

VITAL Conversations



For the first of an ongoing series of conversations with our volunteers and learners, we asked VITAL volunteer LuAnne to chat with tutor Dennis Davoren and learner Adam Garmon about what makes their partnership successful.

Adam has worked in construction and other hands-on trades, although these days he is on medical leave awaiting open-heart surgery. "I can make just about anything," he says. "I could build you a house." Dennis is retired, and while he has spent only a year as a VITAL tutor in literacy, prior to moving to Bloomington from Louisiana, he was a math tutor for more than a decade. Adam and Dennis have been meeting for weekly sessions since July 2018.

Adam, what motivated you to join VITAL, and what keeps you in the program?

I had to read a lot of paperwork at my job delivering kitchen cabinets for installation. That paperwork makes me nervous, and I could have been a supervisor by now if I'd been able to do it. I've had trouble reading and writing for a long time, and tried getting help at other places. Nothing really stuck until I came to VITAL, and I have my sister to thank for that. She knew about the program and told me that I had to try it.

What learning tools have you found useful?

Lexia [an interactive online literacy program that learners can access through VITAL] has been great.

Just this week, I spent 256 minutes on Lexia. I look at that number and I can say, "I did it. I did this today." It's helping me get better at reading and sending text messages on my smart phone, too.

Dennis, in your opinion, what is the most important work that VITAL does?

The adult literacy work can alter the course of someone's life, and VITAL has the resources, and provides the support, to make this work possible.

The Lexia Core 5 program defines a pathway for learning in a structured and logical way. It's cleverly done; it's work, but with the aspect of a game. English is very idiosyncratic, and Lexia provides a way to navigate idiosyncrasies.

Adam is able to do things now that he couldn't do six months ago. Initially, he was texting solely by dictating. Now, he'll dictate and then check the language, and he'll try to read incoming texts before turning to the translator app to help him out.

Adam's appetite for learning is matched by Dennis's patience and commitment: that match-up is essential for a successful VITAL tutoring partnership. What's ahead for Adam? "Continuing to work on reading and writing. I'm hands on. That's how I learn."

Posted by Jackie L. on December 14, 2018

VITAL - Volunteers in Tutoring Adult Learners

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