He said, “I saw a large crack in the road and expected an accident.” He took us to the next town to find a mechanic and a tow truck. It was Saturday and everything was closed. He then found a pay phone and called somebody to tow our car and took us to a hotel. The mechanic did not have the part so we spent 3 days in the hotel. I called my daughter and told her what happened.

After 3 days we left the hotel and went to Colorado. We did not return to California.

Ali Nourian (Shabanali Nourian) was born in Iran 88 years ago and came to the U.S. in 1985 to be with his daughter, who had come to the U.S. to escape the revolution and attend college. Once he arrived, the rest of his family came as well. He has his bachelor’s degree in Social Science from the University of Tehran and has worked in Photographic Ground Digital Mapping in California.

Helen Melody Witherill, one of Ali’s tutors, majored in art education and then became a children’s librarian. Her interest in weaving has led to her business, Woven Melodies. The library has been a central part of her life for much of her life.

Doug Talmage is Ali’s second tutor. Born in Denver, Doug has lived in Thailand, Korea, and Mexico. Doug met his wife while serving in the military in Montana. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah and worked for Sperry Univac in Salt Lake City in computer fabrication as well as ten years in medical device manufacturing at Valleylab in Boulder.
My name is Manuela Longoria. I was born in Zacatecas, Mexico. I’m the oldest in my family. I have 3 brothers and 1 sister. I have lived in Boulder for 17 years.

One important part of my life is my family. I have a husband and 2 kids. I have a 14 year old girl that I am very proud of. She is bilingual; she reads, writes and speaks Spanish and English. My son is 6 years old; he is a very smart kid. He just started to read and write, but he knows the alphabet in English and Spanish. My husband is a chef. I love when he cooks in our home. We like to spend time together. We like to go camping. I organize groups for camping with my family, cousins and friends. We have a great time all together.

I wish to get my GED®. I’m very happy learning in BoulderReads, and I appreciate the time given to me by my teacher. I appreciate the time that people dedicate to me.

Manuela Longoria is from Zacatecas, Mexico. She has been in Boulder for 14 years. She is married and has a 6 year old son and a 14 year old daughter. She has been working with BoulderReads since November of 2014. She has improved her reading and writing, and hopes to get her GED®. She likes camping and spending time with her family.

Holly Sprenkle has worked with Manuela since October of 2014. She is an attorney, and enjoys travel, tennis and yoga. She likes being part of the BoulderReads program and is inspired by Manuela’s intelligence, curiosity and determination.
I came from Eritrea. In Eritrea there are special foods. The name of one special bread is *engira*. The name of one special bread is *hambasha*. Now I will tell you about *hambasha*.

*Hambasha* is for special times or parties, like weddings or to take to church for holy days. It is a tradition for the mother of the bride to make *hambasha* one week after the wedding. She invites three girl friends of the bride to take 15 or 20 *hambasha* to the house of the bride and groom and to visit the bride for a few days. The *hambasha* is carried in a special basket.

*Hambasha* is made from wheat and white flour, yeast, sugar, oil and salt. Some people make it with milk and egg as well. It looks very good and is delicious.

One of the special foods is *ga’at*. *Ga’at* is a traditional food for the mother of the new baby. It is a thick porridge. The shape is exactly like a basketball. You can make a big hole in the top for melted butter with chili powder. Around the bottom put the yogurt. It looks nice and is yummy.

Mebrat Fikak came to the U.S. from Eritrea in 1991; her native language is Tigrinia. English is the first language she has had the opportunity to learn to read or write. Mebrat became a U.S. citizen in 2013, and in 2014 she voted for the first time. This year, Mebrat has enjoyed reading the short stories in *People*, one of the ReadOn! series of books in the BoulderReads collection at the Boulder Public Library. Mebrat’s BoulderReads studies, her evening-shift job, and daytime baby-sitting of her grandchildren keep her very busy.

Mebrat’s tutor, Selena Billington, recently graduated with a PhD. from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, in fulfillment of her retirement dream. She has worked with Mebrat in BoulderReads since December of 2004, and finds that to be an incredibly satisfying experience.
My name is Djeneba Sako. I am from Mali, West Africa. I have lived in Boulder for 14 years. I live in an apartment. In 2013 my house flooded! I was so sad all night and all day. I was crying. There was a lot of water. I lost everything: My African clothes, American clothes, furniture, TV, bed, everything. I moved to my cousin's house for two months. After my house was fixed I moved back to Boulder because I love Boulder.

Djeneba Sako is a dancer of traditional and modern Malian dance forms. Born in Bamako, Mali, she began dancing when she was only five years old. Djeneba knew early on that she wanted dance to be her life's work, and by age eleven she was dancing professionally. She performed with several dance troupes over the next 18 years in Mali. In 2001, Djeneba moved to Boulder and now performs and shares Malian dance, song and music all over the U.S. She is only one of three Malian dance teachers in the United States.

Katy Hess started working with Djeneba at BoulderReads about three years ago, after retiring from teaching second grade at Foothill Elementary in Boulder. She loves working with Djeneba who has such a positive outlook on life and strong commitment to her work and her education.
My story is about my baby brother, Lamont, and how to help get him on the right track. He is the youngest boy. There were 15 children in our family. My mom did the best she could, but our dad died when I was only 16 years old. I had to drop out of high school to help support the family.

When my dad died we were living in Illinois. Later, my mom and the younger kids moved in with one of her older daughters in Colorado. After awhile, her son-in-law got tired of them staying there, so they stayed with different people until the youngest daughter started stealing things. After that, they went from shelter to shelter until I moved out here and got a place with them. My mom finally got on Section 8, and I moved out, and went on with my own life.

Lamont was only two when dad died. I feel really bad that I wasn’t around more when he was a teenager. Lamont started having problems about that time. He started drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. I think he was around 20 when he started doing crystal meth and crack cocaine. He has been in and out of jail since he was about 24 or 25.
Now Lamont is about to get out of prison, and I really want to help him get his life back on track. I was able to get my own life together by getting involved at our church. Spending time there and helping work on their buses, learning to fellowship with people, making new friends and better choices really helped me. I am hoping that Lamont will do the same.

Lee Allen, Jr. has been in BoulderReads for many years because he works a lot and has health problems. He used to fix cars but now he has a scrap metal business. It's hard work! People call him all the time to pick things up and sometimes it's far away, but he tries to make time for reading because he wants to keep learning.

Mary Ann Tomasko Perry has enjoyed working with Lee over the years. It is as much of a learning experience for her as for him, and affords her a glimpse into a very different lifestyle. Her own background is in art, education, museums and anthropology. She is married with four grown kids and is now up to nine grandchildren, ages 6 months to 13 years.