

One word describes volunteer tutor Jim Scarborough and his newest adult literacy student at Columbia Gorge Community College: dedication. Jim travels from his rural home in Washington twice a week. He meets his student at the College's The Dalles campus library, a place quietly buzzing with students and faculty working together. Jim and his student will spend three hours a week here.

It's up to Miriam to choose what the day's subjects might be. Jim, a retired general surgeon, was originally paired with Miriam because she needed help with a class on medical terminology, a subject that Jim is quite familiar with, having spent 37 years practicing medicine. Since then, Jim's found himself helping with a diverse set of subjects: everything from sociology to legends and fairy tales. Always, he supports her desire to be a better writer and a more accomplished English speaker. Jim says, "She works very hard. She really has goals."

Jim became interested in being a volunteer tutor after visiting with some friends from Oregon Health Sciences University who were part of the program. When asked why he joined, Jim answers, "Both my parents were teachers and I did see the impact they made on the lives of people. They had students coming back to visit them when they were in their nineties."

Jim finds the volunteer program satisfying. "Seeing someone catch on to something is rewarding – those 'ah-ha' moments, are wonderful." At 76, he's delighted to be doing meaningful work. "I'd hate to sit around doing nothing." Jim Scarborough is certainly doing something – in addition to his work with the literacy program, he volunteers three days a week with The Dalles Habitat program.