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Editor’s Corner

One goal in adult education is to keep lessons practical, and the articles in this issue should help you meet that goal.

We start off with a lesson to help adults with low English literacy learn how to call 9-1-1 for emergencies. Considering that nearly 240 million calls are made each year to 9-1-1 (and even more when you include other local emergency numbers), this is one skill all adults need to know. Our article addresses what constitutes an emergency, what kind of information an operator will ask for, and how to best respond to an operator’s questions. You’ll also find some great extras related to this lesson on the Keys to Safety website, which is available at www.proliteracy.org/keystosafety.

Next we guide you through the process of introducing students to computers. If your students are new to computers—or if you consider yourself a beginning user—our lesson will make things easy. Using computers does not have to be intimidating. You’ll find that many students become more motivated when they are able to use computers during tutoring sessions or in class; they know that they are learning a valuable workplace and life skill.

As summer approaches, our numeracy lesson on planning a budget for a trip to a family reunion can help students use math in a practical manner. Using common concepts like addition, division, and multiplication, the lesson walks students through how to plan expenses for a hypothetical trip to the reunion.

As always, our Exploring Resources column includes some great links to resources you can use with your program or with students, including the new ProLiteracy Education Network site.

Finally, the Tutor Profile features a California-based retired physician-turned-tutor-turned-program administrator whose world travels (including, most recently, Antarctica) have helped prepare him to work with students from many different countries. You’re sure to enjoy his story.

Remember that you can access Notebook online for the convenience of an electronic PDF version as well as a hard copy. Just follow the instructions in the sidebar on this page.

The Editor

NOTE about photocopying: You may photocopy for use with students any of the activities in this issue or in the Notebook section of the ProLiteracy website (see Notebook Online, to the left). This includes material provided by New Readers Press, the publishing division of ProLiteracy. To learn more about New Readers Press products, request a catalog at (800) 448-8878, or go to www.newreaderspress.com.
Calling for Help in an Emergency
by Katie Schisa, ProLiteracy

Purpose
To help adults with low English literacy understand when and how to call 9-1-1 or a local emergency number for assistance; to help adult learners practice reading and conversation skills.

Rationale
In an emergency, the ability to call for help quickly and effectively can mean the difference between minor property damage and total devastation, or even between life and death. Each year, nearly 240 million emergency calls are made to 9-1-1, according to the National Emergency Number Association. Many more calls are made to other local emergency numbers in places where 9-1-1 is not available. Calling for help is a critical life skill for all adults. This lesson prepares students to know how and when to call 9-1-1 or a local emergency number. This year is the 10th anniversary of 9-1-1 as the official national emergency number.

Basic Activity
Read “Emergency: Calling for Help” on p. 4 with students. Then, complete the “Calling for Help Activity and Script” and “More Practice” on pp. 6–8. Make sure to review the accompanying Teacher’s Guide on p. 5 and the ideas for additional practice on p. 8 before using the student activity. After you have completed the activity, use the discussion questions on p. 7 to talk about the experience in small groups or with the entire class.

Tip 1: A generic operator script is provided for the 9-1-1 call activity, but you may want to modify it with specific questions or terminology used by 9-1-1 operators in your community. Call the nonemergency number for your local fire department or emergency call center, explain your lesson plan, and ask for recommendations to help you customize the script. Many call centers also have informational materials readily available. If the call center provides community education on a regular basis, a staff member may even be able to visit your class to help with the lesson.

Tip 2: Be prepared to help students look up the emergency number they should use where they live. 9-1-1 is not available in every area. Check on the Internet or in a phone book. If you are unsure, ask a reference librarian at the local community library for assistance.

More Information
Visit the following websites for more information on calling for help in an emergency:

Keys to Safety
www.proliteracy.org/keystosafety

Keys to Safety is ProLiteracy’s fire prevention and safety campaign. The website features free fire safety resources for adult instruction.

9-1-1 for Kids
http://www.911forkids.com/

Information and resources from 9-1-1 for Kids, a national organization dedicated to educating children about 9-1-1 service.

National Emergency Number Association:
http://www.nena.org/911-statistics

Information and statistics about 9-1-1 that may be of use to instructors and tutors.

Federal Communications Commission – Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
9-1-1 Information for Consumers
(Click on 911 services)

Provides useful background about 9-1-1 for instructors and tutors.
Emergency: Calling for Help

Words to Review
Here are some words you will see in the reading below and activities. Say the words and discuss their meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-1-1</td>
<td>emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td>emergency number</td>
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<tr>
<td>meeting</td>
<td>place</td>
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<tr>
<td>landline</td>
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<td>cell phone</td>
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<td>operator</td>
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<td>landmark</td>
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</table>

When to Call
Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number if there is an emergency and you need urgent help from firefighters or police or you need an ambulance.

Three examples of emergencies:
- There is a fire in your neighbor’s home.
- A person you don’t know is trying to enter your home.
- Someone in your family is having a heart attack.

How to Call
1. Pick up the phone. If you are using a landline, listen for a dial tone.
2. Dial 9-1-1 or the emergency number in your area.
3. Wait for the operator to answer the phone.
4. Tell the operator what the emergency is and where you are.
5. Listen carefully to all of the operator’s questions. Try to answer the questions.
6. Stay on the phone until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up.

If there is a fire in your home, call for help from a neighbor’s home or a cell phone after you have escaped from your home and checked in at your meeting place.
Teacher’s Guide Calling for Help Activity and Script

Purpose
Students practice calling 9-1-1 or a local emergency number for help. This activity helps improve communication, comprehension, and practical life skills.

Materials
• A disconnected landline phone or a cell phone with the battery removed (Note: Even if a cell phone is deactivated, it can be used to call 9-1-1. This is why it is important to remove the battery. As an alternative, students can just pretend they are dialing 9-1-1 without really dialing it.)
• A copy of the script on pp. 6–7 for each person

Roles
• The instructor is the operator.
• The student is the caller.

If class size prohibits one-to-one work with an instructor, students may pair up and take turns playing the role of the caller and the operator.

Instructor Guidance
1) The caller dials 9-1-1 or the local emergency number using the disconnected phone.
2) Use the script guide on pp. 6–7 to guide the call. There is an example of a full script for a fire emergency call on the Keys to Safety website, (www.proliteracy.org/keystosafety) under “Resources - Keys to Safety Campaign Materials.” It may be helpful to review the full role play script with students before completing the activity. You can also use it for a demonstration before you ask students to do the activity themselves.
3) Discuss the activity with the class or in small groups using the questions provided on p. 7. Use “More Practice” on p. 8 if time permits to practice other 9-1-1 call scenarios. Go over the “Tips for Calling for Help in an Emergency” in the sidebar on p. 8 with students.

Expansion Activity
Read with your students “Kayla Calls 9-1-1,” a story about a woman who calls 9-1-1 for help when her kitchen catches fire. You can download and print the story and related activities for free on ProLiteracy’s Keys to Safety website. Go to http://bit.ly/eFa6ns. Activities for “Kayla Calls 9-1-1” include reading comprehension questions, self-assessment, and a word search. You will also find on the site other activities to help students practice calling 9-1-1, including sample emergency calls and a worksheet to help students decide when to call for emergency help.

The Keys to Safety general website features free instructional materials and other resources for adult educators on a variety of fire prevention and safety topics.
Calling for Help Activity and Script

Instructions

• Use a disconnected landline phone or a cell phone with the battery removed.
• “Call” 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.
• Your instructor or another student will ask you questions using the script below. These are the questions the operator will ask if you call for help in a real emergency. The operator’s questions are in bold.
• In a real emergency, give similar answers that tell the emergency and give your address, name, and phone number.

1. **Operator:** “Nine-one-one. What is your emergency?”
   Caller: “There is a fire in my neighbor’s house.”

2. **Operator:** “What is the location of the emergency?”
   Caller: “The fire is at 100 West Avenue. The house is yellow. It is across from Central Park.”

3. **Operator:** “Where are you right now?”
   Caller: “I am in my driveway at 102 West Avenue. My neighbor is with me. My house is next to the house that is on fire. It is a white house.”

4. **Operator:** “What is your name?”
   Caller: “My name is Sarah Smith.”

5. **Operator:** “What is your phone number?”
   Caller: “I am using my cell phone. The number is 555-123-4567.”

6. **Operator:** “Is everyone out of the home?”
   Caller: “My neighbor said her brother is sleeping in his bedroom on the second floor. He is still inside.”
7. **Operator:** “Stay outside. Do NOT go back into the home. Tell your neighbor to stay outside with you. The fire department will be there soon to help.”

   **Caller:** “OK.”

8. **Operator:** “How old is the person who is still in the home?”

   **Caller:** “He is around 20 years old.”

9. **Operator:** “Do you know where the fire started?”

   **Caller:** “We don’t know, but it looks like it is in the kitchen. There are flames and smoke coming from the kitchen window.”

10. **Operator:** “Stay calm, and don’t hang up. Help is on the way.”

    **Caller:** “OK.”

   *Two minutes later…*

11. **Caller:** “The fire trucks are here.”

    **Operator:** “Stay in your driveway. Someone will come and talk to you. We can hang up now.”

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**Calling for Help – Discussion Questions**

1. How did you feel when you were calling the emergency number?
2. How do you think you will feel if you have to call for help in a real emergency?
3. Did you remember everything you needed to tell the operator?
4. Have you called for help in an emergency before? If yes, what was it like?
5. Children should also know when and how to call for help. How can you practice this activity at home with your children?
More Practice

The role play activity on pp. 6–7 focuses on fire emergencies, but you can change it for more 9-1-1 practice.

Here are examples of other types of questions an operator might ask.

**Car Accident**

- Is anyone hurt?
- How many cars were involved?
- How many people were involved?
- Is anyone trapped inside a car?
- Are any of the cars on fire?

**Medical Emergency**

- What are the symptoms?
- Does the patient have any known medical problems?
- How old is the patient?
- How long has the person had the symptoms?

**Crime**

- Is anyone hurt?
- When did the crime happen? Is it happening right now?
- Did the suspect(s) have any weapons?
- Was the suspect walking or driving a car?
- In what direction did he or she go?
- What did the suspect or suspects look like?

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**Tips for Calling for Help in an Emergency**

- Stay calm.
- Speak slowly, loudly, and clearly.
- Answer all of the operator’s questions.
- Know landmarks (such as public buildings or parks) or cross streets near your home. Give this information to the operator to make it easier for people to find you in an emergency.
- If you are not staying in your own home, make sure you know the address in case there is an emergency.
- If you do not speak English well, tell the operator what language you want to use. If an interpreter is available, he or she will help you and the operator talk to each other.
- Do not hang up until the operator tells you to hang up.

**Only call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in a real emergency!**

If you call 9-1-1 by mistake, do not hang up. Tell the operator that you made a mistake.
Purpose
To help adult learners start to use computers.

Rationale
Knowing how to use computers is a necessary skill for many jobs. Even jobs that do not typically use computers may still require applicants to apply for them on a computer. Having a basic understanding of computers also can make a number of daily life tasks easier for students. However, some students may feel hesitant to use computers, thinking that it is too difficult to learn how. Students who struggle with literacy issues may feel that using computers adds an additional challenge to their learning. Tutors and teachers may not always have access to computers. If they are not familiar with computers themselves, they may believe that it would be overwhelming to both learn how to use them and then teach that skill to others.

This lesson introduces students to the basics of computer and word processing with only minimal Internet usage. The lesson is usually done over one or two class periods of about an hour each. For example, you may want to have students do Part 1 during one meeting and Part 2 during your next meeting.

The Basic Activity, Part 1
1. Ensure you have one copy for each student of “Basic Computer Use” on p. 11. When it is time to actually use the computer, make sure you have at least one computer for every two students. Before using computers, make sure you have access to the website Mousercise (http://www.pbclibrary.org/mousing/mousercise.htm) and a word processing program.

2. Ask the student(s) if they have ever used computers. If you are in a classroom (versus a tutoring situation), ask for a quick show of hands to determine who is new to using a computer. More questions you can ask: When did you use a computer? Why? What did you do on the computer? Did you go on the Internet? What did you do on the Internet?

3. Tell students you will teach them the basics of using a computer. You will then help them use a word processing program as they write a short story about themselves.

4. Give each student a copy of the handout on p. 11.

5. Work with students to label each part of a computer that is on the handout. The words they fill in will be as follows (definitions you can provide appear here in parentheses): 1. monitor/screen (where you see information on the
computer—similar to a TV screen), 2. CPU (short for central processing unit—the computer “brain” or where the computer stores information), 3. keyboard (used for typing), 4. mouse (for computer navigation), 5. laptop (a portable computer), 6. USB drive (can store files and connect to the computer), 7. headphones (used for listening).

On lines 8–10, review the new words and their definitions. If you are working with ESL students, make sure they repeat each new word several times to become familiar with pronunciation.

6. Next, have students sit in front of a real computer. If you are in a classroom and do not have enough computers for each individual student, pair more experienced users with newer users. You also might want to ask for help from a student volunteer with computer experience who is willing to walk around and assist students.

Point to various parts on the computer that you have taught, and ask students to name the parts for you.

Alternative #1: Have each new word written on an index card and give each student copies of the index cards. Point to a part on the computer, and ask students to hold up the card with the correct word.

Alternative #2: Give students cards that say yes and no. Point to a computer part. Sometimes you say the correct name of the part, and other times you incorrectly name it. Students use their yes and no cards to indicate whether or not you gave the correct name.

7. Tell students they will now learn more about using a mouse via the website Mousercise. (Students who already use computers regularly can skip this practice.) If you are working with mostly beginning computer users, the site should already be on their computer screen. If your students want an extra challenge, have them type in the website address for Mousercise (see p. 9 of this issue for the website).

Have students click on “Let’s start mousercising” and then click on the various numbers that the exercise includes. (Students may initially have trouble finding the numbers on each new screen, which is part of the goal of learning mouse navigation.) The website has users click up to number 13 and then provides additional mouse practice. You may want to preview the website’s various screens in advance to decide how far you want students to practice.

The Basic Activity, Part 2

8. Once students feel more comfortable with the mouse, tell them they will have the chance to use a word processing program (such as Microsoft Word) to write about themselves. Show them the screen for your computer’s word processing program. Point out a few important keys on the keyboard—delete/backspace, the space bar, the arrow keys, shift for making capital letters, and enter/return. You can address briefly what each key does. As you work through the following exercise, keep in mind that the goal is to get students comfortable with using the keyboard, not to master the use of those particular keys.

To give them practice with the keys, ask them to type their first and last names. Tell them about the space bar to separate first and last names. Then they can use the back arrow, delete, and shift keys to capitalize their first name. They can use the forward arrow, delete, and shift to capitalize their last name. Have them hold down one letter and watch how it repeats across the screen and automatically wraps to next line. Tell them what they write will do that, too. When they want to go to a new line or start a new paragraph, they can hit return. Have them do this.

9. Give students a model of the story you would like them to write about themselves. For example, if you work with high beginning ESL students, here’s a sample story you might share.

My name is John Lopez. I am from Mexico. I live in Tampa. I am a painter. I have two children.

Alternately, you can write a story about yourself to share. Encourage students to write more if they can.

10. Provide help as needed as students write their stories. Remind students how to use the word processing keys that are new for them, such as the spacebar and backspace/delete keys. Provide assistance to correct major errors.

Expect students to type their stories to differing levels; some students will finish all of the story sentences and add more, while others may not be familiar with the keyboard and may only be able to type one or two sentences.

11. Help students print their stories if you have access to a printer. Invite students to read their stories aloud to the class.
Basic Computer Use

1. [Diagram of a laptop]
2. [Diagram of a mouse]
3. [Diagram of a USB flash drive]
4. [Diagram of headphones]
5. [Diagram of a network connection]
6. [Diagram of a network connection]
7. [Diagram of a network connection]
8. Internet: network where you get information
9. Website: an address on the Internet
10. Email: electronic mail
Plan a Budget for a Trip to a Family Reunion

Purpose
To help students practice numeracy skills as they plan a trip to attend a family reunion.

Rationale
Planning a budget for a trip gives students real-life experience with math skills. This lesson uses structured parameters for the budget (limiting the type of transportation and the destination) to better control the math students will complete.

The Basic Activity
1. Provide students with a copy of the handout “Family Reunion Time!” on pp. 13–14. You can also provide students with a copy of the sample worksheet (all the calculations are done as an example) that is available on Notebook Online. For instructions on how to access Notebook Online, see this issue’s sidebar on p. 2. Alternately, you can use the sample worksheet as a reference copy to make sure students are performing the calculations correctly.

2. Per the directions on the handout, students will need Internet access. If you do not have Internet access in class, visit the AAA Fuel Calculator website in advance (see address on the handout), and print a copy of the United States map with average fuel costs per region (or write down the amounts shown on the map). To help calculate mileage in advance when you do not have Internet access, you can use an atlas. Atlases often provide mileage distances between major cities. Find the biggest city near your town to calculate an approximate mileage. Or, use MapQuest in advance so you can tell students the mileage between their town and St. Louis, Missouri.

3. Have students decide if they will drive a standard car that uses 25 miles per gallon or if they have another car in mind they would like to use. (If they choose another car, they need to know the average miles per gallon they would get with that car).

4. Then, have students calculate meal, lodging, and just-for-fun costs.

5. Students should discuss their subtotals and totals. Were they able to stay within their budget? Why or why not? What factors can they change to stay within their budget?
**Family Reunion Time!**

You are going on a trip to attend a family reunion in St. Louis, Missouri. You and a family member will stay there for five days and four nights. You have been saving money for this trip and have $1,700 to spend. You will travel by car. You have to figure out the cost for gas, hotels, food, and something for fun. Your entire expenses cannot exceed $1,700.

1. **Number of Miles**
   Use MapQuest to calculate the number of miles from your starting point to St. Louis, Missouri. To do this, go to the website www.mapquest.com. Click on “Get Directions.”
   Type the name of your town/city in “Start.”
   Type this in “End”: St. Louis, Missouri.
   Click “Get Directions.”
   a. The one-way trip from my town/city to St. Louis is _________ miles.
   b. The round trip from my town to St. Louis and back is _________ miles.

2. **Gallons of Gas**
   Calculate how much gas you need. Assume that your car will get 25 miles per gallon (mpg). If you will use another car and you know how many mpg it gets, use that number instead of 25.
   a. The car I will use gets _________ miles per gallon.
   b. Divide the total number of miles round trip by the mpg for your car. Round your answer to the nearest whole number. I will need _________ gallons of gas to drive to and from St. Louis.

   Example: 25 | 1780 miles round trip
   \[ \frac{1780}{25} = 71 \text{ gallons} \]

3. **Cost of the Gas**
   Calculate the cost of the gas. Use the AAA Fuel Cost Calculator.
   Go to this website: http://fuelcostcalculator.aaa.com.
   Look at the U.S. map. Find the average cost per gallon in each region you will drive through.
   Pick the highest cost to use in your calculations. Multiply this cost by the number of gallons of gas you need. Round your answer to the nearest dollar. The gas for my trip will cost $__________

   Example: $3.91 per gallon
   \[ \times 71 \text{ gallons} \]
   $277.61 = $278 gas cost

*Continued on next page*
4. **Number of Nights You Need a Hotel**

You will share a hotel room for four nights in St. Louis. You might also need to stay in a hotel on your way to and from St. Louis. You do not want to drive more than 480 miles per day.

If St. Louis is less than 480 miles from your town, you will not need a hotel during the drive. If it is more than 480 miles, divide the number of miles to St. Louis by 480.

Example: 480 miles to St. Louis

I will need a hotel room for ________ nights. (Include the four nights in St. Louis plus the number of nights you will need a hotel going there and coming home—in other words, round trip.)

5. **Cost of Hotels**

Decide how much you want to pay for a hotel. Check one of these:

- $130 per night: Top-Notch Hotel (has a pool, a fitness room, a restaurant, and in-room movies)
- $70 per night: Good Hotel (has a pool, in-room movies and a restaurant nearby)
- $45 per night: Average Hotel (has a pool)

Multiply the cost per night by the number of nights you need. My total hotel cost will be $__________.

Example: $70 cost of hotel per night

\[ \times 6 \text{ nights} \]

$420 cost of hotels for the trip

6. **Cost of Food**

Decide how much you want to spend per day for food. Check one of these:

- $40 per day (fast food for two people)
- $100 per day (a good breakfast, fast food lunch, and a reasonably priced dinner for two people)

Multiply the cost per day by the total trip days. My total food cost will be $__________.

Example: $100 cost of food per day

\[ \times 6 \text{ days} \]

$600 cost of food for the trip

7. **Just for Fun**

Do you want to do something special in St. Louis while you’re there? You could take a dinner boat on the Mississippi River for $42 per person. Or you could go to a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game for $30 per person. Put the cost below if you want to do one or both of these things:

Cost for you: $__________

Cost for the person you are with: $__________

Total cost: $__________

8. **Total Cost of the Trip**

Gas: $__________

Hotels: $__________

Food: $__________

Just for fun: $__________

TOTAL: $__________

How did you do? Did you stay within your budget?
ProLiteracy Education Network
http://proliteracyednet.org/
ProLiteracy has launched a new website. It contains most of the free online courses, interactives, and other resources that were formerly housed on Thinkfinity Literacy Network. Support for the site is provided by the Verizon Foundation.
• Check out the new easy-to-use design.
• Take our free online courses used by literacy programs across the country as a required or recommended part of their pre- and in-service training of tutors and teachers.
• Investigate the new resources that put students in control. Students can choose to read or listen to stories on a number of different topics and then do related exercises to help improve vocabulary and comprehension.
Please contact Project Director Linda Church for more information at lchurch@proliteracy.org.

Expert Network Academy
http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/Academy/index.html
The Home Safety Council’s online Expert Network Academy is designed to assist fire and life safety educators with skills, knowledge, and resources to teach injury prevention in their communities. The free modules are also helpful for people who want to help provide safety education to adult literacy students. The modules cover the following topics: Introduction, Fire Safety, Falls, Poisoning, Choking and Suffocation, Water Safety, Disaster Preparedness, and Evaluation. ProLiteracy served as the literacy consultant during the development of academy resources.

U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy
http://www.USCAL.org
Plan now to attend the inaugural U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy (USCAL), to be held this November 2–5 in Houston, Texas. The conference will feature various workshops, presentations, and professional development opportunities. Sponsored by ProLiteracy, USCAL will provide a unique opportunity to forge new partnerships among national organizations concerned with adult literacy and basic education; workforce development; citizenship preparation; adult learner leadership development; and financial, health, and information literacy. Creating a forum to accomplish this—while providing expert professional development and training opportunities for community-based adult literacy programs and providers—is the central mission of this innovative conference.

PublicProfiler: Last Name Frequency
http://worldnames.publicprofiler.org/
Help students find out where in the world their surname is most common. When you go to PublicProfiler, type in a last name (you also have to provide your gender and an email address). Once you click “search,” the website will show a world map with colored areas that indicate where that particular last name has low, medium, or high frequency. The site can also search for top names (both first names and last names) by world region and ethnicity by world region. PublicProfiler has information on 8 million surnames; its information represents a total population of 1 billion people in 26 countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Information is based on a large analysis of name records from those particular world regions. Keep in mind that the results you get might not be accurate for certain groups of people, such as descendants of African slaves who often took the last names of their owners.
The switch from a physician to ESL tutor may seem like a big one—but San Diego area-based Charles Ross says his medical training has come in handy in the classroom. “With my experience as a doctor, I had a feeling of how to interact with people,” he says. He adds that both jobs require “friendliness, patience, being a good listener, showing that you care, and having a good sense of humor.”

Ross brings his seasoned background as a physician to Laubach Literacy Council of San Diego County, where he tutored for six years before recently switching from tutoring to an administrative role. He still substitutes for other tutors from time to time.

After his work as a doctor, Ross also ran a travel company for about 12 years. He took travelers on 28- to 42-day trips to Yemen, Syria, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, and many other countries far from the usual tourist destinations. That work also required many of the same people skills as tutoring and medicine. Ross’s traveling background also has helped him in the classroom.

Ross, who is 84, has tutored students from around the globe, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Korea, Arabic-speaking countries, and Spanish-speaking countries.

Ross had some teaching experience at the graduate school level, but it was the council’s 12-hour tutor training that really prepared him to teach ESL students. His first student was a woman from Afghanistan with five children. Her husband had been killed by the Taliban, and she still had one daughter in her native country. The student was illiterate in her own language; it took about a year and a half to boost her literacy level enough to attend regular ESL classes. She went on to take ESL classes five days a week and is now a U.S. citizen. Many of the students that Ross has tutored, particularly women from Afghanistan, started out with literacy challenges in their own language.

In his administrative work, Ross has helped to manage the program’s 30 sites and helped the council begin to offer literacy classes via the local libraries. The library-based program won an Act of Caring award in 2008 from the National Association of Counties, which honors county partnerships with volunteer organizations.

“We are proud and happy to have Charles’s questioning, his imagination, his energy, and his devotion to the cause of welcoming those from foreign lands who come here and find in our tutors generosity, compassion, and concern—the face of America,” says Arlene K. Atkinson, president of the Laubach Literacy Council of San Diego County.

Ross volunteers about 30 hours a week with the council. He still travels and most recently took a trip to Antarctica.