

# *Giving Immigrants a Voice*

WINTER 2015

## Forty Countries Represented in ILC-Sponsored Swearing-In Ceremony for New Americans



October 2, 2014, was a dream come true for nearly 100 new Americans who took the oath of citizenship at the Malden Senior Center. Because of our dedication to helping immigrants' dreams come true, The Immigrant Learning Center sponsors this ceremony every year.

ILC teacher Jeantilus Gedeus, an immigrant from Haiti, sang the national anthem. ILC trustee Judge Frank Bailey officiated the ceremony, and ILC Board Chair Arthur G. Koumantzelis led the Pledge of Allegiance. Diane Portnoy shared her story about coming to America as a child and how seeing her parents and their friends struggle to make a new life motivated her to start The ILC. Other welcoming remarks were given by Malden Mayor Gary Christenson and keynote speaker Nereyda Garcia of Biogen Idec.

Family and friends looked on with pride as their loved ones from Albania to Vietnam took the Oath of Allegiance with American flags in hand. They and their children are gifts to this country.

### New Citizens at The ILC

Congratulations to the following 17 students who became citizens in 2014:

Mary Alaby, Haiti; Marie Claudine Derival, Haiti; Yeni Garcia, El Salvador; Namgyal Lama, Nepal; Can Le Li, China; Marie Ghislaine Mauretour, Haiti; Maria Mendez, El Salvador; Sakera Banu Gulm Basir Nagpuria, India; Suk Ying Ng, Hong Kong; Maria Palencia, El Salvador; Ana Pleitez, El Salvador; Hemlata Rana, India; Jamila Salem, Iraq; Shahnaz Tabatabaei, Iran; Marcia Moreira Vendrame, Brazil; Gyaltzen Wangmo, Tibet; Wilson Yau, Hong Kong.



ILC student and new citizen Hemlata Rana pictured with her husband, Rajesh



ILC student Mona Menkari, pictured with her daughter, took the oath of citizenship at The ILC-sponsored ceremony

# MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER AND CEO

With your help, we are now improving more lives than ever

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Diane Portnoy

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I am always looking for ways to stretch your donations and serve as many immigrants and refugees as possible. From the day the school opened with 60 seats until today, there has always been a waiting list.

I think about the months that students spend waiting and how hard their life is without English, and it motivates me to do more. Each session, we examine the waiting list and adjust class offerings to try and address the greatest need.

I am thrilled to announce that last session we were able to hire an additional teacher. We can now serve 450 students each session. That's a 650% increase over where we started in 1992. Your generosity makes this possible.

To make giving even easier, we recently upgraded our online donation page. You now have the option to make a recurring gift monthly, quarterly or yearly, whichever works best for you. I hope that this convenience makes it easier for you to make The Immigrant Learning Center part of your giving priorities.

Thank you for giving immigrants a voice.

*Diane Portnoy*

## ILC STAFF RETIRE

Marcia Drew Hohn, EdD, retired in November 2014 after 40 years of service to the health, education and immigration fields, the last 11 years of which were spent creating and leading The ILC's Public Education Institute. Marcia joined The ILC in 2003 and fashioned a nimble, credible and unique Institute that educates the public on the economic and social contributions of immigrants. She remains a member of The ILC's Board of Trustees.



If you have attended any ILC event, chances are you've met our event planner, Peggy Loudon. This January, she retired after 17 years of service at The ILC. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and Peggy's creativity, aesthetic eye and disciplined attention to details, events such as The ILC's Golf Classic, Autumn Benefit and the Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner are always first class.

The ILC thanks Marcia and Peggy for their many years of extraordinary, dedicated service. They will be very much missed.

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.

# SPECIAL EVENTS

## Autumn Benefit



Thanks to our sponsors and nearly 200 attendees, The ILC's 2014 Autumn Benefit at the New England Aquarium was a big success. Myrtle the Turtle and Friends were very gracious hosts showing off their newly renovated home.

During dinner in the Harbor View Terrace Tent, Diane Portnoy told guests about the work The ILC does to give immigrants a voice, and Hasna Sefiani, a former student from Morocco and current staff member, from Morocco, brought it to life with her story of coming to America. The funds raised that night will help many more newcomers like Hasna create a better life in this country.

## SAVE THE DATES

### **The ILC Golf Classic finds a new home Monday, June 8, 2015**

The ILC is pleased to announce that the 2015 Golf Classic will be moving to the Pine Brook Country Club in Weston, Massachusetts. Located just 11 miles north of downtown Boston, Pine Brook enjoys a reputation as one of the finest private clubs in the state and offers a challenging, beautifully maintained course. The date is Monday, June 8. Please update your calendar with the date and new location.

### **Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards Dinner Thursday, May 7, 2015**

The fourth annual ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards Dinner will be held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge, MA.

More details for both events will be available on our website at [www.ilctr.org](http://www.ilctr.org) in early 2015.

## SCHOOL NEWS

### Your contributions are magnified through the Low Literacy Sharing Circle

Immigrants with literacy challenges across Eastern Massachusetts are helped by this new program



Antonio Lobo, a teacher with the Gilbert Albert Community Center in Dorchester, discusses teaching methods with ILC teacher Jeantilus Gedeus at the inaugural meeting of the Low Literacy Sharing Circle

It's hard enough to learn to speak, read and write in a new language as an adult in a foreign country. It can seem nearly impossible for students who, for reasons ranging from poverty to war, religious restrictions or learning disabilities, never learned to read and write in their first language.

These students who are often left behind in traditional classes learn to read, write and speak English in The Immigrant Learning Center's innovative Literacy Program. Your support has helped thousands of these vulnerable students. To help other educators meet similar challenges, our Literacy instructors have written articles and delivered workshops, yet it still seemed like they were barely able to scratch the surface of the need.

To make an even bigger impact, the director of The ILC Literacy Program, Kathleen Klose, launched a Low Literacy Sharing Circle on October 2, 2014. So far, nearly 50 educators from across Eastern Massachusetts have signed up to share ideas, resources and mentoring.

The generosity of ILC supporters brings hope to this particularly vulnerable group of newcomers. Thanks to the new Sharing Circle, that hope will now ripple through to touch the lives of many more immigrants in Massachusetts.

### ILC student shines in Window Arts Malden



ILC student Minghuang with his paintings

ILC student Minghuang Zhang from China was chosen to be one of 23 local artists whose works were displayed throughout the city as part of the ninth annual *Window Arts Malden* from September 21 through October 12, 2014. Minghuang's extraordinary, colorful portraits and landscapes graced the front windows of The ILC. He was also invited to do an exhibit at the Malden Access Television Art Gallery.

As a pre-school child in China, Minghuang loved to draw, but his parents had no money to buy art supplies. So using small stones, he drew pictures on the road near his home. Neighbors looked forward to seeing what new drawings would appear on the road each day. Minghuang

graduated college in 1987 and continued to study at the College of Art in Guangzhou, China, through 1989. In 2010 he drew a giant mural (300 square meters) for the Sri Lanka Pavilion as part of the Shanghai World EXPO 2010.

Minghuang immigrated to Malden in 2011. He came to The ILC to learn English so he could continue his career as an artist in the U.S. People told him that he couldn't be an artist in America because he didn't know English. He was advised to get a job and forget about making a living through his art. That is when he was inspired to go to Harvard Square and the Boston Common to sketch people. He enjoys being able to sketch a diversity of faces in America and he does 15 sketches a day.

He also shares his love of art by teaching drawing at a Chinese learning center on Sundays and to young children two days a week.

Minghuang hopes to leverage the attention he gained through *Window Arts Malden* and his improved English into a career as an artist in America.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Lessons learned at The ILC translate into valuable job skills

The management of a local Dunkin' Donuts franchise decided they wanted to hire more ILC students when they realized some of their best workers studied English at The ILC.

The recruiter contacted the school, and The Immigrant Learning Center's counseling staff arranged for her to come in and meet with students last fall. ILC counselors routinely help students with job fairs and applications, but this was the first time a job fair came to us.

Forty-five students had the chance to practice completing an application and speaking with the recruiter in English. Five lucky students were called in for interviews and hired!



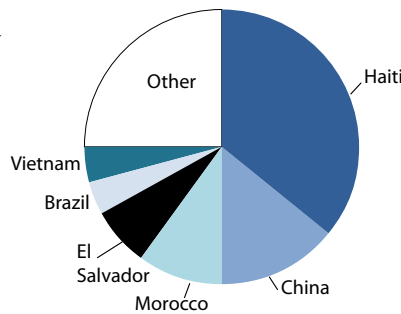
ILC student Fatima Dib Chaib from Morocco meeting Dunkin' Donuts recruiter Bridget Mercer

## 913 students want to say thank you

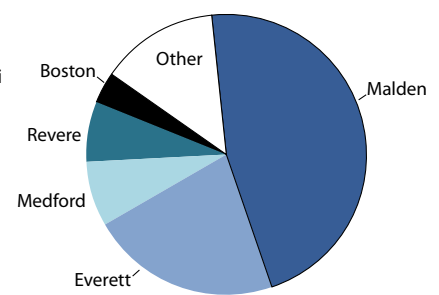
Thanks to your generosity, 913 immigrants and refugees were served during fiscal year 2014 (July 2013 through June 2014).

Improving their English skills has helped these students immeasurably. From day-to-day activities like reading street signs, reading the newspaper or seeing a doctor to important life goals like getting a job, becoming a citizen or furthering their education, everything is easier.

60 Countries of Origin



35 Cities of Residence



## Cultural understanding fostered through International Day at The ILC



Malden's Police Chief Kevin Molis (left) and Mayor Gary Christenson (right) enjoying music, dancing and singing at The ILC's International Day celebration

With students from 60 different countries sitting side-by-side in class, every day is international day at The Immigrant Learning Center. One special day is set aside each year for students to share their cultural heritage with each other, friends, family and the community. Planned by the students themselves, International Day highlights the food, music, dance, dress, poetry and culture of their countries of origin.

## EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

### Giving immigrants a voice nationwide

One of the ways your support gives immigrants a voice is through public education. Experts from The Immigrant Learning Center are increasingly asked to share the message of immigrants as assets. Last October, we took the message to a national audience at the Cambridge Forum and the National Women's History Museum.

Diane Portnoy moderated a panel discussion at the Cambridge Forum based on The ILC's book *Immigrant Struggles, Immigrant Gifts*. The panelists delved into the historical challenges and contributions of two immigrant groups, Germans and Jews, as well as today's immigrants. The Cambridge Forum is recorded in front of a live audience for broadcast on National Public Radio stations nationwide and made available on video by WGBH. To see the video, go to <http://bit.ly/cf-ilc>.

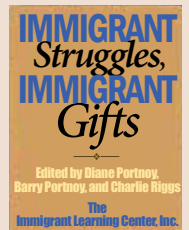


Diane Portnoy moderating a panel of experts at the Cambridge Forum on October 8, 2014

The Women's History Museum in Washington, D.C., sponsored a lecture entitled "New Beginnings: Immigrant Women and the American Experience." Diane Portnoy and Professor Donna Gabaccia led the audience in a lively discussion of the historical challenges for immigrant women and their impact on contemporary American culture. Barbara Harrison, an NBC4 Washington Anchor, was the moderator. Videos from this event are available at <http://bit.ly/nwhm-ilc>.

### Read *Immigrant Struggles, Immigrant Gifts* with your book club

If you are a member of a book club, reading *Immigrant Struggles, Immigrant Gifts* is a great way to learn more about your immigrant heritage, your fellow club members and the country. Contact Karen Glover at [kglover@ilctr.org](mailto:kglover@ilctr.org) or (781) 322-9777 to learn about discounted book offers for book clubs.



### Nominate an immigrant entrepreneur

Do you know an immigrant who started a successful business in Massachusetts? The Immigrant Learning Center needs your help to raise awareness of the economic contributions of immigrants by nominating entrepreneurs for the Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. Information about nominations, sponsorship and more is available on our website at [www.ilctr.org](http://www.ilctr.org) or by contacting Karen Glover at [kglover@ilctr.org](mailto:kglover@ilctr.org) or (781) 322-9777.

The deadline for nominations is March 13, and the Awards Dinner will be held on May 7, 2015, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge. You won't want to miss it, so update your calendars.

## BOARD NEWS

ILC trustee Jason Silverman was elected to the advisory board of the Institute for Immigration Research (IIR) at George Mason University located outside Washington, D.C. The ILC and the University established a partnership in 2012 to create the IIR to conduct national research on immigrants and how they positively impact the country and the economy.

Special thanks to MysticView Design for its assistance in the design, layout and production of this News Update.

## FOCUS ON FUNDERS

### ILC Volunteer Sally Cavanaugh

“I donate to The Immigrant Learning Center for the same reason I volunteer at the school each week. I believe in the mission of this school, and I am very happy to support it in any way I can. The ILC offers classes where students learn English as well as have an opportunity to receive assistance with many important aspects of adapting to life in this country. But what makes The ILC unique is that it is able to offer these classes and programs free of charge through fundraising and generous donations. I always enjoy my time spent volunteering here. The students I meet are an inspiration in so many ways, and I am impressed with the dedication of the staff and the opportunities The ILC offers its students. It is a place that makes contributing meaningful to me.”



### GivingTuesday on December 2, 2014, a huge success



The ILC's GivingTuesday Campaign on December 2 was a huge success! The school received \$44,522 in checks and online donations from 117 donors, which was matched by an anonymous donor for a total of \$133,566! These funds will help The ILC pay for more than 100 immigrant and refugee adults to learn English next year. Generous supporters like you make this possible. Congratulations go to Vincent Rivers, Thomas O'Brien, Eileen Kiley and Catherine Alexandrov who were the winners of the four American Express gift cards.

The thank you photo above is from our Literacy Program. This unique program offers students who are often left behind in other classes the opportunity to learn English and make a better life for themselves. They have no or very low literacy in their native language or a related learning challenge. Due to poverty, war or cultural restrictions, some of these adults have never attended school before. With your help, they are learning to speak, read and write English and lead productive lives in this country. Thank you to all our friends for another great campaign!

## DONORS

*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 July 1, 2014 and January 15, 2015*

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

### Individual donations include contributions received in memory of:

Dr. Stefan Alexandrov	Jorge Gomez
Joan and Joseph Broude	Scott Guitarr
Dr. Robert Earl Dargitz	Lucy Santoro
Terry Dempsey	Elena Volante
Patrick Donelan	Phillip Weinberg
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### Individual donations include contributions received in honor of:

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The Chamberlain Girls	Diane and Barry Portnoy
Susan Haley	Norma Portnoy
Dr. Marcia Hohn	Rose Thompson
Peggy Louden	Sophia Tsikrises
Catalina Necci	

and "all immigrants who make this country great!"