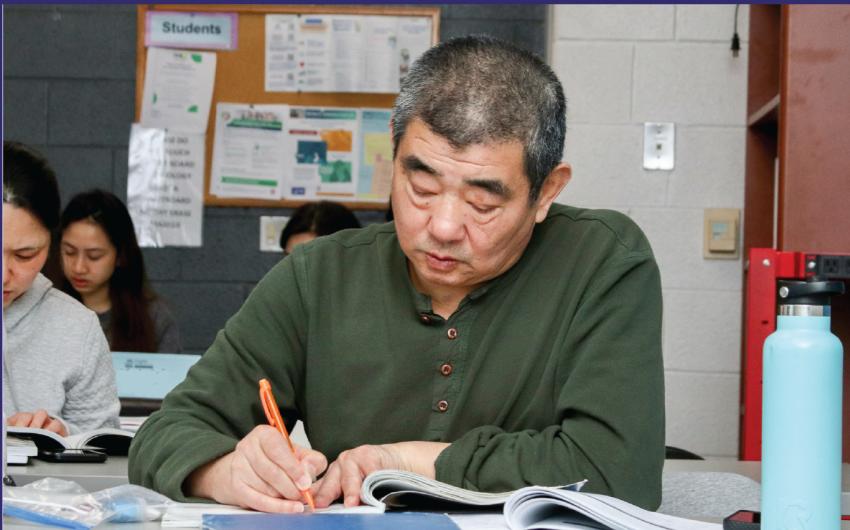




English Empowerment Center

Learn English. Change your life.



A World of Opportunity
Annual Recognition Ceremony 2024

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Platinum
Transparency
2023

Candid.



A Message from the Executive Director



Welcome to the English Empowerment Center's 2024 Annual Recognition Ceremony. Each year, we take this opportunity to celebrate – our students, our partners, our volunteers. And there is so much to celebrate! We are proud to be an organization that brings together people from every corner of the world. Our learners come from more than 90 countries and speak more than 50 languages, but through education, we connect to transcend borders and open doors to a world of opportunity.

At the English Empowerment Center, our students do not just learn English; they are empowering themselves to seize the countless opportunities that lie beyond language barriers. With every lesson, they are equipping themselves with the tools to navigate this interconnected world with confidence and competence, and to enter a future filled with possibilities.

The opportunities that await us extend far beyond individual accomplishments. By mastering English, by volunteering, and by partnering with EEC, you are expanding your horizons and broadening your perspectives. You are opening doors to new friendships, new cultures, and new experiences. You are becoming active participants in our diverse and vibrant community.

This year, more than 500 volunteers spent more than 20,000 hours providing English language instruction and support to more than 2,000 adult immigrant learners. The time, commitment, and determination of English Empowerment Center teachers, learners, and partners makes a lasting change to our community, an impact we are so proud to celebrate at this event.

As we move forward, united by a shared vision of a future filled with opportunity and possibility, let us embrace the power of language to transform our lives and our community. And let us never forget that the world is full of opportunity when we learn together.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of the English Empowerment Center family. Together, let us build a future where every individual has the chance to thrive and succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roopal Saran".

Roopal Mehta Saran
Executive Director,
English Empowerment Center

Guest Speaker: Andres Jimenez

Andres Jimenez serves as Supervisor for Fairfax County's Mason District. Born in Bogota, Colombia, Andres is the first Latino to serve on Fairfax County's Board of supervisors for Mason District. He was raised in West Virginia and has lived in Mason District for 12 years. As the father of two young girls, Andres is passionate about protecting our climate so future generations can not just survive, but thrive. That passion launched his career in environmental protection, eventually landing him as Green 2.0's first full-time Executive Director. Andres also served as Senior Director of Government Affairs at Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL), where he advocated for legislative environmental protection at the Congressional level. He used his experiences as a strategic planner and relationship builder to champion innovative solutions while Associate Director of Government Relations at the Ocean Conservancy, tackling tough issues like ocean acidification and sustainable fisheries.



MASON
 District
Supervisor Andres Jimenez

Andres has a long record of public service, early in his career supporting the Mayor of New York City, the U.S. House Judiciary's Immigration Subcommittee; and two members of Congress, U.S. Rep. Linda Sánchez (California), and former U.S. Rep. Howard Berman (California). Working directly with constituents in these positions created a deep sense of responsibility and empathy in Andres, values he prioritizes in his Supervisor role.

Andres also is an active member of GreenLatinos and serves on the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, as well as the Northern Virginia Regional County, where he served until September 2023. He was elected Supervisor in November 2023 for a four-year term. Andres, 43, resides in Mason with his wife Shanna, their daughters, and a collection of family pets. He can be reached at mason@fairfaxcounty.gov.

About the English Empowerment Center

The mission of the English Empowerment Center (EEC) is to teach adults the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English so they can access employment and educational opportunities and more fully and equitably participate in the community.

Staff

Roopal Mehta Saran

Executive Director

Ashley King

Admissions Manager and Registrar

Jenny Lizer

Development Manager

Michael Mahrer

Senior Director of Advancement

Xavier Muñoz

Senior Director of Academic Programs and Student Services

Abdulkadir Mirze

IT Database Administrator

Sahra Nadir

Financial and Operations Manager

Soo H. Park

Instructional Design Manager

Juan Perez

Student Services Coordinator

Francisco Quesada

Student Records and Data Coordinator

Nada Raja

Academic Operations and Digital Literacy Manager

Melissa Rea

Faculty Support Manager

Marizol Rojas

Office Administrator and Student Liaison

Rachel Rokes

Volunteer and Site Operations Coordinator

Amy Tristan

Volunteer and Outreach Manager

Marin Uher

Communications Coordinator

Lisa Vaughn

Senior Manager of Community and Donor Relations



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CEO, MarginEdge & Wasabi

Judy Gayer

Retired Deputy General Counsel, Freddie Mac

Tom Gilbride

Engagement Delivery Director, Salesforce

Sam Howlader

VP Relationship Manager, Commercial Banking, First National Bank

Anupam Kumar

Vice President of Customer Experience, EVERFI

Nisha Kumar

Attorney, Office of the Assistant General Counsel for General Law, Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Department of Energy

Carisa Pineda

Management Specialist, Arlington County Child Advocacy Center

Jeffrey Porro

Executive Speech Writer, retired

Tiffany L. Taber

Chief Speechwriting and Managing Writer, U.S. Department of Education

John V. Thomas

Former Deputy General Counsel, retired Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

Community Partnership Awards

Each year, the English Empowerment Center recognizes a number of its partners for their consistent support of our programs and mission. This year, the English Empowerment Center is proud to recognize three outstanding partners.



Fairfax County's Solid Waste Management

Fairfax County's Solid Waste Management program recognizes that training and retention of employees for whom English is a second language is a key strategy to ensure that the workforce is representative of the community and opens pathways to advancement for diverse candidates. By partnering with EEC to offer our customized workforce curriculum on site for their team, they are removing barriers for their talented and hardworking staff to develop their skills for current and future roles, empowering them with the tools they need to meet their personal and professional goals.



MainStreet Bank is known for both their cutting-edge practices, as well as the care and attention of a true community bank. In 2020, they worked quickly to ensure that EEC had access to essential resources during the COVID crisis, and since then have been a collaborative and trusted banking partner. Additionally, through their employee giving program, Making Change, they have been generous sponsors of our A Taste of Literacy fundraising event for several years. We are incredibly grateful for their personal touch, partnership, and commitment to this work.



The Philip L. Graham Fund understands the broad and changing needs of the community, supporting innovative and efficient organizations that provide direct services to individuals and families. The Fund has partnered with EEC since 2006. Over the years, their investments in EEC's infrastructure, such as computer upgrades, website updates, training materials, and volunteer management tools, have ensured that EEC could sustain both programmatic improvements and increases to the numbers we serve. Their continued general support has given EEC the ability to offer excellent, affordable, and accessible English language education to 1,500 adults each year, with more than 2,100 served in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Volunteers of the Year

Dan Clancy



Dan began his journey at the English Empowerment Center in 2018 as a tutor, assisting with homework and reading. This past year, he also provided support to learners in the classroom by serving as a class aide. Witnessing the students' eagerness to learn, Dan volunteered at a student registration event and recognized the community's immense need. Driven to contribute more, he took the initiative to become trained in administering the oral language test used for classroom placement. Now a BEST Plus tester, Dan shared a poignant experience: "A few months ago, I was BEST Plus testing new learners for placement. A young woman from Afghanistan seemed very nervous and lacked confidence in her English. At the end, I told her that while I only administered the test, I thought her English was very good and she should be proud. I looked down at the test for a moment, and when I looked up, she was crying. She explained that almost no one had ever told her that. It was then that it struck me. Just that morning, I had seen a meme or motivational quote that essentially said, 'Be nice. You never know what it could mean to someone.'"

Eva Kaplan

Eva's passion for literacy, combined with a former elementary student's family connection to the English Empowerment Center, led her to a fulfilling post-retirement role. Since 2022, Eva has volunteered as a class aide in the Family Learning Program and Beginning English classes. She is deeply inspired by her students' "immense bravery and unwavering hope in the face of challenges." Just as she did as an elementary school teacher, Eva fosters an environment conducive to learning, where students gain both English skills and self-confidence. To enhance her empathy and support for ESOL learners, she recently completed a Trauma-Informed training program. Eva feels rewarded when "the smiles and laughter let me know the classroom is safe and happy." In addition to her classroom duties, she assists with registration, guiding students through the process. Nada, the Academic Operations and Digital Literacy Manager at EEC, remarked, "Eva is such an amazing and warm person. Her help during registration is invaluable and highly appreciated."



Kathleen McCleary



Kathleen's grandparents immigrated to the US and faced significant struggles, despite being English speakers. This family history, combined with the distressing anti-immigrant rhetoric surfacing in the news, motivated her to take action. She started volunteering with EEC eight years ago, first as a class aide and then as a teacher. Reflecting on her experience, Kathleen said, "After almost eight years, I am still amazed, delighted, and challenged every week by the work." She has welcomed and supported learners at all levels of EEC classes, as well as in weekly conversation sessions. She enjoys creating engaging lessons and exploring new topics, but her devotion to the work is rooted in the students' curiosity and eagerness to learn. She remarks, "The people I've met as a teacher have been varied and fascinating, all with unique stories. They are the most motivated and appreciative students I've ever taught, as well as the most generous and compassionate. My mother died at the end of the fall semester one year, and I received so many beautiful notes from my students, expressing sympathy." Working alongside other dynamic volunteers and being a consummate learner herself Kathleen says "I also really enjoy my co-teachers at the EEC. It's been so fun to get to know them, and they are so supportive and dedicated and inspiring. I learn a lot from them."

Volunteer Milestones

20 Year Anniversary

Elizabeth Magee

15 Year Anniversary

Naomi Gittins | Mary Kalfatovic | Kenneth Portnoy | Anne Spear

10 Year Anniversary

Mark Charette | Stan Citron | Pam DiRamio | Cheryl Heidel | Corrie Paeglow | Dennis Shannon | Marie Tibor | Linda Zenker

500+ Hours of Service, 2023-2024

Maura Sleevi

400+ Hours of Service, 2023-2024

Jan Auerbach | Jackie Corkins | Nan Fife | Loren Zander

300+ Hours of Service, 2023-2024

Molly Bensinger-Lacy | Janice Linett | Kathleen McCleary | Sheena McConnell

200+ Hours of Service 2023-2024

Glenn Allen | Michael Boito | Krista Carlson | Debby Christensen | Ida Draim | Linda Johnsen | Eva Kaplan | Jane Michaels | Elizabeth Nelson | Karen Schroth | Valerie Sutter | Kay Xiong

5 Year Anniversary

Parisa Ashraf | Eric Barboriak | Robert Brown | Ann Therese Carlozza | Madeline Chulumovich | Zoe Danon | Jacqueline Davey | Linda Debrewer | Astrid Dejesus Rivera | Eric Dittmeier | Glen Finland | Harriette Kinberg | Nisha Kumar | Karen Lillard | Marlo McMillan-Okuadido | Bill Meara | Elaine Michl | Sandra Olson | Debra Pfaff | Ray Potter | Jennifer Pryor-Abraham | Jane Schulman | Maura Sleevi | Natalie Southwood | Anuradha Srirangarajan | Janet Swanson | Kathleen Utgoff | Joy Yamamoto

100+ Hours of Service, 2023-2024

Eric Ackerman | William Angley | Zenaida Bastidas De Pacheco | Stacey Becker | Loic Bernasconi | Margaret Breen | Brian Brooks | Robert Brown | Paul Cantrell | Da Yeon Choi | Stan Citron | Daniel Clancy | Henry Collins | Christopher Cox | Christine Davey | Robin DeRosa | Jim Eichner | Eileen Foxwell | Callie Heisner | Katie Isaac | Diane Jensen | Jeanne Johnson | Shawn King | Kyle Koziol | Margery Leveen Sher | Vineeta Malkani | Jill Martin | Elizabeth McBurney | Mary Anne McDonald | William Meara | Betsy Mitchell | William Nye | Macy Rainer | Shaqer Rashid | Linda Rawson | Lauren Saadat | David Schmitt | Elizabeth Stone | Robert Sutter | Jody Sweet | Nathan Telaraja | Marjorie Wallach | Mindi Weisenbloom | Debra Willen | Joy Yamamoto | Rawa Zaid | Linda Zenker

Want to learn more about volunteering with the English Empowerment Center?

Contact volunteers@EnglishEmpowermentCenter.org or call (703) 237-0866 x116

Lead Teachers

We would like to offer our appreciation to EEC's Lead Teachers. The positive influence they have on our learners and our community at large is immeasurable. Thank you to all of our wonderful instructors!

Chaima Bagais
Kobi Carter Eidman
Jackie Corkins*
Vaishali Deshpande*
James Falcone
Donna Giarratana
Adrienne Grossman*
Matthew Halse

Laurie Hayden**
Kasia Helbin-Travis
Jennifer Hine
Lina Jae Kim
Claire Kevill
Cassandra Kramer
Karen Leckie
Gyana Lopez*

Troy Morgan
Roshan Nawid
Jackie Park*
Elizabeth Quillin
Ribka Tewelde
Lisa Trangsrud*

*5 or more years of service

**10 or more years of service

A World of Opportunity: Student Essays

English Empowerment Center learners were invited to submit writings around our theme for this year's Annual Recognition Ceremony, A World of Opportunity. Learners worked with instructors and classmates to formulate ideas, construct drafts, and edit their writing in order to create the final products contained here. The ideas and opinions contained in this publication are those of the learner and do not necessarily reflect those of EEC or its partners. It is our hope that these essays give you a sense of how learning English has helped EEC learners provide for their basic needs, create connections, and find opportunities to thrive within their communities.

Student Essay Spotlight



Amina Abbasi

Pakistan



Jakeline Barahona

El Salvador



Juan Pablo Oporto

Bolivia

Amina Abbasi

Opportunity means a situation that makes [it] possible to do something that you want. The United States is a land of opportunity.

In the United States you can achieve anything that you have in your mind, you have so many opportunities to achieve it. Here, opportunity for education, opportunity for jobs, opportunity for business and sports. Thousands of international students came here to get a higher education. People can get free health insurance who are low income. They can get SNAP food and affordable houses.

In the USA, everyone has equal rights. One thing which I really appreciate [is] that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, like education, transportation, healthcare, social services. Last year, I came here from Pakistan. Recently, I got my driver's license. I get a chance to learn and speak English. It will help me to get a job, to improve my self confidence. I believe that this is an opportunity for me to do something for my family. I want to achieve because you never know when you will get a chance again.

Jakeline Barahona

I'm Jakeline, a student at the English Empowerment Center and currently in level 2. I want to start by thanking all the people who make this possible. Since I started English classes, I have improved many aspects of my life by being able to explore the process of learning a new language and discovering the ability to learn that we all possess regardless of age, color, race and origin. Every day is an opportunity to enrich our knowledge and to strive to leave a mark wherever you are.

Learning English fills my life and my family's life with satisfaction. It shows that young people have an opportunity to improve and create a profitable future for society. Being a well-rounded person with a positive attitude towards the language barrier shows the motivation of every student to change our world view.

Thanks to English, I have been able to express myself freely in everyday situations in my work, at home and in the social and cultural life of the United States. Through technology we discover multiple benefits that help to improve our mental state by interacting and creating connections with our environment. Our dedication is reflected everyday in the classroom when we invest time and effort in learning and improving our English skills as this will benefit us both personally and professionally.

My dream is to be able to speak English fluently and be an inspiration for many people of different nationalities to promote values and motivation to strive for their goals.

I conclude by thanking all the people who push us to be better. Teachers, staff, volunteers and fellow donors and all the people who are part of the center.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to study a second language, for being patient and correcting our mistakes with love and empathy. Thank you for giving a new future to my generation. I wish that more people could join and experience the joy of learning and encouraging all the students to continue persevering with God's help. Blessings!

Juan Pablo Oporto

Embarking on the journey of learning English has been both challenging and rewarding. It has opened doors to countless opportunities and transformed the way I perceive the world around me. As I progress through my classes, I'm filled with excitement for the many opportunities that await me at the end of this journey.

Before learning English, I felt a sense of limitation and frustration. As a non-native English speaker, I struggled to communicate effectively in a language that seemed foreign and daunting. I found myself unable to fully express my thoughts and ideas. The fear of being misunderstood and the inability to engage in meaningful conversations left me feeling isolated and disconnected from the community.

Despite the initial challenges, I embarked on the journey of learning English with determination and perseverance. Each step of the way presented its own set of hurdles. However, with each step I gained a new sense of confidence and empowerment.

As I approach the end of my English classes, I am filled with excitement for the vast array of opportunities that lie ahead of me. Mastering English will open doors to a world of possibilities both on a personal and professional level. It will open doors to job opportunities and allow me to pursue higher education and seek opportunities in various industries and sectors.

Student Essays

Nasrin Ahmed

I started my English classes last fall and this is my second time to get classes. Before I learned English, I felt it is very hard to write any topic like emails for my kids' teacher, communicate with people for shopping, make appointments in case of illness.

Since starting English classes, I help my kids learn and have more confidence to communicate with my neighbors and everyone.

By learning English, I can be involved in more conversation for things I want to do and I want to talk about. Now when I speak English I feel more self confidence.

Israa Al Taie

I want to study the English language to achieve my dreams in life which are to obtain a Doctorate degree and become a professor in a university. I study, do research and also obtain offers to succeed more and more. I want to speak the English language because it is the general language currently in all countries which provide greater opportunities.

Muna Ali



Before I learned English, I felt sad because I didn't speak fluently and write and read in English. I was annoyed about how to talk with the people. I was nervous. Since starting English class, I have found a job, helped my children learn and do homework, and talk with people. By learning English, now I can apply for a new job, talk about the needs of my family and community, and talk with neighbors. I can speak to my children's teacher. I can talk with people in the store.

Now that I speak English, I feel happy and better. English changed my life for good. I feel proud of my growth and development to speak English.

Bushra Aljoumari

English was my best subject at school. I came to the USA with some knowledge but it wasn't enough for me to communicate with people around me. In the beginning it was a little difficult. I was needing help in a lot of things like making [an] appointment with a doctor, asking for something in [a] store or a supermarket, paying bills or talking to my children's teacher. Taking classes in learning English with amazing teachers helped me a lot.

I feel more comfortable and confident in speaking even if there are some mistakes. Learning English makes my life easy [and] also I can get a better job. I can achieve my goals, like to finish my studies in university. I wish I can get the US nationality to travel to many countries around the world.

Alaa Al-Ratta

Before I learned English, I used to feel afraid and confused when talking to people and I was afraid to make grammatical mistakes when I spoke. But when I started studying the English language, I became more fluent in speaking and I was less afraid, and I became open to conversation with others and understood them more. I even became more in touch with my daughter's teacher to understand about my daughter's level of education and how she is doing in school. Also, I want to complete my study of English to become stronger in the language to complete study in university to improve my academic achievement and I want to join an international advance program to receive a license to work as a dentist in the U.S.

Linda Veronica Amaya Orellana

First of all, thank [you to] the organization English Empowerment Center which provided support for many people because English is a fundamental language. For it to be my first class I actually liked it and it helped me a lot since when I go out with my family sometimes we want to talk to someone who only knows the English language. It helped me a lot to talk to them. It is a great opportunity to continue learning more every day, new words and putting them into practice. I thank the teachers for their patience, kindness and respect.

I looked for information to learn English.

I have learned to pronounce and write English.

I help my family when we go shopping with some learned words.

My English teachers they help me pronounce colors. My sister called and she spoke to me in English.

Luisa Arce



I'm Luisa. I have been learning English for a year. I can communicate a little on the bus, at work and with my classmates. English phonetics is very difficult. I use English a lot in my work, in a laundry [service]. I practice English with my family and my classmates.

Deysi Arnez

My name is Deysi Arnez. My dream is to speak English to help my children with their homework and read books. Also to communicate with their teachers. English is very important to me because when you go to the stores, they speak to you in English. That's why I want to speak English and also to have a better job.

Raissa Askerova

By learning English, now I can speak English correctly and fluently. Most people will understand me. I can have more friends in my neighborhood and when we travel. I'm going to be a U.S. citizen. I can help my family by teaching my grandson to read. I can talk with my son-in-law. My dream is to speak English well.

Eber Astunaupa

People are like opportunities, and opportunities don't always come back.

The great opportunities are on the other side of the community area.

There is no evolution without change, nor rebirth without difficulty.

Peace of mind begins when you make the decision to break ties that already add up to your life.

Stay away from people who make themselves victims of situations they themselves created.

Work for your purpose, not for your applause. Live to inspire, not to impress.

Varinia Auila

Before I learned English, I felt afraid to leave the house, because I couldn't communicate with people. Since starting English class, I understand a little English. By learning English now, I can communicate a little with people. I can help my daughters with their homework. By learning English, I can be involved in my children's school, I try to communicate with my neighbors. I can read and understand better. Now I try to speak more English. It has not been easy. I want to learn to speak English very well as a personal challenge and for my family. I would like to continue my career in this country and have better job opportunities, then be able to buy a house and travel the world.

Mina Ayobi



I am progressing in learning English. Also I am learning computer basics. The English Empowerment Center has helped a lot. Now I can communicate at school, in the hospital and stores. I hear the news. I am looking for a job in an occupation like tailoring.

The English Empowerment Center encourages me to study English online in "AMU" college.

I am thankful for the English Empowerment Center and all the support of Fairfax County.

Atefa Azizi



My name is Atefa. I came to the United States from Afghanistan. I can learn English in the community with people. I am learning English and speaking is important to me. I am very interested in trying to learn English because it solves many of my problems. Ms. Loren is a good teacher.

Salamatu Bangura

Coming to the United States is a huge opportunity for me. I want to thank you all [at] the English Empowerment Center for giving me this opportunity to be able to learn about the opportunities in the state [I] am living in. As an immigrant, if you didn't know, you can reach out to find help, there is a program like this [to help] me reach the world of opportunity.

Elizabeth Berryman



I love speaking English, and I feel better speaking English and help other people. I enjoy my English [Empowerment Center] people and teachers. My English class is so much fun.

Hazel Bingol



Hello, my name is Hazel. I came to USA one and a half years ago and I didn't know any English, I didn't understand people. I couldn't go out because I didn't understand people, I didn't speak English. I am learning English and I know very [mid-level] English right now. I can go out, shop, talk to my neighbors and my friends. I can drop my daughter at school and talk to her teachers. I need to study more English because I want to learn English very well. I hope [to] speak English very well.

Nora Canaca

Before English class, I felt lots of emotion. In class, I have learned to read and write English. In the future, I want to take the citizenship test.

Cynthia Capistran

I remember my first English class at my elementary school in Mexico. My English teacher played his guitar and sang English basic vocabulary songs. Since then I have been on a journey with English. It was always there, as another class in my academic chart, but I never truly understood the great impact it would have on my life.

Before I got married to an American, I used to think that I knew English. I was wrong. One thing is learning vocabulary, grammar rules etc. and another is using it in everyday life.

The first time that I came to America, I was pregnant with my second son and my older one was turning three years old. I learned a lot that year. I faced the true reality that my English wasn't enough. Necessity was my great motivation. Making phone calls, appointments, doctor visits, preschool teacher meetings and my childbirth day, everything was a challenge and still is.

In the beginning, I was proud and I didn't ask for help, but I know now that the key to learning this beautiful and sometimes complex language is to keep trying and ask for help. Never give up.

Now I have help in my writing class. I feel motivated and happy to have feedback. I am learning a lot, and at the same time, I am [getting to] know wonderful people who are on the same journey as me. I feel happy with my teachers and this opportunity. I am excited for the doors that learning English opens. I am applying for jobs, I am part of the community and have friends - all this, while I see my kids grow up. I feel at home.

Denia Cardona

Since I started my English class at the English Empowerment Center my life has changed a lot. Now I can interact more in my work with clients and can express myself better. I can communicate with friends and neighbors. I can listen to my favorite songs in English and understand, and all that makes me feel very fulfilled and happy.

"I have gained the desire to continue my education and it has helped me greatly to communicate in my professional life as well and grow as a person. One of my dreams has come true."

-Ena, EEC Learner

Eunice Carvajal Mejia



Before learning English I felt isolated since most of the people I interact with speak English and very few speak Spanish, I make myself understood with hands, through signs and I mix English with Spanish which is very poorly done but they understand me a little. I have learned some English, which has helped me a little at home where I try to form sentences, help a neighbor who needs something, shop at the supermarket, answer the doctor's simple questions and tell her why I am coming to the appointment. I have more confidence to interact with other people. Thank you very much to all the people who have done their bit to help me learn this new language and who do it with love, dedication, patience and keep in mind the differences of each of the students.

Ena Castillo

It is difficult for me to try to summarize my story in a few letters. When I left Honduras, I left my life, my dreams, at my young age of seventeen, I was already the mother of a girl. I only remember that I really wanted to live and continue fighting for my daughter. I was forced to leave Honduras due to death threats. Despite the fear and with my heart broken by separating from my daughter and my parents, I left Honduras with the hope of a better life because it was rumored that the United States enforced human rights and was a country of many opportunities and literally that has come true in my life. I had a little difficulty with the language due to my lack of education. Then I began to long to learn English. But since there was no one to support me, I had to work and stay alive. Then I got married. I had three more children and my daughter who I left in Honduras. Her father managed to bring her to this country. We met again. But the desire always remained in my heart to go to school and express it to my friends and family. When I grow up, I am going to learn English and thank God and this [family learning] program, I have gained the desire to continue my education and it has helped me greatly to communicate in my professional life as well and grow as a person. One of my dreams has come true. Thank you very much.

Lorena Castro

Before I came to the USA, I had the opportunity to study English in my country. When I arrived here, I believed things could be easier for me because I supposed that I knew English. However, I realized my knowledge was very limited. My husband and my kids who had no idea about English, expected a lot from me. I had to do something to improve my English skills, because in the USA, English is not just important, it is a necessity. One day, I heard about this English [Empowerment Center] class, I talked with my husband, and we both decided to learn English. By learning English and to be in contact with the language, I can say that I'm accomplishing important things that I wasn't able to do before. For example, my listening and understanding every day is getting better. Also, I can read and write in the class, for my kids or another person who needs my help. Sometimes I help my husband with his English homework. One of the most important things that I'm achieving by learning English is that now I can communicate with others, go to different places, and ask for help or information. I also believe that by learning English, I can have more job opportunities. To conclude, I think that taking English classes and improving my knowledge was the best decision that I have ever made.

Jung Cho

I have a job. Before I had a job, I [was] tired. I can't understand English. I have difficulty communicating with other people. I will study English. I want to retire diligently and go into the world to give [a few] minutes and do some[thing to] help people in need. I'm now very happy. My teacher, Valerie Sutter, teaches English very well.

Jung Ja Cho



I feel sad, confused and afraid to talk to neighbors. I want to learn to make doctor's appointments. Loren is a good teacher.

Ellen Chun



My name is Ellen Chun. I am from South Korea. Before I started school, I spoke in fragments. However, after going to school here, I'm now able to speak in sentences a little. I'm also able to communicate more with my neighbors. I am always thankful to the teachers for their hard work. I'll listen to the teachers carefully, study hard and speak English with more confidence so that I can make my own doctor's appointments and go by myself and understand what the doctor says.

Steve Chun



My name is Steve Chun. I am from South Korea. I am a student at English Empowerment Center. I like the English class there. I'm happy now because it's getting better little by little.

My teacher is eager to teach me. Ms. Loren - thank you so much and the English Empowerment Center. Thank you so much to all the volunteers. I'll do my best to learn. Thank you again.

"When I go to the store, I can tell what I need. I can apply for a job, to care for the sick. I can say hello to my friends."

-Julia, EEC Learner

Mi Ryang Chung

By learning English, I can listen to the conversation, understand, and am happy to express my opinion. I hope I can improve myself [in] understanding the sentence a little bit and help other people. I am grateful for the opportunity [it] has given me greater confidence while learning English.

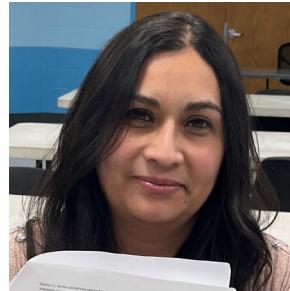
Melvi Constanza

Before learning English I felt that: I felt sorry for not being able to communicate with English speakers.

Now that I have started my English classes, I can understand my coworkers better. Also when I do some paperwork and decide what is best for me.

By learning English today I can become more involved in neighborhood meetings and meetings at work.

Lucia Contreras



Before learning English, I felt lost. I didn't understand anything and I felt very frustrated. Sometimes I was sad and didn't want to leave the house. Since starting English class, I can understand most of the time what the students and the teachers say to me. I can respond to short sentences and express what I want or feel.

Now that I study English, I can go out alone to shop, visit places, ask for directions, and I can also take my son to his medical check.

My goal is to continue learning English and study something about my career in psychology.

Lorena Carolina Cortez

I left my country with the dream of being able to have my own house, but when I arrived in this country with another language, without knowing English, it became very difficult and frustrating for me. But now that I am learning English, I feel that things are improving because I understand more in my work. I can help my daughter with her schoolwork and I feel very happy that things are getting much better.

Yanira De la Cruz

Today the English language is very important. Having knowledge of this, as a second language, helps us in many areas. In the world of work, student, culture and as a society it is of utmost importance to be able to communicate and make ourselves understood since this is the universal language.

Before not knowing any English, it was very difficult for me to go out and make commitments outside the home since I felt like I didn't understand and they didn't understand me, but that has been changing.

At home, it fosters better communication with neighbors, while at work, it improves job prospects and enables participation in multinational teams. In the community, English proficiency allows for meaningful engagement with diverse groups and contributes to societal integration.

Overall, learning English not only empowers individuals but also enriches their personal and professional lives. I am glad that I decided to enroll in English classes and I put all my effort into learning every day since I see the fruits of my effort.

Mercedes del Carmen Cortez

I left my country to [come to] this country of opportunities with the language. It's difficult for me in many ways. I didn't know who to turn to and the language I didn't understand. Now that I'm learning English, many doors are opening for me. I thank God because despite all the difficulties, he never left me behind.

Mari Delgado



My name is Mari. I have lived here in the United States for 1 year with my family. I have three children and my husband. We are well and happy here. To have more relationships with many things, like when you go to the doctor, shopping, bus-metro, neighbors and people is very important. Learning English is quite important because there will be many doors opened to everything.

Flor Diaz

I felt confused and scared but then I decided to go to school [at EEC]. I am learning pronunciation, reading, speaking and vocabulary.

I feel happy because I am learning grammar, new words and pronunciation.

Before English class, I felt scared to speak. I thought they wouldn't understand.

In class I have learned to practice speaking more, vocabulary and listening.

In the future, I want to get a house and get a good job to pay for it.

Julia Aracely Matute Espinoza



Before I learned English, I felt I can't speak and communicate with people, with my family, and my friends, and I had many problems speaking.

Before, when I took the bus, I had difficulties. I didn't speak with my neighbor. When people asked for my address and my phone number, I couldn't answer.

I needed to learn English, for a new job, and to participate more in class, to tell my doctor about my symptoms. Now I speak more English, it can help me to communicate.

When I go to the store, I can tell what I need. I can apply for a job, to care for the sick. I can say hello to my friends.

Thank you, teacher. Thank you to English Empowerment Center. Definitely English opens doors. I appreciate it. Bless you, Teacher.

Milyesser Ferik

Before I learned English, I felt bad. Since starting English class, I have confidence. By learning English, I can be involved in life. By learning English, I can go shopping, alone, but I didn't go before. I didn't talk with my neighbors. My life was very boring. Now that I speak English, I feel more independent and I feel better.

Cinthya Flores

Hi, I'm Cinthya. I feel very happy to be in this class because I feel proud of myself because now I can understand much more English. Before, I was very scared. Now, I feel like I understand much more. Before entering this class, it has helped me a lot. I feel good. I can thank God. First, for my teacher and her help, which she always has. Thank you now in my work, I feel very confident in speaking with clients and I would like to speak much more English [so I am] confident in speaking with clients. It is a very beautiful language. Because I have two children, they speak it well and I would like to be able to speak English with them.

Nancy Flores

For almost two years that I have been living in this country, many times I have felt useless or ignorant for not knowing the English language. When going to the store and not knowing when he asked me if I wanted a bag, when going to a restaurant and not being able to read the menu or being able to ask for my order, always needing my husband's help for everything. When I have gone to school and not know how to communicate with my child's teacher that has made me feel very bad. That feeling turned into fear. Afraid to go out and look for a job. Since I arrived I have not worked. In my country of origin, I have a university degree. I worked in a company for more than fourteen years. I believe that I have the ability to perform in any company or place or job. But not knowing the language has stagnated me and I have settled for taking care of my family at home and that makes me happy. I haven't gotten my driver's license out of fear of not passing the practical exam because I don't know how to understand the instructor's instructions. Thanks to my husband who has always been interested in me learning English. He can sign me up and he could take care of my children, I couldn't miss the opportunity.

Since I have come to take classes now I understand. I understand a little better. I hear words that I didn't understand before. Now I know what it is about. When listening to a movie or news I am more attentive to knowing what it is talking about and thus learn more. I can read a book to my children. I don't do it perfect but I try. I have learned but I still need to learn more and more and I know that knowing this language will open many doors for me. Thank you to this [EEC] program and the teachers for the time they give us so that we can learn English.

Byron Jose Flores Flores

Before I learned English I felt:

With some inability to communicate with English speaking co-workers.

Very few friends.

Little communication with people of different nationalities.

By learning English now I can:

I can make my own payments.

I can buy or choose any type of food.

I can communicate better with my co-workers.

I can text with people of different nationalities.

By learning English:

I can get involved in work issues.

I can talk with school children.

I can get along better with my neighbors in the community.

Now that I speak English, I feel:

Able to find work in many places.

I have possibility to choose a better job.

I feel good because I would like to share with people from other nations who need help or are disabled.

I can choose a soccer team where I have wanted to go before.

Maryam Foushanji

Before I learned English, everything was difficult for me. I couldn't go anywhere, I always went with my husband or my sons. I couldn't drive because I didn't understand the GPS. I was afraid I would get lost. I didn't know anywhere or anyone. I could barely speak with people. But now I can write and read much better. I can go to restaurants with my friends. I can talk about the culture of my country to my classmates. My opinion is that anyone at any age can learn English. As you know, English is an international language and everybody needs it. I have resolved to learn more English because I want to eventually help women who can't speak English. In the future I will write a book about my life learning English.

"I can read a book to my children. I don't do it perfect but I try. I have learned but I still need to learn more and more and I know that knowing this language will open many doors for me."

- Nancy, EEC Learner



Individuals receive information and resources at EEC's 2nd annual Career and Opportunities Fair.

Claudia Franco

The opportunities that learning English gives us are endless. For me, studying English is a benefit because I will be able to communicate better with my daughter's teachers. I'm a delivery driver for a restaurant, [but] I was a pharmacist in my country. English is very hard for me. I understand every day better and better, but when people speak faster I can't understand. I learn a lot in my job because I hear all [the] people speak English.

I want to get a better job but also offer a better service. I want to get a better job as a medical assistant or be able to validate my degree. For this I need to study about health in this language and therefore I need to understand the teachers. That is why I strive to study more English every day to have a better future for me and my family.

Silvana Gardner

Before I learned English, I felt insecure [about] how to speak to get a better job. Since starting intensive English class, that I took in October until December, I have more knowledge to be good [with] clients.

By learning English, now I can help my coworkers to use the LAST: Listen, Apologize, Solve and Thank. [That] made me [learn] how to communicate at work or with everyone around me and how [to] apply [for] a new job. We practice an interview that was difficult for me because I did not have any interview [experience] before this class.

By learning English, I can [be] involved in more conversations with more vocabulary with people at work, with my community, in new places, etc.

Now that I speak English, I feel more secure and positive person.

Thank you Mrs. Vaishali, Mrs. Debbie and Mrs. Anita.

Natsinet Gebremehdin



English is the most popular language in the world. Before I came to English class, I had no confidence to talk with anyone anywhere. I felt nervous. It was not easy and it was a very difficult life. Since I started at the English Empowerment Center, I have been learning English writing, reading, listening, speaking, and many vocabulary words. That was helpful to me and it has changed my life. I am communicating with the teacher, with my classmates, and my neighbors. When I come to English class, I am happy, because of my growth in my English skills.

Right now I am good at English. I can talk with my children's teachers, but not fluently. I have confidence. I practice everyday by talking with my children.

I hope in the future to be able to speak fluently.

Romel Gonzalez

Knowing English gives us the opportunity to get to know other cultures, different ways of thinking and different lifestyles. In addition, it is a language that by allowing us to communicate between such different people to understand and be interested in their customs. English classes open your mind to new ways of thinking. In addition, it opens up more job opportunities as an increasing number of employees speak English. In addition, if you speak English. you will be able to find work in many countries.

Cristina Guzman Cuaquira

My name is Cristina. I arrived in the United States in June 2019. I did not speak English, nor did I understand. I felt lost when they talked to me. I was so frustrated not being able to understand English when they spoke to me. Learning English helped me understand more what the doctors explained to me [and] helped me participate in my child's school meetings.

I was able to better integrate into my business with my clientele. It helps me to be able to participate in my little one's therapies, which is the biggest reason for learning English.

Sara Hannati

Learning English makes life better because before I learned English, I felt bad. I couldn't do the most important things like go to the doctor, or get a driver's license. Since starting English class, it gives me the opportunity to speak with people because no one in my class speaks Arabic. I have friends now to speak to. I would like to thank all my teachers. I want to tell them that you are wonderful people. You make our lives easier, what you do is sublime.

By learning English, I can be involved, and I have a job. I can go to interviews for a better job. But my dream is to go to college. The English Empowerment Center gives me this opportunity to communicate with the personnel responsible for enrolling in the college or anywhere.

Finally, I'm happy learning English.

Salma Hassan

Before I learned English, I felt lonely and found it hard to do simple activities which I used to do in my home country like making doctor's appointments or reserving a restaurant on the phone or even talking to my neighbors. Since starting English class, I have made new friends and communicated with more people and also participated in my child's school programs.

By learning English, I can be involved in more conversation and understand what is happening around me or what will happen when I listen to the news and how the weather will be.

Learning English is opening up many doors to learn, work, make friends and have better communications.

Sofia Hassen

Hello, this is Sofia Hassen. I'm from Ethiopia. I came to the US in 2017. Before I learned English, I felt nervous [and] not happy. Since starting English class I made new friends. I learned new technologies. By learning English, now I can understand GPS, communicate with people, [like] my child's teacher and my neighbors. I live in an apartment. We came from different countries. I talk English with my neighbors. I help my children with home work. I can go everywhere. I feel confident shopping. By learning English, I found a new training CNA class to help senior people and I want to learn more English. Thank you all teachers.



English Empowerment Center level 2 beginning English class

Cindy Henriquez



Before I learned English, it was difficult to express myself in any circumstances, when I went to the supermarket, to my kid's school, or even to open a bank account.

Since starting English class, I learned more vocabulary and I write better.

By learning English, I can be involved in my conversations with my bosses, in my children's school and when I go anywhere.

Now that I speak English, I have confidence when I speak with the people, and I can understand what the people tell me.

Ibania Hernandez

The United States gave me the opportunity to grow, opportunities for my family, a new perspective of my dreams, to have savings. The United States has given me better opportunities, which I have never had in my country.

Lucy Herrera



Before coming to the USA, I knew very basic English, [only] a few words.

In my country we study English in grades 10 and 11, only two years. We learned vocabulary, greetings, and nothing more.

When I came here, I crashed with reality. Many people speak English, in Virginia, where I live. So, 2 years later, I am studying English. Personally, it has been difficult, but I will make it, you will see. Now I feel able to talk a little. I must practice a lot.

Thank you teachers for your help.

Benjamin Hidalgo

We all have the opportunity to pursue dreams and exert good influence on others.

It would be good for several groups of young people to help each other to start businesses. For example in a world that is increasingly connected by the internet, opportunities for people of all ages to make themselves heard locally, nationally, and internationally will continue to increase. The youth movements are already taking the lead in promoting peace, action against climate change and the right to end inequality.

All this support can be provided not only at home but also through youth groups, sports, clubs, mentoring programs and other activities which help young people thrive, develop and [make] new contributions to society.

Currently there are more young people between fifteen and twenty-four years old than ever before in history. Together they represent fifteen percent of the world's population. With so many energies and ideas many can develop their skills, enjoy life and contribute to society. However, others face an uncertain future.

The changes are challenges that open the door to new opportunities.

In the midst of difficulty lies opportunity.



EEC learner, Jose, answers a question in his level 1 beginning English class.

Ngoc Thao Uy Ho

The first time I arrived in the United States, I felt nervous and not confident. I was very shy when I talked to other people in English. My pronunciation was really bad when I spoke. They didn't understand what I was saying. I looked like a foolish person! I felt really bad because I had studied English in my country before I went to the United States. So, I decided to go to school to improve my English. Besides my pronunciation, I have a lot of problems with grammar, speaking, listening, vocabulary, etc.. I was learning English at Fairfax County Adult High School. At this class I met a lot of friends, and my teacher. Her name is Kristen M. Rohan, who was a kind person, patient and very friendly. She taught me a lot of things and skills in English. And then, I had trouble so I moved from Springfield to Falls Church. I had to say goodbye to her. Now, I live in Falls Church. My brother found another place for me to learn English. It's at English Empowerment Center. At this school, I met new friends and teachers. I registered to learn English three times a week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. Everyday I go to the school, I meet different teachers who are tutors or volunteers, who make me so excited. They're really kind and patient, so, I can learn English so fast. Everyday I go to school, it's a day of happiness where I meet teachers and my friends. Also, I can write a long story because I learned English. Now, I realized that English helps me a lot so that I can help my parents make an appointment with the doctor, help me make an important decisions, communicate at work, and make me confident when I communicate with other people. I'm very proud of myself and grateful for the teachers who are willing to help me and teach me new things.

Gustavo Holtheuer

The good things about living in the United States:

The United States has a good economy.
It has a higher quality of life than any country in the middle of the world.
United States is very safe to live.
The political stability in the United States.
The United States has on average better performance in income, employment, education, environmental quality, social relations, and satisfaction with life.

Claudio Hurtado

Life is giving me a new opportunity to pursue my dreams in the United States. I arrived in the United States in December 2023. My father, mother, girlfriend and 15-year-old son are all still in Bolivia. Although I am far from my family and friends, it is a sacrifice that I have to make to have a better future for myself and my family. All this effort will be rewarded with work in a wonderful country where if you do things well it

opens its arms to you. I worked for 18 years in real estate, I had my own company, called LINKS EXPRESS. I decided to come to the United States for new opportunities, because in my country the political and economic situation affected me a lot.

I understand English a little, since my mother speaks 4 languages. She has lived in different countries (USA, Peru, Madrid, Brussels) and has traveled a lot for her work. She was a travel agent. Now I am learning English, which is very important to be able to interact and meet more people and get good job opportunities. With God's blessing, soon my family will be by my side and we will be able to forge a better future here in the United States, but always with the hand of God. I only have words of gratitude for this time that I have been living in the United States.

Yeeun Hwang

When my English is better, I will get more useful information from the radio, TV and books. Here in the U.S., so many professionals in different fields have a lot of expert knowledge. They deliver their knowledge and experiences to us everyday through the media.

I listen to radio, watch TV and read books in English but unfortunately, I understand little of that. I would like to understand the expert knowledge to [use in] my life. I'm sure that would make my life rich.

Second, when my English is fluent, I will call customer services without hesitation. The staff of customer services talk really fast. So I have problems complaining about an issue or product. I must be able to bring problems about their products or services to the company immediately and proudly. Language is a tool for people to live their lives. Learning new languages is seriously challenging, especially for elderly people. But I know that speaking another language makes my life different. Therefore, I am learning English today.

Myung Ja Ha

I came to the USA six months ago with my husband. At that time I felt like my future was gloomy, but [then] I began to learn English. My teachers are very kind and teach me well, so I have more confidence. I study English and I practice hard in my class. I thank my teachers for teaching me.

Noemi Cruz Jaldin

Before I learned English, I felt scared and silly. But now my life is better, my life has changed. Since starting English class, I have a new job with better pay. By learning English, I can be involved in my class and my job. By learning English, now I can go to do my shopping. I can talk with my boss a little more. Now that I speak English, I feel better, and a little more sure of what I'm talking about.

Christine Jang

Since starting English class, I have become more confident when talking to other people. I also feel that my English listening has improved. I know what expressions to use to say a sentence. Also, I have become more aware of the intonation of words.

Ibtissam Jefjef

My name is Ibtissam and I'm from Morocco. I met my husband there and we got married. When we came to the U.S., I was worried about speaking English. I wanted to go to school but I was busy working a full time job. When I had my son, I decided to learn English - professional English. I started learning step by step. I learned some English rules that help me to communicate with people at work, with my neighbors and with friends from this country. So now I'm not ashamed to speak out loud in English. This is because of my self confidence and my belief that I can learn anything anywhere. In conclusion, I want to say trust in your abilities and try to improve them. Everything is possible in the United States!

This is about my experience learning English and what changes I have had so far. First, when I started the classes, I was so limited in talking that I wasn't expressing my opinions or even my concerns. It is very hard to have that feeling, but because of the teachers and how they make me speak and participate in the class I feel comfortable and want to learn more and more without any restrictions or shame. Second, that encouragement pushed me to take my citizenship test. This was my dream and it has become a reality. Finally, I want to say that it has been a unique and different experience for me, which I will be proud of all my life and I want to say thank you to the teachers who helped me achieve my dream.

Qinghua Jiang

Before I learned English, I felt that studying English was not important. It started to feel important when I started to learn English in middle school. English is the unification language in the world. If I can speak English, I can do many things. For example, I can speak with many Foreign people and work in an international trade company.

Since starting English class, I have made new friends and helped my son learn from home. By learning English, now I can communicate with my child's school and become a US citizen.

By learning English, I can be involved with my neighbors and in my community. Now that I speak English, I feel it is very important for my life and it is very interesting.

Lesly Juarez

This is my story, in my country we lack opportunities in every aspect, education, labor [and] health. This is the reason why we seek new opportunities for survival. We are four siblings, we studied elementary school, then we worked in the fields and study on the weekends. With a lot of effort I studied to become a teacher but I never worked as a teacher because to be able to work you had to have studied at university. I would have liked to continue studying in order to become a teacher. When you are 17 or 18 years old, according to customs of my country, you had to get married and start a family. My family has always worked in the fields and my siblings and I had to work, my dream has always been to study at university [and] to work as a teacher. I got married at the age of 21 and immigrated with my husband to the USA.

Rasha Kakar

Hello my name is Rasha. I want to tell you about my journey learning English. Before and after I learned English....When I came to the United States, I couldn't understand what people were saying when everyone was talking so fast. So I needed my husband to tell me what they were saying, but I felt embarrassed that I needed help from my husband. I made myself a promise that I would learn English. Then I started to learn English. Now I can understand and speak English with people and now I can visit my neighbors and talk with them and have a good relationship. Learning English and talking with people has made my mind open. The English Empowerment Center teaches me a lot, like how I can construct a sentence. EEC also gives me a lot of information about schools and our community. I will keep going to learn more and more. My dream is to speak, read and write well and find a good career because I want to be a successful person. Finally, I want my children to be proud of me.

Aynur Kazimova

My name is Aynur. I am from Azerbaijan. I got married in my country when I was 20 years old and I have 3 kids. I came here with my family 1 year and 4 month ago. Nowadays I join the online English classes. I am not working [but] my goal is learning and speaking English better and after I want to get a good job. Since starting English class I have made new friends and learned new technologies. By learning English now I can help make decisions, communicate at work or with my children's school and pay my own bills. By learning English I can be involved in more conversations with people at work. Now that I speak English better I feel myself very confident and powerful.

Shaheen Khan

Since starting English class, I have talked to my children's doctor. I have talked to my children's teachers. I have talked to more people. I am able to study for my driver's license.

Sun-Ah Kim

In my life English is always one of the top tasks that I really care about. Since 2000 when I entered an international company, English has been both a challenge and an opportunity for me. When I was a university student, I loved studying English, so I kept practicing speaking at a private institute.

Therefore, when I took the opportunity to be hired by an international company, I had a big dream that my English speaking would grow fast. However, a reality was that there was a limit to business English. I couldn't speak fluently in daily speaking. Business English was manageable to me but personal talking was still difficult.

My second chance came to me when our family moved to the States again in September of last year. When I moved to Virginia again (I lived in Virginia once from 2010-2012) I [was] determined that I will try to improve my daily English as far as I can. So immediately after moving to a new house, I searched for places to learn English. When I knew about the English Empowerment Center program, I marked my calendar and got a test. Since February, I have been studying English at the English Empowerment Center. Whenever I learn grammar, I try to fill up some points I forgot. And whenever there was writing homework and I got the feedback with corrections, I also try to write it down in my notebook. The correction to my writing by [my] teacher Lisa and volunteer teacher Lauren is really valuable to me. I appreciate the great support and help of teachers to help the improvement of our English. I am also proud that I grabbed this second opportunity here. I am quite confident if I keep studying with English Empowerment Center program this opportunity will be reality one day to me!!!

Atchouvi Kodjo

Before enrolling in the English [EEC] course I felt a lack in speaking and I saw a need that I had in my community for an active and professional life.

I am thinking of increasing my efforts in order to get a good job, have new friends, learn new technologies and help my grandchildren at home in their studies and other areas.

Now I can state my opinions, share my traditions, help make important decisions, communicate at work or with my child's school, pay my own bills, apply for a new job, become a U.S. citizen, participate in programs that help me, talk about the needs of my family and community and vote. These civic duties further confirm the American citizen that I am.

By learning English, I can be involved in more conversation with people at work and, with my neighbors in my community. Such success will give me advantages in other countries and a reputation in my home country.

Now that I speak English, I feel happy and relaxed in society because English is of great importance in the workplace and gives value in society.

Dinh Le

To help each individual see that there is more to life than theirs. To provide holistic and trauma informed approaches, maintaining the safety of all in our care. [To] have business, work, income, insurance, food.

Sam Lee

Confucius memorialized these words in his book "Confucius", "Learn and [practice] it sometimes. What a joyful thing it is." My goal is not to become a someone or to accomplish something, I'm just looking for happiness and satisfaction with studying itself. Just like I need exercise for my body, I need something to learn to keep my mind strong.



Fall 2023 end of session celebration!

Suk Lee



My name is Suk Lee. I am in English class at the Korean Community Service Center two days a week on Monday and Wednesday. I also study at home. I practice English, others practice English in families. I try to learn two or three new words a day at home and at school. Sometimes I watch T.V. or listen to the radio to practice English. I also talk to my neighbors. I thank KCSC and my [EEC] teacher, Margaret. I love it!

Lidong Lin

Before, I learned English in China, I was able to read a little. I spoke and listened very poorly.

Last October, I came to the United States. Now I live here, I hope to talk with people. I want to talk with my grandson. He is an American. He is 5 years old. He goes to school every day.

Since starting English class, I have made some progress in English. I know the teacher and classmates. Chaima is a good teacher. Molly helps me a lot in English. My classmates help me too. They are very nice. I am so happy in English class.

I want to keep learning English and be more involved in my community.

Sonia Llactahuaman

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The surest way to succeed is to try one more time.”

“What you acquire with a lot of work, you love the more.”

“You can always do it, whenever you want.”

“The surest way to succeed is to try one more time.”

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

Maria Lopez

My dream is to learn to speak English very well, to help my daughter with her homework, communicate better with her teachers and other people. [It will] open up more job opportunities for me and I [will] be able to talk to my daughter and her friends.

Maria Adriana Lopez

When I first came to this country, I felt like I didn't understand anything.

I want to learn English to be able to express myself in speaking and writing. Learning English is very important for everything. It helps me make doctor's appointments and speak to teachers at school. You need to speak a lot of English to look for work and have better opportunities.

My job is cleaning houses. At first, my customers spoke Spanish so I couldn't practice English. Now, instead of asking for people to translate, I ask them to please repeat for me. Sometimes I understand.

Rubidia Roxana Guevara Lopez

I'm so glad to be here in this [EEC] program. First, because I am improving my English. Also, I am meeting some new people that are my classmates and part of my life now. Without this class, I was feeling that I can't have more opportunities to continue in my life to try to grow more. I enjoy my time in class. I hope this can be done more often so I have a chance to learn more. Also, I appreciate my teacher for taking the time to be with us. I'm so thankful for her.

I know now I'm going to be ready for a better job because of the steps I am taking with my English. From now on I understand more when I read or when I watch the news, at the supermarket or at my appointments. I feel more confident to not make any mistakes in English.

Julian Antonio Maeda Vasquez

By learning English, now I can talk with my boss. I can talk with customers at the auto repair shop. I can order parts for my car. I can greet people and order food in a restaurant.

Constantin Manzul

Before I started learning English, I felt very uncomfortable in a new environment. I couldn't independently communicate with my doctors, at the bank, or travel on my own. My circle of friends was very limited. Not knowing English has had a huge impact on my life. I depended on my children.

Since I started studying English, I have had opportunity to improve my learning process. At the English Empowerment Center, the teachers encourage me to keep learning. I have to learn more English. I still have weak points - listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and small conversations.

My goal is to speak clearly and have good pronunciation.

Raisa Manzul

When I arrived in the U.S., I knew English very poorly. I was dependent on my children. They always helped me, but this situation affected me. I decided to go to school. I started to learn English at English Empowerment Center.

Thanks to the efforts of my teachers, they helped develop my speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills.

By learning English, I can communicate with my classmates and different people. They told me a lot of interesting things about their countries.

Now, I feel confident and better than before. Learning English opens up many opportunities for me. I hope to learn more. My goal is to speak English fluently and increase my knowledge.

Meilyn Marroquin

I decided to study English to have better employment opportunities, to be able to communicate with other people and provide better service.

Since I started this [EEC] course, I have been able to help my son more with his reading since I have more confidence in my pronunciation.

I know that learning English will help me expand my circle of friends.

Jennifer Ilschsa Sanchez Martinez

Before starting to learn English, I felt a mixture of apprehension and enthusiasm. English always seemed like daunting challenge to me, a language that was both foreign and intimidating. The idea of learning and being able to master a new language seemed like a difficult task, and I couldn't help but wonder if I have what it took to achieve it. However, I found a ray of hope and curiosity.

When I started my English classes, I experienced a transformation that exceeded my expectation. With every word mastered and every lesson learned, my confidence grew and I made steady progress. English not only became a subject of study but also a gateway to new experiences and opportunities.

The opportunities that learning English offers me are many. Professionally, it opens doors to a global market that allows me to look for better job opportunities. Personally, it allows me to connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and broaden my horizons. Studying and mastering English provides me with the tools I need to thrive in the world.

Isabel Mata

I have lived in the United States for seven years. I want to become an American Citizen. In my native country I worked for 28 years in the Ministry of Defense (Military) as a Public Relations Officer. My first job in the US was working in the kitchen (cafeteria) at an Elementary School. My principal said he saw my potential and he gave me an opportunity in the classroom. I had to take three exams in FCPS and passed them. Now I am a Kindergarten Assistant. I take English classes four nights a week. Now I am able to talk to people without having to request a translator, do my errands, pay my payments, and make my appointments.

Now I can and want to learn English well, to communicate with the children at my school, parents and teachers; but my problem is that pronunciation is very difficult for me.

Thank you for your support and I will continue in my classes because I want to improve myself despite my age, but I don't lose hope.

Elsa Medina



Hello. My name is Elsa Medina. I am from El Salvador. I arrived here 10 years ago. I have a 7 year old daughter. Time has passed quickly but I realized that it is never too late to learn and take advantage of the opportunities that knowing the English language gives me in my life. Although I am still in the process, today I feel more confident in my work when establishing conversations with clients and with my daughter's teachers. I feel happy and proud of what I have achieved today but there is still more to learn and I will not give up.

Ruth Najera

I'm Ruth Najera. Before starting to learn English, I felt very ashamed for not understanding and not being able to speak English with people who do not speak my native language (Spanish).

But since I started classes at the English Empowerment Center, I feel very excited because I'm learning little by little and today I no longer feel afraid to talk to people from other countries.

One of my goals is to validate my Diploma from the University of El Salvador, since currently I work as a custodian in schools and my work is at night.

I want to continue learning English to communicate better with others and with the patience of my teacher and her assistants, I will do it.

Caitlin Naves

Realizing My Dreams

1. I have a better future. This country has many opportunities for young people.
2. I have the opportunities to learn English, since in my country I couldn't study English.
3. I can be with my family all the time, I have time to go to the beach, to eat at restaurants and have fun with the family.
4. I have a better job. My salary is enough to cover all my needs, and be able to get what is necessary.
5. I have a better income and a better life.

I have a better life and am realizing my dreams.

Annie Navia Velasco

Before I learned English, I felt sad because I don't understand. This is my first English class with the English Empowerment Center. Now, I can pronounce and I can write in English. I can understand when people speak to me.

I live in Bolivia. My aunt speaks English and I can practice with my family. I [will] learn to speak English because I can have new opportunities and I can study in a university in the United States.

Minh Anh Nguyen

English is my second language and Vietnamese is my mother language. Before I came to the USA I learned English as well. I felt confused and not confident, even afraid of talking. Furthermore, I couldn't open my mouth. I always felt my tongue was stuck when I wanted to talk. Also, I make a lot of mistakes because my grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are not good. All these reasons make me have a lack of confidence.

It also gives me a lot of trouble at work because I cannot deal with clients about sample design nails that they want to do. Since I knew about the English Empowerment Center from my aunt [I started] learning English, now I am at level 3 of semester 3.

By learning English, I can communicate with teachers, clients at work and whenever I go somewhere, I can read the signs. I can ask everyone [for] what I need, to help me pay the bills and buy things. Besides that, I can be involved in more

conversations at school, participate in many festivals or activities that the school organizes.

Now that I speak English, I feel more confident. I have more opportunities in developing myself, and [can] freely express myself. I am so glad to know my teachers and my classmates at the English Empowerment Center. I am grateful for their enthusiasm and patience in teaching us. Thank you for reading my story. I hope you will achieve your goals soon.

Shamshad Nizami

I would like to thank the English Empowerment Center and all the staff and teachers who help us in learning English. Before I learned English, I couldn't go out alone, I couldn't talk to anyone, if someone else talked to me, I couldn't understand what they were saying, I couldn't even say that I don't know English. By learning English, I can buy food from the grocery store, I can buy clothes, I can speak English a little bit when we go to the doctor's office.

Hamida Noori

There's no wrong in opportunities. Even if life gives you an opportunity that you regret not taking, there's many more waiting for you. Opportunities are there to improve your life, not to let you down. You should never give up in finding another amazing opportunity. For instance, my opportunity was learning English or going to English classes. These classes have taught me many things. Now that I learned a little bit of English, it has helped me with most things. I can help my kids now. Before learning English, I felt clueless.

Shaima Obaid

I want to study English because right now I'm studying for the GED. It's like high school and I feel it's very hard for me. All my family has been in the USA for a long time and I came to the USA one year ago. I was frustrated when I saw all my family speaking English fluently, even the children. So, I felt very sad and ashamed before I learned English. But when I started taking English class, I felt self-confident. I try to speak English with my cousins and now they understand me better. Also, I can study for the GED now. I plan to enroll in university and I'll have friendships in the USA. Then I'll get a better job.

The English isn't as hard now, but it needs patience and hard work. There isn't anything [too] difficult and I don't listen to anyone [who] tells me "It's hard," or "You can't." Don't forget that! If you want to do something, you can do it easily. Just believe in yourself.

Firoza Omar

[I don't speak] in English except introducing my name and saying hello. As a result of training in this course I have become familiar with adverbs, verbs and sentences and I am slowly learning them. This training has helped me and I am of the opinion that the continuation of English language training in this course will improve my level a lot. It helps me to be able to write, read and speak in English.

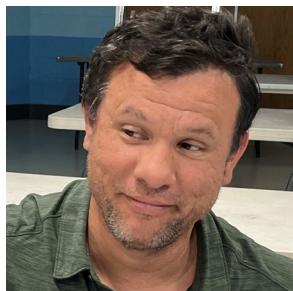
Mirsa Lineth Orellana

When I arrived in the country I looked for an option on how to have the opportunity. When I observed in the stores everything was in English. I found information about English classes in the organization English Empowerment Center. I asked how it was to get information and they gave me a phone number so I could call and ask when they were going to take the exam and here I am learning because in this country it is very important.

I want to learn English.

I need it to be able to have a job because in this country it is very necessary and in this program I am learning a lot, thanks to my teachers, Billy, Kelsie, Chaker.

Jorge Ortega



Before I learned English, understanding other people was difficult, and it frustrated me. After learning and studying, I was able to understand better and communicate my ideas to others, thus improving my work environment. Now I listen to music and I can understand what the song is saying which before was impossible. Now it is easier to understand.

Sonia Osario

[I have] many job opportunities, and study opportunities for our children and for adults too. Opportunities to go out to many fun places, such as the swimming pool.

Khadra Osman



Before I learned English, I felt so bad because it was so hard to understand what people were saying about me and how to communicate with them. By learning English now, I can understand what they are saying about me, and I can communicate better with them. Now, I can speak and communicate with my friends better. In summary, learning English is so important for everyone.

Maeng Kee Park

I came to the United States as an immigrant last September 9th. Before I started learning English, I felt that I lost self-confidence as an immigrant from South Korea. But since starting English, I am developing confidence in everyday life more and more.

Sun Park

If I learn English, I will have lots of opportunities in the United States and furthermore in the world. If I knew and spoke English fluently my life in the USA would have been more easy and successful. So I have decided to learn and study English in my spare time.

In the past, I attended school and I tried to study English many times, but I couldn't attend for long because I had to work hard. I had many positions with many responsibilities. For example, I worked more than sixty hours a week, cared for my children, paid the bills and cooked for my family. My husband and I had to work a lot, so we were able to have a few businesses. Therefore our retirement is not too bad. However, we lost many good opportunities to start and keep businesses. I had many bad, painful experiences without fluent English, so I promised myself to study English until I speak and write well.

Finally, I can study English again, so I have taken a few semesters at the English Empowerment Center. Fortunately, I am interested in studying English and I am getting better each semester. Now I am not very afraid, and I can approach anyone to ask what I need. Learning fluent English gives me a variety of opportunities in the world and for my future life.

Svitlana Pavlenko



My name is Svitlana Pavlenko. I am from Ukraine. I have been living in America for 2 years. I attend [EEC] to study English. We have a very good teacher in our class who helps you master the language. I study the language in order to communicate freely and for socialization in society. I hope when I master the language, I will make more friends and work. I want to try reading books in English. Learning the language will be a rewarding experience for me.

Shakila Qaderi



Before I started learning English, I felt like I can not talk with anyone outside of my house. Because I cannot talk with anyone I didn't understand what was going on around me and always depending on other people to help me. By learning English, now I can understand a little bit. I can talk with my neighbor and share my thoughts and feelings with others. I would like to say thank you to my teachers for helping me learn English.

Ana Ramirez

Before I learned English, I was frustrated with the time it took me to understand when someone who only spoke English addressed me. Since I started classes I feel less isolated and more confident. I can now go to places, go shopping, be able to ask questions, and understand what someone says. Since I started English classes, I'm a little more independent. By learning English I can take steps to improve myself, look for new work goals and have independence.

Oscar Ramos



I am going to personalize the topic of this essay by focusing on the reasons I have for learning the English language. The main reason is that in my job I interact with people who only speak English, which makes it a little difficult to communicate effectively with them, however, I also know that English is the language that is mostly used internationally so that people of different nationalities and languages can communicate with each other, this being the second reason that motivated me to learn this language. The last but not least reason is because I want to be a reference for my daughters and other family members so that they know the importance of mastering not only the English language but any other language.

From the previous reasons I will focus on the second reason. I think that for two people to know each other they must speak the same language, so they can share important information about each other, but also to meet other people you need to go where they live, so as I also mentioned the English language is the international language par excellence, having a mastery of this language gives you the ability to travel around the world, which multiplies your possibilities in many ways, broadens your horizons, knowledge and experience. This is where the phrase that gives rise to this essay is, traveling and getting to know other countries and other societies gives you a world of opportunities. I am going to make a small change to this phrase, I hope it does not cause a conflict, I would also put the phrase this way: "Let's give the World a chance." When we give ourselves the opportunity to travel and get to know other countries and the people who live in those countries, we live their customs and traditions, we feel and apply their values and we will realize that we are more similar than we thought. I am sure that if we did this as a priority, mainly those people who are in charge of directing and governing the countries, if only they were given the opportunity to learn more about other countries, other societies, there would be fewer misunderstandings, less frictions, fewer conflicts and wars, because we would be empathetic with others and it would also allow us to take care of our world, because we would be worried that some of our actions against our planet could affect another country, another society, other peoples, thus giving it another chance to the world.

Zahra Razmjo

Hello. I'm Zahra. I want to write about my English. When I came to America, I couldn't speak English. I couldn't go anywhere because I couldn't speak English. I couldn't go to the doctor or talk to my kids' teacher. Now I can speak English much better and now I can go to the doctor and I can talk to my kids' teachers. Since practicing [English], I am happy.

Jose Resto



Over the last year a world of opportunities have opened up for me. My sister opened my eyes to a world of opportunity. All of my friends have the opportunity of learning English. It was the perfect opportunity to talk to Bryan about my finances. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to prove to myself that I could be useful in life.

Karen Reyes



Since starting English class, I have more opportunity to look for another job, to enjoy teacher conferences and better communication with my child's teachers, coworkers, and other people who never talked [to] because I am afraid to talk because my English was not good. Now I feel more comfortable to speak English than before. I am glad to be here in this class.

Safia Rezia

Before I learned English, I felt very sad. Now I can speak and understand. When I went to the hospital, I didn't need a translator. I practice every day listening to conversations.

I work at TJ Maxx in the back and sometimes in the home section. When someone talks slowly in English, I can understand. I can help the customers and talk to the cashiers.

I have opportunities in the world because I learn English. I will get a better job in the future and save money to buy a house. I am very grateful, and being able to buy a house is a big opportunity for me because I have a family.

Aracely Rodriguez Romirez

My story is very difficult and I don't know where to start because just remembering makes me feel very bad. That decision was very difficult because my son was only 2 years old. The only thing I can have here in this country is to learn English because my dreams are to continue studying. What I like most is sewing and now that I have that opportunity I [don't] want to lose it.

Luzmila Rojos

Before learning English, it was very difficult for me, to not be able to communicate with people in my children's school.

Since English class began with Ms. Jackie, I have learned to read and write. Thanks to Ms. Jackie for her patience and so much love for teaching us.

By learning English, I now have a better chance of getting to my children's school meeting.

Now that I speak English, I feel I am happy. Thanks to Ms. Jackie for all her teaching and for having a lot of patience with us.

Ofelia Romero

When I came to this country, it was very hard for me to understand the language. Little by little, I started learning some words like thank you, excuse me, good morning, please, what is your name, and where are you from.

Also, when my second daughter was born I started learning a bit more like the colors, shapes, numbers, alphabet, and that helped me to read a book to my daughter.

When my daughter started going to school, I started [being] involved more in community service and I met more people that helped me pronounce words or correct me and that motivated me to learn more.

Luci Romero Obregon



My name is Luci, I am from Peru. I came to the United States, I did not understand English. It was difficult to work and talk to [my] boss. Since I started English class, I can understand and listen, I can talk to the chef now. Now I'm better at my job. Learning English, now I can communicate better. English helped my work, English helped for shopping and when I visit the hospital. By learning English, I can be involved, I have more conversations with my nieces about working with people and neighbors in my community. Now that I speak English I feel understood better. I try to practice more at work when I go shopping and also with teachers in English class.

Luz Romero Obregon



My name is Luz Romero. I am from Peru. I came to the United States in 2012. When I arrived, I did not speak English. English has helped me communicate in many ways. I feel proud when I can volunteer at my children's school, pay my bills, apply for a new job, and participate in programs that help me, talk about the needs of my family, community and vote. I can make doctor's appointments for my family. I can also understand and communicate my needs if I go to the emergency room.

I can sign up my kids for activities like swimming, ice skating and tennis. Soon, I can start to become a US citizen. I felt lonely before when I did not speak English, but now I feel like I have friends to talk with.

"English has helped me communicate in many ways. I feel proud when I can volunteer at my children's school, pay my bills, apply for a new job, and participate in programs that help me, talk about the needs of my family, community and vote."

Rocio Rosales

By learning English, now I can communicate more with people. For example, in my job I can understand when someone asks me a question and I can answer them. Since I started English classes I can [be] involved in conversations with my friends. Now I feel more interested in learning more English because I know that it will help me in the future. I also know that it is never [too] late to learn a new language.

Anila Saleh



Hello. My name is Anila Saleh. I am from Afghanistan. I got a good education there but only learned a little English. When I moved to the United States, I faced many challenges because I didn't know much English. So I chose to learn more.

Now I am studying English and my English is improving. I wish to learn enough English to achieve my dream of becoming a doctor in the United States.

Ibrahim Sawah

The English language is very important for me. I started learning English last year. Before I learned to speak English, I felt that I was not ready to live in America. It was difficult for me to talk with my grandchildren or with my daughter in law, son in law and their parents. For me, English was very difficult. English has opened a world of opportunities to me. I can speak with my grandchildren, and I can communicate with the workers in the supermarket. I can ask the bus driver about places and it helps me to understand the preaching at church. I can speak with anyone. Of course, I appreciate the work of my English teachers who are giving their time and efforts to teach us.

-Luz, EEC Learner

Ziaullhaq Seddiqi

At first when we became immigrants, we faced a world of problems. We get to know the environment over time, later by searching and researching and studying new courses, we can solve some of our problems.

When I first came to the USA, it was very difficult. Learning English is helping me because the more I learn will [help] find a job. I have degrees in Law and Nursing in Afghanistan. I want to get a job in nursing in the US.

Anfal Seral

Before I learned English, I felt no contact with people in hospitals, markets and traveling. It is so difficult being a single mom that came to this country. I have learned new technologies. By learning English I can get the exam of ASCP and get a drivers license and then apply for jobs. By learning English, I can be involved with the community [and] people at work. Now I speak English, I feel very happy, comfortable and confident. Thanks to my teacher and the English Empowerment Center for helping me. I hope to continue the wonderful work.

Farida Shuaibi

I am Farida. I am from Afghanistan. I came to the USA with my family five months ago. I attend my English course with Ms. Robin and Ms. Maura. I am learning English to find a job. In Afghanistan, I was a high school teacher for girls.

I was also a clothing designer and seamstress. I taught my students to make clothes in the following ways:

1. First, I showed how to sew by threading needles and making simple stitches.
2. Talked about different types of clothes and how to use the patterns.
3. I started with easy projects like making small bags or simple pillow covers.
4. Then I moved on to harder things like shirts and skirts.
5. I always told my students to be safe and help each other when they have any problems.

I still make clothing, but I also want to get a job as a teacher in the USA. By learning English, I can solve my daily problems and find a job to help my family. There are many opportunities in the USA. I want to use these opportunities in the future.

Ana Siles



When I arrived in the United States, I didn't know any English. It was very difficult for me, because I didn't understand when the people talked to me in the market and in the school for my children, but I wanted to learn English. Since starting English class, I can understand a little more. Now I can shop in stores without help, I can make an appointment with the doctor or with the technical service for my car. It seems like something simple, but for me it is a lot.

Now that I speak English, I see life here differently. I feel liked and free because I depend on fewer people to communicate and move around the city. I can achieve many things.

I also know, that there is still much to learn to better understand the English language, but I'm happy for what I'm achieving now.

Willma Sillerico

We have dreams and we aspire to achieve. [To] live in the United States is to have an opportunity to get a job, [to have] great opportunities to study and better develop what we know.

I see a beautiful future for my daughters, great children, because they are supported in their abilities to be better....I see a better future for me and for my family. [To] live in the United States is an opportunity to achieve your dreams.

Yuliia Sirichok

Hi, my name is Yuliia. I'm from Ukraine. I [have] lived in the USA 1.5 years. I never studied English. It was very difficult for me to communicate with people around me. I finished level 2 and now I study writing classes at the English Empowerment Center. Now I feel more confident. By learning English, I can be involved in more conversations in my children's school, with my neighbors and in my community. Now I don't speak English fluently, [but] I have a goal to learn English and speak very well.



EEC learners participating in a game of telephone during their end of session celebration.

Suzann Samantha Tanchez Gonzalez



By learning English, now I can talk with my daughter's doctor and traveling is easier. When I speak English, I can make more friends and I can talk to store workers. Also, there will be opportunities for better work.

Yared Tesfamicael

Since I came to America, I [have had] a lot of opportunities. America is the number one land of opportunity in the world. So many immigrant people came to America for the opportunity. For example, some people came to search [for a] better life, and some people came to search for religious freedom, so I got a lot of opportunity in America. Some of the opportunities I got are...

1. I got the opportunity [to] work.
2. I became a U.S. citizen.
3. I got freedom of speech.
4. I use a computer in the library for free.
5. I study to improve my education level.

In conclusion, America is a land of opportunity in many ways. Opportunity of worship, opportunity of work, opportunity of school, and the land of opportunity for free press.

Anh Dao Tran



Before I learned English, I felt nervous and confused and afraid because English is hard. I can't talk with my neighbor, I can't call to make appointments with a doctor, dentist and I can't help my children at school. Since starting English class, I have to talk to friends and teachers and I have to talk with neighbors. I have a job. I am learning English and now I can communicate at work. I can help my children at school and I can go to the bank. I can shop online and make appointments with a doctor and dentist.

By learning English, I can be involved in more conversation with people at work, help in my job better in my children's school, in my community, and travel.

Now that I speak English, I feel happy. I want to come to English class everyday. I can talk to my friends and teachers.

Ofelia Umana

I am learning English because I need to talk to my children's teachers. I am learning to speak and the truth is I feel very comfortable because if I say something wrong, the teacher corrects me. I want to learn English because I need a job in the future.

Juana Vargas



Before learning English, it was difficult for me to communicate with the people around me. Since I started English classes, I have been able [to] communicate with my co-workers more easily. By learning English, I can participate in conversations with the community and pay my bills. Now that I speak a little more English, I feel the need to continue with my classes, learn vocabulary, know more verbs to expand and improve the fluency of the pronunciation of the language.

Cinthia Roxana Veliz Quispe



The exact word is TRUST! I'm a very expressive person. When I didn't understand English, I felt like a "mime" only with facial gestures.

For now, I don't know English at all, but I am very happy to understand more, in more conversations. I feel safer, from: paying a supermarket cashier, to talking to my son's teacher.

For me, it is great! It's a big step, and I can't imagine how much better it will be later. I will be [able to] find a better job!

Reina Ventura Argueta



Now that I speak better English I feel more confident, more secure, I can speak with more confidence with other people in English, and when talking on the phone I feel more secure, I am very excited, and I thank my teacher Stan and his assistants.

Khalida Wafa



Hi, my name is Khalida. I am from Afghanistan, I am 32 years old and I now [live] in this country. I am going to write about myself and learning language. I came to the United States 10 months ago. The first month was hard for me because I could not speak English. When someone does not know English, life is hard, you can't go to shop or work or anything. When I went shopping I used Google translate, I still use it but not as much. After this I decided that I should learn English. Before starting the class, I used to watch English programs on YouTube, by learning English now I can talk with people and with my neighbor. I text and email with everyone. I want to improve my English because English is very important and an international language. I want to have good communication with people, I must learn English. I want to go to college and I want to become a teacher in the future, this is my dream.



EEC learners working on their digital literacy skills with Northstar Digital Literacy.

Romelia Zavala



My name is Romelia. I'm from Honduras. I need to improve communication skills to be able to reach my goals and dreams. I did underestimate the necessity of English for many years. If I had realized the importance of learning earlier, I would have gone to English Empowerment Center classes sooner.

Eman Zazai

When I came to America and we had to go to the doctor, I did not speak any English. I did not understand anything. I felt very sad and hopeless. I felt embarrassed when they called a translator. Now that I speak English better, I am very proud that I can help myself and my family when we go to the doctor. I want to study even more English because it will make my life and the lives of my children much better.

Anny Zhao



My name is Anny Zhao. My teacher's name is Mrs. J. Park. I wouldn't have said this before I learned English. I can communicate with my son-in-law. This has brought me great convenience in life. I will continue to attend classes and study hard. Thank you to my teacher and [EEC].

James Zhao

I have been learning English for a year, and my two teachers, Maura and Robin, have given me a lot of encouragement and help. Before I learned English, I felt it was difficult to listen and understand. I would forget new words. Speaking was hard, I was afraid to speak.

Now I am not afraid. I can use English during shopping, dining, and travel. I can talk to leaders and colleagues at work.

I am a traditional Chinese medicine masseuse, and there are often American patients in the clinic. I need to speak English. From simple greetings to talking about pain, comfort and changes in all parts of the body.

Now I have more self-confidence. Special thanks to the teachers for their help.

Yin Zuokui



My wife and I came to the United States from China in April 2022 to take care of my grand-daughter. Now, she is two years old. Over the past two years, I have gradually fallen in love with our community, after two years. I came to the adult school (English Empowerment Center) to study English. Before I learned English I felt this community was two worlds; all the people spoke English, I didn't understand. I didn't go out without my daughter. So I was determined to learn English. In the past two years, I studied English from level one to level three class.

Since starting English class, my confidence has improved. I took the English driving test and I got my license. I understand traffic rules in Virginia and can read the traffic signs.

Before, I refused to listen to other people speaking English [now] I think listen, then I'll be happy. If I can understand a few words, I believe I can do it well.

"Since starting English class, my confidence has improved. I took the English driving test and I got my license. I understand traffic rules in Virginia and can read the traffic signs."

-Yin, EEC Learner

Outstanding Instructor Recognitions

Each year, English Empowerment Center learners are invited to thank their instructors by nominating them for an Outstanding Instructor Recognition. EEC thanks every instructor for their hard work, and for their dedication and passion for adult literacy. Enjoy these words straight from our learners.

Teacher: Molly Bensinger-Lacy

Student: Ahmad Ayoubi

She is teaching very well. The way she is teaching all the students can understand. She wants us to learn and understand every bit of our lessons. We are very lucky to have her as our teacher.

Teacher: Molly Bensinger-Lacy and Cassie Kramer

Student: Muzhgan Ayar

They are excellent and special.

Teacher: Molly Bensinger-Lacy and Elizabeth Stone

Student: Olena Mass

Molly & Liz are nice and qualified teachers. They take care that it is comfortable in classes. They [are] also always available to help with homework. I wish them success!

Teacher: Molly Bensinger-Lacy and Elizabeth Stone

Student: Cinthia Veliz

Patience, dedication and perseverance are the words that define their teachings.

Teacher Liz gave me the confidence to participate, and they corrected my mistakes with great empathy.

They spent more time than expected just to answer our questions!

Teacher: Mike Boito

Student: Iris Nohemí

He is very good at explaining.

Teacher: Mike Boito

Student: Burhanuddin Barna

He's a great teacher he always tries to teach us our lessons and he encourages us to study our homework.

Teacher: Mike Boito

Student: Ana Arce

Mr. Mike has been very respectful, helpful and kind during class. He makes my learning a great experience and always willing to help. Please recognize him.

Teacher: Lindsay Bouie

Student: Blanco Lilian Borilla

We look silly wanting to speak English, but her face shows that she wants to bring out the best in us. She ignores our ignorance when pronouncing and subtly corrects us. She has not come to play in class but she guides us in a playful, kind, empathetic and responsible way (using her good pedagogy)... Thanks to her empathy, we take baby steps and as if wanting to remedy mistakes we get back up.

She has the vocation of a teacher, she does know how to teach. I hope she goes very far. She is making us strong by giving her best to teach us.

Teacher: Lindsay Bouie

Student: Portiuo Sarai

My teacher is a great person with an impressive charisma. I admire her dedication and her incredible way of teaching us, she does it in a very dynamic way which helps us a lot to learn and understand the class. I hope she is our teacher in the next Level because she is definitely the best.

Teacher: Lindsay Bouie

Student: Mohamed Sullafa

She is a wonderful teacher in the teaching process. She conveys information to us with ease and simplicity. She is proficient in language and explanation. She helps us each individually, and she always makes sure everyone participates in the class. She is nice, and helpful. Everyone loves her. We wish her success. Also, she is creating a good environment for the class.

Teacher: Brian Brooks and Eileen Foxwell**Student: Anh Phan**

I am Anh Phan. I am from Vietnam. I have been studying at the English Empowerment Center in 1086 Eden Street near 2 Courses. I like the teachers here, Mr. Brian and Mrs. Eileen. They are very nice and friendly. They're very good teachers. They always come to class very soon and teach very enthusiastically. I am very grateful of them. Thanks so much!

Teacher: Bob Brown**Student: Atchouvi Krajo**

Our teacher deserves to be encouraged because he has always given himself in his teaching using different teaching methods, so that learners can understand and express themselves in English. He is patient with the students and encourages us even if we are in error. His presence in class so early in each session is proof that he likes his work. All this deserves encouragement.

Teacher: Bob Brown**Student: Juan Pablo Oporto**

I am filled with gratitude for the guidance and support you have provided me throughout this transformative process. It is with great admiration and appreciation that I write to recognize you for your exceptional dedication and commitment to your students' growth and success. There are numerous reasons why you deserve this recognition but allow me to highlight a few that have had a profound impact on my learning experience.

- Your passion for teaching English is palpable in every lesson you provide.
- Your enthusiasm is contagious, igniting a sense of curiosity and excitement within your students.
- You have always gone above and beyond to support and encourage your students. Whether it is providing additional resources.
- You are constantly looking for innovative ways to keep lessons dynamic and attractive.

In recognition of your outstanding contributions to express my deepest gratitude. Thank you for being an exceptional teacher.

Teacher: Bob Brown**Student: Jennifer Iluschsa Sanchez Martinez**

My teacher deserves much recognition because he is an incredible teacher. Seriously, his passion for what he does and his support means a lot. He stands out for his patience, for teaching, dedication and kindness. He makes each class fun. He has created a safe space for us to feel comfortable making mistakes and learning

from them. His passion for teaching awakens curiosity and feeds the desire to learn more. He uses very creative teaching methods. His support and confidence makes us stronger and helps us move forward. I am very lucky to have the best guide on this long path. For that and more I want to express my gratitude for the work and sacrifice he makes for our success. I thank him for his commitment, because he is making a real difference in our lives. I appreciate it more than words can express. Thank you so much!!

Teacher: Krista Carlson**Student: Yeimy Williams**

It is very dynamic. It is organized. He wants his students to learn. Brings new things to class and promotes concern.

Teacher: Krista Carlson and Chris Cox**Student: Shamshad Nizami**

Dear teachers, I hope you are always happy because you are trying so hard to teach us English. I am very happy that you are our teachers and I thank you for spending time with us.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman**Student: Ena Castillo**

She is kind and hardworking and makes me feel that we matter to someone who cares about teaching us.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman**Student: Melvi Constanza**

For me personally my teacher is excellent at teaching. She explains the class very well and is dynamic in teaching. She is also very attentive to people who find it difficult to learn. She is AN EXCELLENT TEACHER!!! English Empowerment Center, congratulations for having one of the best teachers in the world.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman**Student: Mercedes Cortez**

My teacher deserves to be recognized for her dedication to teaching in a dynamic and fun way that we all learn.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Lorena Carolina Cortez

She is an exemplary teacher. She teaches with great dedication and effort dedicated to teaching us every day so that we can understand and comprehend the language. She is dynamic and explains very well.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Ana Echeverria

She is a very patient and dynamic person to teach. She knows how to explain each class and tries to make each student feel like asking questions and expressing themselves. Always try to remember and learn about the subject and memorize each concept in each class. She always teaches us every word so that we understand it well and gives us many examples to memorize the words. It is good to attend the classes because it helps you to understand the words and pronounce them well so that you can improve your pronunciation.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Cinthya Flores

Hello, my name is Cinthya. I would gladly recommend my teacher because she is a person who dedicates a lot to teaching. She has desires for us to learn English, always because we ask her something with a lot of love and respect and she answers them. I would like to be in another class with her.



EEC teacher, Kobi, recognizing learners in her Family Learning Program class at their end of session celebration.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Byron Jose Flores Flores

She has a special approach to each student. She explains in a good way each topic of the classes. She is very dynamic and makes it easy to understand the issues. She knows how to listen to her students. She is very generous. She provides special support to the students who need it the most.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Ronmel Gonzalez

I think she should be recognized for the talent she has a teacher and the ease of understanding and teaching the English language. In the future I would love for her to continue as a teacher.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Razia Hassdi

Kobi Carter is an excellent teacher. She is hard working, enthusiastic, and patient. She wants all of her students to learn a lot and to do well.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Lesly Juarez

She is a good teacher. She makes English easy. She has a very good [teaching] method. She has a very funny way of teaching which makes you want to learn more. She is very respectful.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Maria Lopez

She deserves to be recognized because she explains it very well and is very kind. She does her job very well. She is the best teacher who teaches us with great dedication.

Teacher: Kobi Carter Eidman
Student: Aracely Rodriguez

She is an excellent person who has a lot of patience towards me because I don't know much English and with her patience she makes it easier for me to understand what she is teaching. I feel very happy to be learning English with her. She is a very kind person. God bless her always.

Teacher: Stan Citron
Student: Eman Tomoum

Mr. Stan can manage the session effectively. He explains clearly and to the point.

He has a great spirit that makes the class more engaging.

Teacher: Stan Citron, Corrie Paeglow and Linda Debrewer

Student: Sara Mahgoub

They are amazing and very helpful, they are doing a great job with us. They helped me a lot to speak well and get better.

The most important [thing is] that they are positive teachers and qualified. Also want to thank teachers Melissa and Nickeitha, thank you all.

Teacher: Chris Cox, Krista Carlson and Carrie Wielechowski

Student: Lucy Coronel

They are very professional, the teaching pedagogy is clear and simple, every day they make our English improve and we feel comfortable with the practices.

Teacher: Peter Duffy

Student: Celida Matos

I recommend professor Peter to grant him a recognition for his high level of pedagogy. His dynamic activities make the classes super enjoyable. He has known how to reach the group, effectively transmitting knowledge, being considerate and respectful when understanding the limitations of each particular case and at the same time guiding us until we verify that the objective has been achieved. Thank you for the opportunity to have him as a teacher.

Teacher: James Falcone, Jackie Davey and Jackie Corkins

Student: Rose Nguyen

I love all teachers in my class. They are very important part of our society. They give us knowledge. They help us to shape our life and learning new skills. They are also a source of inspiration and motivation. They are very kind and patient. They spend a lot of time and teach us a lot of things. They are role models for students. They are like our second parents. We should always obey and respect our teachers. Thank you so much.

Teacher: Nan Fife and Kyle Koziol

Student: Alad al Ratta

Ms. Nan and Ms. Kyle are wonderful teachers and very kind. They reach the idea to the students in easy and fun ways. They also do not ignore any questions. Rather, they answer us at the same time. They even ask us what info or new word you learned and we add to our vocabulary. I was happy to meet them. I even feel sad because this semester is over. I have a wonderful class! With amazing teachers! Thank you from all my heart..

Teacher: Laura Hayden

Student: Perdono Karina Vanessa Peret

She is an excellent dynamic teacher with a lot of preparation with games that help you learn easily. She is incredible. Her classes are not boring. She motivates you to come and you learn a lot. I really miss her way of giving and explaining the classes.

Teacher: Kyle Koziol

Student: Israa Saadi Al Taie

My teachers are some of the best. They are cooperative, understanding, and help us with everything inside and outside the classroom. My teachers deserve appreciation and respect. I have love for them.

Teacher: Ana Lavrukhina

Student: Mahboobeh Farokhian

My teacher is very good at teaching, she teaches grammar, pronunciation of words and meanings of words very well. The next subject will not start until all students have learned the subject. She is the best teacher.

Teacher: Ana Lavrukhina

Student: Adriana Sanchez

She is so cute and smart. She is very dynamic and makes us participate in class. She has the class well organized

Teacher: Ana Lavrukhina

Student: Thomas Ren

Teacher Ana is very patient. She answers every student's questions. She explains very clearly English grammar. She is good teacher, I wish [to] take her class in the next semester.

Teacher: Ana Lavrukhina

Student: Merida Cabrera

She has the charisma of teaching, because of her patience and love she treats her students so that we can learn more through the teacher.

Thank you teacher for the gift that god left you.

Teacher: Ana Lavrukhina

Student: Shaista Ahmadi

She [is a] very intelligent teacher and teaches very carefully, repeat's the lesson until students understand fully. She is so responsible.

Teacher: Kathleen McCleary, Jane Michaels and Chris Axarlis

Student: Theara Leang

First of all, I would like to thank all of the teachers who work at the English Empowerment Center. Special thanks to teachers Kathleen, Jane, and Chris for teaching at Level 3. They work so hard to teach us, help explain to students who have questions about pronunciation, how to use sentences, and help correct grammatical rules. Also, they provide good information for supplementary learning through various systems such as YouTube, internet, etc.. Teachers help to cultivate the ability of all learners to be better. Thank you teachers at all levels.

Teacher: Kathy McCleary, Karen Schroth and Janice Linett

Student: Bangjin Cha

She is very passionate about every class.

Teacher: Bill Meara

Student: Akemi Febres Murakami

My teacher is perfect.

Teacher: Bill Meara

Student: Gloria Alvarez de Mendez

1. for his patience in teaching
2. for motivating us to continue learning.
3. for their effort, and time to teach.

Teacher: Jane Michaels

Student: Saavedra Angelica

The teacher Jane is kind when she teaches. She makes learning more fun. She has the best helpers, Devora and Mandy.

Teacher: Jacquece Moore-Law

Student: Kattia Loyola

She is always positive and full of energy. Thank you for everything. She deserves the best.

Teacher: Jacquece Moore-Law

Student: Laili H Fazel

She pays attention to everyone. Checks homework and explains grammar very well. She tries her best.

Teacher: Jacquece Moore-Law, Kay and Tou Xiong

Student: Eda Banegas

They are kind. They have patience, and they are good at explaining to the class.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Zoia Shuliachur

He conducts lessons in an interesting way and is in contact with students.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Ibania Hernandez

The teacher is very good at explaining in the class, he has patience.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Willma Sullanico

He helps us understand, his classes are dynamic, and he strives for us to strive.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Caitlin Naves

The teacher is very good at explaining in the class, he has patience.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Gustavo Holtaven

The teacher is very good, he teaches very well and is very responsible. I would like more classes with him.

Teacher: Troy Morgan

Student: Yared Tesfamicael

First of all he is humble and friendly person. He has made a lot of sacrifices to explain the lessons and to help his students understand. Finally I have deep respect and I'm impressed for him and his colleagues, because they all try their best for us.

Teacher: Troy Morgan, Christina McCloskey and Janice Lloyd

Student: Andino Heyseel

They are very nice with us. They are patient with everyone. I love all the activities; the interactions are good. They give us respect, good answers, good examples when we ask them. I like to come and learn with them.



End of session celebration at Lorton Community Center.

Teacher: Troy Morgan and Janice Lloyd

Student: Le Dinh

I want to talk about Troy and Janice. They are my teachers. They teach English to me. They are very friendly, and they teach English very well. Sometimes, I don't understand, and then they help me. They help me with pronunciation. They are good teachers.

Teacher: Troy Morgan and Janice Lloyd

Student: Holtrever Gustovo

They are very good teachers, dynamic, motivating, and hard working. They give a very good English class. They make studying very pleasant and motivating. I would like to continue studying with them.

Teacher: Troy Morgan and Janice Lloyd

Student: Shegofa Noor

Our teachers deserve recognition because they explain our lessons. They always help us and support us in our lessons. They help us to learn how to write and read. I appreciate the teachers giving their time and teaching us.

Teacher: Troy Morgan and Janice Lloyd

Student: Tesfamieael Yured

Both the teachers are friendly... Since I started class, I improved my ability in English by the support and devotion of Troy and Janice.

Teacher: Elizabeth Nelson and Maura Sleevi

Student: Angela Castro

1. Elizabeth Nelson: I recognize you for training yourself hard to be a teacher [for] online classes, that reflects the great love you gave for us. Thank you.
2. Maura Sleevi: I recognize you for being a loving woman and your great human quality.

Teacher: Ann Niederpruem, Stacey Becker and Ida Draim

Student: Aynur Kazimova

They are attentive, helpful, supportive and very kind. I thank you for everything.

Teacher: Ann Niederpruem, Stacey Becker and Ida Draim

Student: Raejin Park

[The] teachers are very kind. They are good at teaching, and they are passionate.

Teacher: Jackie Park

Student: Denia Cardona

During these three months my teacher Miss Jackie has been the best help in my learning the English language. Her classes are dynamic. She is very professional and with dedication to teach. She has a lot of patience and she is a great teacher. Thank you Miss. Jackie.

Teacher: Jackie Park**Student: Rocio Rosales**

I recommend Ms. Jackie because she has been the best teacher that I ever had. She has been always there for me, helping me in my classwork and in getting better with my English. For this reason, I think she is the one who deserves this recognition.

Teacher: Jackie Park**Student: Myung Ja Ha**

Jackie is very kind teacher for me. When she teaches English in class I like how she shows us several examples so I understand easy.

Teacher: Jackie Park**Student: Meilyn Marroquin**

She is an excellent teacher. She knows how to explain and is attentive to insuring that all her students understand the topic. She is very patient so that we can learn. She gives enough examples so that we can learn the topic.

Teacher: Jackie Park**Student: Jose Resto**

The teachers have worked very hard with us to help us have a better understanding of the English language. They helped us by listening to our pronunciation and grammar and by fixing any errors we make. I appreciate the help of all the teachers and their dedication towards us.

Teacher: Jackie Park**Student: Mi Ryang Chung**

Since starting English class, I have gained more confidence and feeling happy to be able to express my opinions with neighbors and friends. Your detailed and passionate teaching was very helpful. I feel grateful and would be thankful if I could continue to learn from you.

Teacher: Jackie Park and Julie Kehrli**Student: Maeng Kee Park**

I have two honorable teachers. They are Jackie and Julie. I met them first at EEC program. I think they are very kind with us. Jackie gave us a simple dialogue sheet every class. It is very helpful for me. Julie explains in full detail. She is a very good helper. They make my English better.

Teacher: Jackie Park and Julie Kehrli**Student: Hellen Park**

For most courses that I have received, so far this is the best and I'm starting to speak more. Thank you.

Teacher: Jackie Park and Julie Kehrli**Student: Christine Jang**

They always check in with the students in class to see if there is anything they don't know. They always are on time for class. They assign homework without overwhelming them.

Teacher: Karen Schroth**Student: Carmen Yolanda Canales**

I like that it's dynamic, one learns and understands oneself more.

Teacher: Karen Schroth, Laurie Tracy and**Janice Linett****Student: Elizabeth Berryman**

They [are] the best.

Teacher: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**Student: Ibrahim El Sawah**

I thank each one of the teachers for the care and kindness they shared towards me.

Teacher: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**Student: Seongmi Yu**

She has a strong sense of responsibility.

Teacher: Kay and Tou Xiong**Student: Shirin Asadollahi**

In this one year, I learned everything from your good teachers, I was in the center, I was very surprised by the patience and kindness of the teacher, that with special patience and compassion, I had a very good experience with all my classmates and it was pleasant.

Teacher: Kay and Tou Xiong**Student: María del Rosario Montoya**

Ms. Kay and Mr. Tou Xiong are valuable human beings and excellent teachers. With them I feel comfortable learning and if I make mistakes they are ready to help me and motivate me to understand with more examples, meanings, grammar, vocabulary, listening and pronunciation. Also the pedagogy they use is easy to understand and fun, and their teamwork is very well coordinated. They should definitely be recognized. Greetings.

Outstanding Student Recognitions

The English Empowerment Center's adult English language learners come from 90 different countries and speak over 50 different languages. EEC's instructors have the opportunity to celebrate some of these remarkable learners with these Outstanding Student Recognitions.

Student: Alaa Al Ratta

Instructor: Nan Fife

Alaa was a particularly strong student who continued to make progress. Her command of English helped other students build their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. She always showed a positive attitude and had good attendance. Her ambition and commitment will take her far.

Student: Muna Ali

Instructor: Valerie Sutter

Muna is very motivated to improve her English skills. She has advanced quickly from levels 1 and 2 and now is in the Level 3 class. She has several goals including finding employment and getting a driver's license (almost there). She was the featured speaker at this year's "Taste of Literacy" event. She is a significant influence for other students.

Student: Israa Al-Taie

Instructor: Nan Fife

Israa has definitely improved her English during the spring session, especially her speaking. Her attendance was the best in the class. She worked hard both in the classroom and on the homework and optional activities. She also asked great questions, which helped everyone understand better. Even when she had to miss a class, she kept up by following our on-line group so she could do the homework assignment for the next class.

Student: Raissa Askerova

Instructor: Valerie Sutter

Raissa transferred to our class late in the semester, but immediately became an integral member of our student community. She is very enthusiastic about improving her English; she often engages with other students as they help each other learn together. She is good at extending the conversation with new ideas relating to the lessons of the day.



Beginning English level 2 learners participating in class.

Student: Wahida Ayar
Instructor: Macy Rainer

Wahida comes to every class and manages to do great work while taking care of her young children. She helps other students who share her native language and always participates in conversation. Wahida is a great student and making excellent progress because of her dedication to learning English.

Student: Jung Im Choi
Instructor: Valerie Sutter

Jung continues to improve her English day by day. As a senior citizen she is a model for others: it's never too late to learn something new. She often comes early, rarely misses a class and is always very attentive. She is model for other students.

Student: Mi Ryang Chung
Instructor: Jackie Park

It is my pleasure to recommend Mi Ryang Chung for student recognition. She is a dedicated student who always joins class early with a smile. She is always ready to learn, is focused, and participates in class. She is also a very hard-working student, completes her homework, and has perfect attendance. It has been a pleasure to have her in class.

Student: Lucia Contreras
Instructor: Jill Martin and Jim Eichner

Lucia worked very hard and made great progress this semester. Her attendance was very good and she worked to complete homework to make additional progress. Her reading and writing skills were stronger than her speaking skills and she was reluctant to share aloud in the beginning, but became more confident and her speaking ability improved. She deserves recognition.

Student: Yanira de la Cruz Trinidad
Instructor: Macy Rainer

Yanira is always a joy to have in class. She participates often, asks important questions that help other students learn, and has a great sense of humor. She makes the class atmosphere fun and welcoming.

Student: Jovita Echegaray
Instructor: Sheena McConnell

Jovita came to each class with the willingness to learn. She worked super hard. She was always happy to participate in the class. She made great progress.

Student: Laura Espinal
Instructor: Jackie Park

I recommend Laura Espinal for Student Recognition. She is very determined and a hard-working student who always comes to class with a smile. She always participates eagerly and helps other students whenever they need help with their work. In addition, she gets along with everyone in class. It is such a pleasure to have her in our class.

Student: Laili Fazel
Instructor: Mike Boito

Despite having childcare responsibilities, Laili's attendance was almost perfect, and she was an active and enthusiastic participant in class. She helped explain things to less advanced students who shared her native language in our beginning-level class. Laili's diligent effort resulted in her improvement in reading and speaking English by the end of the Spring session.

Student: Muyesser Ferik
Instructor: Valerie Sutter

Muyesser is committed to improving her English. She has developed very good writing skills. She engages with other students and has expanded her ability to share contributes to conversations. Always attentive, Muyesser clearly works hard to reach her goals.



*EEC learner, Muna, speaking at the 6th annual
A Taste of Literacy fundraising luncheon.*

Student: Maria Flores**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Maria is very determined to improve her English skills. She has made amazing progress this term, especially in speaking. Maria asks important questions when she doesn't understand something. This is helpful to other students as well. She is an excellent co-worker, collaborating with other students during our lessons. Maria has become a noticeably more confident student.

Student: Claudia Franco**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

We were delighted to have Claudia return to our class for the Spring semester! As a former pharmacist in Bolivia, she works hard and long hours in the US in the restaurant business, but still came to class whenever she could. She improves her English skills class by class, customer by customer. Her goal of becoming a medical assistant in this country would truly benefit many future patients!

Student: Veronica Galicia**Instructor: Lina Kim**

Veronica is an outstanding student because she is always very eager to learn. She was never late and only had to miss one class out of the entire course. On the day she missed class, she had asked a classmate to take pictures of the lesson on the board to make sure she was caught up. Veronica is one of the most dedicated students I have ever had the fortune to teach. Her cheerful spirit and positive attitude also add a great deal to our class. Academically, she has made very good progress. Her pronunciation has improved significantly especially with the letters "v" and "b". She worked very hard to pronounce them correctly and she achieved her goal by the end of the course. I am so proud of her. Veronica is such a joy to have in class.

Student: Natsinet Gebremedhin**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Natsinet works very hard to improve her English skills. In class she is very good at asking important questions and asking for clarification. She wants to learn English in order to help her children succeed as well. She works well with other students as a team member.

Student: Susann Gonzalez**Instructor: Sheena McConnell**

Susann always arrived to class smiling. She participated fully. She also was so helpful to the other students. She often translated for me. Many of the students went to Susann for additional help with an exercise. She provided this with a smile. She was a pleasure to have in the class.

Student: Sara Hannati**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Sara has made amazing progress this year. When she started class she was rather quiet but very determined to improve her English. She was able to find a part-time job; despite a busy work schedule, she comes to class whenever she can. A highlight: near the end of the Spring semester, in perfect English Sara shared her news with the class about being offered a full time job. This is an excellent example of how good English skills can enhance job prospects.

Student: Sofia Hassen**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Sofia is an enthusiastic learner, always smiling and working every minute to enhance her English abilities. She is a very positive influence for other students in the class. Sofia is very engaging, often conversing with other students and exchanging ideas.

Student: Cindy Henriquez**Instructor: Jill Martin and Jim Eichner**

Cindy was very hard-working and focused in class. She had excellent attendance. She was willing to help others in class because she was very fast at completing tasks. Cindy has great determination to accurately speak and to understand complex and advanced English language issues.

Student: Claudio Hurtado**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Claudio has consistently attended class during this Spring semester. He is always prepared and works hard to do his best. He has excelled in class and made tremendous progress, despite only having been in the US since December of 2023. He has a keen sense of humor that was enjoyed by all and could always be counted on to create a lot of laughter and joy.

Student: Ibtissam Jefjef**Instructor: Stacey Becker and Ida Draim**

Class after class, Ibtissam, whom we know as Sam, pours her heart and soul into improving her English skills. She listens intently, asks insightful questions and volunteers to speak frequently. Sam has developed an impressive English vocabulary and ability to express herself both orally and in writing. She wrote two heartfelt submissions for the writing contest about her path to the US and the rewards of learning English. It has been a pleasure to have Sam as a member of our class.

Student: Qinghua Jiang**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Qinghua is always very polite and cheerful as she works to enhance her English abilities. She works well with a partner in class and strives to learn more, day by day. Always attentive, she has increased her confidence in expressing herself by speaking and writing.

Student: Elaine Jing**Instructor: Macy Rainer**

Elaine comes prepared to every class and stays engaged with each activity. She tells great stories about her hobbies and travels during conversational practice. Elaine is a wonderful student!

Student: Rasha Kakar**Instructor: Stacey Becker and Ida Draim**

Rasha is a very dedicated and hard-working English student, who has made superb progress in improving her English skills. She is one of the first students to understand a new grammar rule and she frequently volunteers to provide answers when we are going over exercises that are intangible in nature. Her attendance record is excellent, and she is typically early for class. Rasha has demonstrated her excellent writing skills in her submission to the writing contest, a project she completed and sent to us at 2am in the morning! We have really enjoyed having Rasha in our class.

Student: Mohammad Ibrahim Kashify**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Kashify (as we often call him) brings exuberance and wit to every class! He loves to talk about his life experiences with the class, and his ease at speaking has greatly improved! He particularly takes pleasure when he gets the more challenging tasks correct! It is easy to see that he loves both people and learning; this will help continue to improve his English skills!

Student: Aynur Kazimova**Instructor: Stacey Becker and Ida Draim**

Throughout the past two semesters, Aynur has impressed us with her English language skills and the degree to which she works to improve them. When a lesson is difficult, we can count on Aynur to explain to the class how to correctly approach the material. She has a superb memory for grammar rules and the ability to tie everything together correctly. In addition, through her efforts, Aynur has developed a strong vocabulary and great pronunciation skills. We are fortunate to have a student with Aynur's abilities in our class.

Student: Maria Adriana Lopez**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Adriana (as we usually call her) sets a great example about how to keep trying even through tough exercises. She works particularly hard on pronunciation, and often repeats words over several times until she gets the sounds correct! She was always eager to try each new activity; we would laugh when she said, "How about me?" if we accidentally skipped her!

Student: Olena Mass**Instructor: Macy Rainer**

Olena is an excellent writer. This semester she has given us lovely descriptions of the woods in her neighborhood and her home garden. Olena also surprised the class by showing us her beautiful homemade dolls! She is very dedicated to English class and has made lots of progress this semester.



A peek into the Resume Workshop at EEC's Career and Opportunities Fair 2024.

Student: Isabel Mata**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

No one works harder at learning English than Isabel! She spent the Spring taking two English Empowerment classes, attending class four nights each week! In addition to her heavy class load, she has a fulltime job as a Kindergarten Assistant for Fairfax County Public Schools. She attended class consistently, usually with her homework done and always with a smile on her face. Her work ethic is truly inspirational!

Student: Julia Matute Espinoza**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Julia is the “bright light” in our class. Always smiling, chatting with other students and trying to help others. She is clearly a “team player” And Julia is an example of how if we all work together we can improve our English language skills.

Student: Ho Ngoc Thau Vy**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Vy has moved from being rather quiet in class to an ability now to express herself clearly; giving answers to questions and sharing ideas, stories and more. A few weeks ago she successfully applied for and received her driver’s license. She has made impressive progress in advancing her English skills.

Student: Minh Anh Nguyen**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Perfect class attendance is certainly one reason Minh has made progress learning English. Step by step Minh has become more confident in speaking in class and working with other students. She is a good example of how persistence pays off.

Student: Shaima Obaid**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Shaima has worked very hard at mastering English. She moved to the US from Yemen a year ago and has made tremendous progress. She attends class regularly and is highly motivated and always prepared. One of her greatest strengths in class was her willingness to ask questions or ask for clarification, which benefited all our students.

Student: Jorge Ortega**Instructor: Jill Martin and Jim Eichner**

Jorge had excellent attendance and worked hard. His sense of humor and outgoing personality helped put other students at ease and made class enjoyable for everyone. We are so glad that Jorge was in our class this semester.

Student: Elvin Rodriguez**Instructor: Jackie Park**

I recommend Elvin Rodriguez for Student Recognition. He is such a pleasure to have in class. He gets along with everybody, participates regularly, helps other students, and does his homework. He always comes to class with a positive attitude and makes us laugh in class. We are so lucky to have him in our class.

Student: Nelofar Saddat**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Nelofar is a very kind and hardworking student. She has been our student since September of 2023. She shared her experiences from her fulltime job and joined us in English class whenever she could. Although she was putting in very long days at work, she would still show up with a smile on her face and a commitment to do her best.

Student: Juan Santizo**Instructor: Adrienne Grossman**

I was fortunate to have Juan in my class for both the fall and spring semesters. He was a leader in the class in every way. He helped others, asked pertinent questions, worked hard, and had excellent attendance. In addition, he was very kind to others, always looking for a way he could be of service. He was not only a wonderful student, but an exemplary human being as well.

Student: Fahima Satar**Instructor: Stacey Becker and Ida Draim**

For the past two semesters, Fahima has been one of the most dedicated students in our class! She shows up early for class with the biggest smile, always does the homework assignment, and gives her full attention to each lesson. When we covered a session on Units of Measure, she ran to her kitchen to show the class her measuring cups. She is always so enthusiastic. Due to her hard work, it is evident that her English skills have significantly improved. Often, Fahima is one of the first students to read her homework or to offer her thoughts during free conversation. It gives the teachers and students a warm feeling to see Fahima’s smiling face throughout class.

Student: Ibrahim Sawah**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Ibrahim has demonstrated tremendous growth in English speaking and listening over the past year. Although generally quiet and reflective, his consistent hard work and preparation have enabled him to become a strong, confident participant in class activities, especially with a little bit of encouragement (especially from his wife, whom we love to see from time to time!)

Student: Ziaullhaq Seddiqi**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

This amazing young man always brings a smile and a positive, good-natured spirit to our class despite having endured many difficult experiences on his path to get here. Always among the first to try something new or challenging, he often adds humor to classroom activities. He has gained much confidence in his speaking and his reading. We loved seeing his precious young son!

Student: Farida Shuaibi**Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa**

Farida brings a wealth of talents and experiences to every class, from being a high school teacher for girls in Afghanistan to an accomplished clothing designer and seamstress. She made huge strides in speaking, writing, and understanding English with us, and was always ready to support others in the class. She will continue to make a difference in the lives of those around her!

Student: Ana Ester Tobar**Instructor: Lina Kim**

Ana never missed a class even though she leads a very busy life. She is not only a dedicated student but also a generous friend to her classmates and a pillar of strength to her three children. The stories Ana shared with us helped build rapport amongst our group and brought everyone closer together. Her English improved greatly throughout the course and a lot of it was due to the fact that she took the time to assist other classmates who may have been struggling. She often reminds everyone why we should learn English and how knowing English will benefit our lives. Ana really is such a joy to have in class with her outstanding effort and performance.

Student: Juana Vargas**Instructor: Shaqer Rahman Rashid**

Juana was a very, very fast learner. As well, I know and observed her doing a lot of independent study. She did very, very well, and honestly if she was taught at her own pace, she would be at level three just after one semester. Together with this, she had a kind attitude and was a cooperative student in class. Thank you.

Student: Cinthia Veliz Quispe**Instructor: Macy Rainer**

Cinthia is always one of the first to participate and practice speaking. She always answers the conversation questions with thoughtful reflections and interesting stories from her life. Sometimes when I am having a hard time explaining a concept, Cinthia gives a different explanation in her own words and it's always very helpful for the other students. We are all lucky to have Cinthia in our class!

Student: Yang Wang**Instructor: Valerie Sutter**

Yang is very enthusiastic about improving her English. She brings that energy to the class, inspiring others to engage in conversation, etc. She is an accomplished speaker of English now.

Student: Nazia Zahed**Instructor: Lina Kim**

Nazia is an outstanding student because of her effort and perseverance. She struggled quite a bit in the beginning of the course since Family Learning Program is a multi-level ESOL course and she is a beginner-level student. We also faced unique challenges because our course was a virtual one. But instead of giving up, Nazia and her husband reached out to me for a solution and then decided to push on until the end of the course. As a result, her English skills, especially speaking and listening, have improved significantly. She can now form full sentences and answer basic personal questions such as her and her family members' names, ages and birthdays, the weather, date and time, her and her children's favorite dishes, etc. Nazia has great potential and has made very good progress. I am very proud of her and very happy to have her in my class.



EEC learners practicing reading with a volunteer during Study Hall.

Student: Aracely Zambrano Gonzalez

Instructor: James Falcone

Aracely was an outstanding student, one of the best I have ever had as an EEC teacher. She had near-100% attendance, only missing once or twice when a child was sick. She came to class on time. She religiously did the homework. She approached learning with passion and made marked improvement over the semester. She helped other students regularly. When the projector stopped working she even tried to fix it. She is also a terrific person and was a pleasure to have in the class. She was an outstanding student in every way.

Student: Eman Zazai

Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa

Eman dealt with several stressful situations in the Spring of 2024 with grace and fortitude. As chief caretaker for her children and ailing relatives, she takes one day at a time with determination and doesn't show discouragement. She puts her growing facility with speaking and understanding English to good use in her necessary frequent dealings with doctors, hospitals, and realtors.

Student: James Zhao

Instructor: Maura Sleevi and Robin DeRosa

James has made tremendous progress in class this year! Being from China, pronunciation was especially very challenging. James worked very hard on this, and his efforts paid off! He also has a good grasp of many of the grammar concepts of English. Often, James would still be working when class began, but that wouldn't stop him from listening in until he was able to join and participate.

Student: Yin Zuokui

Instructor: Valerie Sutter

Yin very rarely misses a class. He is dedicated to writing and speaking English correctly. He frequently seeks to correct any mistakes by asking teachers and aides to point out any mistakes in his writing. He has made notable progress in his English speaking skills.

The Patricia M. Donnelly Merit Scholarship



Named in honor of the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia's (now English Empowerment Center) retired Executive Director who led the organization from 2002 to 2017, the Patricia M. Donnelly Merit Scholarship is awarded to an outstanding beginning-level English Empowerment Center learner whose dedication to literacy inspires the EEC community.

This scholarship, which covers tuition for up to six semesters of classes, is given to students who exemplify commitment, perseverance, achievement, and classroom leadership.

Carminia moved to the United States a year and a half ago and has shown admirable dedication to her English language studies and personal growth. She grew up speaking Quechua in Bolivia and is eager to continue learning English to open doors to new opportunities.

With a focus on personal and community growth, Carminia aims to master English. She recognizes that proficiency in English is crucial for effective communication and accessing opportunities in the United States. Carminia hopes that as she continues to improve her English skills, she will be able to help more people in need.

Carminia shares that her favorite part of EEC English classes is interacting with her classmates, a group of adults from diverse cultures and backgrounds, all gathered with the shared goal of learning. She is appreciative of the opportunity to meet her wonderful classmates who have helped her along her English language journey. Her love for collaborating with her classmates has been recognized by her teacher, David Schmitt, who says, "She is always ready to help her classmates, creating a positive and collaborative vibe that enhances everyone's learning experience."

Her teacher, David, continued to enthusiastically recommend Carminia for the scholarship by sharing more insight into Carminia's journey with EEC. "What's really impressive about Carminia is personal growth. She seems a shy person by nature; however, she has actively stepped out of her comfort zone during class. She has proven to be a leading participant in class discussions and a thoughtful question asker. It's been a joy to see her confidence bloom, she's thriving in a supportive EEC environment...Carminia is the sort of student every teacher hopes to have-hardworking, supportive, and always looking to grow. I have no doubt she'll make the most of the scholarship opportunity and continue to shine."

Carminia Zurita 2024 Recipient



The Mid Allen Ries Award



Jackie Corkins
2024 Recipient

The Mid Allen Ries Award is named in honor of EEC's Founder and first President. Mildred "Mid" Allen founded the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (now the English Empowerment Center) in 1962 when she learned that an estimated 5,000 adults in Alexandria were illiterate. In 2015, we established an award in her honor for her distinguished leadership. The Mid Allen Ries Award is given to a member of the EEC community whose leadership through scholarship has immeasurably advanced the organization. This award is presented only in a year when a notable individual has executed exceptional work on behalf of EEC and may represent a body of work conducted over multiple years. This year, we have in our midst such an individual, someone whose contributions have transpired over more than a decade – Jackie Corkins!

Joining EEC initially as an AmeriCorps member, Jackie became the lead teacher for the Herndon Beginning English class site and filled this role for ten years, alongside volunteering in numerous other roles. Under her leadership, the Herndon class site has thrived, with volunteers, learners, and the site partner extolling her expertise and caring support. In her time with EEC thus far, she has directly supported more than 1,600 learners!

As a teacher, Jackie establishes a learner-friendly environment that incorporates real-life situations, day-to-day digital skills, and personal experiences to help adult learners participate more fully and confidently in the workplace and the community. Learners in her Integrated Education and Training (IET) classes have an astonishing 94.83% pass rate on the Guest Service Gold® occupational exam, with 55 learners having attained the Certified Guest Service Professional industry-recognized credential.

Jackie has had a transformative effect, and her impact extends beyond Herndon. She helped develop the curriculum framework for Destination Workforce®, EEC's program that provides foundational language lessons, soft skills, and career advancement training to learners. She also co-developed and piloted EEC's first-ever IET course, which combines English language learning and job training to prepare learners for an industry-recognized customer service credential. This IET curriculum is being adopted by adult ESOL programs across Virginia!

Externally, Jackie has presented at conferences, participated in state initiatives, and written for Virginia's adult education publication. She contributed to the Virginia rollout of the Teaching the Skills That Matter initiative, piloting financial literacy materials and introducing the initiative to teachers and program administrators statewide.

For her scholarly contributions, curriculum development, volunteer management, dedication, and impact on adult learners, EEC is proud to present Jackie Corkins with the Mid Allen Ries Award.

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Since 1962, EEC has worked to teach adults the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English so they can access employment and educational opportunities and more fully and equitably participate in the community. Your support helps EEC to continue these efforts. Help us make a difference and donate today! EIN: 23-7098748.



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If you are passionate about adult education and helping immigrants settle into life in this region, consider joining our team of over 500 volunteers. You can make a difference in an individual's life, a family's opportunities, and a community's future. Volunteers serve in a range of roles, including teacher, class aide, supplemental tutor, translator, interpreter, student advisor, librarian, office and program support personnel, board member, and community ambassador.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with the English Empowerment Center, please fill out and submit the form from the QR code. Once we receive your volunteer interest form, we will email you with next steps. If you have any questions along the way, please contact us at volunteers@englishempowermentcenter.org.

Find out more at EnglishEmpowermentCenter.org/volunteer/



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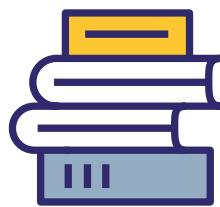
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-Cynthia, English Empowerment Center Learner



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