

# IN OTHER WORDS

*During our tutoring sessions, we often must find "other words" to communicate.*

Spring 2009 Newsletter of the

## VOLUNTEER ENGLISH PROGRAM

in chester county

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## VEP NEWS

### Board News

The Board of the Volunteer English Program is proud of the service provided by our organization. The energy and skills of our paid staff, combined with the commitment of our 200 volunteer tutors constitute an enormous gift to the people of Chester County. During the past year the Board, which meets monthly, as well as during a day-long retreat, reaffirmed the mission of the institution. We set four strategic goals: to increase our fundraising endeavors, in order to serve the growing number of immigrants needing our services; to build our identity and improve our visibility; to invest in organizational development; and to increase and retain tutors and volunteers. Under the leadership of President Dave Garrison we also created a new Advisory Board of local leaders who might give insight and guidance to our organization. The most important upcoming event will be the annual Breakfast at Longwood, scheduled for Friday, June 5, 2009. We encourage all local businesses, interested citizens, volunteer tutors, and students to attend.

### Thank You

Thank you to Board member Sue Heist whose recent birthday celebration resulted in a generous donation of \$300 to the Volunteer English Program. Friends and neighbors of Sue's hosted a birthday party for her and suggested that guests bring a donation for one of Sue's favorite charities instead of gifts. Thank you to Sue for choosing VEP as the recipient of her birthday donations!

## TUTORS & STUDENTS

### Student/Tutor Recognition



*Clockwise: VEP Tutor, Molly Lenowitz, and student, Xuemei Li; students and tutors get ready to enjoy an international feast; tutor Kate Keslick introduces her students, Xiaomei Liu and Gabriela Garcia, before they give their presentations at the tutor/student reception.*

### Tutor Tips

Immigrants and other adults who want to learn or improve their English skills may log on to a new free Online English Portal called USALearns. The US Dept. of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Ed., through its Division of Adult Education and Literacy, oversaw the design of USALearns.org. The portal is to "help immigrants learn English, to expand their opportunities, and to make effective contributions to American society." To access or learn more about the USALearns, visit: <http://www.USALearns.org>.

Two other web sites you may want to investigate are [www.ESLGold.com](http://www.ESLGold.com), which has free English teaching and learning resources and a speaking tab for practicing listening to and speaking English, and <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/pron.htm>, for pronunciation practice.

Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth has started a listserve for tutors. They hope to have it become an active, useful, on-line discussion group for tutors. If you would like to join the group, please go to <http://groups.google.com/group/tutors-in-the-commonwealth>.

## Welcome New Tutors

We welcome the new tutors who attended the September and January tutor trainings.

Thank you!

Fred Akl	Toby Koch
John Badner	Denise Kulp
Patricia Barker	Elizabeth Lancashire
Pat Barone	James Laraia
Shirley Bateman	Cecilia Leathem
Merilee Bodzin	Pat Mapps
Alison Bond	Beverly Marks
Sarah Brady	Ruth Ann McAfee
Ann Caulfield	Larry and Lorraine McClain
Stephanie Clark	Helen McCory
Chris Conroy	Wynne Milner
Betty Dunkel-Hernon	Margie Nangle
Susan Farina	Kristaq Pano
Anita Ferez	Sonia Pant
Margaret Fitori	Frank Pazolski
Carin Ford	Helen Proger
Sally Fort	Thomas Ross
Edna Freud	Nancy Satinsky
Alison Frysinger	Barry Schickling
Lisa Gallagher	Julie Schiela
Alexandra Gennerella	Mary Louise Shea
Claudia Giales	Ashley Smith
Carolyn Gladstone	Barbara Smith
Sue Gold	Nancy Snoke
Luiz Gomez	Lisa Steinhauer
Meredith Habbershon	Judy Stockwell
Martha Hansen	Sharon Stradling
Susan Hanson	Fred Struckmeyer
Bridget Hartmann	Lisa Sweeney
Fran Hoekstra	Padma Tata
Jun Jimenez	Alexis Turner
Victoria Jones	Suzanne VanVechten
Judy Kahl	Wendy Walsh
Peg Kauffman	Anita Wang
Joe Kerkering	Rosemary Whitehead
Kim Khoury	Diane Wilson
Stephanie Kincaid	Ella Wilson
Dee Kinney	Barbara Young
Sarah Kline	Linda Yurkutat
Ann Koch	

## Job Opportunity

PA is looking for Spanish speaking legal residents to work on the 2009/2010 census. The pay is good and the test may be taken in Spanish. For more information, visit the web site at <http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs/index.php> or phone 1-866-861-2010.

## Warning!

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has identified a scam targeting immigrants that seeks to solicit information that is typically used for identity theft. The scam instructs the victim to complete a fraudulent "IRS Request for Recertification of Foreign Status" form. The IRS addresses this topic on their web site at <http://www.irs.gov/>. Click on Phishing and e-mail Scams.

## Congratulations

Congratulations to Wenhua (Angela) Li, student of Sheila Frech, and her husband upon the birth of their baby girl, Yi Fan, in September 2008.

Congratulations to Sema Inan, student of Nancy Snoke, and her husband upon the birth of their baby girl, Ela, on Dec. 1, 2008.

Congratulations to Edina Giber-Bali, student of Lillie May Brown, and her husband upon the birth of their baby girl, Hannah, born on March 5.

Congratulations to Eman Almaqassissi, student of Linda Sturgeon, and her husband upon the birth of their baby girl, Jenna.

Congratulations to Lucia, former student of Carla Herkner, and Utka upon their marriage in February.

## Student Writing

### Life is the Best Teacher!

*By Claudia Duemler-Vogt, student of Yvonne Peiffer*

When I came to the U.S. in June 2007, I was not unprepared. I had had several years of English in school and I never had any problems with it. But I have not used the language for the last 13 years.

So when I came here, I was very optimistic and I expected no problems with the language. What a mistake!

We rented a house and my first meeting with the landlord was very disappointing. I was shocked when I was unable to understand her and I could not imagine talking to her or to other Americans in person or on the phone.

My next shock came as we toured a local preschool. The lady was so nice and explained everything to me, but I did not know what she was talking about. She used the word "potty" a few times and I understood "party." How confusing! I was not used to the American accent at all! After that tour I thought: "How will I ever get used to this language!"

A friend told me about VEP and soon I got together with my tutor, Yvonne. We have met once a week since October 2007. I got used to the accent very fast and I learned a lot of idioms, expressions and most important, the American way of life. Yvonne has been my best experience of this country! We have a wonderful time together and it is so good to get all the training from a native speaker!

We purchased a house in December and I learned all the terms about house buying. We use the English words now, even if we talk in German. I say "countertop," "appliances," and "floorplan" instead of using the German words. Why? I am so used to the English words that they now come faster to me than the German words.

I learn new words each week when I practice the spelling words with my son for school. And even if our car gets service, I learn new words like "tire rotation" or "springs." Going to a dentist or health care provider offers the chance to learn more English, too. Nobody learns terms like "root canal" or "blood work" at school! And now I use the words "flu shot" like it would be German!

I bought my first English book last week and I was amazed how easy it was to read. I always refused to read English books because reading should be a relaxing activity and not work. But after 16 months in the U.S., it was no work at all. I can really say that there was no difference from reading a German book. Having finished the book, I realized for the first time that I was thinking in English!

Life and having a native speaking tutor is better and more effective than any English lesson at school. There is no better way to learn a foreign language as living in the country where the language is spo-

ken! I am sure there is still one thing I will never adapt to, however, the non-metric system!

## Mobile Phones

By Xuemei Li, student of Molly Lenowitz

What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones?

This story is about a mobile phone. It happened in a subway station. A beautiful girl was waiting for the subway to her college, but it wasn't on time. She needed to wait for a little while. She sat on a chair. A strange sound distracted her. She looked around and saw a cell phone under the chair. Someone lost it. She picked it up and answered the phone. A man said, "Hi! Who are you? I lost my cell phone somewhere. Did you pick my cell phone up? Would you return the phone to me, please? My name is Ming." The girl answered, "I am in the subway station, but I must go to school. My address is 20 Zhong Shan Rd." Ming said, "O.K. I will see you at 5:00 p.m. What's your name?" "Lily," she said, "I will meet you at the college gate. Bye-bye."

At 5:00 p.m., they met each other. The man was very handsome. The girl was very beautiful. They fell in love at first sight. A beautiful love story started here. They didn't know each other well, so they used cell phones to talk all the time. The cell phones helped them to get to know each other better. After two years, they got married.

They always think cell phones are good luck for them, but on the other hand, they spent a lot of money on the cell phone bills.



Tutor, Mary Ellen Smith, and student, Gete Wubshet

## A View from Abroad

By Andrea Wrumnig, student of Shannon Almquist

In my three years living in America, I have had a few unexpected experiences, but this was one of a kind.

It was my first election and probably also the last I could watch so closely. Even if I wasn't allowed to vote, I got involved. We got involved. My husband and I excitedly followed the election news--not on a daily basis but very regularly. We took sides, discussed the promises of the candidates and searched the internet for such terms as "caucuses"—I couldn't even pronounce this word at first—and "electoral voting system."

We wanted to understand what was going on in the election tech-

nically, emotionally, and cognitively.

But how couldn't we get involved? With weeks and months passing by, it became more and more clear that this election would be different from all others. There was no question for my husband and me who we—and whole Europe—would like to see as the new president of the U.S. I can't remember the last time Europeans were so unified in their enthusiasm for a presidential candidate.

But I still was filled with skepticism: Is America really ready for a visionary, black president? Will they take a risk with an outstanding, intelligent, very well spoken, but in fact inexperienced president?

Today—after a very weird, exciting and strongly emotional election night—I know America is ready for a change, and it won all my respect that night. With Barack Obama as a new president, America hopefully will play a more active role in foreign diplomacy again and will reach out to other countries working with them and not acting unilaterally. I think Barack Obama enjoys the full support of most political leaders from all over the world...

Even if the election of Barack Obama wasn't about race, it's still a fact that he is the first Afro-American president of the U.S., and it makes this election more special. Racism exists all over the world in different ways and intensity, but it is still there. But here is a country with its "rich" history of slavery and racism, and it is showing the world a new path! I really think that the election of an Afro-American president marks a new stage of democracy and gives us something to think about. It forces us non-American citizens to think about whether a similar constellation would be possible in our country. A black French president? Impossible! A Gypsy Hungarian president? Almost impossible. At least a woman took it so far in Germany: Angela Merkel as a first female Chancellor. It seems that we Europeans still have a long way to go. Or we need our Barack Obama, a man or woman with whom all people—Whites, Gypsies, Hispanics, Afro-Americans—can identify.

I'm really happy I was here in America at the time of the election and could experience such an intense historical event.

## Experiences of America

By Joamna Salinas, student of Betty Dunkel-Hernon

I come from Venezuela in South America, next to Colombia and Brazil. The reason I'm here is because Venezuela's president has been trying to install a communist system that has been affecting the political and economic situation in very bad ways.

I want to say what I like of America, but for that, I need to talk about my experiences here in your country.

My first time here was as a tourist in Dallas, Texas. Everything looked bigger and organized. I can remember how impressed I was with supermarkets, pharmacies, airports, malls, etc. I think most people who come here have the same opinion and it's amazing! Everything is organized and with enough space you never feel crowded if you don't want to.

During my second time here, I was an immigrant, because my husband got a contract job in Syracuse, NY. We were so happy and excited. Sadly, three months later he was fired because his communication skill in English was not sufficient to maintain the position. Could you imagine that? It was devastating for us.

Immediately we attended a nonprofit organization where we could take English classes without cost and they offered legal assistance if we needed it. This experience made me think what a wonderful country the U.S. is. We had help and met people who really enjoy doing this. In that moment, despite my sadness, I could realize the

English language as a universal language and how this language is capable of connecting people from everywhere. My classmates were from Italy, China, Kosovo, Vietnam, India, Iraq, etc. They all were in the same situation as we were and were ready to keep learning English.

Most people in my country think that life in the U.S. is one of the best things you can get. I believe they are right if always you are available and ready to learn and change. I continue enjoying this country in many ways even when I eat, because it is amazing to have the opportunity of tasting food from different cultures that have been merged here. It's not necessary to go to China, Vietnam, Spain, France, India, Japan, Greece, Italy, etc. to know how they like to eat.

To finish my message, I want to say that this country has a lot of good things, maybe I say too much to those people who don't give them value. In my case, I want to let you know how important my English tutor is and thank you so much for those people who are working in this organization. Without your support, the good things that make this country gorgeous are not possible.

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It is sad to see that, in our highly competitive and greedy world, we have lost touch with the joy of giving. We often live as if our happiness depended on having. But I don't know anyone who is really happy because of what he or she has. True joy, happiness and inner peace come from the giving of ourselves to others. A happy life is a life for others.

--Henri J.M. Nouwen  
Life of the Beloved

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## Election Day November 4, 2008

By Julia Hannon, student of Pat Ellison

I woke up at 5:30 a.m. I dressed in my uniform; I washed my face; made up a little bit, and I went to work at the hotel.

I came back from work at 8:00 p.m. I took a shower and changed my clothes. At that time my husband took me to vote at the township building. He told me that it is also the police station. When I was walking in, my husband told people there about me, that it was my first time to vote. I know a couple of people there. First they asked my name and gave me a paper to sign. After that, another man gave me a big envelope with a paper to pick the name of the president and representative--and a lot more--in a booth. Then, I waited in line to give my voted paper to the man who would tear the end of the paper and put the paper in the machine. It's done!

My husband and I walked out of the building. It was unbelievable; one man who wrote for the newspaper took a picture of me. He said, "Congratulations," and asked me, "Is this the first time for you to vote?" I said, "Yes." He told me to hold the end of the paper from voting and took a picture of me one more time.

## My Progress with English

By Chau Tran, student of Patricia Downing

I'm Chinese. I live in Phoenixville. I came to the United States when I was 27 years old. My biggest problem was to find a job. I didn't speak any English and I could understand very little. Fortunately, I found a job in Exton. I knew that English was important. Before, I al-

ways thought it was too late to learn English, but I was wrong. It is never too late to learn. So I went to the Volunteer English Program office to find a tutor. My tutor is Pat Downing. She has volunteered her time for the past six years to tutor me in English. Now my English is improving. My English is good enough to help me get a promotion at work. I'm proud of my accomplishments and I'm thankful to my tutor and the Volunteer English Program.

## The Inauguration

By Jung Hyun Kim, student of Fran Johannes

The inauguration was an exciting and beautiful event. I was thrilled that I could see the inauguration of the new American president. I have only seen Korean inaugurations. I watched it on TV, however, many people joined the celebration. And they congratulated Obama's family from their heart. It was great that a lot of people enjoyed the festivities. The new president and first lady looked comfortable and happy as could be. They were dressed in their best. Michele Obama's fashion was charming and graceful.

My son was interested in the leaving of the former president, because Bush could use Air Force One that my son saw at the movie. I was also impressed that the Obamas gave Bush a warm send-off. I had a pretty good experience. I hope to continue everyone's wish and delight of that day.

## Music to Our Ears

•**Nube**, student of **Sarah Coffey**, moved positions at her job and has been given more responsibility. She also was named Employee of the Year for the PA-based QVC office--apparently the first time someone in housekeeping has received this honor!

•**Eman**, student of **Linda Sturgeon**, obtained a library card from the Chester County Library. Student and tutor are reading children's books together and taking outings to the library, the mall, restaurants, etc.

•**Chau**, student of **Patricia Downing**, is now a Team Leader in the electronics manufacturing plant in which she works.

•**Henry**, student of **Karen Emory**, passed his citizenship test and became a citizen of the U.S. in Sept. 2008.

•**Mohammed**, student of Board member **Ed Gilardi**, became a U.S. citizen.

•**Josephine**, student of **Margaret Shields**, initiated a conversation with her employer regarding salary, benefits, etc. She was able to discuss some job-related difficulties that resulted in a positive outcome. Josephine also is learning to bake.

•**Ahmed**, student of **Ann McGurrin**, was promoted to manager at the car wash where he works.

•**Sophany**, student of **Pat Ellison**, became a citizen of the U.S. on Oct. 3, 2008, and voted for the first time in Nov. 2008.

•**Noemi**, student of **June Bigler**, is now employed as a medical interpreter at the Day Room at St. Agnes Church. She also started a new job with the County and bought a new house.

•**Audrey**, student of **Nancy Khair**, told her tutor that co-workers have noticed an improvement in her English, both pronunciation and use.

•**Malamani**, student of **Charley Parker**, obtained her driver's license.

•**Afrim**, student of **Bob McCann**, registered to vote for the first time. In addition, he made an agreement of sale on a condominium. He plans to move in February.

•**Myung-Hee**, student of **Marianne King**, received her nursing license from the State. While she is waiting to apply for a job, she is serving as a volunteer at Bryn Mawr Hospital.

•**Silvia**, student of **Cynthia Lyman**, has enrolled at West Chester University in the ESL Master's degree program. She also registered to vote and will be voting for the first time in November.

•**Haxhere**, student of **Nancy Holland**, started a full-time job at a printing company this month. She also is taking a grammar course at Delaware County Community College to improve her English.

•**Teresa**, student of **Sonia Pluta**, has "vastly improved her reading and grammar skills."

•**Kuvey**, student of **Connie Partridge**, passed her citizenship test on Sept. 26, 2008 and became a citizen of the U.S. on Sept. 30.

•**Khadija**, student of **Charlotte Pavlides**, passed her citizenship test on Dec. 10, 2008.

•**Teofilo**, student of **Luis Gomez**, had to make a vital presentation for his company which was to determine whether his contract would be extended. He "passed" with flying colors!

•**Lin**, student of **Tom Buchanan**, voted for the first time in the Nov. 2008 election. Lin also has been of help to her tutor in upgrading his computers, researching their specifications and capabilities, and given him guidance on computer purchases.

•**Gabriela**, student of **Kate Keslick**, finished her HR certification training at Villanova and is looking forward to taking the exam. Xi-aomei, Kate's other student, is steadily increasing in her confidence with English. She participates in discussions more freely and enjoys getting together with fellow students.

•**Gete**, student of **Mary Ellen Smith**, became a citizen of the United States on August 7, 2008.

•**Nada**, student of **Joyce Hurt**, became a citizen of the United States.

•**Angelica**, student of **Jennifer Bobalik**, received a nice promotion at work.

•**Maria**, student of **Margaret Fitori**, passed the test for her citizenship.

•**Andrew**, student of **Reuben Schonebaum**, got a second job and is pleased that it gives him more opportunity to engage in English conversation.

•**Pei**, student of **Carol Linsenmann**, completed her first semester at DCCC, passing all her ESL classes.

•**Xiao Yan**, student of **Mary Ellen Trego**, obtained a Master's Degree in Applied Statistics. She also voted in the election on Nov. 5.

## Mission Statement

The Volunteer English Program enhances the economic and social quality of life for immigrant families, community members, consumers, employers, and employees in Chester County by providing tutoring for adults to improve:

English language skills

Cultural understanding

Participation in the communities we share

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