

Adult literacy learners

CHIEFTAIN EDITORIAL

Published: October 11, 2016; Last modified: October 12, 2016 08:36AM

ANGELINA MATIAS is among the many English language learners who are grateful for the Pueblo City-County Library District's Adult Literacy Program. Never having the chance to attend school in Guatemala and after 25 years living in the United States, Matias finally is learning English under the tutelage of Carrie Heck, one of the 40 volunteer tutors in the program.

"I used to be very shy because when I spoke, I was worried people couldn't understand me. Now I can start a conversation with somebody," Matias said. "This literacy program makes me feel like I'm a real person."

Heck began teaching Matias by asking her to read grocery store advertisements in *The Pueblo Chieftain*. "She can answer any of the 100 questions on the U.S. citizenship test," she said of her student. "She wants to become a citizen so badly. She will be taking the citizenship test as soon as she can afford the \$680 fee to take the exam."

Like so many other learners, literacy in the language gives learners more enjoyment of life here, as well as a wide range of knowledge they gain by reading.

There is no cost to the learners.

The program, which began four years ago at the library district, is for people 16 and older who are interested in improving reading, spelling, writing, math and comprehension skills. Some participate in order to study for the GED, prepare for the military aptitude test or learn how to read the newspaper.

Jackie Swanson, adult literacy coordinator at the library, has expanded the number of volunteer tutors from four to 40 and the number of learners from six to 45 in the six months she has been employed in Pueblo. She said she took the job to make sure "everyone has a chance to learn."

For more information on the Adult Literacy Program or how to become a volunteer, people may call Swanson at 553-0206 or email her at Jackie.swanson@pueblolibrary.org. The website is pueblolibrary.org/adultliteracyprogram.

As Heck noted, the tutoring program is rewarding to both the students and the teachers.