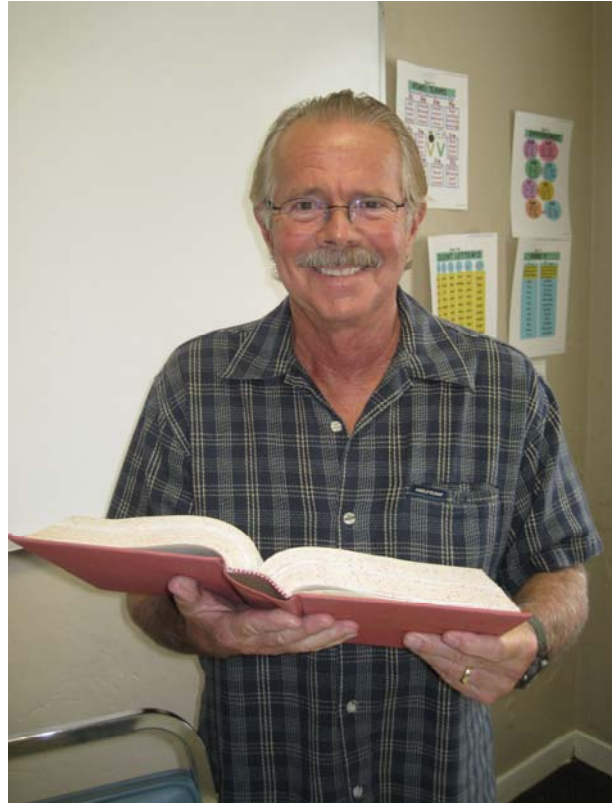


Volunteer Spotlight - March 2010 Erv Bradley

Services (SFBFS) from a longtime SFBFS volunteer. Since retirement, Erv had been looking for a place to serve where he might be able to use his Spanish speaking skills. His wife's friend, a volunteer in the Adult Education program at SFBFS, suggested the program to Erv, and he's been volunteering ever since.

Erv has found that the program allows him to help a wide variety of adult students, several of whom are learning English, but the majority who are studying for their GED exam or taking community college courses and need additional help. He admires the students who have made the time in their often busy and difficult lives to come receive tutoring. "Education is one of the many challenges facing our students," he says. "Tutoring is just one part of helping them put their lives back together." Erv works with students in reading, writing, and occasionally math, science, and social studies. The moment that keeps him coming back is when students finally grasp a concept they've been struggling with. "That's a very satisfying feeling," he says.



Carrie Black, Oak Park Adult Education program manager, appreciates Erv's compassion for the students he works with. "He's been extraordinary in his support of this program," she says. Carrie reveals that Erv had been working with an older student who was struggling with reading. It became apparent that the student was having a particularly hard time because he couldn't quite see the words on the page. Erv took the initiative to purchase over 20 pairs of reading glasses to donate to the students of the program. "It's just not that much to spend and it makes a big difference," he says. The glasses went very quickly, as many students realized they needed reading glasses to make their work easier.

A retired Army officer, general building contractor, and business owner, Erv brings his many skills and talents to the table in the Adult Education program. Through his various experiences, he has learned discipline and study skills that he shares with the students he works with. Erv is also "90% fluent" in Spanish, as he was born in Cuba but raised in the United States and taught Spanish by his mother. He also took Spanish through college to stay fresh, and he and his wife have traveled to Spanish speaking countries on vacation. He admits he does have one "selfish" motivation to being a volunteer tutor: "It helps me stay sharp!" he laughs.

Erv enjoys the atmosphere at SFBFS and says he enjoys being around other volunteers and students. "Working with those not quite so fortunate really makes you appreciate everything in your own life," he comments. "I would encourage everyone that even has a little bit of time to volunteer. It's a way to see that maybe your own problems aren't so big."