

# *Giving Immigrants a Voice*

Founded 1992

SUMMER 2015

## Donations spark inter-generational learning.



An ILC student reads to her daughter at Family Literacy Day.



Volunteer Nathan Bornstein reads to students and their families at Family Literacy Day.

Imagine not being able to read to your child, help with homework or read a report card. What if you'd never heard of a parent-teacher conference, and you were afraid to go because you don't speak the language? These are the kinds of challenges that immigrant parents face every day. That's why The ILC periodically holds Family Literacy workshops for students who are also parents or caregiving grandparents for children in grades K-8. Since November, The ILC held five workshops that served more than 60 students. Workshop topics included the importance of understanding summer reading list requirements, doing literacy activities with children during the summer and arranging for childcare for pre-school children.

In June, one volunteer, Sandy Bornstein, and her son Nathan organized a Family Literacy Day for ILC students. They gathered all the books their family had outgrown and all their friends' books as well. This treasure trove of high-quality children's literature was offered to ILC students and their children. Activities also included reading, crafts and eating healthy snacks. Thank you, Sandy and Nathan, for creating a really fun, family event!



An ILC student selects a donated book for her daughter at Family Literacy Day.



Books donated to The ILC Family Literacy Program



An ILC student reads with her son at Family Literacy Day.

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Diane Portnoy

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## Your support continues to pay off 23 years later.

All students at The Immigrant Learning Center set goals to achieve as their English improves. Usually these goals, such as getting a driver's license, a new job or entering a training program, are merely first steps on a long ladder of success. Rarely do we have the satisfaction of knowing the long-term outcome. Leon is one exception.

Leon Spivak came to The ILC in 1993, less than a year after I opened the school. He and his mother and grandmother left Russia earlier that year to avoid the anti-Semitic culture and economic uncertainty. As he says, "When I came here, I had no spoken language. I had never spoken with any English-speaking people."

In the early '90s, following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the school was full of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Today, only one percent of our students come from Russia. Regardless of what languages students speak, ILC teachers have always insisted on strictly English in the classroom. Leon recalls jokingly, "You guys were mean. You didn't let us speak Russian."

After studying at The ILC, Leon passed the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and attended New York University Dental School. Although he had attended dental school in Russia, like many immigrants in accredited fields, he had to start over in the United States. He graduated, passed the boards, and has been practicing dentistry ever since in Carver, MA. He was included several times in the "America's Top Dentists" by Consumers' Research Council of America. He has made the most of the opportunities this country has to offer, and it all started with learning the language.

Recently, Leon came back to The ILC on his way to get coffee. You see, he has taken over the practice of a retired dentist in Malden. We are now practically neighbors, and Leon passes by The ILC on his way to Dunkin' Donuts.

We may not know the details, but rest assured there are 8,400 other success stories out there, thanks to support from donors like you.



Leon, a former student from Russia, returns to Malden to run a successful dental practice.



*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.

## FOCUS ON FUNDER

Tam has been a regular donor to The ILC since 2009, often giving multiple donations each year. He is also a student in the Friday morning Senior Conversation Class. Tam worked on a rice farm, as a police officer and served in the military in his home country, Vietnam, before moving to the U.S. in 1985. He worked as a dishwasher at the Westin Hotel for 10 years. He is married with six children: three boys and three girls, some of whom are college graduates. He gives money to the school because he likes the teachers, staff and students and is learning English. Thank you, Tam, for your continued support of The ILC.



Tam, a student from Vietnam, is a regular donor to The ILC.

To learn more about the Senior Conversation Class, see the story on page 4.

## ILC BOARD OF TRUSTEES NEWS

The ILC recently welcomed two new trustees: Nereyda Garcia, senior director of compliance for Biogen, Inc., who is an immigrant from Cuba; and Saritin Rizzuto, assistant vice president for Metro Credit Union, also an immigrant, from the Dominican Republic. Judge Frank J. Bailey, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, succeeded trustee Arthur G. Koumantzelis, a private investor, as board chair. Former Citizens Bank Senior Vice President Richard M. O’Keefe resigned from the board after many years of service. Congratulations to Nereyda, Saritin and Frank, and many thanks to Richard for his long-time service and support and to Arthur for continuing as a trustee.

### SAVE THE DATES

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

October 28, 2015                      The ILC Autumn Benefit  
The State Room

December 1, 2015                      Giving Tuesday - A National Day of Charitable Giving

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

### Try a recurring gift in 2015

Your support is a critical means for giving immigrants a voice in 2015. To make giving more convenient for you, The ILC is now accepting automated recurring gifts through our website. You can choose to give monthly, quarterly or yearly in any amount. Simply go to [www.ilctr.org](http://www.ilctr.org) and click Donate Now.

For more information, please contact Kathy Smith, Director of Development, at (781) 322-9777 or [ksmith@ilctr.org](mailto:ksmith@ilctr.org).

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Sharing best practices makes your contributions go farther.

In Massachusetts and all across the country, the number of immigrants and refugees wanting to learn English far exceeds the availability of classes. Here at The ILC, we maintain a consistent waiting list of 500. For people with literacy challenges entering this already taxed system, it can be particularly difficult to receive the help they need to become productive members of society. That's why your support is so important. The ILC's Literacy Program is completely funded by private donations. This groundbreaking program teaches speaking, reading and writing English to those who may have never learned to read or write, or have other learning challenges that leave them struggling in a typical classroom.

To expand the number of these underserved newcomers that we can help, The ILC created the Low-Literacy Sharing Group, a support group for educators serving adult learners in Massachusetts. The group met for the second time on May 14, 2015. Participants from nearly a dozen different programs observed ILC Literacy teachers in action and then met to discuss what they learned and what next steps to take. The experience was valuable for everyone involved. One participant commented, "Yesterday, I learned how much I do not know about teaching literacy and will look forward to online and in person sharing." The group plans to meet quarterly and share resources online.

## Senior conversation class helps elder immigrants.



Maria from Peru practices speaking English in the Senior Conversation Class.

Every Friday morning, approximately 20 immigrant seniors come to The ILC to attend a three-hour, weekly conversation class taught by Gedeus Jeantilus, an immigrant from Haiti. Funded by Mystic Valley Elder Services, this low-level English class has a two-fold purpose: to help immigrant seniors learn conversational English and to lessen their social isolation due to language barriers. Students study vocabulary words for holidays, seasons of the year, parts of the body, grocery shopping, going to a doctor's office and other themes with the help of several volunteers who work one-on-one with the seniors or in small groups. Gedeus, a talented musician who sings, plays piano and flute, uses music to help reinforce lessons around grammar, numbers, vocabulary and some navigational skills. At the end of each class, students tell each other to have a nice weekend as they dance out the door to Gedeus' uplifting music. Come by one Friday and join in the fun!

## ILC students benefit from job fairs.

Nearly two dozen students attended job fairs this spring assisted by ILC Career and Education Advisor Carol Weigert. The first fair they attended was a skills training panel of nine participants, hosted by English for New Bostonians. It was a free event that provided ILC students with information on skills training programs. The second job fair was hosted by Career Source Career Center in early June. One ILC student from this event, Ernst (from Haiti), was hired by LSG Skychefs as a driver. Three students were accepted by Jewish Vocational Services to take a Hospitality Training course this summer. Students were exposed to companies such as Marriott, Hostelling International and Homewood Suites to name a few. Everyone who attended these fairs benefited from the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom in the real world.



Ernst, student hired by LSG

# SCHOOL NEWS

## ILC students learn in and out of the classroom.



ILC students learn about the Liberty Tree at the Boston Public Library.

ILC teachers often pair subject matter with English lessons so students learn the language and the culture of their newly adopted home. Linda Altvar chose civics as one of the themes of her Level 4 class this spring. In class they talked about civil rights and responsibilities, and they learned about the Liberty Tree where colonists in Boston staged the first act of defiance against the British government. In June, the class visited the Boston Public Library. They took an informal tour of the library and visited the “We Are One” exhibit, which includes a tribute to the Liberty Tree. Students wrote their definitions of liberty on “leaves” and tied them to the exhibit along with many other Bostonians.

“Liberty means nobody can persecute me for my opinions”  
- Anne, Haiti

“For me, liberty means when I go out and I’m not afraid because here people respect the law.”  
- Willian, El Salvador

“Liberty for me is I can have more than one child. Children can grow up happy”  
- Zheng, China

“For me, liberty is the rights that you have and use with wisdom, responsibility and awareness.”  
- Elzenice, Brazil

## The ILC moves full STEAM ahead.

Four students from The ILC Theater Class were invited by the Linden STEAM Academy in Malden to talk to four second grade classes as part of their geography and cultural diversity lesson. The Linden STEAM Academy is a magnet school for communications, humanities and multi-media. This was the third consecutive year that students from The ILC participated. The four ILC student participants were Hafida (Morocco), Melba (Mexico), John (Haiti), and Wanpen (Thailand). They answered questions about their native countries, favorite foods, music, families and school experiences. “This continued interaction between STEAM and ILC students is mutually beneficial as it provides an opportunity for learning on both ends,” says Director of ILC English Language Programs Karen Oakley. The STEAM students get a cultural learning experience and understanding of life in other countries, while The ILC students get an opportunity to practice English. It was an exciting day for everyone!



An ILC student helps a second grade class with geography and a cultural diversity lesson.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Five honored as 2015 ILC Immigrant Entrepreneurs of the Year.



From left are University of Massachusetts Boston Chancellor Dr. J. Keith Motley, The ILC Public Education Institute Director Deniz Mohammed, Life Science Winner and Toxikon Corp. CEO Laxman Desai, ILC Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy, High-Tech Winner and Acquia CTO Dries Buytaert, Business Growth Winners and swissbakers Co-Founders Thomas and Helene Stohr, Neighborhood Business winner and Ultra Beauty Salon Founder Damaris Pimentel, and MA Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash.

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) hosted The 2015 ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards Dinner at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, MA, on May 7. Members of the state government, economic and community development, banking, media and business sectors were among the 250 guests who celebrated the contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs to the commonwealth. This year's 33 nominees started more than 50 businesses, employ nearly 2,000 people and generated income and investment totaling more than \$1 billion.



Special guest Gov. Charlie Baker addresses guests at the reception.



Business Growth nominee Ravi Meruva and High-Tech nominee Dinesh Wadhvani

### Nominate an immigrant entrepreneur

The fifth annual ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards Dinner will be held on Thursday, April 28, 2016. Help The ILC raise awareness of the economic contributions of immigrants by nominating outstanding entrepreneurs. More information is available at [www.ilctr.org/events](http://www.ilctr.org/events) or by contacting Karen Glover at [kglover@ilctr.org](mailto:kglover@ilctr.org).

### Annual ILC Golf Classic Finds a New Home.

The 17th Annual Golf Classic, held on Monday, June 8, swung into great form at its new home at Pine Brook Country Club in Weston, MA. Near-perfect spring weather, a picturesque golf course and complimentary rolled cigars were enjoyed by 102 golfers.

Other winners were Sean Gormley, closest to the pin; Jack Dunphy, longest drive for seniors; Cameron Clough, longest drive for men; Kelly Wellborn, longest drive for women; and Elliot Herman, putting contest.

The ILC is deeply grateful to the law firm of Sullivan & Worcester LLP and other generous sponsors, friends of The ILC and volunteers for making this event a real hole-in-one kind of day.



The first place winners were Justin Benincasa, Justin Leon, Mike Linskey and Andy Fienberg.



Runners up were Jay Czarnecki, Kevin Czarnecki, Chris Choma and Matt O'Doherty.

## EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

### The ILC Public Education Institute reaches new audiences with its free online workshops.

The ILC Public Education Institute continues its free, online education while expanding its reach with new topics and new audiences.

Seven experts discussed their pioneering integration work and lent their expertise to attendees from faith-based organizations in 33 states during the newest online workshop, Talking to America About Immigrants and Immigration: Faith Perspectives, held February 26, 2015.

The free, online workshop Immigrant Student Success: Models and Tools for K-12 and Adult Educators, now in its fourth year, took place in July with new modules and presenters who offered practices to capitalize on the benefits of classroom diversity.

### The ILC educates at national conferences.

This spring, The ILC Public Education Institute Director Denzil Mohammed led the workshops on U.S. immigrants and their contributions to the country and the economy at the following conferences: the annual Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference in Denver, CO; the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education's NETWORK 2015 Conference; the 2015 Cambio de Colores Conference: Latinos in the Heartland at the University of Missouri.

In the fall, the Public Education Institute will lead more workshops at conferences for the National Council for Workforce Education, National College Transition Network and the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE).

To learn more, contact Denzil at [dmohammed@ilctr.org](mailto:dmohammed@ilctr.org).

### The Institute for Immigration Research emerges as a go-to source for immigration data.

The IIR is a joint venture launched by The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. and George Mason University in 2012. The requests for information are accelerating as the Institute for Immigration Research (IIR) becomes increasingly well known by audiences ranging from academics to politicians to the media and more. Recent examples include a customized fact sheet for Minnesota's fifth district for Congressman Keith Ellison, factual support for Forbes' article "American Dreamers: Foreign Born Women Making Fortunes In U.S." and a new research project studying the African immigrant population in D.C. with the Executive Office of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs.

This fall, the Institute will launch an immigration data on demand tool on its website for anyone to request and receive immigration data in their area of interest.



Participants at The ILC Public Education Institute's workshop at the NETWORK 2015 Conference on May 15, 2015

As seen in

**Forbes**

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