

Good evening, everyone!

I have to admit, I'm a little nervous tonight
not just because I'm speaking in public,
but because this is the first time in my life
I have ever spoken in front of an audience.
And I never imagined that my first time
would be in a language other than my native language.

When Martha invited me to share a few words at this event,
I hesitated at first.

But when I talked to my wife about it, she said,
"You can do it, my dear, and I'll help you."

That encouraged me, but I was still afraid.

Then I spoke with my tutor,

Jim, and explained how insecure I was feeling. He said,

"It'll be good for you—you can do it, and I'll help you."

They both helped me,

I was never alone.

My fellow students,

we are never alone here.

Let me share something I saw in the office
to prove this.

Someone rang a bell—this bell! (*ring the bell*).

When it rang, the office staff cheered,

and I didn't understand why.

Then they explained

that the bell celebrates every time a student is matched
with a tutor.

That moment is the beginning

of an important partnership between a student and a tutor.

Tutors, when you say "yes" to one of us,

there is a small celebration in the office.

And certainly there is also a celebration

in the heart of every student who has a new tutor.

The bell in my heart rang last year,
on November twenty first,
when I received this message from my tutor:
“Hi Bruno, let's meet in the lobby of the library,
near the main desk at 10.
See you there!”
That was the day of my first class with my amazing tutor: Jim.

Jim, how many laughs we've shared this year,
every Tuesday at the library.
While we chat, I learn about culture, books, traveling, food, kayaking, and,
of course, English.
Jim has been more than a teacher—
he also supported me during my road test,
standing by my side when I heard:
“Congratulations, you passed!”
Thank you for everything, Jim!

I feel very strongly
that being part of Literacy Unlimited is about
much more than learning or teaching a language—
It's about connecting people.

To close, I'd like to ring this bell again.
When it rings,
I invite all students to cheer loudly
as a way of thanking the incredible office staff
who make these connections happen:
Martha, Karen, Margie, Michelle
and also the board members who support this mission,
the sponsors who make it possible,
the library staff
who welcome us with smiles,
and finally,
all the tutors who said “yes” to each of us.
This bell is for each one of you. (ring the bell)