

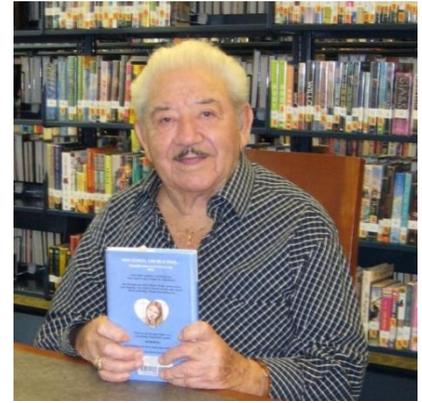
Bob Perez: Adult Literacy Instruction at the Library

At 88, Bob Perez is enjoying life. He is retired from a successful career in construction, delights in regular bike rides and working on his home of more than 60 years, and is often visited by his four children and several grandchildren. Recently, though, Bob decided there was one thing still missing from his life – an education.

Growing up during the Great Depression in the 1930s in a small farming community, Bob was required to stop school after only a few years to work with his family. While his childhood employment taught him many of the skills he would need to succeed in construction later in life, Bob was forced to adopt a variety of coping mechanisms to overcome his low literacy skills.

“I asked a lot of questions and I used landmarks to get around,” recalls Bob. “Throughout my adult life I was able to hide my lack of education from my coworkers, but it was not easy. I spent many days scared about what problems I might get into because I couldn’t read.”

Following several years in the Navy, Bob settled in San Diego in 1945. While it was always something he thought about, it wasn’t until 2006 that he decided to pursue an education.



Eighty-eight-year-old Bob Perez proves you can gain literacy skills at any age.

“I got my first library card ever at the age of 84...you are never too old to learn...because it will change your life.”

“I got my first library card ever at the age of 84 and began going to the [Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Branch Library](#),” says Bob. “I would check out books for very young children, take them home and try to read them. One day, a Librarian asked me who the books were for, and when I pointed to myself, she told me about READ and how it could help me.”

[READ/San Diego](#) is the San Diego Public Library’s free adult literacy instruction service. Each year, READ/San Diego assists more than 1,000 adult students from various backgrounds and learning levels. The American Library Association recently recognized the service as the nation’s top literacy program and the U.S. Department of

Education named it a “model program.”

“I felt so welcome into the program,” says Bob. “It’s one of the best organizations I’ve ever encountered. It’s such a wonderful opportunity for anyone that wants to learn. It’s unbelievable the feeling you get when you start the program and begin to read.”

“The success of READ/San Diego demonstrates that there is a solution to adult illiteracy – that it is never too late to learn to read and write,” says Bob’s former tutor, Erica Aguillon. “It has been such a positive experience to get to work with Bob and to witness the evolution of his goals and perspective on life. I would encourage anyone with a need to use this program.”

While Bob acknowledges there are challenges that come with beginning an education at such a late age, he is confident the program can help anyone who is looking to improve their literacy skills. “You are never too old to learn and you’ve got to make an effort to learn because it will change your life. You couldn’t ask for anything better than READ/San Diego and the staff and resources at the San Diego Public Library.”

For more information on READ/San Diego, please call 619-527-5475. To support the program, contact the San Diego Public Library Foundation at 619-238-6636 or [donate now](#).

