

[VITAL Receives \\$25,000 Donation from the Estate of Robert Klausmeier](#)



Last fall, [Volunteer in Tutoring Adult Learners \(VITAL\)](#) said goodbye to Robert (Bob) Edward Klausmeier, a long-time VITAL tutor and advocate, who passed away at the age of 93. Over the course of 23 years, Bob worked with at least 30 learners, providing one-on-one tutoring to help adults achieve their personal literacy goals. This fall a \$25,000 donation from the estate of Bob Klausmeier was gifted to VITAL, ensuring that generations of future learners will benefit from his generosity.

VITAL Coordinator, Bethany Turrentine, recalled her first meetings with Bob. "When I joined VITAL in 2012, it was my particular joy to meet Bob and learn about his rich history with the program. He felt very strongly about the core values of VITAL. I always enjoyed those conversations because he was just so funny."

According to Bethany, Bob had a unique skill set that was extremely valued in VITAL. The gift for teaching math. "That is an area that people really struggle with and for him it was so important that someone understand what they're learning and why. Real-life learning was really important to him. There was a time when he helped us try to figure out 'how do we train tutors to teach math', and he was a part of the building of those resources for people."

Bethany shared that even after Bob retired from tutoring, she continued to get phone calls from students whose lives he had touched. One former student expressed her gratitude for her experience with Bob. "My math tutor changed my life. He made the horribly complex into almost an art form. I'm now studying meteorology and I tutor math to 10 to 12 years olds who 'don't get it' because Bob showed me how to 'get it.' Their eyes light up with confidence, thank you for your program, and I'm still keeping it going."

"His gift for teaching extended beyond his students – I too benefited from long conversations regarding the principles that guide VITAL activities, and his passion for adult literacy," Bethany said.

In addition to generosity with his time and knowledge, Bob's ongoing financial contributions made it possible for VITAL to buy materials and resources to meet the needs of their students. Though she knew a donation was coming, Bethany didn't expect the magnitude of the final gift.

"I was stunned by how generous his contribution was, and it made me so happy because right now, things are really uncertain. These huge inequalities that have always existed are getting bigger because of the pandemic. People do not have access to technology, they do not have access to computer resources. So people who are already struggling with literacy are at even that much more of a disadvantage."

According to Bethany, the goal is to do something long term to help increase access for people who struggle with those barriers, whether those barriers are technological or physical. "Clearly there is a need. The size of the gift really makes me think creatively about how we might meet that need." While a final decision has not been made, "building a digital literacy program is at the top of the list."

However the funds are deployed, Bethany said "we are thrilled to explore the next chapter for VITAL, which has served the community for over 40 years. Already a VITAL legend, Bob's legacy ensures a brighter future for adult learning in our community."

Posted by Aubrey D. on September 18, 2020 [Think Library](#)

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