

VOLUNTEER ENGLISH PROGRAM

in chester county

2016-2017 Annual Highlights

Trends that Impacted the Year

VEP continues to scale its services to meet increased demand for one-to-one English language tutoring. During the past year, the following external factors contributed to the ongoing need for the personalized VEP model of adult English language instruction.

1. Immigration reforms and related uncertainty drove many existing immigrant community members to seek English language instruction to improve their personal and financial security.
2. Local and regional unemployment rates at or near the 4.4% mark created opportunities for non-native workers to fulfill unskilled as well as professional labor positions throughout Chester County.
3. The strong economic vitality of the Chester County region increased the demand for English proficient individuals to support all sectors of growth, including hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, and health care.
4. The challenging political climate has created an unanticipated ground swell of support from community volunteers wanting to serve and give back to their local and workplace communities. Their interest and availability enabled VEP to serve more adult learners than anticipated.
5. VEP's successful 1:1 community-based model allows for the organizational flexibility to adapt to changing community trends and needs. VEP mobilizes core student and tutor services to support growing immigrant communities where and when needed in all areas of the county.

The People Behind the Success

Q: Who are VEP's adult learners?

A: Women (80%) and men who speak 37 different languages and are natives of over 50 countries. Many are multi-lingual, with English as a new language. Over 65% are employed, others are seeking the skills to become financially and personally self-sufficient. Learners live and/or work in Chester County.

Q: How long does it take to become a VEP student?

A: Students are matched as soon as a volunteer tutor is identified or trained. The waiting list averages over 90 persons with an additional 70 prospective individuals waiting for an initial interview. The average wait time is close to nine months.

Q: Who are the volunteers?

A: Tutors range in age from 21 to 80+. They are women and men who seek a fulfilling volunteer experience. Many are working full-time, others add VEP to their list of other community service engagements, providing over 100 hours each year to a student.

Q: Who comprises the staff and board?

A: 4 part-time program staff and 1 full-time executive director are supported by an average of 14 volunteer board members. This team of individuals represents the fields of social work, education, business, law, finance and technology.

Q: Who are our community partners?

A: Close to 100 area businesses, houses of worship, libraries, and funders offer free private tutoring space on a year-round basis.

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610-918-8222



"...at what point did I learn English and stop translating in my mind from Spanish to English and vice versa? I don't know the answer, but I deeply thank God and VEP for the opportunity of meeting my tutor, Cynthia and learning this language. It gave me the opportunity to succeed and help my daughters as well." Silvia, Headstart Family Services staff at CCIU.

Results:

- 314 adult students
- Proficiency levels: Low beginning to Adult Secondary
- 10 new citizens
- 294 tutors
- 120 tutor student matches
- 93 new tutors trained in 6 community locations
- 5 community-based conversation groups met weekly
- 11,383 hours by 341 volunteers
- \$272,179 in volunteer value
- Cost to the student: Free
- Annual Cost of Operations: \$363,000
- 100% philanthropically supported



In Romania, I studied electrical and mechanical engineering, and I worked in Human Resources at a coal mining company for 25 years. My husband was a coal mining engineer. He went into the mines twice a week, and also worked in emergency mining, going into the mines after explosions or fires. After 20 years as an engineer, he had the opportunity to retire early with a pension. Soon after we both retired, we began a new chapter in our lives. My husband and son wanted to live in America for opportunity. In 2013, we came together to the United States on a

lottery visa.

It was not easy for my family and me to begin a new life in another country, especially because we didn't speak English. In school, I studied French and German, so while I know three languages, I only knew about ten words in English when we arrived in the United States. Soon after we arrived, we applied for an English program in Exton at the library, but we were not lucky. They didn't choose us and weren't able to provide us a tutor to learn English. Two years later, in 2015, we found the VEP of Chester County and here we were lucky, because in the shortest time we had a tutor. His name is Dr. Mark DeWitte.

Now, my family and I study twice a week at the Downingtown Library with our tutor. It is a small amount of time, but Mark is a very good tutor. Usually, the VEP does not tutor families together, but ours was a special case because of our work schedule. Mark explains and answers all of our questions and he has a lot of patience with us.



I'm Edilson, I'm from Minas Gerais, Brasil. I came here in 2002, and my family came 2 years later. We are very happy here, this country changed our lives, my son and my daughter love it here too. They came here when they were 3 and 6.5 years old. Now they are teenagers, they do not remember Brazil anymore.

Me and my wife like it much here too. One and a half years ago we started in V.E.P and this program helps us a lot in our jobs and our general lives. My teacher, John (seen left), is a nice person. We talk about life, my country, my farm, food, and many

other stories. When I say something wrong, at the same time he tells me how I have to speak. Now, I recommend friends for V.E.P. and they are very happy too. Usually when they have meetings with Donna, I go with them to translate because now my English is better. I can help a little bit. I learned many words after starting this program.

