

Giving Immigrants a Voice

SUMMER 2016

You make The ILC unique

A school that offers free English classes five days a week is rare. With supporters like you, The Immigrant Learning Center (ILC) has grown from a rare resource to a truly unique institution touching the lives of thousands throughout Massachusetts and across the country.

Part of what makes The ILC truly unique is the Literacy Program. This program, funded 100 percent by private donations from supporters like you, offers customized English classes to adults with literacy challenges. A shining star of this program is Jeantilus Gedeus, an educator and musician from Haiti who went from ILC student to volunteer to teacher. Gedeus was recently one of only six educators named a Mass Literacy Champion by the not-for-profit organization, Mass Literacy.

Gedeus teaches students with the lowest level of English and literacy skills. Many are learning reading, writing and grammar for the first time in any language. He makes this difficult task look easy, in part, by turning grammar lessons into easy-to-remember songs. Gedeus is the Schoolhouse Rock of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) education.

Gedeus often serves as a model for other educators. In May, two teachers from Project Literacy in Watertown observed his class and remarked, “We were so impressed and learned so much from observing Gedeus in action. He is really a gifted teacher and was very generous with his time.”

Previously-named Mass Literacy Champions include Diane Portnoy, ILC founder and CEO, in 2003, and Kathleen Klose, director of The ILC Literacy Program, in 2008.



Jeantilus Gedeus, ILC instructor and 2016 Mass Literacy Champion, with students

Other privately-funded programs that make The Immigrant Learning Center one of a kind include:

- The theater class where students learn English and public speaking skills as they write and perform original plays. See story on page 3.
- Family Literacy workshops where students learn skills that support their entire family. See story on page 3.
- A brand new entrepreneur class that was piloted this spring for immigrants who need to learn English and wish to start or grow a business. See story on page 5.
- The ILC Public Education Institute, which reaches audiences across the country with the message that immigrants are assets to the United States. See stories on pages 4 and 6.

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Who knows what she will accomplish with your help

You read in our cover story about some of the programs that make The Immigrant Learning Center truly unique. If you ask me, what makes this place special is the people. It’s our generous donors, our dedicated staff, board members, volunteers and our inspiring students that make this place a beacon of hope for so many.



Carene’s story is a perfect example of how we do so much more than “just” teach English. Carene and her husband moved from Haiti to Montreal before settling in the United States in the early ‘90s. They put down roots. They had two children. Carene worked as a nursing assistant and her husband a school bus driver.

Their lives were disrupted more than a decade ago when Carene started having seizures. Not knowing when a seizure would cause her to black out, she could no longer have a “normal” life. She says, “My husband goes to work. Son and daughter go to school. I have to stay home.” Her daughter just graduated from Holy Cross College, and her son is attending Bentley, but her education was on hold.

Working with her doctor, Carene is getting the seizures under control. Once she was cleared to leave the house on her own, she signed up for school at The Immigrant Learning Center. The seizures have affected her memory. She would have struggled in a typical ESOL class, but here in the Literacy Program she can take her time. She says, “I’m scared to talk to people. Twenty plus years here, and I can’t speak English. Coming here [The ILC], people like me and talk to me nice.”

Carene misses her old life. She misses working with elderly patients and making them happy. When she started at The ILC, she would come to class in tears. Her teachers comforted her and made her feel at home. “My story was not good before, but now everybody support me.”

Thank you for supporting Carene and so many more.



Diane Portnoy

The ILC is a not-for-profit corporation supported by tax-deductible charitable contributions and, in part, by funding from The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Mystic Valley Elder Services, Inc., the Massachusetts Executive Offices of Elder Affairs and the Federal Administration on Aging; and the cities of Malden and Medford, Massachusetts.

ILC lessons that are good for the whole family

Did you know that children who are read to regularly have an average vocabulary that is five times larger than that of other children? That is one of many helpful tips that ILC students learned at a recent Family Literacy Workshop, “Reading with Your Children.” Family Literacy workshops are offered periodically by The ILC for students who have children or grandchildren.

During this workshop, students learned age-appropriate tips for sharing books with children, shared their personal experiences with each other and brainstormed ways to overcome obstacles to regular reading time with their children. The workshop ended with a charades-like enactment of the tips they had learned.

Every parent wants what’s best for their children. In fact, providing a better life for their children is an often-cited reason why ILC students tell us they immigrated to the United States. The challenges of learning a new language and new culture can put extra pressure on family obligations, particularly for adults who have literacy challenges themselves. The parents and grandparents who attended this workshop walked away feeling motivated and empowered to help their children with reading.



ILC students practice skills for reading to their children they learned in a Family Literacy workshop

SAVE THE DATES

The ILC is planning two very special events. Please update your calendars with the following dates:

October 26, 2016

The ILC Autumn Benefit at The Harvard Club

November 29, 2016

Giving Tuesday - A National Day of Charitable Giving

For more information, contact Felicia Kornegay at fkornegay@ilctr.org or (781) 322-9777.

Bringing history to life



ILC Theater students learn about American history on the Freedom Trail

Before students in the Theater Class start telling their own stories, they have English lessons that contain stories of the history and culture of this country. Each session, their instructor, Kathleen McGovern, takes them on a tour of the Freedom Trail in Boston. There, the lessons come alive, and the students see the deep, rich history of immigration in America that unites their experience with the past.

We have been very fortunate to have Kathleen on staff. She recently completed a Masters in Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her thesis was about language acquisition and theater. In April, she spoke at a Symposium on Language and the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations in New York City. Her talk was about how incorporating students’ voices into educational curriculum, as in the Theater Class, can be a vehicle for social change.

ILC PROGRAMS ENRICHED BY IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS

Immigrants are entrepreneurial by nature. This is a message The ILC has been sending for years through the Public Education Institute. In 2011, immigrants were responsible for founding more than one in every four (28 percent) U.S. businesses. Forty percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or the children of immigrants, and many of them are featured in the Immigrant Entrepreneur Hall of Fame on The ILC website. We've also seen it over and over again in our students who start businesses. Now more than ever, the theme of entrepreneurship runs through The ILC, as evidenced by these three stories.

The award goes to...



Winners of The 2016 ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards:
Front row from left: ILC Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy with winners Hilda Torres, Gerardo Loza, and ILC Public Education Institute Director Denizil Mohammed
Back row from left: winners Mihael Mikek, Garo H. Armen, Herby Duvern  and MA Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash

In its fifth year, The Immigrant Learning Center's Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards were held on April 28, 2016. It was a magical evening full of inspiration and hope. U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker sent pre-recorded remarks recognizing the importance of immigrant entrepreneurs. Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash served as master of ceremonies.

Forty-two outstanding entrepreneurs from 26 countries who started businesses in 18 cities and towns across Massachusetts were nominated. Herby Duvern  received the Business Growth Award. He came from Haiti as a young adult with nothing and is now the owner of physical security and emergency management service provider Taino Consulting Group. Cousins Hilda Torres and Gerardo Loza from Mexico received the Neighborhood Business Award. They are co-owners of My Little Best Friends Early Learning Center in Malden. Mihael Mikek received the

High-Tech Business Award. He came to the U.S. from Slovenia to pursue his MBA and launched Celtra, a rich media advertising platform for mobile devices. Garo H. Armen received the Life Science Business Award. Born in Turkey of Armenian descent, he is the founder of Agenus, Inc., an immuno-oncology company determined to find a cure for cancer, and the Children of Armenia Fund, a not-for-profit that works to improve the lives of children in rural villages in Armenia.

These awards are an important reminder of the contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs to Massachusetts and the country. You can see more about this year's event on the website at www.ilctr.org/events/immigrant-entrepreneur-awards-dinner. Nominations for next year's awards will begin in January 2017. Keep your eyes and ears open for the next outstanding nominee.

Your support helps them reach for their goals

Students at The Immigrant Learning Center often learn life skills while they are learning English. This was very much the case when the Level 3 class did a lesson on “dreams and goals.” The lesson began with a reading about an immigrant who had a dream, set a goal and opened his own bakery.

This reminded Andrew Shapira, the Level 3 instructor, of the video interview series The ILC Public Education Institute maintains on YouTube and The ILC website. To enhance what students learned from the reading, Andrew had them watch some of these videos in the computer lab.



Part of the Immigrant Entrepreneur Interview Series, Helene and Thomas Stohr of swissbäkers discuss starting and growing their business

After identifying the steps these entrepreneurs took to achieve their dreams, the Level 3 students wrote their own goals and identified the steps, obstacles and supports to achieving them. Level 3 students know enough English for basic survival and maybe an entry-level job but have difficulty having a conversation in English or understanding complex instructions. Their goals ranged from getting a degree to getting a job to helping children with homework, and some even wanted to start a business. Learning English is a critical step toward achieving their goals. Throughout this lesson, they practiced reading, writing, listening and speaking, and increased their vocabulary.

To see the entrepreneur interviews for yourself, go to www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants/video-interviews. The ILC is seeking help with captions for these videos. To volunteer, please email Karen Glover at kglover@ilctr.org.

Making dreams come true



Students in the pilot Entrepreneurship Class who are interested in launching food-based businesses visit Stock Pot, a shared licensed commercial kitchen

Immigrants and refugees who come to this country with the dream of owning their own business face many barriers. In addition to learning English, they face cultural barriers and a whole regulatory environment that is completely foreign. This spring, The ILC began a pilot class for students who want to learn about starting or growing a business and need to improve their English.

Two seasoned ILC teachers, Marcia Spector and Susan Rojas, spent months researching and developing a curriculum that will simultaneously enhance students’ English abilities and increase their knowledge of starting and running a business. The pilot program is running now with 18 students who have ambitions to start companies that range from an art gallery to an ecommerce site. Marcia and Susan’s instruction is augmented with field trips and expert speakers from fields such as economic development, law, accounting and finance.

Since this is a pilot program, the teachers may be learning as much as the students. The early feedback from students is fantastic, and we look forward to this class being another ILC innovation that other organizations will wish to emulate.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Study finds immigrants are critical to the U.S. health care system

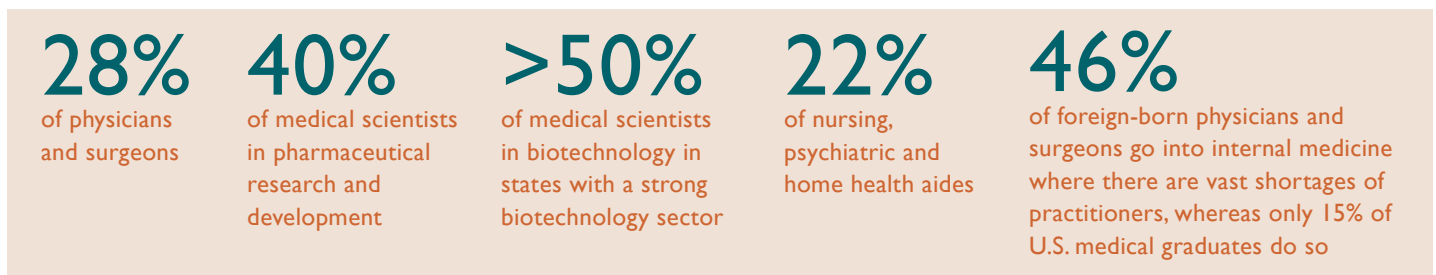
The most recent study published by the Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture between The ILC and George Mason University, indicates that the U.S. health care system is vastly dependent on the services, research and employment of immigrants across the country, and that dependence will only increase in the future.

The last time you needed health care was your physician, nurse or aide an immigrant? Was the medication you needed discovered by an immigrant? There's a good chance you answered yes to at least one of these, and this report explains why.



Retired Director of The ILC Public Education Institute Marcia Hohn was the lead author of the report. Marcia researched this broad topic for more than a year and concluded, “Immigrants touch our lives in many ways, but none so deeply as in the current health care system. From low-skill, entry-level jobs all the way to the leading medical researchers, health care in America is highly dependent on the skill, talent and energy of immigrants.”

Facts that may surprise you include that immigrants are 13 percent of the U.S. population and:



The dependence on foreign-born health care workers will increase significantly in the future as the U.S. faces a growing shortage of health care workers, from physicians to nurses to researchers. The American Medical Association predicts the demand for physicians alone is expected to exceed supply by a range of 46,000 to 90,000 by 2025.

The full report is available on the Institute for Immigration Research website at iir.gmu.edu.

Leveraging technology to make a difference

The Public Education Institute continues to spread the message about the economic and social contributions of immigrants far and wide through conference presentations and online workshops. In 2016 alone, we hosted three online events that reached hundreds of participants in nearly all 50 states.

The first was a webinar in January on immigrants in health care that included a panel of five experts. In May, the topic of immigrant integration was discussed by faith-based organizations leading the charge. It

included leaders from Catholic, Jewish and Muslim organizations. The annual teacher workshop that has been helping educators capitalize on the assets their immigrant students bring to the classroom since 2004 was held online again in early July.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, all of this content is delivered free of charge. Presentations and recordings from these online events are also available for free on The ILC website.



Joanne Seymour and Brian Ruh

Giving is Automatic

Joanne and Brian are long-time ILC donors who switched from making occasional donations to automatic monthly donations through The ILC website. There were several reasons why they made a conscious decision to make donations to the school in this manner. “The auto-charge every month is a great way to save time, eliminates the need to remember to make a donation, and of course, it greatly cuts down on paper for us and The ILC. We use this method for our favorite recipients so we can ensure that the amount intended happens without fail. Spreading the amount over a year is easier on our cash flow as well. For The ILC, it ensures a stream of revenue each month.” To start your own recurring credit card payment to The ILC, simply go to ilctr.org and click on the Donate Now button.

Thank You ILC Trustees

The ILC welcomes to the board Warren M. Heilbronner, partner at Sullivan & Worcester LLP and long-time champion of the school. We also thank Joel Beckman of Nystrom Beckman & Paris LLP for his years of service and whose term ended.

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It is with our deepest thanks that we recognize the following community groups, corporations, foundations and individuals that made financial and in-kind contributions to The ILC between January 16, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

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