

# When Dreams Become Reality

by Connect4Success Committee

Eighteen months into the program, we are celebrating its growth and success. The committee members, tutors, and students are all learning as the program evolves in this journey together: what works, what doesn't, what details needed to be tweaked or simply discarded. As the tutors become more confident, they, too, are enriching the curriculum with their unique plans to more effectively meet the needs of individual students. As in any volunteer program, our tutors and students deal with personal issues and situations that result in absences or "retirement," so Paulette, the committee chair, is often recruiting and training new volunteers along with creating updated spreadsheets, calendar schedules, and a creative way to post lesson plans on the Portal. We are grateful to our UVTO administration for its support and commitment in offering release time for weekly one-hour sessions for employees dedicated to this learning opportunity.

As cameras captured special moments that meaningful morning, we all experienced the excitement of a dream come true as each student was handed a beautiful certificate honoring his or her achievement. Enjoying Mexican pastries, donuts, and coffee after the ceremony, we savored many "testimonials" from several employees. As one beamed a smile, she exclaimed, "For me it's amazing! It's an opportunity to speak better English and more steps in my job!" Another employee added, "I'm expressing myself differently." The entire event was the greatest reward for all of us involved in making a dream come true!

**A final note:** We begin the next eight-week session in mid-January. If you are interested in finding out how YOU can support the program, contact Paulette M. or any committee member.





# Village View

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As we enter a New Year, we think, hope, and even dream about new possibilities. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." The Connect4Success Program, the ESL program for employees, is a testimony of a dream becoming a meaningful reality at University Village. The certificate ceremony held in Catalina Hall Monday, December 19, was a celebrative culmination of the persistent work and commitment of the Connect4Success Committee, our administrator Dmitry E. and Espy G., Environmental Services Director, the volunteer resident tutors, and most of all, the employees who courageously and enthusiastically participated in the weekly tutorial sessions. Behind the launching of every successful program is a dream, a back-story that is worth sharing.

Connect4Success began as an idea in July 2021 offering the opportunity to the Environmental Service employees to improve their English verbal and writing skills. To launch the dream into a plan, a committee was formed under the leadership of Paulette M., a business, marketing specialist, former ESL teacher Ida O., the creator of many helpful lesson plans, Sue S., retired special education teacher, and Don C., former university administrator to oversee administrative details. Later, Denna H., a retired secondary English teacher, joined the team to help create an enrichment curriculum. The committee, however, soon realized it needed a partner from the community to help launch the program; that is where the Conejo Adult Education program in Thousand Oaks shared their expertise with us. The director of the adult literacy program provided us not only leadership in recommending a text book for tutors and a workbook for our students, but also in the initial training for our twenty-five resident volunteer tutors. Next, the employees interested in the program were assessed in their English skills and assigned to Basic, Beginner, and Intermediate instructional levels. After the students were assigned to a compatible tutor, they were ready to begin their weekly sessions of opportunity to better use and comprehend the English language in their work, their social interactions, and possible pursuit of other job opportunities.



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