

IN OTHER WORDS

The official newsletter of the Volunteer English Program



"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

— MAYA ANGELOU

NEWS AND FEATURES

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

FIKRETA REDZEPAGIC DUZIC REFLECTS ON HER U.S. CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY EARLIER THIS SUMMER.

I had so many mixed feelings today. Working for the Federal Government in my country Bosnia and Herzegovina, I never thought that I would leave it or become a citizen from any other country, especially not a citizen of the country which a large number of people want to be a part of. Sitting on the chair and waiting for the ceremony to start (and reading some of the materials in English!), I also thought of VEP. My tutors Richard (who spent so much time with me teaching me English and giving me always more time than I should have on my classes with him), Tom (whom “I heard” correcting my W, V, TH sounds in a best way ever) and Martin (who during the Pandemic spent his time correcting my essays even though he had his other student). Such great people within the VEP organization and great people on my American journey.

As you could expect, no one could attend the ceremony. But all of you were there with me in front of all the big American flags while I also held one small flag in my left hand, getting ready to stand up, raising my right hand and starting a new chapter in my life. Thanks for giving me a chance to be your student and thanks to my extraordinary tutors who will be a part of many of my spoken or written words.

“ALL OF YOU WERE THERE
WITH ME WHILE I HELD
ONE SMALL FLAG
IN MY LEFT HAND
STARTING A NEW CHAPTER
IN MY LIFE.”

TUTOR UPDATE

LANE LIEBMAN

“My student is doing so much better in pronouncing all the words in a sentence. I thought, at first, it was that I am becoming used to her speaking English. But, it is really her understanding and pronouncing the words in a clear vocal manner. I felt very good when her daughters told her that she is pronouncing words in English to them ‘so-o- much better’ and to tell me, the tutor, that I am ‘doing a great job.’ A kind word is all I need! That’s the pay-off!”

RESOURCES

BLENDING TOOLBOX

VEP has recently updated the [Tutor Toolbox](#) inside our Tutor Training Manual to include virtual ESL activities, techniques and tutoring suggestions. The toolbox is color-coded and follows the order of presentation in the manual. Yellow indicates items that can be done both virtually and in person; white indicates what’s best done in person; teal indicates virtual communication modes that are being used by tutors and students.

VOTING INFORMATION

VEP’s student-centered, goals-focused approach sometimes leads to helping students navigate the naturalization process and eventually voting rights. With this in mind, and coupled with safety concerns due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, VEP would like to highlight recent changes by the Chester County Board of Elections to make it easier to drop off mail-in ballots, such as secure drop-boxes at local libraries to return mail-in ballots. Translatable information on voting, visit VEP’s [news](#) page.



FUNDER NEWS

VEP is fully funded through philanthropy. We are grateful for all of the supporters who believe in our mission. VEP was recently awarded grants from three regional funders who all recognize the importance of offering adult immigrants the opportunity to improve their English language skills.

The **Brandywine Health Foundation**, whose mission is “to advance a more equitable, resilient, and healthy Greater Coatesville community,” recently approved a grant for VEP from their healthcare and Economic Recovery Fund to support our work with non-native speakers in their community. VEP supports over 40 adults with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the greater Coatesville area and this grant will allow us to continue this work throughout the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions and resulting recession.

The **Phoenixville Community Health Foundation (PCHF)**, whose mission is “to improve the health and quality of life for people in the greater Phoenixville region [...]” recently approved a grant to enhance VEP’s outreach capacity. With these funds, VEP will continue helping the growing immigrant community overcome social, economic, and environmental barriers to living healthy and productive lives. Funding will directly support 60 individuals in the PCHF service area, bringing marginalized members within our neighborhoods forward into a safe and trusting environment for learning.

The **United Way of Chester County (UWCC)**, whose mission is to “unite people and mobilize resources to build better lives and stronger communities,” recently awarded VEP general operating funds to continue supporting VEP students wherever they live or work in the County. The UWCC’s grant allows VEP the flexibility to use the funds where it is most needed to adapt to new learning approaches, blended and virtual within and beyond pandemic-related restrictions.



UPCOMING DATES

NOVEMBER'S GLOBAL GATHERING GOES VIRTUAL

This year’s Global Gathering (November 15), typically a day spent celebrating the VEP community while enjoying an international buffet of homemade dishes, will be held virtually this year. More details on this event and a link to participate will be forthcoming.

Since we are unable to gather in person due to the pandemic, we are asking for recipe submissions from any student’s or tutor’s land of origin: starter, entree, side dish or dessert. Tutors may work with their students to help document and submit recipes. Recipes will be compiled into an online VEP International Cookbook and posted on our website, to commemorate the unique circumstances of our 2020 Global Gathering. To submit a recipe, complete this [form](#).

*Anyone who would like to submit a recipe photo or video of themselves making the dish, please contact volunteer.english@volunteerenglish.org.

STUDENT VOICES

Below is a story written by a VEP student about her experience as an immigrant. To submit a student-written story, essay or poem for future editions of the newsletter, email volunteer.english@volunteerenglish.org.



"ALWAYS, I HAVE
DREAMED
TO GO TO USA
TO LEARN ENGLISH.
I THOUGHT,
IT'S MY BRIDGE
TO MAKE REAL
MY DREAM."

BEFORE AND AFTER HURRICANE MARIA by Yameilha G.

Always when a government announces the possibility that a hurricane would come, [we] will go to my mother's house. For us the meaning of a hurricane was a party or a get together. It was the day to play, to laugh, to eat, to talk, and to go to sleep late. It's a time to update each other.

In 2017 a different time came. All of us were incredulous about if [Hurricane Maria] would hit Puerto Rico. Of course, we had prepared with water and meat cans and necessities. When all of them were sleeping, I couldn't sleep. I began to walk inside the house trying to see through the windows what was happening, but it started at night, and it was so dark and raining that I couldn't see anything out. The scare was coming to me. I closed my eyes to try to sleep, but I heard the heavy wind blowing, roaring, and throwing things in a circuitous way. I was in my mother's bedroom. I opened my eyes and I imagined my mother and the window exploding and the glass falling over her. I ran to my husband and I said, "I have never see this before and I feel we are in danger. We need to stay together in this bedroom and with food." I almost couldn't talk. I was trembling.

Finally, we were together waiting for the hurricane to end. Few hours later, we were anxious about what had happened. We went out, and we saw how destroyed our neighborhood was. We didn't have electricity, water, and communication. All people were desperate. At night, we were completely in darkness. You needed to stay inside your home because the governor declared a curfew. We were lucky because my mother's house had an old wire phone line and old analog phone, and we connected both, they were working. I could call my brother in (Chester County) PA. His first words were, "Puerto Rico is as if a bomb will fall in a center on it and exploded." I felt short of breath as if someone will press my neck and I said, "Please buy us 3 tickets to fly to you." I just was thinking of my mother's health and my son's education. Always, I have dreamed to go to U.S.A. to learn English. I thought it's my bridge to make real my dream.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

CENSUS DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 30

Census participation strengthens communities by determining how citizens are represented in Congress and how money is allocated for senior centers, hospitals, libraries, roads. It also sets funding for food stamps, Head Start, school lunch programs, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. It’s completely confidential and open to everyone regardless of immigration status. Your answers can’t be shared with anyone, including other government agencies.

The new deadline to complete the Census is September 30. Students are encouraged to work with their tutors to access information and navigate the questionnaire at 2020census.gov. More information is available on VEP’s [news](#) page.

WE DON'T ALL HAVE
THE PRIVILEGE
OF VOTING,
BUT WE CAN ALL BE
COUNTED IN THIS
YEAR'S CENSUS.

Have You Completed Your Census?
September 30th Deadline is Fast Approaching!
76% of Chester County households have responded to the Census, let's get to 100%

Better Representation | Better Funding | Better Data

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church, a VEP stewardship funding partner, is hosting a Red Cross blood drive on Wednesday, October 28, 2020 from 2:00pm-7:00pm. Volunteer donors can help fulfill the constant need for blood and help patients in the community. Visit [Red Cross](#) to make an appointment.

St. Francis-in-the-Fields
Episcopal Church

American Red Cross | Blood Services

BOSCOV'S FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

Shop in store or online at [Boscov's](#) from 9 am to 9 pm on October 14th and 15th and mention Volunteer English Program at checkout; you'll save 20% off most items and Boscov's will donate 5% of your total purchase back to VEP.

Boscov's *really* FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS
better than ever!

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A text version of this newsletter is available for translation in 50 languages by visiting the VEP [website](#).

