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Tutor one child, change two lives

In My Own Words

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Are you looking for that perfect volunteer opportunity? One that combines service with enjoyment and leaves you with a deep sense of actually helping someone? And do you enjoy working with children? If so, the Augustine Literacy Project of the Upstate may be just the volunteer opportunity for you.

As a newcomer to Greenville, I was excited to find the Augustine Literacy Project as just the activity I had been searching for in my previous location and had been unable to find. It is a unique group of volunteer tutors working with children individually twice weekly for 45 minutes to improve their reading, writing and spelling skills. It was founded in 1993 in Chapel Hill, N.C., and brought here as a replication in 2006. Since then, 87 tutors have been trained and 154 children have been assessed and tutored. Our goal is to train people to become tutors who will, in turn, teach children to improve their literacy skills. Tutors need not be teachers – the program is geared to train everyone who wishes to help a child. I have a teaching

background, but many excellent tutors do not. Students are recommended for the program by their classroom teachers, administrators, or parents and must be below grade level and qualify for free/reduced lunch. Currently, 26 ALP tutors are working with 35 students in 12 schools throughout the Greenville area.

Prospective tutors take a training class to learn the basics of reading instruction and the particulars of the structured, sequential approach this program uses. Then they work with a student in a practicum setting with the help of a coach, a seasoned tutor. After successfully completing the training program and the practicum, tutors can request their school assignment, generally whatever is most convenient. Materials are provided and support is available throughout the year for any and all tutoring.

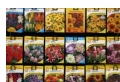
The motto of the Augustine Literacy Project is "Tutor One Child, Change Two Lives," a very fitting descriptor of the program. As a tutor and coach with this program for the past three years, I can easily say that I've gotten as much out of it as the students I have tutored. To watch a hesitant and uncertain student blossom into a confident reader is truly a rewarding experience. I am as proud as they are when they can apply a new skill to read a word or comprehend a new concept. Top that off with smiles throughout, and the experience can't be beaten!

The volunteers of the ALP of the Upstate are a wonderful, engaging group of people of all ages and interesting backgrounds. To that point, we are embarking on a growth initiative to raise awareness in the community of the program and its impact so that we can gain additional tutors and reach more at-risk children. Training classes are scheduled for July, September and January.

If you think you would like to tutor a child and change both of your lives, or make a donation, please visit augustineproject-upstateresc.org, contact us at Augustine.upstate@gmail.com or call 864-680-1533 for more information.

Alice Sobray is a retired reading specialist who taught students for 27 years in Texas and New Jersey.

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