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TULSAPEOPLE / AUGUST 2015 / PROBLEM SOLVER

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Problem solver

Tulsa library volunteer is recognized for helping adults become better readers.

RACHEL LELAND



Donna Farrow has tutored six adult learners, including Amber (pictured), since she began volunteering with the Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service in 2006. Farrow recently received the Marcus R. Tower Award from the Tulsa City-County Library.

Evan Taylor

Donna Farrow is a mathematician who feels just as comfortable helping people sound out words as teaching them to solve equations.

In May, the Tulsa City-County Library recognized Farrow for her volunteerism with the Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service. The program assists Tulsa adults who cannot read above a sixth-grade level and relies on dedicated volunteers who commit to read with an adult learner every week for one year.

Farrow, a retired University of Tulsa professor of mathematics, received the Marcus R. Tower Award at the library's annual volunteer recognition event. The award,

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established by the Bank of Oklahoma and Tulsa Library Trust, is given to individuals who serve the library and fulfill its mission of learning through reading.

Nominations are made based on time and dedication to the library and on candidates' standing as role models. More than 900 volunteers in the library's numerous programs are considered. Award recipients are presented with an engraved crystal trophy and \$1,500 to gift to a library service or program of their choice.

Farrior began volunteering with the Ruth G. Hardman Adult Literacy Service in 2006. Since then, she has tutored six adult learners, some of whom joined the program because they were seeking employment.

"When you become a tutor, you are not helping someone read a novel every night," she says. "You are helping them improve their lives and navigate society more easily and be able to look things up. You're helping them to live richer lives."

In addition to tutoring adult literacy students, Farrior leads 12-hour training programs for other volunteers who desire to work with adult learners. She also has served on the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award selection committee for three years.

Farrior received the Tower Award for her commitment to her learners and her desire to go above and beyond her duties, according to library officials.

"Donna was really good at working on whatever level the student was on," says Literacy Coordinator **Jennifer Armistead**. "She would also help them with their math. We don't handle that very often."

Farrior's math background also has come in handy for other volunteerism, such as teaching math classes for more than three years in a GED program at the Tulsa Dream Center.

Last year, she started a math circle with middle school girls that meets weekly at TU. Based on a model used in Eastern Europe, the circle connects students and teachers to solve problems in an unorthodox way.

Although math and reading seem on opposite ends of the educational spectrum, Farrior says she has found more similarities than one might think.

"Working with literacy students is a lot like problem solving," she explains. "If they're an adult and they are struggling with literacy, then there is something that is getting in the way.

"So, finding that is like solving a math problem. It's kind of the same thing."

*This article appears in the [August 2015 issue of TulsaPeople](#)
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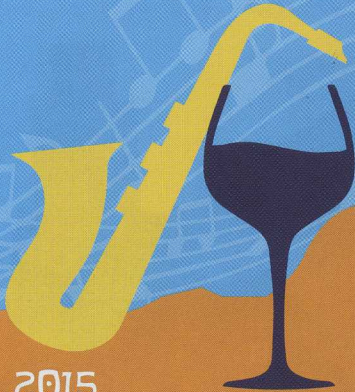


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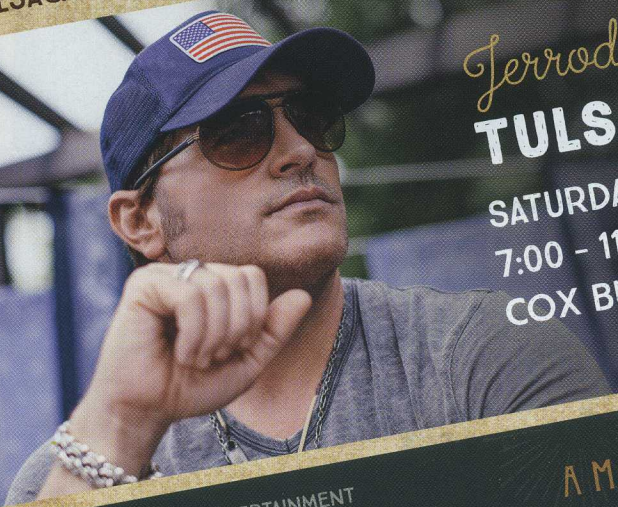
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