



## The Exhilaration of Volunteering

"You'd be good at it," my friend told me.

Always looking for different or unusual things to do, she suggested that we volunteer as tutors at Read Write Now. As is usual for me, I doubted myself, that I could do something like that. I am not a teacher, but I do have a lot of patience and I enjoy teaching others with skills that I have. There would be training, so maybe I would learn how to go about it.

The training did teach us a lot about tutoring adults, especially adults that are sensitive about the fact that they are unable, or have limited ability, to read or write. Many have difficult backgrounds. No two students are the same and every student's needs and circumstances are different. It is their determination and diligence that allows them to succeed.

Tutors have many amazing stories to tell of their experiences and the people they have worked with. There are some students that are not successful, some that don't put the effort in, but tutors know that they have tried their best.

Before being matched with a student, I went base over apex and did a really good job of detaching three tendons in my shoulder. It took a year to mend and rehabilitate. I did a refresher training and was ready once more.

Starting with the first student is daunting. How do I know what to teach my student? Will I be able to help the student to learn? The student had been assessed by a co-ordinator and tutors use that assessment to base lessons on the level of literacy required. The first couple of lessons are trial and error to gauge the needs of the student and get to know them.

Soon, it becomes easy to plan and present lessons, and prepare homework for the student. At the end of the lesson, usually there is something light, like a game. An hour and a half passes very quickly.

The preparation work put in and meeting the student once a week is so worthwhile when the students progress and achieve goals that they have set for themselves. To know someone has been helped to have better opportunities in everyday life and work prospects gives a tutor feeling of satisfaction and achievement.

Lessons are usually held in the local libraries, where Read Write Now provide a lot of appropriate adult resources, besides there being more tutor material in the library. Libraries and the staff are very supportive, helpful and accommodating to the tutors and students.

After five years of tutoring the need for new co-ordinators in our region arose. What does it involve? Asking the question to the retiring co-ordinator meant that I could not escape! I did the training and started my additional volunteer career - I'm still tutoring - along with two other co-ordinators, under the mentorship of the outgoing co-ordinator.

It is extremely satisfying to be involved with organising students and tutors, and all the success stories.

This year, celebrating 45 years, Read Write Now has something to be very proud of.

Erica Thompson

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