

Trends that Impacted the Year

VEP celebrates its 33rd year of continuous service to Chester County and the region. New English language speakers increasing seek safe, confidential language and cultural instruction. VEP's community of volunteer tutors, business partners and individual supporters made it possible for over 300 adult learners to achieve their personal and professional goals while balancing life, work, and family.

The following factors contributed to the ongoing need for the personalized VEP model of adult English language instruction.

1. Over 8,000 people who live in Chester County describe themselves as "not speaking English well" according to available U.S. Census information. 13.2% speak a language other than English at home.
2. Local and regional unemployment rates below 3% created opportunities for non-native workers to fill unskilled as well as professional labor positions throughout Chester County. Adults rely on the flexibility of private language tutoring to ensure their financial security while also contributing to their communities.
3. The strong economic vitality of the Chester County region continues to demand that workers are English proficient individuals supporting all sectors of growth, including hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, and health care.
4. Community volunteers desire fulfilling opportunities to serve and give back to their local and workplace communities. VEP attracts people from college age to retirees, and from all walks of life. Over 90% have post-secondary degrees, another 30% have professional degrees. All have the passion and commitment for making their neighborhoods safe, thriving places to call home.
5. VEP's 1:1, inclusive, 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: 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.



"I knew if I wanted to be successful in this country I needed to learn better English, but also keep knowledge of our native (Belarus) language so we could still talk with family and friends back home. An obstacle to that is that our children want to speak English- NO, they want to speak American. At school and with friends in the neighborhood everybody is speaking American. So, we must keep working to ensure they learn English but not forget their root language."

Alex Ihnatsiuk, VEP adult learner

Operational Results:

- 325 adult students
- 12,093 hours of instruction reported by tutors
- Proficiency levels: Low beginning to Adult Secondary
- 75% of students reported functional gains after 70 hours of learning
- 269 tutors
- 92 new tutors trained in 6 community locations
- 5 community-based conversation groups met weekly
- \$291,925 in volunteer value
- Cost to the student: Free
- Annual Cost of Operations: \$300,000



Naturalization ceremonies are auspicious occasions for VEP students, their families and tutors. In 2018, three members of the same family pursued US Citizenship. Pictured to the left are Mariana Ionescu (2nd from left) with son, Alex and husband, Mircea. VEP tutor, Sandy Schaal and Dr. Mark DeWitte (not shown) celebrate their accomplishments.

DO YOU EVER ASK—WHAT WILL MOTIVATE SOMEONE TO LEAVE THEIR HOME COUNTRY...and go to a place that is unfamiliar to them?

I know that some people are still in other countries dreaming about this place, and I am pretty sure they will have perspective that will open the golden doors here. I strongly believe that here are the best opportunities ever, and you can change your life. Here, it is a place that is about chance, where in other places maybe chance doesn't exist at all. Here we have diversity, freedom, opportunities, that need courage to get in and to enjoy.



I have an accent which might sound heavy to your ears, and I am sorry because all accents are wonderful to me. We are all together on a big journey with ups and downs but we should all pray for this most beautiful land, work hard, believe hard, and do everything with love. *Premisa Kerthi*



Carol Rubinger, center, 2017-18 Tutor of the Year, celebrates with her family and VEP student at the annual VEP Global Gathering.

Right panel, top to bottom: Dr. Bill Lalicker, Board Emeritus, inspiring new tutors; Shirley Warren, 2018 Betsy Hawkes Award Recipient with husband, Everett (left) and Bob Hawkes; Mary Lou Sterge, VEP Tutor sharing an ELL technique with peers; Marsha Yankelev and student, Nisha Nube conversing with friends at the 2018 VEP: Building the Chester County Community fundraising event.

