Sacrifice and hard work pay off for former ILC students

Leopold

Leopold came to the United States from Cameroon in 2006. He attended The Immigrant Learning Center from July 2007 through June 2008, starting in ESOL Level 4 and then continuing in the Theater Class. After he finished, he attended the Kaplan Career Institute in Charlestown where he completed a training program in 2009 to become an HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) technician.

Leopold found a job as an engineer at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Newton where he worked for three years. He then attended Building Pathways, a pre-apprenticeship program sponsored by the Building & Construction Trades Council of the Metropolitan District in partnership with Action for Boston Community Development and the Boston Housing Authority. Leopold completed the program in 2012 and is now a plumber’s apprentice with the Boston Plumbers & Gasfitters Union Local 12. The apprenticeship lasts five years.

Leopold said about The ILC, “The ILC helped me a lot, and not only me, but many other people I know about. When I came to the United States, I didn’t know how to communicate or behave with people. I was afraid to talk with anyone. The school helped me to learn the English words, grammar and pronunciation that helped me enter my training program. It helped me understand how to make a new life here.”

Leopold’s wife, Felicite Njieptchi, also attended The ILC and now works as a lab technician at Boston Medical Center. Their two children recently joined them from Cameroon.

Sandra

“How can I go to a country where I cannot speak?” This was Sandra’s main objection to joining her husband in the United States. Sandra came from a long line of entrepreneurs and had her own successful clothing shop in El Salvador. Her husband was drawn to the U.S. by a promise of an even better life for their family and finally convinced her to come for the sake of their children’s education.

“With a degree from a U.S. university, you can work anywhere in the world. With a degree from El Salvador, you can only work in El Salvador,” he said.

Sandra sold her business, moved to Massachusetts and started looking for English classes immediately. When The ILC called to say she could start school, she jumped for joy. For three years, from 1993 to 1996, she studied at The ILC and worked two jobs while getting only a few hours sleep each night. Her goal was to once again have her own house and her own business before bringing her children to the U.S. Although it took her seven years to start her business, her children came after just four years.

Sandra opened Taco El Paso in Everett in 2000, and she bought a grocery store named Regina’s in 2008. Two of her children are currently studying at the University of Massachusetts, and the third is applying to medical school. She evaluates her experience this way, “It was hard to spend seven years working for someone else. It was worth it because my kids are successful, and now I can do my own thing too.”
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear Friends,

The “face” of America is once again at the center of debate in this country. From the halls of government to dinner tables, corporate board rooms and community meetings, our country grapples with who defines America. This is an exercise that continues to repeat itself in our nation’s history.

As Washington debates immigration reform legislation, the future of new Americans across the country hangs in the balance. Millions of men, women and young adults in urban cities and rural communities hope for the day when they can become fully participating Americans.

U.S. census data show that recent growth of the U.S. population comes from immigrants and their children and that the U.S. workforce is growing because of them. One-third of entrepreneurs are immigrants who create jobs for everyone. Immigrants take care of our parents and sick patients, harvest crops, build homes and are major players in the high tech, pharmaceutical, transportation, health and hospitality industries. They are the drivers of innovation that continue to build and shape America as a global powerhouse.

The students featured on the cover are the face of America today. They are achieving their goals as a result of learning English at The ILC. Without English language proficiency, they and other immigrants cannot realize their big dreams that they carry deep within them from their native countries. That is why The ILC and its generous supporters have played such a transformational role in the lives of the more than 7,600 immigrant adults from 118 countries who have been served in the last 21 years. We continue to look to our friends for financial support so that our students can find jobs, go to school, start businesses and give back to the country that needs them.

We are a nation of immigrants. That is our history, our foundation and our uniqueness. Thank you for being part of this important mission that keeps America strong and moving forward.

Diane Portnoy

Institute for Immigration Research

The Institute for Immigration Research was launched in 2012 as a partnership between The ILC and George Mason University. Already in 2013, it’s having an impact in the nation’s capital and beyond. The Institute’s research on immigrant Nobel Prize winners was recently quoted in multiple publications, including the Washington Post. In September, it hosted a panel of experts to discuss the economics of immigration reform, including a U.S. congressman and a representative from the U.S. Department of State. The monthly colloquium series features experts discussing a myriad of issues related to U.S. immigration. With several research projects underway, the Institute’s influence will surely grow in 2014.

From left to right: Audrey Singer, Brookings Institution; Rep. Joe Garcia of Florida; Ali Noorani, National Immigration Forum; Dolly Oberoi, C² Technologies, Inc.; Ryan Spiegel, Gaithersburg Md. City Council; Don Hellin, U.S. Department of State; James Witte, Institute for Immigration Research
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FOCUS ON FUNDERS

Eddie Cassel
Vice President of Commercial Services
Madison Commercial Real Estate Services, NYC

“I was introduced to The ILC several years ago by attending one of its fundraising events as a guest. When I heard Diane talk about her parents’ struggles as Polish Holocaust survivors, I thought of my grandparents who were Russian immigrants who survived the war by living in the forest. My connection to The ILC was immediate. Madison Commercial Real Estate is proud to be a corporate partner with The ILC. We applaud Diane and the staff for their decades-long dedication to immigrant and refugee adults by giving them the English skills they need to succeed in this country. It is one of the best investments our company can make in the future of America.”

Brenda Jovenich, Vice President, RBS Citizens and Dr. Joseph Terlato

Brenda and Joe are proud to support the work of The ILC. After many years working directly with The ILC as a trustee, Brenda married Joe and moved to Rhode Island. Together, they are running around after Carolina (4), Joseph (4) and Nicolas (2). “The ILC remains close to our hearts, and we’re grateful for the updates on the school. We donate to The ILC in honor of our parents and grandparents who struggled to learn English when they arrived in the U.S. from Argentina and Italy. Congratulations to the students of The ILC who work hard to achieve their dreams.”

COOLEY MANION JONES LLP

Harry L. Manion, Partner

Martin F. Gaynor, Partner

“The Immigrant Learning Center provides the ultimate gift to its students: the gift of opportunity. By providing the tools people need to improve their lives, The ILC impacts the lives of multiple generations and the community as a whole. On behalf of Cooley Manion Jones, we are honored to be part of such a meaningful endeavor.”
The Theater Class is a unique program that allows ILC students to hone their English skills by writing and performing an original play about the immigrant experience. For the second year in a row, the class created its spring performance based on the “Malden Reads” book selections. This year, the community chose to read The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie, and The ILC students created The Absolutely True Story of a Part-Time Immigrant. The book’s themes of identity, belonging, discrimination and leaving home formed a perfect springboard for the students to tell their stories. This year, ILC students increased their community involvement by presenting a DVD screening of the play followed by a panel discussion at the Malden Library.

The summer production from The ILC Theater Class was titled Child, Life Starts Now. Inspired by the hopes and dreams that all parents have for a new-born child, the students shared advice, stories and songs from their home countries as gifts for an expectant mother. The audience was the true recipient of their gifts.

Taking the Next Step

The Immigrant Learning Center now has more resources to help immigrants and refugees achieve their goals. In July, Carol Weigert became the education and career advisor for the school to help students leverage their improved English skills into building better lives for themselves. Carol works with the program director and the teachers to develop curriculum and present lessons designed to help students learn how to reach goals such as getting a degree, entering job training, and getting a new or better job. In addition, she meets with individual and small groups of students to provide them with more focused assistance.

Carol has also worked to develop partnerships with a number of organizations in the area that offer services related to employment and education. Recently, she took a number of students to a job fair where they could practice talking to prospective employers and applying for jobs. Some students successfully applied for jobs, participated in interviews and hope to be hired. On November 19, representatives from college and career preparation programs will come to the school to meet with ILC students at a “Next Step Fair.”

ILC honored

Community Quarterback Award

For the second time in four years, The ILC was the recipient of Eastern Bank’s Community Quarterback Award that honors local non-profit organizations for outstanding community leadership. In an awards ceremony on April 10, 2013, hosted by Eastern Bank CEO Richard C. Holbrook, The ILC was one of 69 local non-profit organizations who received grants of $10,000 or more and a signed football by former NFL quarterback and bank spokesperson Doug Flutie. The footballs were tossed to recipients!
PROMOTING IMMIGRANTS AS ASSETS

Pictured at the Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards dinner are Richard A. Davey, Jr., secretary and CEO, Massachusetts Department of Transportation; Marcia Drew Hohn, EdD, director, The ILC Public Education Institute; Dr. Chiang Li, founder, Boston Biomedical, Inc.; Rafael Guzman, president, RM Technologies, Inc.; Mahmud Jafri, founder, Dover Rug & Home; Diane Portnoy, founder, president and CEO, The ILC; and Steven Grossman, Massachusetts Treasurer and Receiver General.

Immigrant entrepreneurs honored by The ILC

Three outstanding Massachusetts immigrant entrepreneurs were honored at the 2013 ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner on May 8 at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, MA, attended by 200 guests. Out of 26 nominees in three categories, selection committees chose as the winners:

Neighborhood business: Mahmud Jafri (Pakistan)  
Dover Rug & Home in Natick

Business growth: Rafael Guzman (Dominican Republic)  
RM Technologies, Inc. in Lawrence

Science/technology business: Dr. Chiang Li (China)  
Boston Biomedical, Inc. in Cambridge

Guest speaker Steven Grossman, Massachusetts Treasurer and Receiver General, and Master of Ceremonies Richard A. Davey, Jr., secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and ILC board trustee, handed out the awards to the winners and presented legislative citations to all of the nominees.

“As entrepreneurs, immigrants revitalize depressed neighborhoods, create jobs, pay taxes and help form the backbone of this country... This is not a new story in American history. Since the founding of this country, immigrants have come here with hope, drive and ingenuity and have become entrepreneurs. This evening’s awardees and nominees are part of a long and proud tradition,” said Diane Portnoy. The next Awards Dinner is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2014.

Report shows immigrants’ role in growing industries

For the first time, The ILC commissioned a research study on a national scale. Immigrant Entrepreneurs Creating Jobs and Strengthening the U.S. Economy in Growing Industries shows that immigrants play an outsized role in growing industries relative to their population share thereby supporting a high rate of job creation and market expansion.

Written by Prof. James Jennings of Tufts University, who previously co-authored ILC reports on immigrants in the leisure and hospitality (2010) and health care (2009) industries, this newest ILC report examines immigrant workers and entrepreneurs in three high-growth industries (transportation, food and building services) nationwide with a focus on Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania. It profiles 10 entrepreneurs including ILC student Saul Ortez of El Salvador whose fast food business has expanded into two states.

Interviews also show that while immigrant business owners are very interested in green practices, the majority have not been reached by state and other organizations that can assist them in greening their businesses.

Online workshop reaches teachers in 23 states

The ILC Public Education Institute’s annual online workshop for educators “Teaching Immigration Across the Curriculum” expanded its presenters, modules and audience this year.

On July 9, 10 and 11, Dr. Marcia Drew Hohn, director of the Institute, led the ambitious project into new territory with presenters from the University of Southern California; Warren County Schools, Missouri; and Boston College. In the free workshop, 80 K-12 and community educators from 23 states learned more about their immigrant students as well as the tools to integrate immigrant students and immigration into their classrooms. Modules included “Issues, Perspectives and Ideas to Build a Framework for Curriculum Adaption” and “Promoting the Success of Immigrant Students.”

More information can be found on the website www.ilctr.org, including:

- photos from the 2013 Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner
- a form for suggesting 2014 award nominees
- the report Immigrant Entrepreneurs Creating Jobs and Strengthening the U.S. Economy in Growing Industries
- a sign-up form for the next online workshop
- a link to sign up for the Public Education email newsletter

Special thanks to Mystic View Design for its assistance in the design, layout and production of this News Update.
The Capitol Steps get vote of approval at The ILC Autumn Benefit

President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, House Speaker John Boehner, former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Capitol Hill political figures made cameo appearances at The ILC’s Autumn Benefit on October 17 at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge! The return engagement of The Capitol Steps delighted the audience of more than 180 guests who were treated to political parody about current headline news coming out of our nation’s capitol. The troupe was established 30 years ago and is comprised of former Congressional staffers. Their hilarious performance was a fitting end to an evening that included inspiring remarks by Diane Portnoy, and a sumptuous tour of New England, Southern and Southwestern cuisine. ILC Trustee Rich Davey was the evening’s emcee. The event helped raise nearly $270,000 in proceeds that will underwrite direct student support services. More photos from the evening can be seen on our website at http://www.ilctr.org/events/2013-autumn-benefit

15th Annual ILC Golf Classic

One hundred and twenty golfers enjoyed a beautiful day at The ILC Golf Classic held on June 4th at Kernwood Country Club in Salem, MA. The event included a barbecue lunch, 18 holes of golf, a cocktail reception and clambake. Pictured from left are Charles Nahatis, Dennis Frolin, Mike Ciccone and Gary Stevens, who repeated their 1st Gross win of last year, turning in a score of 62. More than $300,000 was netted for ILC programs, raising the total 15-year contribution of the tournament to $3.1 million. Thank you to all who made this signature event one to remember.
The ILC Welcomes New Citizens

They came from 34 countries, from Albania to Vietnam, with dreams of becoming an American. Those dreams came true on October 24 for 97 immigrants who were sworn in by Judge Frank J. Bailey, an ILC trustee, at The ILC’s third annual Swearing-In Ceremony at the Malden Senior Center. Pictured above, from left, are ILC students Camone Toussaint (Haiti), Xiu Qing Wu (China) and Van Truong (Vietnam) with ILC instructor Alan May, proudly showing their certificates of citizenship. Diane Portnoy shared her story about coming to America as a child and becoming a citizen shortly after her parents did. Malden Mayor Gary Christenson spoke of the importance of immigrants to the community and the country. As family and friends looked on, America’s newest citizens waved the American flag while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance led by ILC Board Chair, Arthur Koumantzelis. ILC instructor Jeantilus Gedeus, an immigrant from Haiti, sang the national anthem and also led a group of ILC students in singing God Bless America. Congratulations to all the new citizens!
It is with our deepest thanks that we recognize the following individuals, community groups, corporations and foundations that made financial and in-kind contributions to The ILC between January 16, 2012, and November 13, 2013.

INDIVIDUALS

Ms. Jeanne Alceus
Catherine and Kiril Alexandrov
Linda J. Altvater
Mehrnoush Bakhsandeh
Arlene L. Beck
Mr. and Mrs. George Behrakis
Cheryl and Everett Benton
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Leah Gandman

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