

A Lifelong Learner

Carmen Chu

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What are some things you've learned recently (not necessarily in school)? In what ways are you a lifelong learner?
2. How do you and your family use the public library?

My Children Encouraged Me

When I came to the U.S. in 2008, my three energetic children were 13, 11, and 7 years old. They were my major reason for coming here. I wanted to provide them with a bright future. However, I was terrified of being here because I felt that I was an outsider.

My children, on the other hand, liked it here very much. They were thrilled to study at schools, and they made friends. They learned a lot about different cultures and traditions. They often shared their joyful school life with me. They continually encouraged me to take English classes. They knew I was an introverted person, especially since my English was not very good. They wanted me to reduce my stress and boost my happiness in this foreign country.

My Teachers Were Patient and Dedicated

I went to the Alameda Adult School, and one of my classmates introduced me to the literacy program. Alameda Reads opened the door and welcomed me. Their motto is "Learning is Lifelong." Their staff were pleasant and patient. They talked with me and listened to me. I took their writing, reading, and conversation classes, and I joined their book club. In the writing class, my dedicated

I always practice my English with the friendly staff and lovely patrons.



The public library in Frederick, Maryland. Describe what you see in the photo. Does this library look like a welcoming place to you? Photo by Carol Highsmith from picryl.com

teacher gave me great encouragement to write an article for *The Change Agent*. My articles have been published twice before, and I felt ecstatic both times!

When I studied in the reading class, my teacher used the newspaper called *News for You*. I learned about a lot of current events from around the world. I built up my vocabulary. Also, the book club was my favorite. I read a variety of books such as *Pass Go and Collect \$200* which is the real story of how Monopoly was invented. *Moreover*, my teacher taught us how to play this well-known board game. I'm grateful to have this chance to learn English at Alameda Reads. It enriched my life and built up my confidence day by day.

A Job with Friendly Staff

Thankfully, I got a job as a library aide at the Alameda Free Library in 2009. I shelved all the books. I had the advantage of reading many

different kinds of books, so I have become a *bookworm* now. I always practice my English with the friendly staff and lovely patrons. They're pleased to talk to me.

Moving Forward with My Goals

When I felt more confident about improving my English, my family and Alameda Reads advocated for me to chase my dream. My goal is to go to college. I'm interested in art. As a beginner, I will take Introduction to Drawing and Painting. I will check the class schedule to make sure it works for me, and then I will apply online. I am eager to accomplish this challenging goal.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Note the transition word, *moreover*, and the idiom, *bookworm*. What do these words mean? Try using them in sentences.
2. Read another article by Carmen on p. 38 of [Issue #57](#). Write a paragraph about the people and organizations that have supported her.
3. Read a third article by Carmen on p. 36 of [Issue #50](#). Look up the democracy movement in Hong Kong and find out what is going on now. Share the information with your class.



Carmen Chu came to the U.S. from Hong Kong in 2008. She is a student at Alameda Reads, in Alameda, California. Her English classes take place in the Alameda Free Library, where she also works. She has been published two times previously in The Change Agent. She has been overjoyed to learn English with classmates from diverse backgrounds.



Libraries Are a Public Resource



A public resource is paid for by taxpayers. More examples of public resources are: parks, schools, fire departments, roads, and bridges. Even if you never use the fire department, it is clear why it is important for one to be publicly available. How do you feel about contributing taxes to public resources?

Learn more about public libraries in this illustrated history by Ariel Aberg-Riger at [Bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com).