

Mariposa READ

(Read, Enjoy, And Discover)

Mariposa Gazette Article: Literacy Program

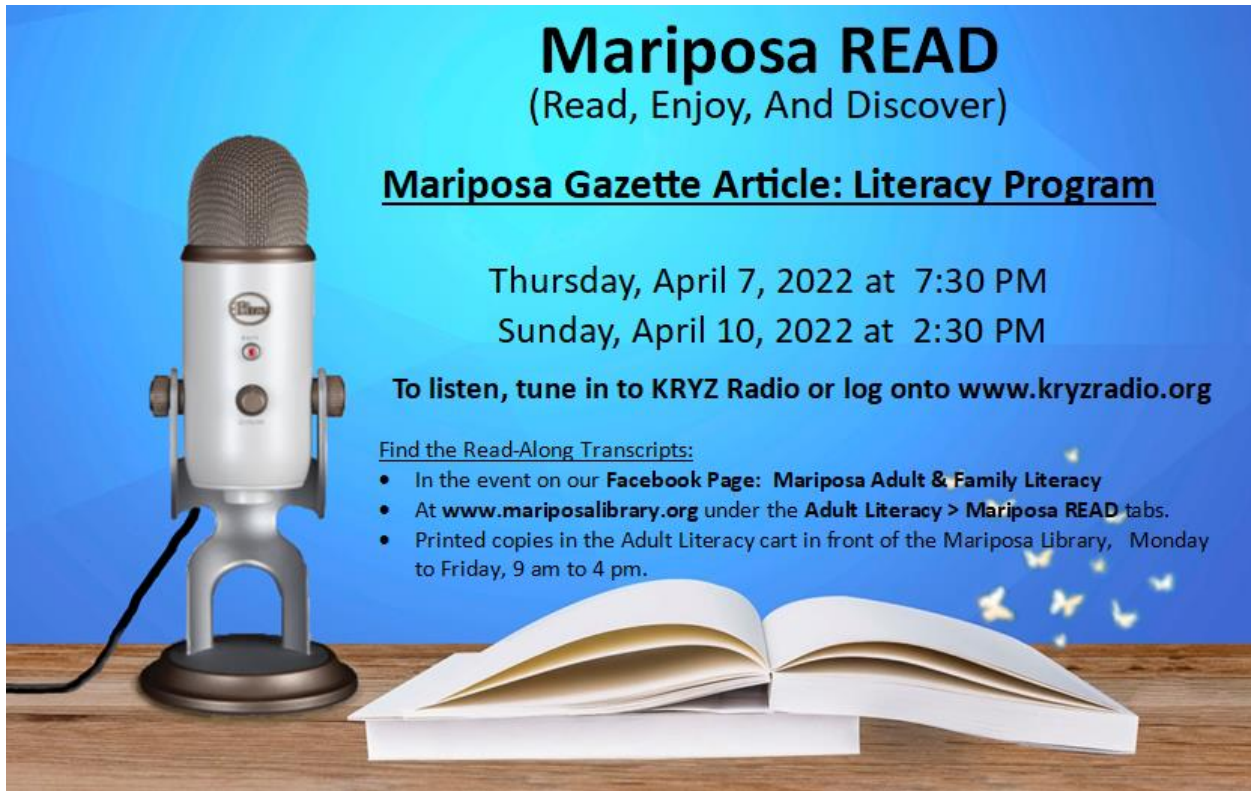
Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, April 10, 2022 at 2:30 PM

To listen, tune in to KRYZ Radio or log onto www.kryzradio.org

Find the Read-Along Transcripts:

- In the event on our **Facebook Page: Mariposa Adult & Family Literacy**
- At www.mariposalibrary.org under the **Adult Literacy > Mariposa READ** tabs.
- Printed copies in the Adult Literacy cart in front of the Mariposa Library, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.



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Photo by Greg Little
Michelle McCarty, right, and Cheryl Berg are shown recently doing a reading for the radio program.

As pandemic eases, adult literacy group wants to grow the program

By GREG LITTLE
Editor

Reading is fundamental. That's a basic concept and it is the entire focus for the Mariposa County Library Adult and Family Literacy Program.

"The focus is to work with adults to achieve literacy goals," said Cheryl Berg, coordinator of the program who has been at the helm since 2020.

And that was the same time Covid-19 changed the lives of everyone, including those involved with the literacy program, which was limited because the library

was closed for a lot of that time and it was much more difficult because so many people were isolating. That includes the volunteers who are the backbone of the program as well as those in need of the program.

Berg said there are a wide variety of offerings within the program. It can range from someone needing to get their high school equivalency degree to those seeking U.S. citizenship.

"Some just might want to be better readers or writers," said Berg.

As an example, she said it may be as simple as some-

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one wanting to know how to read their mail. Whatever it is, Berg said programs are in place to help people, something she said is crucial. Berg gives a lot of credit to Mariposa County Library Director Janet Chase-Williams, who she said has "been amazing" in supporting the program. With the pandemic easing and the library once again open, Berg said the goal now is to spread the word about the program and try to get as many

people involved, both those in need of help and those willing to volunteer to help them. Berg said the program is funded through a grant from the California Literacy Association, the statewide organization which works with similar program throughout California.

One thing that is always hard to gauge is the need for the program. In other words, how many people are in need of assistance when it comes to reading. “It is big,” said Berg. “The statistics are hard to come by.” But, said Berg, she believes the percentage of the local population that likely could use the program is 15 to 20 percent. “The need is there,” said Berg. She also said there are “a variety of reasons” why people need help and why “people fall under the radar.” Some dropped out of school, but there are many other circumstances. “There are lots of different reasons why they got to where they are,” said Berg. And none of that matters, she said, because the goal of the program is to help everyone who wants to get involved. The program itself, said Berg, “is completely learner driven. Whatever the learner needs.” That can be anything from the level of reading to where the learning takes place. “It is completely confidential,” said Berg.

That is a key element in any literacy program because in many cases, people might be embarrassed or feel shame because of their reading ability. Berg said it is crucial to make sure people know there is no shame involved and people want to help others to learn to read better because they will then do better throughout their lives. She also said the pace of the program is up to the individual. “They say when they are ready to move on,” said Berg. A key element in the program is how the tutors make sure they understand what the person in need wants and how to achieve that goal. There could be some testing involved, she said, which helps the tutors “work with the strengths” of the person as well as learn “where the gaps are” in outlining the overall goals. Once that is done, Berg said the person is paired with a tutor once they “figure out the best match, and then they work out the logistics.” The heart and soul of the program are the volunteer tutors, said Berg. They have about 18 now but she said “we need as many as we can get.” Some have not been active because of the pandemic but some of them are coming back. Berg said there is always a need and she believes it is a satisfying endeavor for both the tutors and those who learn to read better. As far as who is in need, Berg said there are “a variety of levels.” Some are low-level readers “and it goes up to those who move here from other countries,” she said. Some, she added, “might just want to improve themselves.” For Berg, “trying to grow the program” is the current objective, and she noted there is a new, private room which just opened at the library dedicated to the literacy program. Berg said it is “amazing” how some people are able to “work around” their inability to read and “function in day to day life.” She said for those people, enrolling in the literacy program can make their lives more fulfilling in many ways, from basic reading to family interaction.

Anyone interested in the program can visit mariposacountylibrary.org and click on the “adult literacy” link. They can call (209) 966-2140 for more information or email mariposaread@gmail.com. In addition, Berg said people can also inquire at any county library. She did say at the library in Mariposa there is a cart in front of the building and there are applications for the literacy program.

A new twist

A new part of the overall program was started recently by local resident Michelle McCarty and it’s called Mariposa READ, or Read, Enjoy And Discover. Berg said there was a similar program a few years ago, but now it has been revamped and McCarty is heading up the effort. The READ program is where the program helps people read via 98.5 KRYZ-FM Radio, where there is a weekly broadcast. It is also available online at kryzradio.org and can be heard anywhere there is internet access. McCarty said “the wonderful thing” many people might not realize is KRYZ is required to have a certain percentage of local program and this fits right into that need. The show is part of several program produced locally by volunteers at the radio station. For people who want to learn to read better, the show fits the bill. The 30-minute program features stories read at a

certain pace so those listening can read along. Transcripts of the programs are available ahead of time at the library website as well as written documents in the cart in front of the library. There is also a Mariposa READ page on Facebook with the transcripts. In general, McCarty said the same story is read twice during the show, once at a slower pace and then a second at a quicker pace, which can serve a variety of people who want to improve their reading.

The show airs Thursday at 7:30 p.m. and is rebroadcast the following Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Participants, said McCarty, can “read along” with the scripts to improve their skills. McCarty wants to expand the program and is now working on “tutor tips,” a method in which people go through the process of the literacy program and the tutors can then “see what they learned,” which becomes a “tool they can use,” said McCarty. Berg pointed out this is the only adult literacy program in California that hosts a local radio show. She said the state organization is quite interested in learning about the radio program and possibly help develop similar programs elsewhere in California.

As for McCarty’s involvement, Berg didn’t hold back. “She’s a rock star,” said Berg. “I’m so excited and so confident in what she’s able to do.” Berg did say she is hoping to attract more writers and readers to participate in the radio show. She also working on producing a video. “I will work with them to learn the reading part of it,” said McCarty. Certain timing and cadences are part of reading for the targeted audience, she said, but it’s nothing that difficult and anyone can learn. She said she can personally meet with people and do the recording or she can help teach people how to do the recording, which basically only requires a computer or even phone and a simple program.

For more about this program, people can use any of the contact information used in this story.