

# VOICES

## *Volunteer English Program Student Magazine*

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### ***Welcome to the first issue of VEP Voices!***

All over the world, people tell stories – stories of myth, of history, of culture, of day-to-day experience, of imagination. People love stories, because we learn from them, we sympathize with them, and we draw strength from them. In each issue of this magazine, we share the stories written by students in the Volunteer English Program. By reading these stories, students can build their English skills, and also can reach out and get to know a community of friends. By writing their stories, VEP students improve their skill with English, share their experiences with others, inspire others, make us laugh, or stop and think. We all know some good stories. We invite all VEP students to write your stories. Your tutors will be happy to help you, and we all will be happy to read what you create.

The Volunteer English Program congratulates the students who contribute their stories through *Voices*. It is an honor to be part of the journey.

--The Editors

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## ***Differing Cultures Come Together on a New Jersey Farm***

The Antioch Church medical missionary team after worship on July 13th visited a Hammonton blueberry farm in Southern New Jersey.

The team is composed of Eunmi, who is a student with Volunteer English Program as well as a nurse from Korea, and 19 other people including 5 doctors, 5 nurses, 2 pharmacists, 1 dental hygienist and other volunteers.

The team rode in 2 vans and some cars from the church in Conshohocken.

They were able to help about 80 migrant workers. Main problems were high blood pressure and diabetes. The workers come every year for 2 months from Haiti and bring their children with them.

Each year many churches visit and open Vacation Bible School for the children.

Antioch Church also has a VBS for those children every summer. During the VBS children worship, paint, play games, sing and do other fun activities.

This has resulted in the children learning English more quickly than their parents. So, the children helped by interpreting for their parents during the health exams.

In addition, Eunmi's daughter Stephanie, a junior at Radnor High School, helped by translating English into Korean for some of the medical team and taking notes.

Eunmi says that it is exciting to be able to help others.

She and the medical team hope they have given some comfort to the migrant workers.

*Eunmi*

## ***Who Am I ?***

I was born in Cap-Haitien, Haiti and lived there for more than 35 years. Everyone there knows me as Paule Andree Durosier or Paule Andree Durosier Jules (my married name). In 2002, my life turned to a new journey because of my political tendency. After many near death experiences, I decided to move in the beginning of the summer 2003 to a free land, America, where I can live

in peace. For my move to America, I needed some legal documents. One of my compatriots proposed to help me to fill out an application for asylum. Unfortunately he made a mistake and filled it out with my name backwards. My application was granted in the incorrect name, but when I went to the Social Security for my card, they recorded my name correctly. Since then I

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used two different names depending what pieces I used. I went back to school to get an associate degree in Respiratory Therapy and used my Social Security for identification. So my respiratory therapist license is in my correct name.

For eight years I lived in Miami, Florida. I was thinking about becoming a citizen. In July, 2012, I got my citizenship with the wrong name because of the previous error on my residence card. Due to lack of information at this time of how to fix the problem, I stuck with my two names. After I got my citizenship I opted to move to a new state, Pennsylvania, specifically West Chester.

When I came, everything was different and I had a hard time to accommodate to my new life. Nobody can understand me easily. I had to repeat over and over before I got understood. I was very frustrated. One day at church I spoke out my concerns. One person there referred me to the Volunteer English Program. I went there, introduced myself and explained my problem with my accents and English talking. Irma very kindly reassured me they can help me. They gave me a placement test to figure out how good my English was. She told me they'll call me when they find a tutor for me. After two months, I received a call to come to meet my tutor. I was so happy to finally

be going to speak better English. On June 2013 at the office of VEP I met the lady who was going to change my life, Elaine. Since then, we met twice every week. She teaches me how to speak, how to write, and the best part, the history of America. We went on many field trips to achieve each study. Also she teaches me about every Holiday like Thanksgiving, July 4th, Presidents Day, and so on. I research different topics and do writing. I have become more confident when speaking English.

One day I was wondering if I should talk to my tutor about my name and how I can fix it. She might be able to help me. She was so open to help me. We got some advice from her lawyer friend. I decided to follow the process of his advice and on March 2014 my citizenship has been corrected!! Yay!

It is a big accomplishment for me after 10 years of dealing with two different names. In addition, I can apply my skills as a respiratory therapist and my English and my accents are way better. One of my coworkers a few months ago confessed to me my speech has become better. I want to thank the program and my tutor Elaine for helping me get my double portion: speak better English and my name has been fixed correctly.

Paule

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## ***My Trip in 2014 : Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park***

My husband and I went to Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park for 7 days in the middle of May.

Yellowstone National Park is a beautiful natural area. Part of the Park has geysers and other parts have deep canyons, huge grassy areas and a large lake, Lake Yellowstone. All parts were impressive for us to see. One of the most interesting things for us to see were animals. We enjoyed watching them. In my country, it was hard to watch wild animals easily, especially in Tokyo. My husband and I lived in Tokyo for a long time, so we were very surprised when we saw wild buffalo cross the street. Besides buffalo, we saw bear, a wolf, coyotes, moose, elk, a beaver, and an otter. I had never seen

that many wild animals in my life!

Grand Teton National Park is next to Yellowstone National Park, but the scenery is completely different. It was awesome! The lingering snow on mountains, the clear blue sky, both of which reflect on the surface of a lake, was overwhelming. We often got lost in the magnificent views of Grand Teton National Park.

I highly recommend people go to both National Parks. I believe everyone should go there once-in-a-lifetime. I believe the scenery in both Parks is very symbolic of U.S natural territories. It is my desire that every foreigner experience what I was fortunate enough to see.

*Haruko*



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## ***Tuesdays with Morrie***

Last summer, I was introduced to a book, *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom, by my teacher. In fact, I was a little apprehensive about the book when I saw the description on the front cover "... and life's greatest lesson" because I thought it wasn't my cup of tea. But the book made me change my mind. I still remember many nice wise sayings, and they can help my job and my normal life. His wisdoms give me energy. The book is basically a philosophical essay about Morrie Schwartz, a sociology professor at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, who has been diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and is dying, written by his former student, Mitch Albom. When I was a graduate student in Korea, most bookstores displayed the book in my country. After reading several pages, I could see why *Tuesdays with Morrie* has been published in many different languages and why so many people still love Morrie.

Mitch Albom was one of Morrie's long lost students who currently hosts a daily radio talk show and appears regularly on ESPN's Sports Reporters and Sports Center. When he saw his dying professor in an interview on the show Nightline, he was stunned and realized he forgot the promise he made to him that he would keep in touch. Sixteen years after his graduation, he visited Morrie like when he was a college student from Detroit. Their meetings didn't stop until

Morrie went to heaven. Every Tuesday the professor and the returning student talked about what is the most important thing in life, having no regrets, and happiness when faced with death. Morrie's voice was very weak and getting weaker every week from ALS, but his moving lesson was getting stronger. In their fourteen weeks of lessons, they covered how important it is to have compassion and love for others and ourselves, family values, community involvement, and aging.

Toward the end of the book, I started to help elderly people who were living in a retirement apartment. I decided to do this job without hesitating, but it was much more difficult than I expected. My toughest case was with the first client. I knew she was a generous and strong woman. She was very kind to others and always tried to help others, but she didn't want to accept help and love from others. I tried to help her as best as I could, but she always said "I don't need any help." While working for her, I realized why she did that. The reason was very simple. She doesn't know the most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love, and to let it come in. It is one of Morrie's beautiful famous sayings and also one of my favorite sayings. She doesn't have any family who wants to watch over her and a friend who can talk with her openly. She is very lonely. I can understand her a little bit.

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Her life was so tough. She had to take care of her own children and her younger siblings by herself during the terrible wars. The difficulties probably made her heart cold.

On the other hand, I took care of an elder who was very different from my first client. I worked harder for her because she was disabled with arthritis, but she made me feel valued for my care giving. I smelled a strong medicinal scent when I opened her front door. But her face was always bright and peaceful even though she was suffering in pain. She enjoyed being with me, and she always said thanks to me from deep down in her heart. I was pondering about why the women were so different even though they lived in the same time period in Korea. Both of their lives were very hard. They reminded me of one of Morrie's quotes about family. "Family isn't just love. Family will be there watching out for you." My second client was very mentally stable and healthy because of her good family relationship.

Through my job, I understood Morrie's teaching through more firsthand experience. I could see why the book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, has been published in many languages and why so many people still love Morrie. I had a chance to imagine how to die and then I learned how to live through the book and my job, like Morrie said. When I finished the book my teacher gave me a faded paper. It looked like a very old and important paper for her. Bible verses were written on the paper. The verses tell us to give your love to others and live with love. She said it was for her daughter. When I got it, suddenly tears welled up my eyes. The message was similar to Morrie's teaching. We cannot imagine we are lonely and regretful when we face death if we try to live his teaching. I want to thank my teacher again for recommending the book. I also want to recommend the book to someone who wants to know what is most important in our life or needs a guide to a satisfying life.

*Hyun-hee*

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## ***Vacation Plans***

This summer I plan to visit my wife's brothers and their families in Brooklyn New York. I plan to go there on September 6th with my wife Beatriz and our children. Beatriz has five brothers and they all live in Brooklyn.

We are planning to go to Times Square to see all the busy streets and all the stores. We probably will go to a restaurant near Times Square to have lunch or dinner.

If we have time, I would like to visit

the Statue of Liberty with my family and my wife's families.

I will also be cooking food on the grill. I will probably grill steak, chicken and corn. We will have ice cream for dessert.

We will stay overnight at Beatriz brother's apartment. We will end our visit to Brooklyn on September eight and drive back to Phoenixville.

*Pedro*

## ***House Rules***

When I was young, my Mother set down some clear house rules.

One of the rules was that I was only allowed to play cricket on weekends from 4 P.M.- 6 P.M., but not on weekdays. The other rule was that I was not allowed to go to the beach with my friends without my parents' knowledge.

Even though I was not allowed to play cricket during the weekdays, I played every single day. I always told my Mother that I had an extra class in school. If there was tournament, I skipped school to play. During the school break, I told my parents I had to go to Boy Scouts meetings. I always had an excuse to go out and play cricket. I

did this for a couple of years. One day, my neighbor saw me playing cricket with some friends at Kodamunai ground, but I didn't see her. She told my Mother that she saw me playing cricket. I came home around 5 P.M. and my Mother asked me where I was.

I told her I had an extra class. She asked me the same question again. I gave her the same answer. Then she said angrily, "where is your extra class, at Kodamunai ground?" I was shocked when I realized somebody saw me playing. I apologized to my Mother for being disrespectful.

Once every two weeks my friends and I went to the beach. One of my friends,

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Gobi, lived close to the coast so most of my friends and I would leave our bags with clothes at Gobi's house and when we went to the beach we would take those bags with us and leave our school bags at Gobi's house. I did this all through my high school years and never got caught.

After I got caught playing cricket however, I didn't play for three months then I started again. I guess I'm addicted to cricket!

A couple of years ago, I told my Mother about playing cricket and going to the beach against her rules. She told me she knew I was lying all that time, but she let it go. I was surprised to learn how much my Mother knew about me.

*Krishanth*