

How the Library Has Changed My Life

By Gladys L.

My first visit to a public library was in Antioch, California, with my grandchildren. I was 58 years old. I could not read. Nine years later I would be diagnosed as being dyslexic. My visits were soon enhanced by the alert staff that realized I had a need. I was assisted without being offended or belittled. I let down all my shields and I felt safe in the library for the first time. I finally admitted I couldn't read. Discovery of books on tape led me to finding favorite authors and their styles and stories. I found new joy in the amount of knowledge and true facts in these varied stories.

After losing 104 pounds on Weight Watchers, my dream job was to work for them. A condition of working for them was an ability to read. My oldest son, a doctor, said, "Look into a program called Project Second Chance at the library." I had no desire to attempt another reading program that would result as the previous ones did! In failure. However, I talked to the staff at the Library's Adult Literacy Program. They were uninhibited and very skillful, and this gave me the confidence to try one more program.

Through the library, Project Second Chance has provided me with the reading skills that have opened more doors in my life than ever before. All facets of my life have been enhanced by the growth of reading skills. I no longer have to look at pictures to understand movies or menus. I can read contracts before accepting them. Reading allows me to avoid certain prohibited foods and food allergies. I now have my dream job at Weight Watchers. I can read e-mails and answer them. I text my older grandchildren and read stories to the three youngest. I now use Facebook.

I often relate to Helen Keller's story. Her 'aha moment' took place under a fountain, learning the word "water". My 'Aha moment', at the age of 67, I learned that the letters of the alphabet had sounds. And that sounds make words. Because of the library's Adult Literacy Program, I have worked with my tutor for two years and I am now a reader, more skilled than before, but not as skilled a reader that I will become.