



VOLUNTEER EVENTS

LETC Volunteers Appreciated

June marks the end of the regular school year at LETC. Students and teachers alike look forward to graduation and the sense of accomplishment it brings. But LETC recognizes that there would be no school without our volunteers, and so there were two special events this year to honor our teachers.

On the evening of June 12, a special Volunteer Appreciation reception was held in the auditorium, where over 100 teachers from all sessions—weekday, evening and weekend—could meet, mingle and enjoy some cheese and wine. Teachers were greeted by a huge “thank you” banner across the wall of the auditorium, signed by scores of students. One student, Maria from the Basic B daytime class, wrote, “I’m very grateful for the effort all the teachers made and for the patience they have to teach us how to write and speak English.” Benjamin and Jorge from 1A expressed their gratitude by writing, “Thank you teachers for giving

us your time. We will always have you in our hearts.”

Carolyn Morrissey, Executive Director, thanked our volunteers for their dedication. Each volunteer was presented with a certificate in appreciation of his or her service. “Our volunteers are the essence of LETC and the work you do is so important to our students,” she told the group.

Then on June 16, two Board members, Jennifer Browning and Amy Berger, hosted a lunch for 25 of their fellow weekday “AM” teachers. Also held in the auditorium, the event provided teachers with an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other, discover shared professional and personal interests, and most importantly, share teaching tips and ideas. In the process, Jennifer was surprised to discover

that her former high school French teacher, Liz Lourie, a new volunteer who recently moved to Washington from the Philadelphia area, is now using her considerable teaching skills for the benefit of students at LETC!

In all, volunteers learned a great deal about their fellow teachers and had a terrific time at these events. Given their success, more events like these are sure to follow.



Volunteer Mario Turse meets Ana Guglielmelli White, Elsa Marcela Rodriguez and Steven White.

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They expressed their gratitude to Language ETC, where they have felt welcomed and encouraged in their classes. “We’re studying what they call ESL – English as a Second Language. But ESL is not true,” he said. “Here, you have to be able to speak English.”

Claudia agreed: “We want to learn English well because it’s absolutely necessary.”

Richard expressed his beliefs earlier this year by appearing at a committee meeting of the DC Council, where former Language ETC Board Chair Frank Dicello and Executive Director Carolyn Morrissey also testified about the importance of public funding for the organization, which educates about a quarter of all D.C. adults enrolled in continuing education classes.

“Learning English is a sign of respect. It’s learning to live in a community in the native tongue. It’s logical,” Richard said. “What I said [at the hearing] was that Language ETC needs the help of the government to help the Latino, so he can improve his status, get a better job and integrate better into the society.”

“The Latino who arrives here can’t think of English as a second language,” Richard said. “It should be English as a first language.”



Who We Are

Our mission is to provide affordable, high-quality English language instruction and other basic educational programs to foreign-born adults in the Washington, DC metropolitan area through the involvement of volunteer teachers and tutors. Our vision is that all immigrants gain the education and support they need to build a better future for themselves, their families and their community.

What We Do

We offer high quality, affordable classes in English as a Second Language (11 courses, Basic-Advanced), Computer Skills (in Spanish), Spanish Literacy (3 levels), Citizenship and Civics. The following free resources are also available for students: language laboratory, computer and internet access, one-on-one tutoring, and job counseling. We are open seven days a week and offer classes during the day, at night and on weekends.

Schedule

Language ETC is open 7 days a week to accommodate the diverse schedules of our students.

Hours: Monday – Thursday: 9 am – 9 pm
Friday – Sunday: 9 am – 5 pm

Fall 2009 Classes September 14 – December 6

New Volunteer Training January 9, 2010

Winter Classes January 11 – March 31

For further information, call LETC at 202-387-2222.

Language ETC

2200 California Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008-3902
202-387-2222



Improving the lives of immigrants through education

STUDENT PROFILE

Recasting Their Lives

by Sylvia Moreno

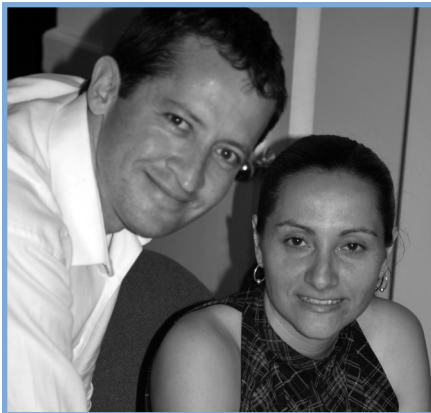
Less than a year ago, veteran journalists Claudia Rodríguez and her husband, Richard Vasquez, were covering the biggest stories in their native Colombia, among them the violence wrought by left-wing insurgents, right-wing paramilitaries and drug-traffickers.

Today, as they adjust to life in the Washington area, they continue to ply their trade, even if the tenor of the stories has changed dramatically. They, along with Fr. Roberto Cortés-Campos, are the editors of *Tiempo del Espíritu*, a Spanish-language monthly tabloid devoted to the Catholic Charismatic Movement.

“We are recasting our lives,” said Claudia, 37.

Indeed, she and Richard, 40, left their home in Bogota and their jobs at RCN Televisión (Radio Cadena Nacional) after receiving threats. They were also long-time freelancers for Voice of America. Although journalist murders have declined slightly in Colombia since 2006, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the country has historically been one of the world’s deadliest nations for the press.

The couple arrived in Washington late last year, applied for and was granted political asylum. Through Fr. Roberto Cortés-Campos at Our Lady Queen of the Americas Church, they found jobs and their way to Language ETC, which rents office and classroom space in the church.



Claudia is a familiar figure at Our Lady Queen of the Americas, where she helps coordinate public education campaigns targeting the Spanish-language congregation and produces the weekly church bulletin. Richard is the director of Hispanic ministry at the Shrine of St. Jude in Rockville. Once a month, the couple works until midnight on the third floor production office of the church building, editing and designing *Tiempo del Espíritu*, which is distributed for free through 20 churches and 10 restaurants in the metropolitan area.

And four nights a week, Claudia and Richard can be found in English classes offered by Language ETC. The couple said they knew a little basic English when they arrived in the United States, having had a private tutor in Colombia for two hours a week. But studying a couple of hours a week and being forced to negotiate life in an English-speaking country is something else completely, Richard said.

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LETC Featured in Catalogue for Philanthropy

Language ETC is proud to be part of the Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington. Chosen from a field of some 200 applicants, we survived a rigorous vetting process and were selected as “one of the best small charities in the Washington, DC region.” Each year 68 new nonprofits are featured, and all 350 organizations (including ours!) can be viewed online at cfp-dc.org where donations can also be made.

Language ETC has been part of the Catalogue family since 2005. The Catalogue has enabled us to reach out to individuals in the region who would otherwise never have heard our story. The Catalogue also provides us with a stamp of approval, and donors tell us that they appreciate the good housekeeping seal that the Catalogue provides.

Since its inception in 2003, the Catalogue has helped raise over \$6.3 million dollars for local non-profit organizations. Request your copy online at cfp-dc.org (single copies are free) and share the Catalogue with family and friends. Language ETC is proud to be called “one of the best,” and we hope you’ll view our profile online and help spread the word about the Catalogue so that all of us can work together to deepen the culture of giving in our nation’s capital.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Autumn is always an exciting time at Language ETC. Students are registering, new volunteers are arriving and familiar faces are returning, and the staff is rushing around pulling all the pieces together. On September 12, we had a new volunteer orientation for 90, as well as a workshop for 60 returning teachers. The week of September 14, we started 54 classes. This fall we have 318 volunteer teachers and tutors working with almost 800 students!



coordinators, both former LETC volunteer teachers. Steven White is working with day and evening volunteers and Sylvia Moreno works with the weekenders. Claudia Belloso, our former evening office assistant, is now Office Manager. Together, they ensure that the 318 teachers and tutors are matched with the right class and with the right students – not a simple task!

Our dedicated Board of Directors is also very busy in the fall. Officers were elected in June and Committee Chairs were appointed.

All of this positive energy is exciting. Yet we are also facing the reality of decreased funding and a very difficult year ahead financially. Language ETC is in the same situation as most nonprofits, facing a year that will probably hold less government and foundation funding than in the past and more students in need of scholarships. We have made difficult decisions and cut costs (for example, sadly, sacrificing childcare during our classes) and we have had to increase tuition for the first time in years. We are facing a year filled with uncertainty and worries, but also with a renewed commitment to continue our mission. We know that the relationships built within our walls will lead to better lives for many who are striving to fulfill their dreams for a new life in this country.



Meet LETC's New Board Chair: Jennifer Browning

Jennifer Browning came to LETC in 1997 after tutoring English in Hong Kong. She began as an evening teacher, teaching Basic or Level 1. She has continued teaching at LETC ever since, although more recently she has taught during the day to better accommodate her young family.

Jennifer joined the LETC Board in October of 2007, although she had previously worked on both LETC fundraising and program advisory groups. With her professional background in communications, marketing and business development, Jennifer initiated and served as the first Chair of the Communications and Outreach Committee. She also served on the Program and Development Committees. With her long history as a teacher, and her depth of experience on the board, Jennifer was the natural choice to step into the shoes of the outgoing Chair, Frank Dicello, whose term ended in June of this year.

“Without question, LETC’s biggest challenge is meeting the growing needs of our students in a difficult economic climate,” Jennifer says. “My father is Hungarian, so I am a first generation American and I lived abroad for six years. I understand that LETC and its mission to help students acquire the English they need is more important today than ever.”



LETC Fortunes Sag with DC Budget Travails

For the past several months, Language ETC has been riding the D.C. budget roller coaster—following its twists and turns, briefly enjoying its heights, but ultimately ending up where we started.

It all began last April. An LETC panel led by student Rosa Vilma Siguenza appeared before the D.C. City Council to urge the city to reinstate a competitive process for local adult education funds so that LETC would have a chance to receive some of this money. Although the Council did not act upon this specific request, they did respond to Rosa’s plea for help and provided LETC with a one-time appropriation of \$150,000.

Unfortunately, the sighs of relief were short-lived. In mid-July, Mayor Adrian Fenty proposed a 60% reduction in the funding provided to LETC and a number of other community groups in order to make up for city revenue shortfalls.

Former Board Chair Frank Dicello, joined by Executive Director Carolyn Morrissey and student Richard Vasquez, made a return appearance to the Council at a July 24 hearing called to consider the Mayor’s proposed cuts.

Mr. Dicello explained that a direct appropriation was not LETC’s first

choice, but—in the absence of the opportunity to compete for funds—it was the best means available to obtain critically needed support. He also pointed out that LETC is already seriously underfunded relative to the proportion of adult education services it offers—receiving about 3% of adult education funds while educating nearly 25% of adult students receiving 12 or more hours of instruction.

Student Richard Vasquez put a face on the services provided by LETC—describing to the Council his flight from the violence in Columbia and his commitment to learning English to make the most of his new life in the United States. (see page 1)

DC Council Chairman Vincent Gray remembered LETC from the April testimony and was clearly impressed with Mr. Vasquez’ presentation. At the same time, he indicated that it is critical that the DC budget be in balance and that there were few appealing options for accomplishing that goal.

The majority of council members shared this view. Regrettably, the appropriation for LETC was eliminated entirely in the final budget approved by the Council.

LETC Volunteers Step Up

Back in April of this year, LETC began feeling the crunch of the economic downturn facing the country. One by one, foundations we’ve relied on in the past let LETC know they would be cutting back grants by 10% to 25%. Potential new donors indicated they would only be supporting organizations they had previously funded. Government funding, though still in place, was being distributed slowly and was insufficient by itself to maintain operations. Facing the approach of the summer months, when enrollments and tuition income are typically lower, the LETC Board of Directors decided to make an emergency email appeal to one group that already gives so much—our volunteers. While some volunteers had contributed generously in the past, LETC had never before made a direct appeal

We asked. They delivered ...and how!

Calls and emails came in from all over the U.S. and even from other countries, as former and current teachers sent in checks or donated online. All in all, over \$9500 was raised, helping LETC meet its ongoing financial obligations.

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A small contribution goes a long way at Language ETC.

Donate through www.languageetc.org and click on *Network for Good* 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: _____



Language ETC
2200 California St., NW
Washington, DC 20008



Language ETC Donors, May 2009 – September 2009

\$5,000 and above

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Natalie Wexler and James Feldman

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