

LANGUAGE ETC NEWS

Improving the lives of immigrants through education.

Volunteer Teachers Go Beyond the Classroom

One day a few years ago in her native Ethiopia, Dinke Deste's world changed in an instant. "I suddenly stopped being able to hear," she says. "Just like that."

Although Dinke didn't know it at the time, her hearing loss was a common side effect of the TB medication she had taken. But now, thanks to the determined efforts of two of her teachers at Language ETC, Dinke is hearing again.

When Dinke—who had come to Washington to work at the Ethiopian Ambassador's residence—first showed up in their Level 2B class, Bonnie Loeb and Robin Hanerfeld weren't fully aware of the extent of her hearing loss. Although she always sat in the front row and often asked the teachers to repeat their questions, she was fully engaged in classroom activities and excelled at written work. But when Dinke failed the audio portion of her final exam, the whole story tearfully came out. Deeply moved, Bonnie and Robin vowed to help Dinke find medical attention.

It wasn't easy. First they managed to secure insurance for her through a DC program for indigent residents, a process that took months. Then they found a primary care doctor who spoke Amharic. And after over 30 phone calls, they finally located an otolaryngologist who took Dinke's insurance. Acting as Dinke's advocates through a series of doctors' appointments and hearing tests, Bonnie and Robin discovered that Dinke had completely lost hearing in one ear and had suffered about a



Robin, Dinke and Bonnie

70% loss in the other. But, they were told, hearing aids could help.

It took more long months before Dinke received one of the aids, and she's still awaiting the second one. But even with only one of the aids installed, Dinke's world has changed again—this time for the better. Within a week, Bonnie and Robin were astounded by the improvement in Dinke's spoken English. "Getting the hearing aid was like turning on a light," Dinke

says. "Before, it was very hard to learn English. It is very easy now."

Dinke says none of this could have happened without Bonnie and Robin. "They helped me like I was one of their daughters," says the young woman, whose parents died when she was a girl. "I will not forget, ever."

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VILCEK FOUNDATION FUNDS COMPUTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

We are excited to report that the New York-based Vilcek Foundation has awarded Language ETC a \$10,000 grant. The funds are earmarked for the purchase of updated software for LETC's Language Lab and the expansion of its computer literacy education program.

"The Vilcek Foundation is thrilled to award this grant to Language ETC for the expansion of its technology education program," said Rick Kinsel, Executive Director of the Vilcek Foundation. "By providing learning resources—including a more comprehensive computer skills course, made possible by this grant—Language ETC opens professional doors to low-income adult immigrants, enriching not only the lives of its students, but also the wider community."

"As an organization that celebrates the accomplishments of foreign-born individuals living in the United States," he added, "we are proud to support Language ETC's efforts to foster a multicultural learning environment, as well as ensure future opportunities for student development and growth."

Building on the technology upgrades LETC was able to make last year with a grant from the Philip Graham Fund, the Vilcek grant will allow LETC to offer our students a Language Lab with the latest hardware and software. The Language Lab offers various types of English instruction software and is equipped with headsets and microphones to help students with pronunciation.

RECENTLY AT LANGUAGE ETC...

Students learned about other non-profit providers at the Community Services Fair on October 9, 2012.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Visit Our Website –
www.languageetc.org



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*The Language ETC Board of Directors welcomes Carlos Martin and Bonnie Loeb to the Board.



20 Years at Language ETC

It seems impossible that it's been 10 years since I was here celebrating our 10th anniversary. I never would have thought that I would be here for our 20th! I am thrilled to be able to mark another great milestone at Language ETC. We have much to celebrate this spring at our 20th Anniversary Celebration and I hope you will join us. (More details and invitations coming soon.)

With almost 750 students enrolled this fall, we are on track to surpass record enrollment for the year, as we did last year when we had an annual enrollment of 2,472 students. Last spring LETC piloted off-site classes with a conversation class at the Watha T. Daniel Shaw DC Public Library. This fall we have added two new off-site programs, both in apartment buildings in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. Providing classes to students where they live is a great way to introduce people to our programs. Students who have limited time or access to transportation are able to take classes just a few steps from their front door. We look forward to exploring other off-site possibilities this year.

Looking at how we can extend our reach is one of the areas we have addressed in our new three-year strategic plan. Our vision is that LETC will be the most supportive and accessible choice for immigrants to receive high-quality English instruction and other educational programs in the DC area. In addition to expanding our reach, we hope to enhance our programs and services, strengthen teacher development and training, and develop and implement a strategic communications plan. With 20 years behind us, we are excited about how we have grown and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Last August I was thrilled to be asked to record a "Community Minute" for Washington DC's local Public Radio station, WAMU. If you did not happen to catch it on your way to work, we have linked it to our website's homepage. WAMU did a great job of editing my comments to convey a sense of what we accomplish at LETC. What makes LETC unique is the volunteer/student bond that makes it so much more than a place to learn English. A perfect example is the story of Dinke Deste and her teachers Bonnie Loeb and Robin Hanerfeld in this issue of the newsletter.

Finally, we welcome Bonnie and her fellow long-time volunteer Carlos Martin to the Board of Directors. In this issue you will also read about our new Board Chair, Karen Sandler. While our past Chair, Jennifer Browning, is still on the board and contributing as much as ever, I would like to thank her for her leadership. LETC has advanced greatly under her direction and we have a terrific foundation from which to launch into our next 20 years!

Mercedes Lemp

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| ANC 2D | Holy Trinity Catholic Church | Philip Graham Fund |
| The Acacia Foundation | IDB-DC Solidarity Program of the Inter-American Development Bank | The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington DC |
| The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation | The Jovid Foundation | The Vilcek Foundation |
| Clark Charitable Foundation | Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation | Our Lady Queen of the Americas Church |
| The Dana Foundation | DC Office of State Superintendent of Education | Deloitte Consulting LLP |
| John and Cora Davis Foundation | | El Tamarindo |
| The Herb Block Foundation | | |



New Board Chair

KAREN SANDLER

In 2007, my friend (and now fellow board member) Natalie Wexler called me to see if I would be interested in filling in for a teacher who couldn't finish the term for a 2B class. It was my first experience at Language ETC, and like so many of our volunteers, I fell in love with our students and our mission. I never would have imagined that a few years later I would be elected to lead our Board of Directors. I feel very lucky to become Chair at such an exciting time.

We now have the best team of staff members and the most committed group of volunteers in our history. And speaking of history, this is a special year for all of us – Language ETC is now celebrating its 20th Anniversary. We are excited to reach this milestone and will be marking the occasion with special events throughout the coming year.

I am extremely honored to be given this responsibility, but I feel especially fortunate to be following in the footsteps of our former Chair, Jennifer Browning. Jennifer's tenure was eventful, coming in the midst of the great recession. Thanks



to her foresight and leadership, ably bolstered by Vice Chair Amy Berger, Language ETC came through that difficult era with an expanded funding base and a more secure future. All of us thank them – and YOU, our friends and supporters--for helping us weather the storm so that our students can count on us to be here for them for many years to come.

Jennifer also oversaw a change in our leadership, welcoming the return of Mercedes Lemp as our very able Executive Director. Fortunately, Jennifer and Amy still serve on our board, making my job and that of our new Vice Chair, Stephanie Lawson, all the easier. Their wisdom and guidance are greatly valued; our entire community, including our truly committed Board of Directors, thanks them for all they have done and continue to do.

There is always much to do to continue building quality programs that reach the many individuals who rely on us, and I look forward to the challenge, along with your help. If you have never visited LETC, please come! It's a special place worthy of your support. I hope to meet you soon!

iPads in the Classroom

This year has turned out to be the year of new and upgraded technology for LETC. With a few technology-focused grants, LETC has purchased new laptops, TVs, DVRs, projectors, and computer hardware and software. And we wouldn't be keeping up without iPads, which we'll roll out in classrooms this fall. We have a few uses in mind, but the possibilities are endless. We've done away with CD's that get scratched or lost and CD players that break every few months, and we've downloaded textbook-related content

from those CD's to the iPads. We will begin to ask teachers to take attendance on the iPad and will post the syllabus on them as well. We're also encouraging our teachers to take advantage of apps and websites they can use in class. And the iPad allows teachers to videotape students during classroom activities.

We recently introduced the iPads to students by asking them to fill out a survey they had previously completed on paper by using the online tool Survey Monkey instead. The students were excited to have the opportunity to use an

Morning teachers attend iPad training. From right to left: Larry and Susan Rausch, Michele McNamara, Martha Tansey, and Liz Lourie



iPad, and it's a great benefit to Language ETC to receive the survey results right away. We're looking forward to seeing how our resourceful teachers put the iPads to use.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN SEASON HAS BEGUN

LETC is excited to announce that it is once again part of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee-focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. The CFC is the world's largest workplace charity campaign and helps to raise millions of dollars each year. Pledges can be made by Federal civilian, postal, and military donors during the campaign season (September 1st to December 15th). Language ETC's CFC number is 50645. If you are eligible to give through the CFC we hope you will choose Language ETC as your charity this year.

A small contribution goes a long way at Language ETC.

Donate through www.languageetc.org Click on Network for Good on the home page or use this form. Student tuition is only \$120 for a three month term. Your contribution enables us to offer classes at these low prices and provide scholarships whenever needed.



Enclosed is a donation of \$: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

in honor or memory of: _____

Please notify: _____

Improving the lives of immigrants through education.



WHO
WE
ARE

With nearly 2000 students annually,

LETC provides practical and affordable English language education in a diverse and welcoming environment. Our proven student-teacher partnership approach to education removes barriers, giving students the confidence to fully participate at home, work and in society. Our small classes with two teachers and extra-curricular activities empower students to become self-sufficient.

As a leading, nonprofit school and advocate for adult education in the Washington, DC region, our volunteer teachers help our students achieve success. With 70% of our students improving at least one literacy level each year, we have greatly exceeded the national average of 40%.

Our organizational focus is the successful integration of each individual immigrant into his or her community. Students come from 75 different countries on five continents, bringing different backgrounds and life experiences.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
www.languageetc.org

SCHEDULE

Language ETC is open 6 days a week.

HOURS: MONDAY & WEDNESDAY: 1:30 PM – 8:00 PM
TUESDAY & THURSDAY: 9:30 AM – 8:00 PM
FRIDAY: CLOSED
SATURDAY & SUNDAY: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

IMPORTANT DATES:

NOVEMBER 12: CLOSED FOR VETERANS DAY
NOVEMBER 19-25: CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING
DECEMBER 9: END OF FALL TERM
DECEMBER 3: START OF WINTER REGISTRATION
DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 1: CLOSED FOR WINTER BREAK
JANUARY 12: START OF WINTER TERM

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
CALL LETC AT 202-387-2222.**

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