BoulderReads is celebrating

30 YEARS
at the Boulder Public Library!

1986-2016

Learning To Read Program
Opening new worlds
A project of the Boulder Public Library

1986-2000

2000-2014

Boulder Reads!
A program of the Boulder Public Library

2014-Present

Boulder Reads
LITERACY FOR ALL

City of Boulder
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanam Gauli</td>
<td>Marine Corps and the Reasons for my Dedication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noemi Robles</td>
<td>Book Review: “I Will Always Write Back”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam De Santiago</td>
<td>My Children</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Barlow</td>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Allen, Jr.</td>
<td>A Court Day Mix-Up.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer McDonald</td>
<td>Beautiful Disaster</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Escobar</td>
<td>My Work at BoulderReads</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erendira Silva</td>
<td>The Promise</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djeneba Sako</td>
<td>My Green Card Story</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana Woodward</td>
<td>Chronicles of Ancient Darkness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinthia Turner</td>
<td>Organizing my Words</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel Olivan</td>
<td>Family Is the Greatest Inspiration There Is</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Nourian</td>
<td>Leaving California</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuela Longoria</td>
<td>The Quinceañera</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen Roberg</td>
<td>Memories of a Little Girl</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucilia Valente</td>
<td>BoulderReads</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiale Zhao</td>
<td>Why I Like the GED Class</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BoulderReads would like to thank the Boulder Library Foundation for its ongoing support.
Marine Corps and the Reasons for my Dedication  

Sanam Gauli

My name is Sanam Gauli and I am interested in becoming a part of something bigger than myself. I would like to serve my country and protect the people of the United States of America. Many people have a desire to become great and to do something that will change lives. However, not many understand the dedication and commitment that is required to join the military.

My reason for wanting to join the Marine Corps is because I firmly believe in what our nation has to offer. The United States of America has provided several opportunities to the people of our country to become successful. As someone who has traveled all over to the United States to create a better life for myself and my loved ones, I value the opportunities that were given to me. They have shaped me to become the man I am today. I want to serve the country that has taught me the importance of each citizen’s duty and privilege to continue the traditions established by the Marine Corps. As stated on the Marines’ website, the vision of the United States Marine Corps states, “The Marine Corps will be tailored to answer the Nation’s call, at home or abroad.” I wish to uphold the vision of the Marine Corps and become a part of the legacy that several have contributed to before me. My contributions in the armed forces will honor these heroes who have made sacrifices of their own to answer those needing assistance from the armed forces.

My older brother is not only a contributor to this legacy, but he is also my inspiration in every aspect of my life. He has showed me the importance of self-sacrifice in order to bring more meaning to life. I have come to realize that throughout my life, I have always felt that I have a greater purpose in life. I have always felt like there is more meaning to my life and that I am on this planet to make a change, to touch lives, to contribute to success and aid in the needs of others. After becoming more aware of the opportunity that is provided by the Marine Corps, I realized that this is my calling. I am here today to serve the United States, to protect my people, and to assist in any shape or form in the nation’s needs, whether that is in an actual war or peace-keeping mission. Becoming a part of this brotherhood will become a new chapter in my life and I am ready to overcome any obstacle to show my dedication to the United States and the Marine Corps.
Recently, I read a book called *I Will Always Write Back* by Caitlin Alifirenka and Martin Ganda with Liz Welch. I think everyone should read this book because it teaches us about friendship, caring and generosity. It is a marvelous story about how two teenagers from different countries started an important friendship that changed both their lives.

Caitlin, from Pennsylvania and Martin, from Zimbabwe started writing each other because they were in a pen pal program in middle school. At first, Caitlin chose a pen pal in Africa out of curiosity, but it turned into the best relationship she ever had. As they got to know each other better, Caitlin found out that Martin was poor and had to pay for his own education. This made Caitlin realize how important education was for Martin, and she began to appreciate her access to education because before she started writing to Martin, she was more worried about what to wear than what she wanted to learn at school. As their friendship grew, she began sending money she earned doing chores to Martin.

Several months later, her parents got involved because Martin needed more money because his dad lost his job. Caitlin’s parents decided to support and help Martin find a scholarship to go to a university in the U.S. After some time, Caitlin’s mom helped Martin to find an international scholarship. Meanwhile in Zimbabwe Martin found a job as a teacher and waited for news from a university in the U.S. Finally he received the e-mail of acceptance to the university and went to the embassy to make the necessary arrangements to go to the U.S.

Eventually Martin came to the U.S. to attend the university and he and Caitlin continued their friendship. After he graduated, he got a job in Manhattan. Caitlin got married and Caitlin’s parents continued to help other African students to get into college.

I find this book interesting because it shows me that there are people who care about others. I think the world would be a much better place if more people helped and cared for others. I highly recommend this book to everyone.
I have two children, Marcus and Andres. Marcus is nine years old and Andres is eight years old. The doctors tell me I have two little miracles because I have a condition that makes pregnancy difficult.

Marcus is my little boy. He is so special because he was born too early at 37 weeks. He has learning disabilities, but he loves to make art, paint, and play with Legos. He is so sweet. He likes to hug people. Sometimes he gets scared. For example, one time he hid for two hours. When I asked why, he said because his hands were tired from studying math.

My pregnancy with Andres was 42 weeks long. The first two months of his life I didn’t sleep because he cried all day long. But now he is an extrovert. My husband calls him “goofy” because he is playing all the time and making jokes. At the same time, he is sensitive. For example, the other day he told us that when he opens his own café he wants to offer a free meal once a month for homeless people.

I am a very busy mom. My days are filled with children’s appointments and activities. Today, for example, I brought my children and 3 nieces to school. Then I needed to run to the doctor for an appointment. Then the school called and told me that Andres had pink eye and I needed to take him home. Maybe my life runs so crazy, but I wouldn’t change my life because I love my children and my husband.
One Sunday morning, we got up, got dressed and went to church. This was back when I believed something. It’s sad to admit, but I don’t believe a damn thing anymore. We were sitting in the audience on chairs sleeping through church, because that’s what we did. Everyone woke up because McCray pounded the pulpit and told us, “If we don’t listen and do as we are told, we are all going to be canned and turned into dog food.” He went on to explain how horses and fish were sent to plants to be slaughtered and turned into animal feed. That’s what would happen to us if we didn’t listen and obey. The only thing anyone got out of that meeting is that we would be canned and turned into dog food.

Another Sunday, Uncle Sam got up and explained what the devil was. He explained how the devil gets people to do what he wants. He gave us a story where there were these rocks and some birds came down and landed on the rocks. A snake came out, put its head up, and went back and forth for about fifteen minutes to hypnotize the birds so it could eat them for lunch. The lesson we took from this story was to see who we could hypnotize to make fools of them.
A Court Day Mix-Up

Last month, I picked up my baby brother Lamont to take him to his court date. It was at the Court House in Longmont. When we walked in, I noticed his name wasn’t on the docket. Lamont was going to leave but I told him to talk to the state’s attorney first. My brother Sam was on the schedule, which confused everyone. My baby brother’s legal name is Samuel Lamont. His court date wasn’t until this month.

I felt good when the judge said, “Mr. Allen, we haven’t see you for awhile!” He also noticed that I could read the docket. I replied, “You’re not going to see me anymore. Praise the Lord, I turned my life around and learned to read.”
Beautiful Disaster

The morning was crisp. Opening my eyes trying to piece together the events of the past four years, all I could think was I’m here and I am a survivor. What you are about to read is only a glimpse into a young girl’s life. At only six years old, she was thrown onto the road of chaos and pain. This is what happened, how she overcame it, and where she is now. That girl is me.

Having five older brothers and one older sister, who had moved out, I felt safe, like any girl should. I was as wild and as free as the wind. Yes, wild, free, hardheaded, at times yes, but strong. There wasn’t a single thing I couldn’t or more, wouldn’t do. Anywhere my brothers were to go, I was sure to follow, no matter the danger or consequences. Like my brothers, I too was adopted. With my mother who comes from a family of ten and with the heart of a saint, I knew there would be more to come. And that’s just what happened. In the late spring of 2007, five new additions were added to my diverse little family. The adoption officially brought our number to twelve.

Now my father, a strong quiet man, at first wasn’t too keen on the idea of expanding our family. Seeing my mother’s only desire, wanting to give, my father only saw it fit to allow the process to continue. At first life was good with these newfound siblings, but I couldn’t help but feel a change. Something wasn’t right, in fact something was very off. Besides the fact that my home life and space was totally and utterly invaded by these five new siblings, there was P. He was a short kind of lengthy boy with short black hair and glasses, not weighing more than 150 pounds, would be my guess. P was nice, but perhaps a little too nice. We did everything together as if we were best friends. But soon I came to see more and more the niceness he was portraying was turning into control and control into abuse.

The greater the power the more dangerous the abuse. – Edmund Burke.

I gave him complete power out of fear of the well-being of my family. I only did exactly as he said to do. With I myself only being knee high to a grasshopper and only weighing about 90 pounds there wasn’t much I could do as far as defending myself. The mental, verbal and physical abuse became my tragically unfortunate normal. After two years of this, I came to accept the reality of the situation not changing nor getting better. And, with that, I did what I had to do to survive. From the outside looking in, they saw the same happy little girl, but only this time, she had a shadow who was always close behind. He was always waiting, watching, listening and playing the part, only to get to me.

Things are not always what they seem; the first appearance deceives many, but the intelligence of few perceive what has been carefully hidden. – Phaedrus

Yes, on the outside I was the same little Jennifer, playing outside, laughing and singing around the house, smiling when it seemed appropriate, but on the inside, I was dying. More often than not, at night, I would lay in my bed with blankets over my head, praying to God to take me from my reality, to deliver me from what I came accustomed to as my normal. This was all until my prayers were answered. It was a warm July day, about 3 o’clock, when my parents drove into the driveway and called me outside. They would not say what they wanted to talk about only for me to get in the truck. And so I did, sitting in between them, my father driving and my mother holding me close. They began to question my relationship with P. At this point, 10 years of age, I was more scared than ever. I denied everything. I feared that I had unknowingly instigated the abuse. I feared that the repercussions would fall upon my family. After about ten minutes of this gentle interrogation my mother spoke the words that broke me, “This is not your fault. None of this is your fault.” And in that moment all I could bring myself to do was weep. I wept and wept as if I’d been holding back tears for the last four years.
With my mother holding me close, I found my composure and told them everything. It turns out I wasn’t P’s only victim; there were others. That was the first and last time I saw my father cry. After that most of it blurs together, except for one thing, I so vividly remember. Sitting in the interrogation room in child services, I had just gotten done with telling my story to a lady of some importance with a clipboard, when I heard the door open. My head turned briskly to the left where an officer stood with P by his side. They had the wrong room, and closed the door just as fast as they opened it. That was the last time I saw P.

After a few years of therapy and accepting the past for what it is, the past, I am here sharing this story with you seven years later. Today, I find myself working in a dementia memory care center and loving every second of it. Always having a fascination in the practice of medicine, I’ve decided to push myself to graduate early and to become an EMT. I couldn’t be happier in the person I see myself becoming and the woman I have become. Now, my purpose for sharing this is not to look for your pity or sympathy. I would rather show you that we are not defined by our past, but more so, by what is in our hearts. So let me leave you with this. The past can never define you, for who you were yesterday is not who you are today. You can overcome anything and everything. You can be anything or whoever you want because who you were yesterday isn’t who you’re going to be tomorrow.

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* – Philippians 4:13
My name is Franklin Escobar and I have been working with Marcia the last 7 months and I have learned a lot. It is not easy but Marcia is an amazing tutor. I think that to be a good tutor you have to be very patient because it is very frustrating for the student when he doesn't understand a word. That was my case. What was really hard for me was the pronunciation of so many words. Now I feel that it is easier for me to pronounce more words. I also like to be alone with my tutor because all the attention is on me and I can learn more.

Being in a group is harder because the teacher is only one person and there are so many students. Some students are at a higher level than others and it makes you feel that if you say something that is wrong, people will make fun of you.

I'm also trying to make an appointment to get my driver's license. Marcia is helping me to go through all the questions and answers that may be on the test.

My goal in the next couple of months is to get my reading and writing at a higher level. I know that by working with Marcia, I will be able to make it happen.
I was 9 years old. I wanted to learn to ride a bike like my friends who were older and bigger than me. I was small and tiny. They could ride; I couldn't. I tried it, but I lost control and crashed into a tree. I fell and had a bloody nose; I was hurt. Mom came and took me home.

Later, I went to the temple to pray to Saint Jude. I wrote him a sticky note and put it under where he was standing. It said, “I promise I will learn to ride my bike.”

One nice sunny morning, I went out with my friends. I got on my bike. I put my right foot on the pedal. I moved it a little bit; then, I was able to get my left foot on the other pedal. Suddenly, I was trembling. My face was flushed and my ears were hot. I was very scared. I took a deep breath. “Okay.” I relaxed. I was myself again. I started pedaling. I was going straight. I was happy. I could see myself go. I felt the wind in my hair. I was so happy. I was smiling from the inside out. I couldn't wait to go home and tell my mom I was able to do it on my own. I kept my promise.
I did a hard thing when I sent my application for a green card. I did not get a good response. I wanted to know what happened. I decided that I need to get help. It took such a long time. I felt so sad.

I should get my green card because I’m legally married to a U.S. citizen. I have lived in the U.S. for 15 years. I pay taxes every year. I have my driver’s license and a social security number. I teach about my culture in Africa with my dancing. I hope they change their mind.
My tutor, Gina, and I are enjoying reading a series of books by Michelle Paver about a boy, his wolf and a girl who go on journey after journey to find a cure to a terrible physical, spiritual, emotional plague that is taking over their world.

The boy, Torak, learns that he is a *maj*. And, the girl is an *italicsmajitalics* too, and a huntress; but she doesn’t want to be an *italicsmajitalics*. Wolf is found by Torak when Wolf is still a pup. Both have lost their parents and tribe packs. These two discover they are brothers. They meet Renn, the girl, later on in the first book.

We have read two of the six books. We are starting the third one. We find them to be very moving, exciting and spiritual. Each page keeps us wanting more. We are pulled into the story; getting to know the characters better and better and meeting new, surprising characters in each book; going to new parts of their world in each book, facing dangers and mysterious beings. Some of these turn out to be friendly, even though they are scary and weird. Others turn out to be treacherous masters of evil, even though they are friendly to begin with and we rely on them.

Right now, in the third book, we are meeting the Walker, whom we heard about in the first book. “A creature snuffling, swaying... It was very tall, with a shaggy pelt and a trailing, matted mane. Torak smelled carrion, and heard a wet bubbling of breath...Loops of green slime swung like creepers from his shattered nose and his rotten toothless mouth...Torak’s gorge rose. Renn clamped both hands over her mouth.” (p. 26-31)

But within a few pages we read: “Suddenly his face changed and for a moment Torak saw the man he’d been before the accident that had taken his eye and wits. It can never rest...That’s why it is angry.” (p. 31), the Walker says about himself.

That’s an example of how quickly our perceptions are changed in the books. It’s breathtaking. You can’t put it down.
I like to organize. The different jobs that I have had over the years, like mechanical assembler, hair dresser and care giver, have taught me organizational skills to make things work smoothly. Watching *Downton Abbey* shows you how a large home is run. Everyone learns what jobs are required of them and they do it with style.

The BoulderReads program has taught me how to organize. I have learned about how to make sentences and paragraphs and make ideas turn into a story. The program has helped me see my goals by seeing the educational level I have improved upon. It’s like going on a journey and smoothing the educational bumps in the road.
Family Is the Greatest Inspiration There Is

Angel Olivan

Everyone has fears but at some point you realize you can’t live with them. I want to overcome my struggles and exceed my expectations. My dad once said to me, “Never say the words ‘I can’t do it’ because everything is possible.”

My family is one of the reasons why I am here at school. I want my family to know that I am prepared if anything happens. For instance, if any of them loses a job or an accident happens, I want them to know that I can overcome that incident that stands in the way. I am ready to follow any exam and achieve any goal. I want them to feel relief when I start something new because they will know I can accomplish it and that I am prepared. If a family member is struggling I want them to look up to me. I want them to feel comfortable because they will know I can help them out of their struggle.

Another one of the reasons why I am in the GED class is because of my last experience with my job. I couldn’t keep getting promotions because I don’t have the requirements needed. I am at school because I want to have a good job and be able to support my family. I am working hard at school because I don’t want to be stopped because of a paper I don’t have. I want to be able to access all the open doors in my life. I want to be able to reach the highest position available and walk through any door I desire.

A third reason why I am here is because I want to overcome my fear of failing, of being on the bottom and not being able to get up and accomplish my goals. I want to defeat the fear of not being able to access the door I want because I couldn’t finish my GED because I wasn’t capable. I will defeat the fear of my family not being able to see me succeed. I will stand up and achieve my goals. I will keep getting up until I achieve it.

Not everyone has fears but I am in the group that has fears. I want to exceed myself and one of the steps for my success is getting my GED. The will help me defeat fear and exceed myself.
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 are going 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.
The *quinceañera* is a Hispanic traditional celebration. It is when 15-year-old girls, the *quinceañeras*, are presented into society as an adult. The girl dresses in a big beautiful dress like in a princess tale. The celebration starts with going to the church to give thanks to God for their life and blessings. Afterwards, we have a reception in a grand ballroom, where we make food and we have music.

The reception starts with a dance between the father and the *quinceañera* and continues with the coronation of the *quinceañera*. Then she changes her shoes to high heels, puts on earrings, a bracelet, a ring and a necklace. Then someone gives her a doll. The toast is important too. Everybody raises their glasses to salute the *quinceañera*.

After this the *quinceañera* dances a waltz and a surprise dance together with some friends who accompany the *quinceañera* all day. We call these girls and boys *damas y chambelanes*. Afterward, the *quinceañera* cuts a big cake and it is time for everyone to join the dance. I always compare a *quinceañera* celebration to a wedding. The most important part is everybody pays to help make all of this possible. Somebody pays for the ballroom, the dress, the music, the cake, the jewelry, the heels, the doll, and everything. All of your family and friends pay for something.

I am very excited because this year my family will have a *quinceañera*. My daughter Silvia Stephanie is turning 15. We are organizing a big party. We have almost everything ready. In these times, the *quinceañera* wants a party bus to go cruising with friends before the party. We found someone to pay for this too. All my family and friends are helping.

I can’t wait for the day!
This story is about when I was a little girl. I was born in a town called San Luis Potosi, Mexico. I have four sisters and three brothers. I am the second youngest of the family. I remember only a few anecdotes and I want to share them with you.

I had a poor childhood but I was very happy. When I woke up sometimes there was milk with bread for breakfast and sometimes not. In the kitchen, my parents had a fireplace where they cooked milky candies to sell at the market. I liked to go with my mom to the market because she bought me fruit or bread.

My neighbor friends liked to go to my house, especially in the kitchen. That was where my mom and dad made the candies. My friends liked to pick up the crumbs of candy and lick the table where my parents made the candies.

My school was a little bit far. Sometimes my mom walked with me to school or I walked with my friends. And in the afternoon I liked to play with my friends. We had no toys or jump rope but we always found something to replace them. We had a lot of imagination. For example, if we didn’t have a doll house, I made one. I remember I liked to burn tumbleweed because it looked very bright and made many sparks. It was dangerous but we did it very carefully.

These are some of the best memories of my childhood. Sometimes I dream of them and it makes me very happy.
I have been in BoulderReads a few years off and on. I have learned amazing writing skills, how to test, and read. This year, my tutor encourages me in everything and in every way. She is a wonderful and lovely person. She has changed my world in a lot of areas in my life, which I am eternally grateful for. What brought me here to this program was to have a one-on-one tutor. I was in a GED class before and I didn’t get anywhere. Since I’ve been here, my world has changed. When you have a positive teacher, your brain just starts to click. Then a vision comes to mind and I think, “Yes, I can do this writing!” That makes me feel good about myself.

Also, I would like to thank the Boulder Library program for helping hundreds of people get an education who could not have done so otherwise. If it was not for BoulderReads, where would we all be today? Thank you BoulderReads staff and all the volunteers...you are appreciated and loved.
Why I Like the GED Class

Jiale Zhao

I’m Jiale who is coming from China, now I’m living in America. English is my second language, but I have a lot of problems with it. I hoped I could talk to my friends easily and that my expression would become clear. I have already finished one year of English class in a community school, but I still need more training.

I moved to Boulder in July 2015, because my husband got a job here. We left Arizona. I left my English school and friends. We spent nearly two months to get everything done in our new home. And then, I knew I needed to go on to my English class.

Before I left Arizona, my English teacher helped me to find some new English schools in the Boulder area. She suggested the Boulder Library class first. She thinks the GED class is nearly my level. Another good reason is this school is near my home. That really helped me a lot, because I couldn’t renew a Colorado driver’s license until now, so a faraway place was not good for me.

This class gives me a lot of new information. It always lets me remember my high school time and gives me a young feeling. Compared with the past, I prefer now. In the past, we always finished one article for four classes. So that in the beginning, my reading speed was very slow. Now, I can finish an article in a short time. Thank goodness I’m much quicker now. My husband is so happy, looking at me learning in a good way; me too.

The class really helped me a lot. From the reading practices and grammar parts, I got the sentence pattern to form my speaking. The science and art give me many more topics for my conversation. I am on my way now, and I’ll go on.