

IN OTHER WORDS

The official newsletter of the Volunteer English Program



"Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try."

— ATUL GAWANDE

NEWS AND FEATURES

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

MARCO-ANTONIO R. REFLECTS ON WHAT COMMUNITY MEANS TO HIM.



"A COMMUNITY...
CAN HELP US
TO IMPROVE OURSELVES,
CREATE GOALS & PLANS,
AND NOT TO FEEL ALONE."

My name is Marco. I am from Mexico and I live in West Chester. My community is full of very hard-working people who help one another to succeed in getting good jobs, buying homes, and starting their own businesses. I think it's important to feel part of a community because it helps us to improve as people. The good influence of people can help us to improve ourselves, create goals and plans, and not to feel alone.

What I like most about being part of a community is that I can bring joy to many people. I have been able to do this every weekend by forming two sports organizations to entertain them after a long week of work.

Four years ago, I decided to build something special in my community. I noticed that on the weekend, there was no entertainment after work. So I came up with an idea to form a basketball league for adult men. We began with about 6 teams, a total of 30 people. Now the league has grown to 25 teams and about 200 people. Last year, I also started the soccer league for adult men. I began with 8 teams and about 96 players. This year there are 16 teams and about 192 players. I love helping my community and I'm so happy to add these two sports to the lives of so many people.

TUTOR UPDATE

TUTOR TOM BUCHANAN LEADS PRO BONO LEGAL AID PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

Tom Buchanan, a former Federal Government attorney and prosecutor with 30 years of legal experience, is co-leading the second year of an effort to connect adult VEP students with affordable and reliable pro bono legal services. With the support of the Chester County Bar Foundation and VEP's bilingual staff, VEP students are interviewed and referred to one of several partnering agencies in Chester County for free expert counsel related to their needs.

Legal services focus primarily on immigration issues such as visas, residency status, naturalization, and DACA, as well as unemployment, housing and evictions, contract disputes, and personal injury concerns. The project will also include seminars and workshops for active VEP tutors about legal matters related to immigration or the immigrant experience so that tutors can help promote education, knowledge, and awareness of the law within the larger VEP community.

THIS PROJECT CREATES A
SAFE HAVEN FOR
INDIVIDUALS TO STEP OUT
OF THE SHADOWS AND
RESOLVE LEGAL ISSUES
THAT CURRENTLY LEAVE
THEM AT A DEEP
DISADVANTAGE



DONOR NEWS

The Volunteer English Program is fully funded through philanthropy, which means we rely on the contributions of many faithful supporters. VEP and its mission resonates with individuals for a variety of reasons. Below, Dr. Rogers Smith shares some of the reasons why he and his wife include VEP in their philanthropic giving.

My wife Mary Summers and I are proud to be among the many donors who have enabled VEP to continue to grow. We have reviewed the evidence of VEP's impact, and we have talked to some of the many beneficiaries of its student-centered, outcomes-based instruction. Both in seeing the "big picture" data and in engaging in these conversations, we have been deeply moved by the positive difference VEP has made in the lives of its students and in the communities we share with them.

I have been a professor of political science for 40 years, and I have done extensive research and teaching on issues of immigration and citizenship. Those issues are complex, but I am convinced that, if we can provide immigrants with the tools they need to succeed in America, especially the English language, in the long run everyone benefits. When new immigrants first arrive, however, sometimes unexpectedly and in large numbers, real problems do occur. In America, unlike some other countries, we have not had traditions of governmental aid to help immigrants adjust, believing the American way is for them to prove themselves self-reliant. Most are; but in truth, no one in this world makes it entirely on his or her own. Often those that succeed do so with the aid of civil society organizations—and the Volunteer English Program is a shining example of what George H. W. Bush called these "thousand points of light." This is a model with a proven track record of helping immigrants to experience America as a new home in which they can thrive. VEP gives us hope and that, in the end, is why my wife and I have been eager to be among its donors.



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FUNDER NEWS

LAWRENCE SAUNDERS FUND (LSF)



The Trustees of the **Lawrence Saunders Fund** recently approved a grant to the Volunteer English Program. The Fund prefers to support smaller organizations in Philadelphia and surrounding suburbs including Chester County, and organizations that focus on the environment, social services, and education – which includes educating adults in need.

This grant will be used to purchase books and materials needed by VEP students and tutors. Instructional resources are essential to our program and will help make a transformative impact on the English language and cultural education of immigrant adults who must learn such skills to survive and thrive. We are grateful to The Lawrence Saunders Fund for their financial support and recognizing our shared missions offering adult immigrants an opportunity to improve their English language skills.

CHARITY NAVIGATOR 100/100 RATING



VEP's strong financial health and ongoing accountability and transparency have earned a **100/100 rating from Charity Navigator's** new Encompass Rating System! This score designates VEP as an official "Give with Confidence" charity based on criteria from Charity Navigator, America's largest and most utilized independent charity evaluator. VEP's Charity Navigator Encompass Rating can be viewed [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHEDULE YOUR FLU SHOT TODAY!

Getting a flu vaccine this year is more important than ever to protect you and your family. It's likely that flu viruses and Coronavirus will both spread this fall and winter. The flu and Coronavirus have many similar symptoms (cough, chills, fever, body aches) -- and healthcare systems could be overwhelmed treating both patients.



Many additional measures have been put in place this year to keep flu clinic staff and clients healthy and safe. For more information, visit the [Chester County Health Department](#). Be sure to schedule your flu vaccine today!

CALLING ALL COOKS



Since we are unable to gather in person for this November's Global Gathering, we are welcoming 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, along with a photo of the dish if possible. 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](#).

UPCOMING DATES

VIRTUAL TUTOR TRAINING WORKSHOP

VEP's next [Tutor Training Workshop](#) will be held virtually on January 25, 27, & 28 at 6 pm each evening via Zoom. Change Someone's Life and See How it Changes Yours. Online registration will be available in late December (approximately one month in advance).



CONVERSATION GROUPS

Tutor and community partners facilitate weekly conversation groups for VEP students and individuals who want to meet others in their local community to improve or practice their English speaking skills. Conversation groups, such as the one pictured, led by longtime tutor Jane Palestini at the West Chester Public Library, continue to meet virtually during Coronavirus restrictions. For more information, [click here](#).

RESOURCES

VOXY MOBILE LEARNING APP

Students and tutors can now supplement their learning sessions with ProLiteracy's software product Voxy, an online English language learning tool available as an app through their smartphones. Voxy allows students to practice their English language comprehension skills anytime, anywhere, with personalized instruction adaptable to students' interests and careers, using authentic media sources and assessments. Through a grant from ProLiteracy earlier this year, VEP has access to Voxy for up to 24 student/tutor pairs. During this time of physical distancing, Voxy can provide more flexibility to accelerate students' language acquisition rate on-the-go, or to continue their learning if they need to take a short break from instruction due to family, illness, work or pandemic-related constraints.



CCIU PARTNERSHIP



VEP is thrilled for the opportunity to continue our partnership with the Chester County Intermediate Unit in the coming year. This past Spring, VEP launched the ESL Peer Empowerment Circle for Women at CCIU Head Start in West Chester. Designed for mothers who are seeking to improve their English for use in daily life activities, this peer circle aimed to empower women to take charge of their education. With the intent to create learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom, the ESL Peer Empowerment Circle implemented Project Based Learning (PBL) to simulate real-life experiences with the learners' goals at the forefront. We are proud to have the opportunity to continue this partnership into the coming year.

ARE YOU IN NEED OF FOOD ASSISTANCE?

To receive food assistance through the **Chester County Food Bank**, click on this [map](#) to contact your local agency during its listed business hours. All listed agencies are open to the public. If you are unsure of the cupboard closest to you, call the Food Bank at 610.873.6000 to find a hunger relief agency that serves your part of the County.



Volunteer English Program in Chester County

790 E. Market Street, Suite 215
West Chester, PA 19382
Phone: 610.918.8222, ext 5
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](#).

