

IN OTHER WORDS

The official newsletter of the Volunteer English Program



"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

— LEO BUSCAGLIA

CONTENTS

- Student VOICES
- Resources
- Tutor Update
- Corporate Giving
- Global Gathering
- Funder News
- Community Partnerships
- Announcements
- Upcoming Dates



STUDENT VOICES

These stories written by VEP students provide a wonderful opportunity to share their personal experiences and to demonstrate their creative and English language writing skills. We hope that they inspire others to contribute.

ROCK WALL CLIMBING BY HELEN P.

My family and I visited the climbing center. It is situated in Bridgeport, near King of Prussia. This building has a unique open floor plan with extensive community space, fitness and weight training areas, a yoga room, gym, and dedicated climbing with specific training zones. You can rent all the gear you need including shoes, harnesses, chalk bag, ropes, and belay devices.

First of all, we had an introductory class during which we learn how to tie ourselves in to climb and handle the ropes. After, we went to the training wall and our instructor showed us some techniques and how to use auto belays. We spent about 2 hours climbing on the walls. We tried different paths with different complexity. My daughter was so happy! We like climbing!



Helen, halfway through her climb

CANOEING WITH MY FAMILY BY FATIMA O.

My worst day of the week was Sunday.

I went canoeing with my family. We were very excited about the experience. When we started rowing everything was fine, three minutes later the canoe tipped over and we all fell into the water. The water was very cold.

Two boys came to help us and put the canoe upright. We continued rowing but the water was rapid and the canoe tipped over again. After we recovered the canoe we sat on a rock for a few minutes because we were frustrated with this experience.

After that we continued rowing again. Fifteen minutes later, we hit a tree trunk, the canoe tipped over once again but this time the canoe sank under the tree trunk. Two children sank with the canoe and pass under the tree trunk. [Everyone left unharmed].

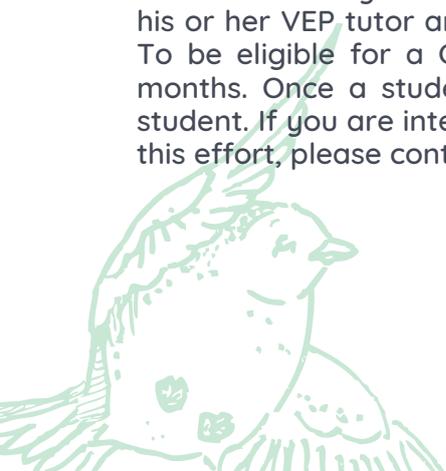
We all remained until help came. A guy came and took us to the office. When we were at the office we checked about our belongings and all of them were wet and some lost.

That was a worst day of the week.

RESOURCES

CHROMEBOOKS IMPROVE DIGITAL LEARNING EQUITY AND ACCESS

Through generous donations to VEP from the **West Chester Downtown Foundation**, **IBM**, and private individuals, a limited number of Chromebooks are now available for dedicated students actively meeting with their tutors. The devices will be used to support instruction by his or her VEP tutor and to advance the student's ability to learn English as a new language. To be eligible for a Chromebook, a student must have participated in VEP for at least 6 months. Once a student stops tutoring, the Chromebook will be passed along to another student. If you are interested in participating in the program or making contributions towards this effort, please contact program staff.



TUTOR UPDATE

When Covid-19 broke all the rules of tutoring, Lane Liebman and her student came up with new ones.

Lane Liebman, an octogenarian living in King of Prussia, has accomplished much in a lifetime of work for nonprofit organizations. Now retired, she served recently as an experienced Major Donor Fundraising professional and volunteer recruitment advisor for the **Southeastern Pennsylvania region of the American Red Cross**. Prior to that, she served as Director of Fundraising for the **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)** for Pennsylvania. Just under two years ago, when she heard about VEP's mission of helping immigrants and refugees through free, highly individualized, one-to-one English language tutoring and American cultural guidance, she knew she wanted to become involved.

On her path to becoming a tutor in that fateful month of March 2020, Lane immediately encountered several obstacles. VEP's three-night training workshop for new tutors was held at **Tower Health-Phoenixville Hospital** and she had trouble driving at night, so she persuaded her condominium maintenance man to drive her to class and had an Uber driver pick her up for the first two workshop sessions. (Neither driver would take any compensation when she mentioned that she was volunteering to help others). After the second in-person night of training, the country shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the remaining session was held virtually on Zoom. Lane was not comfortable with technology, but knew she had no alternative if she wanted to become a tutor, so she worked with VEP staff to listen to the last workshop session on speakerphone.

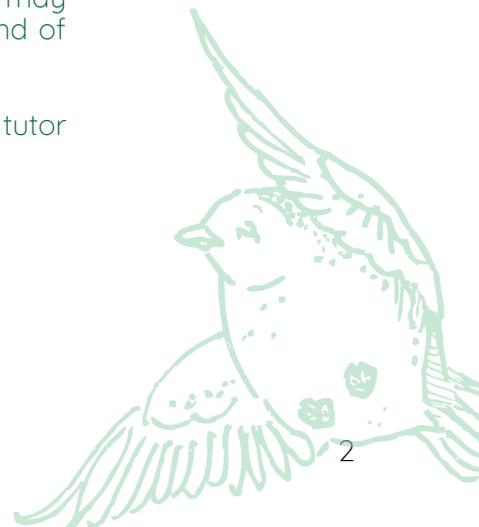
Meanwhile, Jeeyhun Kwon, a 45 year old substitute teacher at a Korean school, became acquainted with VEP by attending a conversation group at **Chester County's Easttown Library**. Jeehyun could read and write English fairly well, but she wanted to better understand and be understood when speaking with others.

Knowing that conversation was the goal, Donna Dello Buono, Senior Program Coordinator at VEP, connected Lane with Jeenyun. Since Lane was not comfortable with many of the technologies that became popular for maintaining connections during the pandemic, such as Zoom and FaceTime, they went "old school" -- and just talked on the telephone.

Lane knew immediately that using **The Philadelphia Inquirer** would be a fantastic resource for learning English. They read and discussed articles from Monday's paper together over the phone twice a week; recently, they began meeting in person for one of their weekly sessions. Jeehyun has been amazed at all the idioms she's learned from their conversations, as well as a better understanding of American social customs. Lane will underline vocabulary that Jeehyun may not understand from their Tuesday session and they review it together on Thursday's. They also discuss current events and sometimes use a workbook provided by VEP.

"The success Jeehyun has achieved by the turn of each page of *The Inquirer* is amazing. Her whole personality has changed! Before, she was introverted and quiet. Now she laughs and speaks excitedly about her family and friends. She's more communicative, talking on the phone in English to her older daughter, who is currently studying at MIT, and working with her younger daughter on her SAT's for her application to Yale University. I feel that I know her so well now. I may have shown her the way, but she finally saw that "light" at the end of the tunnel, and is running right to it."

- Lane Liebman, tutor



CORPORATE GIVING

Corporate donations and sponsorships are a vital source of year-round, general operating support. We appreciate a personal introduction with your company representative. Please drop us a line to get the conversation started.

WEGMAN'S DONATION

Wegmans in Malvern recently made a generous donation to the Volunteer English Program. VEP is grateful for Wegmans and their donation which allowed us to recognize hard-working students who attended the virtual Global Gathering in October.



WORKPLACE GIVING

If you work for a company, organization, or the federal government, chances are you've had the opportunity to participate in a workplace giving program. Workplace Giving is an easy and efficient way to make tax-deductible donations to the charities you care about.

Each organization may structure their employee giving program differently. **Quest Diagnostics**, **QVC**, the **United Way**, and **Vanguard** currently have employees that give to VEP through their Workplace Giving Program. There are many benefits of Workplace Giving such as the convenience of automatic payroll deductions without losing the tax benefits of charitable giving. Also, having a smaller amount of money deducted from your paycheck throughout the year can be easier for you to budget and allows you to donate a larger amount of money while making a greater impact overall. For example, if you get paid biweekly (26 times throughout the year) and you pledge \$38.50 of each paycheck to a charity, by the end of the year you will have donated \$1,000 to that charity! Finally, Workplace Giving provides a way for you to be more involved with the community in which you live and work.

"As an employee of Quest Diagnostics, I noticed how their commitment to social justice, diversity, inclusion and community service had increased in recent years, to the extent that this year they introduced an extra holiday dedicated to a "service day," a day that could be taken off work at a time of the employee's choice to do something of service for their community. To further encourage community service, they also introduced a "dollars-for-doers" program whereby the company would donate money to eligible organizations for voluntary work done by employees. VEP was not originally on the list of approved organizations, however I was able to propose our inclusion and after a few simple steps we were added to the list. I was then able to request a donation to VEP based on my volunteer tutor hours, and a couple of months later Terri confirmed receipt of the check.

It felt so rewarding to have my volunteer hours recognized by my employer, and that VEP (and ultimately our students) are able to benefit financially from work that I was already doing anyway. Employer matching or gifting programs, such as Quest's dollars-for-doers, are a great way to increase the value of time or donations to non-profit organizations. If you have a connection to a company that offers such an opportunity, I encourage you to participate and to be surprised how easy it is to tap into this additional source of income for non-profits such as the Volunteer English Program."

- Martin McNeil, tutor

How Workplace Giving Works:

- Workplace giving can be a once-a-year contribution or a year-round employee engagement program.
- You find the charity(ies) you want to support and designate a set amount of money you would like to donate to the charity(ies). After you make your decisions and submit your pledge, you're done!
- Donations will typically be deducted automatically from your paycheck, and that money will be distributed to the charity(ies) you designate.

GLOBAL GATHERING

A VIRTUAL SUCCESS

Prior to the Pandemic, VEP hosted its annual **Global Gathering** every year as a pre-Thanksgiving celebration for students with their families, tutors, guests, staff and board members. It has remained, in fact, one of the most beloved VEP traditions. It is a free jubilee that celebrates unity, diversity and friendship with an international buffet and fellowship. This year, we held the Gathering virtually on Zoom for Covid safety reasons. Learning about other cultures through interactive food trivia games on Baamboozle and a fast-paced Idioms quiz using Kahoot made the hour together go by quickly. Special recognition goes to **Wegmans Market, Panera**, and the **Paoli-Malvern-Berwyn Rotary** for their generous support and gifts.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the fun and helped us continue the tradition. We look forward to being in person next year!



FUNDER NEWS

VEP is fully funded through philanthropy. We are grateful for all of the supporters who believe in our mission.



Last fall, the **Chester County Commissioners** allocated \$3.5 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help local nonprofits recover from the pandemic. They established the **Chester County Nonprofit Innovation & Resiliency Fund**, and in December 2020 VEP received a generous grant. This award was used to support VEP's strategic priorities of investing in professional development opportunities for tutors, integrating new virtual learning technologies for students, and preparing the VEP office space for a safe return to work environment. A portion of the award was used to purchase a series of AeraMax Air Purifiers. The air filtration system, along with required masking and appointments, adds an extra layer of protection for VEP staff, students, and tutors to keep us safe while in the office. VEP worked with **Penn Office Products** to find the right system to meet our needs. We look forward to seeing you at our West Chester office soon.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Life Transforming Ministries (LTM) is a non-profit organization. One of their ministries to the community is providing free tax preparation and filing for low and moderate income households, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. They are asking for assistance in recruiting volunteers. If you are willing to be trained to prepare taxes during February, March or April, please visit www.ChesterCountyFreeTaxes.org and click on the registration link at the bottom of the page. You may also contact Ms. Laird at 610-380-9099 or email her at dlaird@quietrevolution.org.

The **VITA** program (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is a 40 year old initiative of the IRS. Since 2004, the LTM VITA program has been a partnership-driven authorized IRS E-file provider under the oversight of the Philadelphia IRS office. They provide IRS Training and, once completed, the volunteer is free to set up a schedule which works for them. Their current locations include Coatesville, Downingtown, Exton, Phoenixville, Pottstown, Royersford, and West Chester.

VEP partners with Life Transforming Ministries through the **United Way of Chester County's Financial Stability Center**. VEP students may benefit from this free service; others who are multilingual speakers may serve as volunteers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW STAFF MEMBER, ANNE RYAN

Welcome to new part-time Program Coordinator **Anne Ryan**, who joined VEP in September. Anne holds a Master's Degree in Teaching, a B.A. in History and French, and a PK-12 ESL Program Specialist Certification. She has more than a decade of experience teaching English language, digital literacy, and citizenship classes to adult learners. Anne approaches her work with curiosity, empathy, and a strong equity focus. Anne's primary responsibilities will include the development of Volunteer English Program services in the western Chester County area.

ADVISORY COUNCIL OFFERS WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE TO HELP VEP PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Members of VEP's **Advisory Council** represent Chester County leaders from business, education, government and other backgrounds. The diverse professional expertise and personal knowledge of every individual who accepts this volunteer role helps us make valuable connections to local, national, or international resources, colleagues and peers.

"In today's rapidly changing and evolving cultural landscape, the knowledge and insights of the Advisory Council provides ideas and guidance as VEP advances its mission and objectives," says Chuck Maser, Advisory Council Chair. "The discussions among the Advisory Council, the Board, and the Executive team, are both enlightening and thought-provoking as we evaluate and adjust to the challenges facing our students."

Advisory Council members meet several times a year to help the organization explore the immediate needs and emerging trends within Chester County's communities. The Council will continue its collaboration with the VEP Board and Executive team to ensure that VEP remains a 21st Century model for language and cultural education.

For a complete listing of the Board of Directors and Advisory Council, please visit volunteerenglish.org/about.

UPCOMING DATES

TUTOR TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Volunteer English Program's virtual **Tutor Training Workshops** successfully prepared 95 new volunteers during the past eighteen months. In 2022, new tutors will benefit from asynchronous learning along with live interactive Zoom sessions. Beginning in January, we will offer alternating morning and evening workshops. If you have other commitments to work around, we hope you find one that fits your schedule. Live registration will open one month in advance of each session. Visit volunteerenglish.org/tutors/how-to-become-a-tutor for updates, workshop fee, and access.

Our next Tutor Training Workshop will be held on Zoom on **January 24, 27 and February 1 from 9 am to 11 am**. Thank you for accepting the exciting challenge to teach English to VEP's long waiting list of non-native speakers who live or work in Chester County. Sharing your time and talents make life possible for others.



GIVING TUESDAY IS NOVEMBER 30

Save the Date! We invite you to join VEP on Tuesday, November 30th as we participate in [#GivingTuesday](#).

What is #GivingTuesday? It is a day dedicated to generosity and giving that takes place each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Started in 2012, #GivingTuesday encourages individuals, communities, nonprofits, and businesses from around the world to come together and give back in a variety of ways. It's a day to acknowledge the power of giving, volunteerism, and simple acts of kindness.

There are a variety of ways to support the Volunteer English Program on this day. You can share the good news of our campaign with your friends and family, follow us on social media and tag us in your posts, or you can contribute to our Giving Tuesday campaign!

Every donation and act of kindness counts. Our work to empower new English language speakers is more vital now than ever before. It is always the right time to come together and support the greater good. We appreciate our amazing community that is doing just that - helping build and grow our mission with your unwavering support. This #GivingTuesday, November 30, 2021, please consider continuing that support in any way you can at www.volunteerenglish.org/donations.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The VEP staff will be taking time to be with their family and friends. The office will be closed for the upcoming holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. We wish you a happy holiday season.

If you'd like more information about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact volunteer.english@volunteerenglish.org.

Volunteer English Program in Chester County

790 E. Market Street, Suite 215

West Chester, PA 19382

Phone: 610.918.8222

Email: volunteer.english@volunteerenglish.org

www.volunteerenglish.org



A text version of this newsletter is available for translation in 50 languages by visiting the VEP [website](#). To contribute a topic or article for an upcoming issue, please [email](#) us ("IOW" in the subject line).