

# *Giving Immigrants a Voice*

FALL 2019

## Your support helps another new American achieve her goals.

When Sonia and her daughter walked into The ILC's Citizenship classroom on July 11, only one of them was a citizen, but that was about to change. Sonia had just passed the citizenship exam and, like prior students who passed, she returned to describe the experience to her classmates. She talked them through the entire experience, including details like being given a number and waiting for it to appear on a display screen. With each new student who succeeds, the remaining students are given encouragement and familiarity with the process so it seems less scary when it's their turn.



Sonia and her daughter return to Citizenship Class to share her experience passing the citizenship exam.



Now that Sonia is done with Citizenship Class, she's returned to the wait list to improve her English.

Sonia came to the United States in 2011 to join her husband, who was already a U.S. citizen. They had two children, a boy and a girl, who were both citizens at birth. Sonia spent all her time on her children until they were old enough for her to start considering her own goals. In January this year she started studying for the citizenship exam at The Immigrant Learning Center.

When Sonia's childcare arrangements fell through, an ILC volunteer, Deb Andersen, offered to continue working with Sonia in her home. Sonia feels that the support she received in and out of the classroom was crucial to helping her through the process, and she is eternally grateful. She was sworn in as a U.S. citizen on August 1, 2019.

Sonia finished high school in Morocco, but did not have an opportunity to find work before coming to the U.S. She hopes to find her first job after improving her English skills even more. Now that she's done with Citizenship class, she must re-apply for English classes. She joins the hundreds of other immigrants on the wait list hoping to improve their lives. Thanks to your continued support, we look forward to seeing Sonia again when her space opens up.

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## The ILC students benefit from one woman's desire to make a difference.

Shikha and The Immigrant Learning Center are a perfect match. According to her, "This is a place where I got the opportunity to get rid of my loneliness, depression, the things with which I was struggling. I got a family and good friends here. I heard the story of Diane Portnoy. It was very inspiring."

Shikha herself is an inspiration. She and her husband, Ani, were running a successful daycare in India when her mother-in-law's pleas to join her in the United States finally convinced them to move to Malden. They both have a background in IT, but her husband was the first to find a job, and Shikha could only get a spouse visa, which does not allow her to work. After more than a year of trying to occupy herself at home, Shikha started looking for ways to invest her time and talent. The Entrepreneurship Class brought her to The ILC, and she found a place where she is needed. She explains, "I met the many immigrants in my class, I talk to everybody, understand them. I saw the loneliness in their faces and their life." After the class ended, Shikha kept coming back to The ILC to volunteer, first with students in the Citizenship Class, then assisting with the Family Literacy program. She even serves as a substitute teacher on occasion.



Volunteer Shikha Vyas received a certificate of appreciation from The ILC Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy.

Shikha is also inspired by her father. Shikha says she learned to value compassion and hard work from watching her father who was always working for the family and their community. Likewise, she volunteers with MATV, the arts community and other local organizations in addition to The ILC. Even though she cannot get paid work, she continues to learn and improve her skills. For example, she became certified to work in daycare. If her visa situation changes, she'll be able to put her childcare experience to good use. There's no sign of changes any time soon, but she is not deterred. Shikha says, "If you want to do something nobody can stop you. Show your talent."

## Barry M. Portnoy Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Benefit

For the eighth year in a row, we will gather to honor the tremendous contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs across the commonwealth. From this year on, the Benefit is dedicated to Barry M. Portnoy. A consummate entrepreneur, Barry was the founder of The RMR Group and a founding board member of The Immigrant Learning Center. Not only did he help to make these awards possible, his unwavering belief in immigrants and the transformational impact of entrepreneurship are part of his enduring legacy.

*Join us on October 29 at the Royal Sonesta Boston for an elegant reception, dinner and awards ceremony.*





## The Immigrant Learning Center goes to Utah without leaving Malden.

When you support The Immigrant Learning Center, you're not just helping people in Malden, or even Massachusetts. You are touching lives nationwide. The ILC Public Education Institute gives immigrants a voice by informing Americans about the economic and social contributions of immigrants. The ILC reaches people no matter where they are through our webinars and online workshop. On May 8, 2019, 280 people from 43 states participated in an ILC webinar called *Beyond Partisan: Bridging Divides Across the Immigration Debate* about the messages, values and issues that resonate across party lines when building support for immigrants and refugees. One of those people was Joanna Onorato, outreach coordinator for the Moab Valley Multicultural Center in Moab, Utah. The webinar caught her attention because it resonated with their mission to build bridges across language and culture through family support, community collaboration and education.

We wouldn't have thought to target our message to Moab, Utah, but Joanna explained that Moab's economy is highly dependent on tourism, and the jobs in hospitality have attracted immigrants resulting in a diverse population for a small, rural town. She said, "Wherever you are, there's going to be a difference of opinion. Learning how to have a non-political dialogue with everyone and anyone is important for an organization like ours trying to serve the entire community." She found the tools and perspectives



Joanna Onorato, Moab Valley Multicultural Center, turned The ILC's *Beyond Partisan: Bridging Divides Across the Immigration Debate* webinar into a brown bag presentation in Moab, Utah.

offered in the webinar so valuable that she and her director wanted to offer it to the staff for professional development. Since they are a community organization, they went one step further and planned a public, brown bag presentation of "Bridging Divides" at the local library for August 21. Fortunately, The ILC Public Education Institute's webinars are available on-demand on our website, and we offer handouts and a whole library of online resources for anyone who's interested. To see some of these materials for yourself, go to [www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants/ilc-workshops](http://www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants/ilc-workshops).

## Double your impact!

*a Voice*  
v  
#GIVINGTUESDAY

December 3, 2019

Make your gift go further on Giving (a Voice) Tuesday. An anonymous donor will match your contribution dollar for dollar. Contributions from new donors will be matched two to one, so this is a great time to share your enthusiasm for The ILC with your friends. Created as a

response to commercialization and consumerism in the post-Thanksgiving season, GivingTuesday is a global day of giving celebrated in 90 countries. Be on the lookout for our posts on Twitter and Facebook, and go to [www.ilctr.org/givingtuesday](http://www.ilctr.org/givingtuesday) to make your donation.

# Thank You 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 during Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019).*

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## Literacy for the whole family

The ILC students who are primary caregivers, parents and grandparents, face a tough decision in the summer. Many of them have no childcare options once their children's school lets out for the summer, and they must put their own education on hold to care for the kids at home. This summer, The ILC's Family Literacy Coordinator, Trish Micheli, created weekly opportunities for them to work on literacy-related projects while they escape the heat with their children at The Immigrant Learning Center. On August 1, Malden Mayor Gary Christenson read a book to the children about recycling. He began by saying that when he was young, his mother told him the most important thing a child can do to be successful in life is read. With your support, we intend to set up these children and their parents for reading success.



Malden Mayor Gary Christenson shares the importance of reading and recycling with The ILC students and their children.

## The ILC Teachers recognized for contributions to adult education.



Kathleen Klose has been teaching English at The Immigrant Learning Center since 1998. In June, her many contributions, including being the driving force behind the Literacy Program, the Theater Class, and now designing two levels of Citizenship Classes, was honored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education with their Outstanding Educator Award.

The ILC's Advising Coordinator, Robbin Kotajarvi, joined an advisory panel for SABES, the Massachusetts adult education professional development system, in September 2018. This honor is a reflection of Robbin's deep expertise and allowed her to help shape the future of professional development for adult educators.



## Happy Birthday!

Happy belated birthday to our supporters who asked for donations to The ILC instead of presents.



Mark Correia  
Stacey Gilchrist  
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