



The Literacy Council  
of Lancaster-Lebanon

# The Literacy Line

Spring 2021

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Literacy & Learning  
*Success Centers*

Lancaster | Lebanon

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The Literacy & Learning Success Centers, a service of  
The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon.

## A Look Ahead...

**Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director**

As we move into the next phase of the global pandemic crisis, I cannot help but think about past events that changed how we live. COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on our lives – how we work, how we travel, how we shop and play.

The Success Center staff members have been considering this impact on our services. We need to determine how we hold classes, how we tutor and how we continuously improve programs and services, based on these experiences. We are taking the lessons learned from the crisis to guide our next steps.

As restrictions lift, we are mindful that we are serving some of our community's most vulnerable residents. Our next steps will consider, first and foremost, the safety of our students and our team.

One thing we do know – when it is safe to resume face-to-face services, we are not going back to “normal.” Our students and teachers built their “remote learning muscles” and they like it! Remote learning is the best choice for many of our students and we are not going to take that away.

Moving forward, we see a future with service options that remove barriers and offer the right fit for the diverse needs of our learners. Instructional options will include face-to-face classes, tutoring, and group instruction. These face-to-face options will be available throughout our service area thanks to community partners who welcome us into their buildings. We will also be offering remote learning options for students who prefer that mode of learning or have barriers getting to a class. We will grow our digital literacy and computer skills instructional programs to ensure that learners are digitally connected.

The pandemic was not the only crisis we faced as a nation. Events in the past year put a spotlight on racism and inequity in our nation. As an organization that strongly opposes racism and inequity, we have begun to work as team to reflect on our beliefs, policies, and practices to ensure that we are moving the antiracism needle. Partnering with IU13 Community Education, we held a combined staff training led by Dr. Amanda Kemp from Racial Justice from the Heart. We followed that with an all-staff book discussion on *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, facilitated by Dr. Todd Mealy. Dr. Mealy and his team at The Institute for Racial Equity in Pedagogy is leading our two agencies through an audit of our practices so that we can address areas that need improvement and build on our strengths in creating welcoming, inclusive, and equitable organizations.



## **Student Success Story: Naglaa** *Cathy Roth, Student Services Coordinator*

I can't help but admire the dedication and drive of the students who have come into my classroom and joined me remotely on Zoom. Learning English while caring for a family is a challenge in itself. Doing it remotely is even more difficult. However, some students have thrived in remote classes, and there are many success stories.

Recently, I reached out to one of my former students to get her permission to write about her for this newsletter. Naglaa said, "yes, of course, but why?" I explained that she has worked hard in my class and that dedication should be recognized. Naglaa had been in my class since the summer of 2018. She was now studying four mornings a week in my Intermediate English class and attending Teacher Assistant Training through IU13 in the evenings. In December she let me know she couldn't continue class in the winter session because she would begin a job as a Personal Care Assistant to an autistic child in a local school district classroom starting in January 2021. Naglaa had been a special education teacher in Egypt.

When I called Naglaa for an update, she had been working for a month and a half. I asked her how she's been feeling, and the first thing she said was "confident." She now works in a classroom assisting a teacher with six children. The teacher Naglaa supports stated that she is doing well, and she certainly has continued learning; she learns something new every day. Naglaa said that although it's nice to get a paycheck, it's more important to her to be helping in the community.

Naglaa has helped me become a better teacher. Once in class, when she had asked if I could form a WhatsApp class group so students could communicate with each other as well as with me, I was a bit flustered. I really didn't know how to set up the group. Naglaa talked me through it and that day in class we entered every student into the group. We've continued to use the group to help students complete homework assignments.

Before our conversation ended, Naglaa revealed that she and her husband are now in the process of buying a house in Lancaster city. She thanked me for my encouragement when she came in as a shy student. I thanked her for her dedication, for being a role model for lifelong learning, and her willingness to help other encourage and guide her fellow students.

## **Looking Ahead: Student Success Through Lifelong Learning**

*Steve Hess, Student Career Services Coordinator*

As we come to the end of one program year and look ahead to the next, I asked my students to reflect on what success meant to them. As expected, success can be measured in infinite ways depending on the individual experiences of those we serve. Getting a job, having a healthy family, learning to speak English more fluently, going to school to get additional training, helping children with their schoolwork, or personal growth were common responses. These responses have thus afforded me an opportunity to think about what activities I could utilize to help them achieve success which align with our vision of adults having the skills to transform their lives, sustain their families and strengthen their communities. These activities include:

1. Increased and intentional focus on student goal setting and articulating a plan with short, intermediate, and long-term goals.
2. Increased and intentional focus on embedding Career Pathways into the curriculum. For those seeking employment, or for those who would like to obtain a better job, promote middle skill jobs, which are in high demand.
3. Create student portfolios to document student progress and success and motivate students to persist in their educational and professional journeys.

Collectively, it is my hope that putting these three activities into meaningful practice will not only increase my own efficacy as a classroom instructor, but also provide my students the necessary tools to achieve their success; success based on individual values.



## Reclaiming Healthcare Careers: Nermein's Story

*Brittany Foose, ESOL Coordinator*



I recently had the opportunity to speak with Nermein about her journey from Egypt to the United States, including her path to reclaiming her medical career. This is her story:

### What experience do you have in healthcare?

After I graduated from Alexandria Medical School in 2008, I started an internal medicine residency program. During the first year of my residency, the Egyptian Revolution started so I was working in a university hospital, and the situation was dangerous. Also, I had very long shifts, often for 36 hours spent between the emergency unit for medical cases, inpatient cases, and the internal medicine clinic. In the last two years of my residency, I had advanced training in the diabetes unit. Here, I worked with diabetes emergency cases,

the Diabetic Food Clinic, and in research. After the completion of my five-year residency, I finished my Master's degree in Internal Medicine.

After I finished my residency, I worked as an Internal Medicine Specialist (attending physician) in both private and public hospitals for two years. In 2016, I came to the United States with my husband.

### Since you came to the United States, what's been your journey to get back into the medical field?

After I came to the United States, I started to study for the STEPs exams for my ECFMG certificate. My first exam was in March 2018. It took me two years to study for the exam due to some personal circumstances, but I passed on the first attempt. I then started to study for the STEP 1 exam, which I passed on my first attempt in August 2020. Normally, there is a STEP 2 CS exam but this was cancelled due to COVID-19 and replaced by the Occupational English Test. This was a little harder for me because I had to work more on my language skills, but I passed this exam in December 2020. I plan to apply for residency for the 2021 cycle. During this period, I've applied for volunteering positions at the UMPC Hospital and the Lebanon Free Clinic. Also, I've been accepted for a fellowship at Hershey Simulation Center. Additionally, I am certified for ACLS and PALS. On April 22, 2021, I officially became a U.S. citizen!

### What are your goals for the upcoming year?

I'm currently studying for the STEP 3 exam and trying to improve my residency in hopes of matching with a residency for the 2022 cycle. I'm currently searching for a healthcare or research position to get back into the medical field. If I don't get a residency program in the 2022 cycle, I'm considering applying for a Physician's Assistant program so that I can still return to the medical field.

### What advice would you give to other students who are trying to achieve their dreams?

You must work hard at a younger age. For any immigrant who decides to move to the United States, it's easier to do it when you're young. Keep learning languages! Any language that you know is useful.



## Lifelong Learning Reimagined

*Jane Myers, Volunteer and Tutor Services Coordinator*

When Jenny entered my office over one year ago and told me to gather what I needed and to leave the building, I did. I understood that COVID-19 was raging and would change our lives in ways we could never imagine. Although I was not surprised by the shutdown of the office, I thought, okay, we will be back in a few weeks and we will return to business as usual. We did return to business quickly, but not in the sense I imagined. COVID-19 has influenced nearly every aspect of our lives for over a year. Because of this virus, we have been forced to navigate in a very different way. Personally, I have become more flexible, upped my technology skills (still working on this one), and have realized that the future will be a hybrid of our past.

As we go forward, I visualize a return to face-to-face instruction for some students and instructors, while others may prefer to continue remotely. Whatever the mode of teaching, our instruction will be geared to seeing our students succeed, not only in the classroom, but throughout their lives. As life-long learners, not only will our students learn academics, but as they continue their journey, become better versions of themselves.

## **Success Centers Receive Grant from The Steinman Foundation**

*Ilisa Powell Diller, Outreach and Resource Coordinator*



The Literacy & Learning Success Centers recently received a \$50,000 Community Stewardship Grant through The Steinman Foundation. With the funding from this grant, we will be able to expand direct tuition support for students participating in our Career Pathways for English Language Learners (CPEL) program which began in 2018. CPEL is a collaborative partnership between Lancaster-Lebanon IU13 Community Education, the Success Centers, and other

community partners. Students enrolled in this program are completing post-secondary education programs in partnership with Penn State Harrisburg, HACC, Millersville, Tec Centro, and Stevens. For the last three years, we have been able to provide students with scholarships to help cover tuition and tuition related expenses (books, assessments, uniforms, etc.). The Community Stewardship grant will allow us to provide 20 additional scholarships to students (@\$2,500) in the CPEL program.

Many of our students in this program are on healthcare career paths and are doing well! We recently had six scholars attain jobs as registered nurses, allowing them to earn a family sustaining wage, and reclaim the medical careers they began in their home countries. Healthcare workers continue to be in high demand, and we are happy the CPEL program can be one pipeline to filling the healthcare job gaps, while at the same time aiding students in reaching education, career, and life goals.

We would like to extend our thanks to The Steinman Foundation for providing us with a means to offer more scholarships to students in the CPEL program. The scholarships have been a lifeline for our students, and help reduce the stress of going to school, working, and taking care of a family all at once. Most importantly, this is a resource to help qualified and well-prepared professionals enter the healthcare field in their new country, where they are desperately needed.

## **PA Department of Labor & Industry Grant Funding Received to Expand Digital Literacy at the Lebanon Success Center**

*Ilisa Powell Diller, Outreach and Resource Coordinator*

One of the most important things learned during the past year is the impact of digital literacy and digital inclusion on adult learners. When COVID-19 safety mitigation efforts forced us to suspend face-to-face services on March 16, 2021, we quickly transitioned to online instruction and learning. That week, it became starkly apparent that there were huge discrepancies in access and abilities when it came to technology. Some of our students were trying to do all their work on their cellphones because they did not have a computer; some students had no internet, and some students simply did not have the technology skills to navigate online learning. Utilizing the Northstar Digital Literacy Curriculum, a project of Literacy Minnesota, we began to carve pathways to get both students and instructors comfortable utilizing various virtual learning platforms.

We realized quickly that digital literacy must become a core instructional program at the Success Centers. Digital skills are critical to be able to compete in today's job market, and we can help skill-up our students, so they become competitive applicants as they look for jobs/careers with family sustaining wages. A local foundation invested in our digital inclusion project which enabled us to bring in resources, including the ability to hire a digital navigator to work directly with students. This local investment was the first step. In February 2021, the Literacy & Learning Success Center in Lebanon applied for and was awarded a \$45,000 digital literacy and workforce development grant from the PA Department of Labor & Industry to offer stand-alone digital literacy education into our Lebanon County programs and services.

This Digital Literacy for Employment Success project is designed to help bridge the digital literacy gap in Lebanon County. Adult learners will participate in instruction and practice that addresses digital fundamentals, digital job seeking, digital citizenship, and digital navigation. The Literacy & Learning Success Center in Lebanon will be utilizing the Northstar Digital Literacy Curriculum to guide instruction, assess learning goals, and help students gain the digital skills they need to be competitive in an employment market that is increasingly technology focused.

We are grateful to have been chosen to receive this grant, and most importantly, have the opportunity to help students gain the skills they need to be successful in their roles as family members, workers, and community members. To read more about the digital literacy and workforce development grants awarded across the Commonwealth, click here: <https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/Labor-and-Industry-details.aspx?newsid=562>

## Navigating Forward with New Staff

**Jenny Bair, Program Director**

In January 2021, Emiko (Emi) Houck became the newest member of the staff at the Success Centers. She joined our team as a Program Coordinator with an emphasis on digital navigation. It has been great to connect with her remotely and I am looking forward to getting to know Emi even better when we (eventually) return to face-to-face services.



### All About Emi:

#### What is your hometown?

I was born in Lancaster, PA. However, my family moved to Fukuoka, Japan immediately after my birth, so my first four years of life were in Japan. Having spent almost an equal amount of time in these two countries, I consider both to be my hometown.

#### What did you want to be when you grew up?

As a young child, I wanted to work at a flower shop and sell muffins.

#### What was your first job?

I worked at a printing company called Scantron during my high school summers.

#### What is your education and experience?

I graduated from Millersville University with an English Education degree. A few weeks after graduating, I moved to Japan and taught English to students of all ages and levels for almost six years. During those years, I also worked as an interpreter, a translator, and a reporter for local radio and TV programs. I obtained my ESL certification last year.

#### What is a movie you recommend?

Here's one I recently watched: I Still Hide to Smoke.

#### What book do you recommend?

Any writing by my favorite writers: Oscar Wilde, Alberto Moravia, and Junichiro Tanizaki.

#### What is your music of choice?

If I'm feeling sprightly, Benny Sings; if I'm feeling existential, Jose Gonzalez; if I'm feeling nostalgic, Joe Hisaishi.

#### What are your hobbies?

Classical guitar, piano, tennis, reading, baking sweets, and napping with my cats. I decided from the onset of the pandemic to master latte art. I just chuckled at the image of myself in the kitchen with a half-crazed look and a wholly-caffinated energy trying to perfect my pours. So, have I mastered it? Ask me for a latte to find out!

#### What are you looking forward to at the Success Centers?

I look forward to connecting with students and staff on a non-virtual level and expanding digital navigation services.

Happy Spring from  
the staff of the  
Literacy & Learning  
Success Centers!

# The Literacy Line

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## The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon

We serve the people and communities of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties; working in partnership with multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, business and industry employers, governmental staff, and organizations. Key to our success is a network of highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, and a supportive community.

### Mission

Success through Lifelong Learning and Learning for Life

### Vision

Adults have skills to transform their lives, sustain their families, and strengthen their communities.

### Values

**Empowerment** – Our programs empower adult learners to set and meet goals to become the best version of themselves.

**Success** – Provide an environment of collaborative learning experiences, community partnerships and education innovations that allows our students to acquire the deep skills required to achieve the next step in their life goals. Our volunteers, staff, and board members are empowered to recommend changes that will foster the success of all our stakeholders.

**Respect and Integrity** – Our compassionate and caring approach and interactions are highly respectful of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Our integrity rests in our word, our deeds and actions to ensure trustworthiness and confidentiality.

**Sustainability** – The Literacy Council will make sound governance, program and fiscal decisions that honor the organizations ability to grow and thrive so that more adults in need can access our services. Our volunteers, staff, and board members are encouraged to actively advocate for adult education, lead by example and continuously refresh their skills to provide the highest quality experiences for our students.

## Board

The Literacy Council is governed by a volunteer board of directors. 2020-2021 board members:

Eric Luckenbaugh, President

Aliina Hirschhoff Hopkins, Vice President

Willa Freer, Secretary

Erik Cianci, Treasurer

Chad Burgess

Scott Cole

Rich Druby

Ashley Garcia

Star Gibbs

Martha Guaigua

Philip Heckert

Cheryl Hiester\*

Brian Naff

Erika Nava

Stephanie Stauffer

Charity Welch

\*(Non Voting)

## Staff

Jenny Bair, Program Director

Brittany Foose, ESOL Coordinator

Steve Hess, Student Career Services Coordinator

Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director

Mitchell Hiester, Program Assistant

Emiko Houck, Digital Literacy and Navigation Coordinator

Jane Myers, Volunteer and Tutor Services Coordinator

Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach and Resource Coordinator

Rita Nutter, Instructor

Cathy Roth, Student Services Coordinator

Amanda Ruth, Volunteer and Tutor Services Coordinator

Monica Shannon, Program Assistant

## Adjunct Instructors

Meredith Aul

Lauren Swartz

## Volunteers Needed

Take action today and join us. We need volunteers to teach basic education skills.

To get started, contact:

Jane Myers,  
Lancaster Center  
[jane@literacysuccess.org](mailto:jane@literacysuccess.org)

Amanda Ruth,  
Lebanon Center  
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STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon is accredited under the PANO Standards for Excellence®



The Literacy & Learning Success Centers are supported by United Way of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties, and serve as the lead agency for Collective Impact projects. In Lancaster County, Integration Services for New Americans. In Lebanon County, Pipelines and Pathways to Success.

"When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal; you do not change your decision to get there." –Zig Ziglar