



The Literacy Council
of Lancaster-Lebanon

The Literacy Line

Winter 2024

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Literacy & Learning
Success Centers

Lancaster | Lebanon

**The Literacy Council of
Lancaster-Lebanon**

407 Lafayette Street | Lancaster, PA 17603
717-295-5523

400 Locust Street (rear) | Lebanon, PA 17042
717-277-5682

www.literacysuccess.org

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

2024 is Here! Happy New Year!

Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director



For at least 4,000 years, people around the world have celebrated the start of each new year. Did you know that to realign the Roman calendar with the sun, Julius Caesar added 90 extra days to the year 46 BC when he introduced the new Julian calendar and declared January 1 the first day of the year. January's namesake, Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, had two faces to look back at the past and ahead to the future.

This edition of *The Literacy Line* is a look back and a look ahead through stories from our students and staff. Stories that reflect on the past, ground us in the present, and look ahead to the future.

I hope you enjoy it!

Ukrainian Students Helping Others

Rita Nutter, ESL Instructor

One of my students, Oksana, welcomed two Ukrainian children into her home for three weeks during the fall. The visit was a joint venture of a local church with a Ukrainian church. A Slavic Church of Bethany in Ephrata pastor visited Oksana's church, Brickerville Grace Fellowship, and told the congregation about the plight of children in Ukraine. These were children whose fathers were killed in the war with Russia. A total of 28 children came to the Lancaster area. So, while our Ukrainian students are adjusting to life in this country and trying to learn the language and culture, they are also helping others in their home country.





The Journey to Citizenship

Cathy Roth, Adjunct Instructor



Houda from Morocco, surrounded by Samuel, her husband from Spain, and their coworker Esmeralda from the Dominican Republic. Esmeralda also swore her oath that day, and Samuel had done so in the past.

The task of preparing for American citizenship is arduous. In 2023, one of my intermediate students called to ask about a form she was completing. It was for the swearing-in ceremony she was attending on July 21st, the following day. She invited me to attend, and I arrived at the event the next day as the 13 new citizens showed their documents and taught the judges how to pronounce their names. We filed into the courtroom and listened to a brief talk about the rights and responsibilities of citizens – one of the responsibilities being to serve as a juror in the future. Judge Tylwalk told them our country isn't perfect, but it has the best tools in place for a great society. He

welcomed them with all their gifts and talents to become part of this nation. The new citizens were asked to rise, raise their right hand, and read their oath. As their names were read, they shook hands with the judge and received their document and an envelope of information about applying for passports and registering to vote. As I looked around the room, I noticed former students who were there to support their spouses. Knowing the difficulty of scraping up money to pay for the application, filing it, studying the 100 questions about history, government, and culture, and preparing for an interview, I was impressed by all those who have taken this huge step. Congratulations to these New Americans!



Genevieve supports her husband Joseph from the Ivory Coast as he is sworn in. Genevieve is dressed in purple and gold for the occasion.



Determined and Motivated: Vocabulary Our Students Learn and Live

Cathy Roth, Adjunct Instructor

In December, my Intermediate English class learned about the American Education system. We studied the process of finding a college course related to one's goals and understanding the vocabulary involved in requirements, deadlines, determination, and qualifications. We read about immigrants who have come to America with nothing, sacrificed everything, set a goal, planned, and persevered despite all the obstacles. Through these immigrant stories, my students learned about people like them who met their educational goals in the US.

During a discussion in which students were paired and asked to discuss their obstacles and successes, I found that several of my students were accountants in their country of origin. War, violence, and hope for more opportunities here drove them to the decision to immigrate.

Aracelis from the Dominican Republic explained that she has an MA degree in Business Management. She's taking care of grandchildren now and giving her daughter the opportunity to work. At first, she only saw how far she was from the fluency she needed to reach her goal. She surprised me by revealing that besides attending ESL class with me remotely, she also takes a tax preparer's class in the evening when her daughter is home. It's hard because of the vocabulary, but she is persevering. I complimented her on "sticking" to her goal, which prompted a quick lesson on another idiom in English.

From this activity, I have asked my students to write a paragraph called My Classmate's Success Story.



Student Writing by Clairette Kengne

Submitted by Lauren Swartz, ESL Instructor

In Cameroon, I was living in a large city. My parents have a beautiful house, with four bedrooms and one bathroom. People are very smart, but after graduating from university, it is very difficult to find a good paying job. So many people are very poor. Living in the city is not easy, because everything is expensive like food, rent, and transportation. Cameroon has two seasons a hot and rainy one.

On March 8, 2016, we left Cameroon, my original country. It was a very stressful day because my twins were only four months old. From Cameroon to the United States, it is a long travel. So, we left on March 8 and arrived on March 9. It was my first time on a plane, but I did not enjoy it because we were too tired. Finally, when we arrived in the United States, everything was very new and different from my country like streets, houses, shops, and many other things.

The challenge I faced when I arrived in the United States was learning English. Because my first

language was French, so listening and speaking with people when I went to the store, or any other public place was frustrating! I try to start English class, but it was too difficult. First, I had no transportation because I did not have a car, and I did not know how to drive. Also, I had to find daycare for my children, but it was too expensive. So, these were very big challenges that I faced when I arrived in the United States.

When I started taking English at the Literacy Council, communication is better. Learning English is very helpful, because now I can help my children with homework or call the doctor office to make an appointment. Wherever I can communicate with each other. Literacy Council is the best place to start to learn English because the school has different levels.

After I live a few years in Pennsylvania I can come to the conclusion that is the best state to accomplish my goal as a nurse. I plan to move to Hanover with my family in the future after I become a nurse.

Bridging Language Gaps and Unlocking Potential: A Tale of Empowerment

Taylor Thomas, Program Coordinator

While every new student orientation holds its own significance, this one had a musical twist. Three women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), speakers of Kinyarwanda, faced not only a language barrier but also the challenges of limited literacy. Their journey, however, took an unexpected turn, revealing the profound impact of digital literacy in the realm of education.

As paperwork filled the room and opportunities arose, the trio faced a crucial juncture. Despite the presence of a translator, communication still posed challenges due to limited English proficiency. Moreover, two of the three women could not read, adding more complexity to the situation.

Amidst the uncertainty, one commonality emerged—each woman held a phone, a lifeline provided through their resettlement organization. In a pivotal moment, the realization dawned that this seemingly simple device could bridge the communication gap.

During the orientation, determined to connect with the learners, I demonstrated the use of a QR code linked to English grammar videos. The catch? The videos were in English, and the women started with minimal literacy.

The breakthrough came when one of the women, with basic reading ability, could grasp the concept of scanning the QR code with her phone's camera. The room resonated with the English alphabet, and the joy on her face was infectious. It was not just a lesson; it was a moment of empowerment.

Encouraged by their peer's success, the other women hesitated at first but soon followed suit. With guidance, they embraced the digital tool, and the room echoed with the sounds of learners navigating the English alphabet.

This heartwarming experience highlights the transformative potential of digital literacy in ESL education. In a world where language barriers often seem insurmountable, a simple QR code and a smartphone became catalysts for learning, breaking down walls, and fostering a sense of community.

In the face of adversity, these women from the DRC learned the English alphabet and discovered the power within themselves to overcome challenges. The story demonstrates the impact of digital literacy in creating inclusive educational environments and empowering adult learners on their journey to language proficiency.



Creatively Learning English

Meredith Aul, Adjunct Instructor

My Level 3 English class was studying “used to” and “use to,” and I asked them to write some “Then and Now” poems.

Here are a few of those poems:

I used to live in Russia,
but now I live in USA.
I used to walk to the store and take public transport,
but now I enjoy driving a car.
I used to not like cleaning,
but now I'm cleaning and enjoying it.
I used to climb trees,
but now I look at them.

–Daria

I used to hate reading,
but now I read a lot.
I used to know English a little,
but now I know more.
I used to be afraid to drive a car,
but now I like to drive.
I used to go to school every day,
but now I stay home.
I used to have a lot of friends,
but now I don't.

– Samra

I used to live in my own country,
but now I live in another.
I used to go to work,
Now I'm looking for another job.
I used to look at the sunrise from one side of the world,
Now I look from the other.
I used to think that neighbors nearby were friends,
but now I see that they are enemies.

– Olexysi

Resilience, Resettlement, Renewal: A Student Story

**Jane Myers, Volunteer Services
Coordinator**



My Journey from Afghanistan to the United States

After graduating from university with a bachelor's degree in computer science, I worked with the government of Afghanistan. It was my goal to help our people trust the new administration, which was created by a new generation who believed in equality for all. Women were free and had become an active part of society. There was hope for all in the country until 2021. The Taliban gained control, and all hope died.

In 2021, with the help of the United States Army, I left my country. It was hard. I was young; I had dreams, and I was leaving my family. Three months later, my family joined me at a military base in the US.

In 2022, with the help of the United States government, my family and I started a new chapter. We settled in Lancaster. We realized the number of differences in our cultures and how much we needed to learn to live a comfortable life. The one thing I particularly like about the US is not being forced to live by strict rules. There is freedom.

I found the Literacy Council through the refugee center. I was working as a machine operator and needed a special schedule to work on my English language skills. I was told that the council could accommodate my schedule through a flexible tutoring program. I completed the orientation and was matched with Joanne, who has helped me with the language to the extent that I am now employed with Church World Services as a housing specialist. In my new job, I continue my dream of helping people by resettling new refugees in Lancaster. I am helping them to feel safe and comfortable as I teach them about their rights and American culture.

This was shared with me by a student whose name I cannot use because of family still residing in Afghanistan.

Defining the Role of Teacher

Kat Ludlow, Instructor and Program Coordinator

As an English teacher at The Literacy & Learning Success Centers, you become more than just a teacher to the new Americans that you teach. You become a friend and advocate for some family members. There are many who have been in the United States for only a few weeks. My job is to educate, encourage, and connect to the resources that will help students accomplish their goals. When you are in this position, you learn to pay attention to communication that goes beyond English. You learn to see and listen to the depths of someone's silence if they are not engaging in class. You watch students who are caring for their children struggle to participate in class to the best of their ability, and they do so despite everything else. You always learn to hear when someone needs just that little bit of extra...whatever it may be. Perhaps it is just holding the space and making the time to have a conversation about their needs and how to help them get to where they want to be.

Many of our new English learners coming in are refugees or asylees torn away from their homes due to war, genocide, constant violence, or corruption to a scale that we could never imagine. It is not for me to know their back story, but once a student knows that you are there to advocate for them, these stories unfold. Many of these people are doctors, engineers, lawyers, artisans, and professionals with multiple degrees. For some, their credentials are not recognized in the United States. For others, they need to learn English to reclaim their careers. Our language classes will allow these people to acquire the skills they need to return to where they began.

Most of our students do not have these degrees or professional backgrounds. Some have never even had access to education beyond 9th grade or at all. These

are the students that are the survivalists. Many speak three or four languages and can read just as many. These are the faces of the New Americans coming into Lancaster. Refugees who have lost everything. For some, their entire families. Single Mothers with multiple children and partners lost to war. Homeland and history are lost forever. Now they are here in a new land that requires so much more academically than they have ever needed to even get an entry level job somewhere. Due to this, many must work in factories that require mandatory overtime, and for these single mothers, there is no other option.

I have been working with one such student, a single mother of four children, in this job search process. She is one of the most brilliant people I have ever met. Articulate, self-educated, a businesswoman, and above all, an attentive, strong mother. Her children are a direct reflection of her hard work. This student is here alone without her family.

Despite all that she has been through, she cannot get an entry-level job because of the lack of an HS Diploma or GED. She is working towards this goal, but until then, there is a lot of time to fill with studying, surviving, and raising her kids. I have no doubt that she will have that GED in hand one day. The sacrifices that she has made will have to continue until then. Can you imagine going through all of this to get here only to have this piece of paper be the difference between a better life for you and your family?

These are the students who are most impacted by our programs and whose lives change for the better. These are the students that are the face of Adult Education as well. This is why Adult Education matters. For many, adult education is more than a second chance; it is the last chance.

Get Grounded

Jenny Bair, Program Director

Not too long ago, I found myself in a meeting with colleagues from a partner agency. The facilitator asked participants to give a word that summed up their feelings in that moment. Many folks indicated feelings such as being distracted, overwhelmed, or preoccupied. I learned that several people in the meeting had witnessed a student suffer a medical incident that morning. Their minds were clearly elsewhere.

Remembering some trauma awareness training that

I had attended the year before, I suggested we all try a grounding exercise.

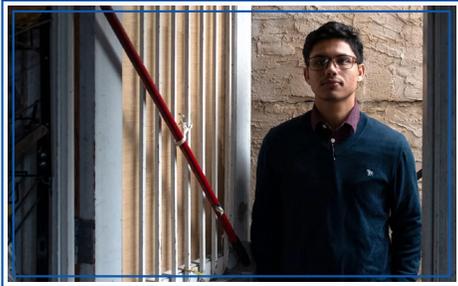
The grounding exercise was offered as a technique for instructors to use with students to help them become present in the classroom and set distractions aside.

The activity is simple. Participants can mentally catalog the items, but I find that writing the items increases the benefit of the activity.

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Give the Gift that Keeps on Giving: Education

Megan Goerner, Program Supervisor



Refugee now part of Lancaster's Pennsylvania Dutch. Image taken from [Democrat & Chronicle](#).

"Across the globe, one out of every 97 people is displaced from their homes due to violence, persecution, or poverty. This number includes 37 million children," per Bethany Christian Services' website.

These individuals are often resettled in communities far from home. Pennsylvania was listed in 2018 as being in the top 10 states for resettling refugees, and Lancaster City received 5,000 people between 2002 and 2019. The Literacy & Learning Success Centers is a partner to Bethany Christian Services and Church World Services, both agencies that assist refugees in resettlement.

As you may guess, English language education is vital to the success of resettled individuals. Learning English is the first step to gaining employment, training, and education. The Success Centers receives continuous referrals from these agencies throughout the year, and we designate orientations and program coordinators to fit the special needs of these students. These orientations are smaller in number, creating an intimate atmosphere for explaining our services and completing paperwork. The assessments are completed one-on-one to ensure that students are placed into classes that fit their

level and schedule. Before leaving our building, we are aware of the students' dreams for the future, and we understand a great deal about the lives they had as engineers, teachers, drivers, and workers in their country of origin. As students, they continue to work with our program coordinators to ensure that barriers do not impede their educational success.

At The Literacy & Learning Success Centers, we believe in these students' future and their contributions to the community. We know that in 2014, foreign-born residents contributed 1.3 billion dollars to Lancaster County's gross domestic product.

This year, demand for our services is high. We rely on community partners like IU13 Community Education to help us meet the moment. Like us, IU13 is also facing high demand, with classes at capacity with full classes and wait lists. As we begin 2024, we will work hard to support our students as the work to fulfill their dreams by taking the important step to learn English. The gift of English language fluency is a gift that far exceeds a one-time present; this gift is the gift of a new life, a fresh start, and a life of giving back to the community.

You can help us meet the moment. We rely on community support to cover the costs of providing services for these vital programs. If you can, please consider donating to us and one of our partners too.

Have you ever thought about being a volunteer? Now is a great time! You can work with an adult learner as a tutor or mentor. Hundreds of adult learners are waiting for an education to achieve the lives they deserve. Lives filled with work, family, and giving.

Grounded *(continued from page 5)*

To begin, take a deep breath (or not)

5 - LOOK: Look around for five things you can see and list. For example, I see a pencil in my hand.

4 - FEEL: Think of four things that you can feel and list them. For example, I feel the pencil in my hand, I feel warm socks on my feet.

3 - LISTEN: Listen for three sounds and list them. For example, I hear the pencil glide across the paper.

2 - SMELL: List two things you can smell. If you can't smell anything at the moment, name your two favorite smells.

1 - TASTE: List one thing you can taste. If you can't taste anything, list your favorite thing to taste.

Take another deep breath (or not).

I am glad to say it worked! I'm also glad to say the student who suffered the medical incident is doing well!

During the meeting, I set a timer for three minutes. When the timer stopped, we stopped. We didn't share our lists, but we did share how we were feeling. Quite a few of us noticed a higher level of focus and less distraction than when we started.

It only took three minutes but helped us have a productive and positive meeting.

If you are a tutor or an instructor, try it. It might work for you and your students, too.

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

To promote success through life-long 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.

Staff

Jenny Bair, Program Director
Darrill Ersery, Program Coordinator
Megan Goerner, Program Supervisor
Steven Hess, Program Supervisor
Cheryl Hiester, Executive Director
Mitchell Hiester, Program Assistant
Katherine Ludlow, Instructor and Program Coordinator
Jane Myers, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Rita Nutter, ESL Instructor
Ilsa Powell Diller, Outreach and Resource Coordinator
Monica Shannon, Receptionist/Program Assistant
Lauren Swartz, ESL Instructor
Taylor Thomas, Program Coordinator
Debra Totten, Digital Navigator

Adjunct Instructors

Meredith Aul
Shawn Gaffney
Deb Linton
Cathy Roth

Board

The Literacy Council is governed by a volunteer board of directors. 2023-2024 board members:

Chad Burgess, President
Erik Cianci, Vice President
Scott Cole, Secretary
Philip Heckert, Treasurer
Ashley Garcia
Martha Guaigua
Cheryl Hiester*
Stephanie Stauffer
Tim Steffen

*(Non Voting)



STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

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

Volunteers Needed

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

To get started, contact:

Jane Myers,
Lancaster and Lebanon
Success Centers
jane@literacysuccess.org

The official registration and financial information of The Literacy Council of Lancaster-Lebanon, LVA, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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

–Zig Ziglar