

## Every Boy's Dream

by **Annette Jurgelski**  
RSVP Volunteer

Little boys may dream about their future and say, "When I grow up, I'm going to be a cowboy." For most, it doesn't become a reality. However, one boy had the next best thing happen by being the son of a cowboy. Jon Livers, former insurance executive turned RSVP volunteer, grew up on a mid-West farm raising horses and cows. He comes from a family of pioneers traced to the early 1700s.

Now, Jon shares the flavors of his varied cultural experiences as a volunteer. Every Tuesday morning, a classroom at the Seymour Center resounds with the hum of multi-accented conversation. In the Orange County Literacy Council's English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class, everyone is speaking English, but their pronunciations vary, and Jon is in the middle of it all.

Jon facilitates this present-day tower of Babel by giving non-English speakers an opportunity to improve their conversational skills. Participants come from a variety of countries, including Russia, Korea, Japan, China, Columbia and Persia, and range from visiting scholars to newly settled refugees.

"Many have studied English in their home countries and may know more English grammar than the average American," Jon says. "In this case, we work on pronunciation and putting things in the right syntax. It's difficult to understand how the same English word can have different meanings. For example, we take a trip (vacation) and then we trip and fall."

Like many others, the

Livers chose Chapel Hill for their retirement home. After moving from North Dakota in 2003, Jon followed the example of his wife, a "Volunteer of the Year" award winner for her work with UNC Hospice. Initially, Jon volunteered with the Orange County Literacy Council, where he was trained to tutor students working for their GED. Then he was offered the opportunity to assist in the conversation lab, which quickly became the focus of his volunteering.

Under Jon's tutelage, lab activities have become as varied as its participants. Groups of two or three meet with an English-speaking volunteer to discuss newspaper articles or simply share life experiences. The entire group takes field trips to local destinations such as the Oishii Sushi restaurant, Allen & Son BBQ and Weaver Street Market. Potlucks provide a setting for participants to introduce their native cuisines and share perceptions of our country. This culture sharing increases when the attendees wear native costumes and describe their holidays.

Like many volunteers, Jon finds that he's a recipient as well as a giver. Working with the internationals in the conversation lab has given Jon a broader outlook on life. "We learn from them; they learn from us," Jon says. "The experience revitalizes you and restores your faith in the future of the human race."

Since as many as 20 internationals may attend the conversation lab in one session, new volunteers are always welcome. If you are interested in sharing the culture of another country and helping others communicate, call the RSVP Volunteer Program at 968-2056 or visit the OC Literacy Council at [www.oranaeliteracy.org](http://www.oranaeliteracy.org)



**RSVP Volunteer Jon Livers occasionally adds a cowboy twist to leading an ESOL class (English Speakers of Other Languages). Stop by the class and you may catch Jon strumming a campfire tune in full cowboy attire, hat to boot. The volunteers and students attending the class above studied newspaper clippings and enjoy tasting exotic fruits.**

## Free Tax Help Program for All Ages

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) provides a free tax service for people with a family income below \$60,000. IRS-trained, tested and certified volunteers prepare computerized federal and state tax returns. If your tax return is complex or lengthy, please contact a paid tax consultant. The service will be available Mon through Sat across Orange and Chatham counties. Appointments for the homebound or disabled can be made by special arrangement. Returns are filed electronically at no charge.

[www.orangecountyinc.gov](http://www.orangecountyinc.gov)

KEYWORD: VITA

- Non-English-speaking clients without appointments must bring an interpreter.

- Walk-in clients may be served if there is an open appointment and must arrive no later than 2 hrs prior to the tax site's closing time.

- Clients must bring their social security cards and photo ID.

### ORANGE COUNTY

For Spanish-speaking clients - 245-2010

**Carrboro Town Hall - 968-2086**

Mon (Appointments only) 4-6 pm; Tues (Appointments and walk-ins) 10 am-1pm

**Chapel Hill: Community Center - 968-2086**

**Appointments and walk-ins**  
Wed, 11 am - 2 pm

**Chapel Hill: Seymour Center - 968-2086**

**Appointments and walk-ins**  
Thurs, 1 - 4 pm; Fri, 9 - 4 pm;  
Sat, 9 am - 12 noon

**Chapel Hill: Women's Center - 968-4610**

**Appointments only**

**Hillsborough: Central Orange Senior Center - 968-2086**

**Appointments only**  
Wed, 12 - 3 pm; Sat, 9 am - 12 noon

### CHATHAM COUNTY

For Spanish-speaking clients: 742-1448

**Appointments only**

**Pittsboro and Siler City - 542-4512**

Wed and Sat

**Carolina Meadows: 942-4010 (ext 596)**

Tues and Sat