

LETC EXTRA!

Raul Mendoza's Full Schedule Keeps Him Focused

A G.E.D. STUDENT SUCCESS STORY

by Michele Cona

Despite the late hour, a wide-eyed Raul Mendoza just about leaped into his seat in front of me to begin our interview. But then he hesitated and bit into his smile when I asked about his day. It was long, I gathered, as he fidgeted and twisted the rolled-up magazine in his hands. I changed the subject. "Qué estás leyendo," I asked. He lit up with an excitement that swept across his face. *El*

Nuevo Constructor the title read. "I like to read a lot in my free time." Ironically, that phrase came so easily to him at that moment—*free time*. I quickly realized that *free time* is a precious commodity in Raul's life, and had been for nearly all of his 20 years.

He turned to an advertisement in *El Nuevo Constructor* that showed workers in the early morning hours walking from beam to

beam on top of a frame being built for a house. "This is what I do, from top to bottom, all day." Construction is grueling work for anyone at any age, but Raul still maintained a glimmer in his eye. "I want to go into architectural engineering, because I like that kind of work very much."

Raul's dream is to study at a university in the United States and he is preparing to take the G.E.D. within a few months. He



Raul Mendoza, shown here in his Sunday afternoon MS Word class, also takes G.E.D. prep at LETC. In addition to these courses (and his 40-hour work week!) his studies include English, Internet, and Excel, among others.

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Two New Members Added to Board

GEORGETOWN INSTRUCTOR AND DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICIAL



Renee Feather, an adjunct faculty member at both Georgetown University's Center for Language Education and Development and American University's TESOL M.A. Program, was appointed to LETC's Board in January. She says she was excited about the opportunity and, like the Board of Directors, believed she made a good fit for the school's

needs. And she hit the ground running. Renee not only chairs the Program Committee, which provides critical assessment of the ESL program, its curriculum, teacher training, and language lab, but she is also a member of the Steering Committee, which will help to set the agenda for the Board's strategic planning meeting later on this summer. Taking a hands-on approach to her service, Renee is regularly involved in teacher training and curriculum development at LETC and gives monthly progress reports to the Board. She is also involved in creating, implementing, and evaluating questionnaires for the staff.

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From the Executive Director

NEW SEASON, NEW ADDITIONS

We begin the Spring term with many new additions.

Classes started on April 12th and we were happy to welcome many new volunteers. Also new is our website, www.languageetc.org, which is now up in a draft format, with continual updates and more “bells and whistles” to come, including pictures and stories of our volunteers and students. Already on the site is information about our programs and funders, current and past issues of our newsletter *LETC Extra*, giving opportunities, and a list of staff and Board of Directors.

As you look at the Board list, you will notice that there, too, we have made some new additions. We are happy to welcome Renee Feather, a Georgetown University ESL professor, and Margie Ruiz, a Washington DC Latino activist and DC Public School Director, who both bring invaluable experience and dedication to Language, ETC. You can learn more about both of them in this issue.

In addition to new volunteers, a new web site, and new Board members, we also added new lifeskills workshops and seminars

(detailed in this issue). And, last but not least, thanks to the State Education Agency, our computer classroom now boasts 10 new computers that will greatly enhance our computer students’ experience.

We are very excited to begin Spring with such wonderful new resources and look forward to seeing the results of the investments that all our staff, Board, and volunteers make everyday.



*Mercedes Lemp
Executive Director*

ESL Coordinator Comments

HELPING STUDENTS SET AND KEEP GOALS



*Annette Langdon
ESL Coordinator*

Ahhh, Spring is finally here! And with it comes a new term for our evening and weekend afternoon classes. All of the crazy weather over the past few months proved to be a challenge for our attendance, but we all survived and ended the term with strong numbers.

As always, we are trying a few new things this term. In order to help motivate students to attend class every

night, all classes will provide weekly incentives for students who attend class each day that week. This will acknowledge the efforts of those who come every night and also provide an example for others to follow. Teachers will also be talking with students one-on-one during the first two weeks of class to get an idea of why they are taking the class and any other needs or expectations they may have. Even just a short amount of time spent with each individual student is sure to make an impact on overall

class participation and attendance.

Finally, the last initiative we are launching this term is the use of daily journal writing in every class. Over the past two terms, it has become apparent, through my own observations and in consulting with teachers, that there is a great need for writing instruction in all classes. Journal writing has proven to be very successful in many adult ESL programs similar to ours, so I am confident it will benefit our students greatly.

Raul Mendoza (cont'd from page 1)

also takes computer application courses at Language, ETC as well as at a professional training center in Arlington. All the while, he studies English at a third school in the District.

“How do you do all that in one week,” I said, in part, amazed, and a bit in disbelief.

“I have always worked and gone to school,” he said, “since I was eight years old.”

Born in Estado de Idalgo, Mexico, Raul helped to sell fruit at the local market with his uncles during his lunch break in elementary school. He later attended a technical high school, specializing in construction, and taking classes in architecture,

topography, and technical drawing.

In 2000, he came to the United States, leaving behind most of his family in Idalgo; he lives with his three sisters in Virginia. For the past three years, he has worked as a construction worker, specializing in carpentry and advancing very quickly due to his extensive training in Mexico. To complement his work, he has just finished some courses on creating architectural plans and is scheduled for more classes in repair and computer rendering.

At the same time, Raul has been taking English classes at Language, ETC, and, in September of 2002, began

preparing for the G.E.D. He has recently added MS Word classes to his schedule, which was already packed with computer survey classes in Windows, PowerPoint, Excel, graphic design, and Internet navigation at the Center for Professional Training in Arlington.

A typical week for Raul entails waking up at 5:30am, commuting one hour to Leesburg, working from 7:00am to 4:30pm, and studying English from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. And that’s just Monday to Friday. On Saturday, he goes from 8:00am to 6:00pm, studying at the training center. His class doesn’t begin until 1:00pm,

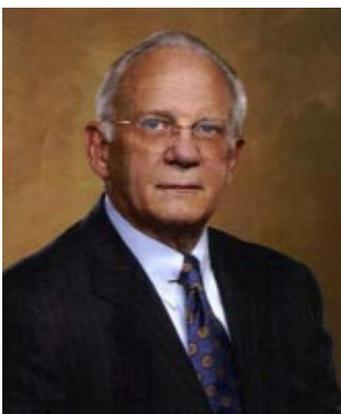
but he goes early for the extra practice! Sundays start at 9:00am with his G.E.D. prep and finish at 5:00pm, after his MS Word class. After that, he goes home to do his laundry, put in some study time, and, oh yes, do some reading in his “free time.”

It all sounds like a good, working plan, but Raul knows that he needs a lot of perseverance, positive attitude, and support from his teachers and colleagues to reach his goals. If he can’t attend a college in the U.S., he’ll return to Mexico, he says.

Either way, he’s determined to make his dream come true.

Volunteer Spotlight

PETER BRENNAN: FOCUSED ON STUDENT MOTIVATION



Peter Brennan is a common face at Language, ETC. He is here once a week to teach his class, but he is also always one of the first to volunteer to help with registration, to administer a test or “test prep,” to sub a class, and he has even developed a resume-writing workshop (which will be offered again this summer). He is one of the many talented and generous vol-

unteers that make Language, ETC a place where students and teachers continually benefit, year after year.

Peter, a former graduate school instructor in New York City, heard of Language, ETC through friends and relatives, who at

the time were teaching ESL; he began volunteering in the Fall of 2001. When asked why he decided to volunteer at Language, ETC he said, “Basically I like helping others. My personal motivation is selfish; I like to be around people who are motivated and have a passion to learn and grow.... Most of our students work full time jobs and come here four nights a week – it’s not too much to ask that we give two hours to help welcome them to our country.”

When asked to describe what he enjoys most, Peter acknowledges that it’s the students, “watching their improvements from week-to-week and the “thank you” at the end of the semester.” He also enjoys the challenge of working to improve his own teaching skills.

Peter may be busy now, but it seems he’s only getting started. “Whenever I see people who want to improve—I want to help as much as I can. Clearly there is a feeling of satisfaction. There is also a corner of the mind that asks, could I do more?”

Volunteer Appreciation

HAPPY HOUR AT BUFFALO BILLIARDS!

We decided to celebrate “Volunteer Appreciation Week” early and on April 8th we threw a great “Volunteer Appreciation Party” at Buffalo Billiards, located on 19th St, NW, just south of Dupont Circle. We thank Buffalo Billiards for their contribution towards the room rental fee. We had delicious food and rousing pool playing (not quite ready for the pro league, but loads of fun!). Around 40 to 50 volunteers, several Board members, and staff attended. Everyone had a great time. This definitely could be the beginning of a tradition.



Taking a timeout from all the fun to smile for the camera were EL/Civics Instructor Ruth Takushi, volunteer ESL Teacher Veronica Grigera, ESL Coordinator Annette Langdon, and volunteer ESL Teachers Mary Janice Dicello and Robert Preston.



Caught in a moment of levity were volunteers Michael McNulty, Tom Frankiewitz, Alexandra Ortega, and Charlene Wilson, who all teach ESL on Sunday mornings.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

LETC is always looking for caring people to:

- volunteer to teach ESL, literacy, citizenship, or GED preparatory classes.
- volunteer to tutor individual students.
- volunteer to work on the school newsletter or website.
- volunteer to monitor the Language Lab.
- donate money to continue our mission.
- spread the word among family and friends that we need volunteers.

Lifeskills Workshops Offered

FINANCIAL LITERACY, RESUME WRITING, AND INTERNET JOB SEARCHES

In March Language, ETC began to offer **Financial Literacy seminars**, recurring every Sunday afternoon from 1:45 to 2:45. The 10 week series, which began on March 30 and will run through June 15, offers information on establishing good credit and preparing to purchase a home, among other topics. The seminars are being delivered by volunteers Maria Jaramillo, Marianne Hilgert,

and Marma Antonia Hernandez. In addition, the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC), located in Adams Morgan, has offered to coordinate with us to present some of the topics. For more information about LEDC visit www.ledcdc.org.

On March 9, Peter Brennan, an ESL volunteer and featured later in the newsletter, offered a **Resume Writing workshop** after realizing the need from

his ESL students. The workshop was very popular and was attended by his students and many others. In the workshop students were taught the various sections normally found in a resume and were given examples so that they could write their own.

The following week, Volunteer Kip Gregory, conducted a two-hour seminar on March 16 showing students **how to use the Internet for job**

searching. While students came with various levels of computer experience, Kip conducted the seminar in a way that all participants learned valuable skills and tricks to make job searching more effective.

We thank the volunteers that are making these seminars possible and look forward to incorporating them into our normal offerings.

New Board Members (cont'd from page 1)

After an early retirement from Verizon, Renee decided to pursue a second career in TESOL, completing her M.A. at American University in 2000 and then spending a year for Georgetown University in Korea as a trainer. Renee holds a B.A. in Education from Montclair State University as well as various teaching certificates.

Margaret V. (Margie) Ruiz, the second recent appointment to the Board, is Coordinator for the Office for Civil Rights Compliance and Multicultural Education Development for DC Public Schools. As Coordinator, she is responsible for monitoring,

advocating, and supporting collaboration to ensure the schools work to meet the needs of all English Language learners. She works with the Superintendent's executive team, school and community level stakeholders, and federal and local officials to promote policies and design procedures that work to the benefit for all children.

Margie played a pivotal role in the development, modification, and approval of the civil rights compliance plan of 2002, one of the most comprehensive and systemic civil rights agreements in the country between the U.S. Department of Education,

Office for Civil Rights, and a school system.

Margie's personal experiences also bring a unique perspective to the guidance of the school.

Born in Austin, Texas, to a migrant family of 15 siblings, she endured the life of following the seasonal labor stream during most of her childhood. While raising her own family of four, she completed her bachelor's at Saginaw Valley State University and her M.S. at the University of the District of Columbia.

Margie, a former Teacher of the Year (1994) at Bell Multicultural High School,

has, over the years, provided leadership, initiative, and drive to strengthen and empower Hispanic and minority communities.

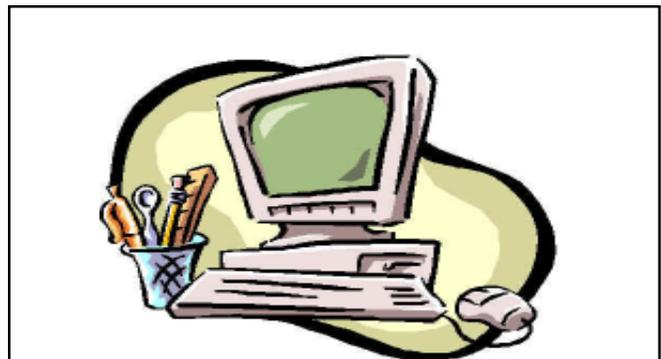
We are happy and honored to welcome both Renee and Margie to our Board, and we look forward to working with them.

The Board is always interested in talented people wishing to serve as Language, ETC Board members and is actively searching for those with expertise in financing and public relations. If you or someone you know is interested in serving, please contact Mercedes Lemp at Mercedes@languageetc.org.

Thanks to New and Continued Funders

HELPING TO FUND SCHOLARSHIPS, BOOKS, AND MANY OTHER INITIATIVES

We are grateful to add several new funders to the list of foundations and organizations that support Language, ETC. In the past few months we have received new funding from the Verizon Foundation; the Inter-American Development Bank, which has been a long time supporter; the Advisory Board; and the Corina Higginson Trust, also past supporters. In addition, Holy Trinity Church and the Cafritz Foundation have also recently agreed to support our work. We look forward to working with all our funders and to building long lasting partnerships.



Visit us on the Web!
at www.languageetc.org

Find out about all the programs and services we offer, read inspiring stories about our students and volunteers, get to know our staff, and more!



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United Way #8936

WHAT IS LANGUAGE, ETC?

Founded in 1993 by Our Lady Queen of the Americas Church, Language, ETC strives to meet the growing demand for English and literacy courses in the Washington, DC metropolitan area by offering low-cost instruction in ESL, citizenship, literacy, computer training, and G.E.D. preparation. The Center also provides job placement assistance on Sundays. A computer-assisted Language Lab, open seven days a week, allows students to practice English at times that suit their busy work schedules.

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NEWSLETTER WRITER/EDITOR

Michele Cona

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

A small contribution goes a long way at Language, ETC. \$80 covers the tuition of one student for a full three month term, including books. While our fees are low, there are many students that find it difficult to allocate money to improving their education when faced with more immediate needs such as food and housing. Language, ETC admits all students, regardless of their ability to pay. To allow us to maintain this policy we would greatly appreciate a donation to our scholarship fund.

_____ Please allocate \$80 to the scholarship fund.

_____ Please allocate \$160 to cover 2 scholarships.

_____ Please allocate the enclosed amount of _____ toward the scholarship fund.

From: Name _____
 Address _____
 (cont'd) _____

Please mail to: Language, ETC Scholarship Fund
 2200 California St., NW
 Washington, DC 20008

