



Nelly Espinoza, Role Model and Advocate for Her Children

*LEARN MORE
ABOUT
THE REDLANDS
ADULT LITERACY
PROGRAM*



To become a volunteer or receive services from the Redlands Adult Literacy Program, please call

Adult Literacy
Coordinator

Diane Shimota at:
(909) 798-7565 ext. 4110
or email
literacy@akspl.org

The next tutor
orientation is
January 20, 2026

All literacy services are
free and confidential.



*Literacy Changes
Lives!*



Nelly Espinoza joined the adult literacy program ten years ago because she wanted to improve her communication skills and read books with her children. While in the literacy program, Nelly has learned to read books and newspapers, advocated for her children, obtained her driver's license, and most recently, she celebrated gaining her high school diploma.

Nelly shared that working with her tutors to improve her reading and writing skills has changed her life: **“In big ways, wonderful ways, it has helped me make a lifestyle change and be able to help others—especially my kids.** The program helps me not to be scared to help others. I can speak in public now without feeling embarrassed or scared. I am confident in myself. I can help with my church's program now, thanks to this program. It allows children to think about things they wouldn't typically think about.”

Nelly's tutor Alan Vuchichevich, said, “Language has always been important to me and being able to communicate is essential. Communication is

both what you take in as well as what you put out. Good communication skills give you a better perspective and the ability to affect our world.”

Nelly is doing just that as she raises her five children, teaching them a love of education, reading, and supporting each other.

When the library began offering family literacy in 2019, Nelly and her children were among the first to sign up and are regular participants in the monthly family literacy meetings. They especially enjoyed learning how to write letters and family recipes. **Writing letters helped Nelly and her children stay in touch with relatives who live far away.** Nelly's children were proud when their stories were published in the adult literacy anthology.

Nelly appreciates that family literacy encourages parents “to share their experiences.” She said, “Participating in the parent-time conversations can help us be prepared for the different levels of child development, particularly how to help our kids with their emotions.” Nelly's older children help the family literacy team by assisting with crafts and other program activities.



**Nelly Espinoza,
Adult School Graduate**

Nelly thinks improving reading and writing skills is important: “For your personal life—to be able to help your kids with homework or to get a better job—you need to be able to read and write well to complete your goals. It is the foundation for a good life.”

Nelly believes the community should know that the literacy program provides great support. **She has learned that the literacy program not only helps her reach her goals, but it has helped her children get better grades** because they have better reading comprehension.

**CONGRATULATIONS,
NELLY, FOR ALL YOUR
ACHIEVEMENTS!**

Redlands Adult Literacy Program

Sponsored by A. K. Smiley Public Library and
The Friends of A. K. Smiley Public Library,
a 501.c.3 organization.
Donations are gratefully accepted.

For more information...

Call: 909.798.7565, ext. 4138 or 4110

Email: literacy@akspl.org

Stop by: A. K. Smiley Public Library, located at
125 W. Vine St., Redlands, CA

Visit the literacy web page:

www.akspl.org/literacy

Follow us on Instagram: [friendsofsmileylibrary](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofsmileylibrary)

Facebook: [Friends of A.K. Smiley Public Library](https://www.facebook.com/Friends.of.A.K.Smiley.Public.Library)

Help change someone's life!

The **MISSION** of the Redlands Adult Literacy Program is to provide professional and confidential tutoring in reading and writing to help learners in the Redlands community reach their literacy goals.

All participants are treated with dignity and respect.

You can help support adult literacy in our community:

- Spread the word that literacy help is available at Smiley Library—most learners find out about the program from family and friends.
- Become a literacy volunteer.
- Come to literacy events.
- Join the Friends of A. K. Smiley Public Library and purchase books at the Friends Bookstore, located in the lower level of Smiley Library.
- Make donations to the Redlands Adult Literacy Program by using the donate button at www.friendsofsmileylibrary.org/donate



Chef Curtis Aikens to Speak on “The Power of Literacy” on April 17, 2026, at 6:00 PM

The community is invited to attend an adult literacy event at the Contemporary Club, April 17, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Chef Curtis Aikens, author of five cookbooks and star of the Food Network, will share his personal story about how literacy changed his life.

This FREE literacy event is open to the community and is sponsored by the Redlands Adult Literacy Program and Friends of A. K. Smiley Public Library.

Aikens' success as an author, chef, and TV personality is even more remarkable because, growing up, he never learned to read. Even his parents were unaware that their son couldn't read. Aikens faked it so well, that after graduating from high school, he was accepted into college.

After moving to Marin, California, Aikens saw a public service announcement on TV that said people could get help with reading by calling the Literacy Volunteers of America in Marin. Aikens contacted the group

and began meeting with two volunteer tutors. At age 26, Aikens learned to read, and his life changed. He loves to read, and, in addition to working and enjoying his family, Aikens has earned a Master's degree in education.

Aikens will speak about his literacy experience and his work as a chef.

Aikens' television career began as a consultant and food stylist on commercials for Pizza Hut, Pillsbury, and McDonalds. In 1990, Chef Aikens began appearing regularly on ABC. In 1993, he was hired as one of the original chefs on the Food Network where he spent the next decade hosting his own cooking shows. Aikens has continued to do TV work in addition to authoring books.

Aikens speaks openly about his experience and the importance of literacy. He was profiled in Dan Rather's book, *The American Dream: Stories from the Heart of Our Nation*. Aikens' goal is to encourage others who can't read or



write. He has said, “I tell folks, **‘If you can read, you can succeed.’**” Chef Aikens is an adult literacy advocate. We sincerely appreciate his generosity in coming to Redlands to share the “Power of Literacy” with our community. We hope you will “save the date”!