

# An Advocate for Literacy

Lou Pinkoff

**BEFORE YOU READ:** What does it mean to be an “advocate” (noun, *pronounced ad-ve-kit*) and “to advocate” (verb, *pronounced ad-ve-kate*)? Try using the words in different sentences.

I try to be an advocate for adult literacy. Education means a lot to me. If I had a better education when I was young, I would have been able to make better choices in my life. It’s not too late for me to get an education now and to advocate for adult literacy so that others in my community can take classes too.

## Speaking Up about Adult Literacy

Twice in the past, I have spoken with elected officials. One was a county board member, and the other was a state legislator. I had this opportunity because I have been an advocate for Alameda Reads and their programs. How did I become an

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advocate? I just started speaking at different types of meetings, and it grew from there.

What is surprising to me is that after I have spoken in public meetings, people have come up to me to talk about adult literacy. They are looking for classes. I have suggested programs, and some of them have gone to the places I recommended.

Another way I advocate for adult learners is that I speak to tutors in training. I share with them my experiences as a learner. I hope it has been helpful to them. Being an advocate is easy for me, for I know it has helped me.

## Persisting Despite Discouragement

I understand that learning is a process, so I just keep chipping away at it. Sometimes it is easy, and

sometimes it is hard.

Now I can write notes to myself, read them a day or two later, and know what I wanted to remember. In the past I could not understand what I wrote. My spelling and writing were so bad I could not make sense of it. Now

my spelling has improved, and my writing skills have come a long way, so I know it can be done.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and I wonder why I keep trying, but that feeling passes fast. I just have to keep going, for I understand if I want what I never had, I have to do what I never did.

## AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are two ways Lou advocates for adult literacy?
2. What helps him persist?

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*Lou Pinkoff is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. He is 66 years old and has been with Alameda Reads for 11 years. He is glad he got past his fears of others knowing about his reading and writing skills.*

## Be an Advocate in Your State

Contact your state adult education organization and find out how adult education is funded in your area. Ask if there are ways you can support. Write a letter or call your state representative. Read the article on the next page to learn about more training.

