

Formerly
Language ETC

Washington English Center

Improving the lives of immigrants through education.

NEWSLETTER FOR SUMMER 2014

Celebrating Washington English Center

We live in a city full of luminaries and leaders, famous newsmakers and world-class experts. And yet the most eloquent and moving speakers you will ever hear spoke at our recent event to "Celebrate Washington English Center" held on May 12 of this year at the elegant Josephine Butler Parks Center, situated across from Meridian Hill Park in Northwest DC.

Standing before a crowd of nearly 200, Abdallah Makeo of Burundi shared his story of fleeing his home country torn by violence and political upheaval to make his way to the United States and Washington English Center. Abdallah enrolled in the Basic class and stuck with it all the way through Advanced, with perfect attendance along the way. We could say that Abdallah is what Washington English is all about, but that would only be part of the story. We also heard from Roberto Damian, a lawyer who left Mexico, and came to Washington English originally as a student but then also became a teacher of Spanish literacy. Both students wowed the crowd with their heartfelt comments in English, about what Washington English has meant to them, not only as a means of reaching their goals, but as a way of feeling welcomed and nurtured in their adopted country.

We were also especially fortunate to hear from the Pastor of Our Lady of the Americas Church, where Washington English Center is located. Father Evelio Menjivar related his story of coming to this country with no English and no high school diploma, working as a janitor and house painter, while studying English and acquiring his



Abdallah Makeo of Burundi shares his story.

GED. He eventually entered seminary, was ordained and chosen to continue his studies in Rome at the Vatican. We are extremely grateful to him for his support of Washington English Center and the tremendous example of hope he represents for our students.

Guests enjoyed the beautiful surroundings, the sumptuous buffet and the chance to mingle, catch up with old friends and meet new ones. Thank you to all who attended. We hope you will join us next year!



Father Evelio speaks of learning English at the celebration.



Executive Director, Mercedes Lemp, with event co-chairs Board Chair, Karen Sandler and Board Vice-Chair, Stephanie Lawson.

ESL for Customer Service Jobs

During the Winter and Spring 2014 terms, Washington English Center has been fortunate to have Claire Kevill supporting our Workforce ESL initiative by teaching a specialized ESL class called "ESL for Customer Service Jobs." Claire is a long-time volunteer at Washington English Center who has over 20 years of experience working for

Mariott International in various leadership roles throughout Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the U.S. Most of her positions with Mariott involved training Mariott managers and other staff in customer service, so she has extensive knowledge about the field as well as years of experience working with English Language learners.

ESL for Customer Service Jobs is a 10-week course that covers introductory customer service job skills. Students learn how to politely greet customers, when to use open versus closed questions, and how to deal with difficult customers. Additionally, students learn more general job skills such as the importance of body language and its role

Continued on Page 5

Letter from the Executive Director

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A small contribution goes a long way at Washington English Center.

Donate through www.washingtonenglish.org

(Click on "donate" 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.

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Improving the lives of immigrants through education.

Washington English Center
2200 California Street, NW
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New name, same great mission!

We just finished another fiscal year that has brought about many great changes for Language ETC – that is for, Washington English Center! The biggest change has been our new name. As of January 1, 2014 we became Washington English Center. The name change was something that had been discussed for years. We are excited to report that reception of our new name has been extremely positive and the process remarkably smooth.

The change in name and logo led to an updated and improved website which has led to increased social media use, including most recently Twitter and Instagram. Not only have social media platforms helped us communicate with supporters, volunteers and teachers, we have now started to use them in the classroom as teaching tools. It's been a lot of fun and a great way to teach students English and advance their technology skills. Read more about how we are using social media in the article written by our new Deputy Director, Lee Griffith, on the following page.

Speaking of Lee, Lee Griffith came back to Washington English Center as our new Executive Director in April. Lee had served as our Weekend Volunteer Coordinator for several years before leaving to teach English in Myanmar for nine months. We are grateful to have him back and look forward to his contributions in this new position for him, and for the organization. With the growth of enrollments from 2,639 last year, to this year's current 2,818, our increasing staff allows us to keep up with the growing demand for our programs. Our programs are also expanding to meet the needs of our students. With a generous grant from the DC Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), this year we launched Customer Service English classes. These are classes in English as a Second Language with a focus on customer service careers. You can also read more about these classes in the following article.

On May 12th we celebrated all of our accomplishments, and the accomplishments of our students, with a cocktail reception attended by almost 200 of our loyal donors. The event was held at the beautiful Josephine Butler Parks Center. As always, the most compelling part of the evening was the presentations by our students. You can also read more about this great event on the previous page.

It has been another fantastic year for Washington English Center and we are looking forward to the coming year.

Mercedes Lemp

Visit Our Website –
www.washingtonenglish.org



Washington English Center
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Thank you Volunteers!



Volunteer Appreciation Event at Buffalo Billiards

On May 30th we thanked our volunteers for their outstanding service and commitment with a Volunteer Appreciation Party at Buffalo Billiards in Dupont Circle. More than 300 volunteers teach and tutor over 800 students each three-month term. With a small staff of only seven full-time employees, we could not do what we do without our wonderful volunteers. It is our volunteers that make Washington English Center a unique ESL (English as a Second Language) program. Our volunteers take a personal interest in our students and make the classroom more than just a place to learn English. Staff and students alike could not be more grateful to our volunteers.

Our Students, in their own words...

Student Stories

"I had an uncle who has lived here for 7 years and he knew about Washington English Center, so he came with me. While I have been in Washington English Center I can say that every teacher I have had is wonderful, first of all because they have passion for helping others. One of my favorite teachers so far is Ely.

Learning English at Washington English Center has definitely changed my life. From dishwasher to assistant manager is proof of that. So every single step has counted to get me where I am thanks to all of the volunteers, teachers, thanks to all those people who made it possible.

When I come back to my country in 1-2 years, I will remember this as important part of my personal formation. English is the first step for immigrants who really want to succeed in this country, and Washington English Center has the key for that door." **Moises, Level 4**

My name is Eugene. I was born in 1963 in the Central African Republic. I have been living in the United States of America for two years. I came to the United States because of my wife. She's been working at the embassy of the Central African Republic in the United States of America. I choose to take English class at Washington English Center because I need to get a job so I can help her. That's why I need to learn English, because I have to talk to and speak to people. Learning English is a good thing to do. It's helped me learn how to read, to listen, to take instructions. I'm able to meet someone, introduce myself, ask questions, and have short conversations. I strongly believe that learning English is the best way to do everything. I want to thank everyone at Washington English Center. May God bless you." **Eugene, Level 3**

I came to this country to be a better person, I started to work but I could not study, my goal was to work. After two years, I started to study English class at night, but my teacher was from Colombia and she explained everything in Spanish. I was there for one year and I did not learn anything, after that I stopped taking this class because I pay a lot of money for nothing, that wasn't helping me.

One day I was on my computer and I started looking for a new school. I asked to my partner, what do you think about this school? And he told me, let me call, and then we can go to see if you can go. That was a great idea, because when they told me they have 6 teachers, 2 per day. When I started coming to this school I can understand something in English, but I did not speak any English. I learned a lot here, now I can have a conversation with my boss or my customer, so I can answer many questions. I am so happy. I only can say to everybody that works here: thank you very much, for making my life in the United States better. And thank you all my teachers who are teaching me at the 4(A) level." **Julio, Level 4**



Students show off new Washington EnglishCenter t-shirts!

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Embracing Social Media

Advancing Technologies

Our volunteers and students are using facebook, twitter, and Instagram to make their lives better, so how can we make our school better by using them, too? This spring we have revamped our presence on social media – we are riding the wave! You can now find Washington English posting, tweeting, uploading, sharing, and connecting in ways that were impossible at our inception 20 years ago.

Teachers Nathan Cunningham and Lee Griffith acknowledge the challenge in education is not just following trends – it is being innovative with them. And in week five of the spring semester Twitter became part of the classroom with the profile name @Class1BPM. During the review section of the lesson, students began sending tweets and introducing themselves to the twitter universe. Little did they know playing on twitter was about to turn educational.

The co-teachers had already coordinated with Manager Alyssa Jacobsen on how to incorporate this trend to meet their students'



Students using twitter in the classroom



learning needs. "The plan was to get them to use twitter, and it was fun tweeting them on my end," Alyssa said. Using Washington English's twitter profile @DCEnglishCenter, Alyssa sent review questions such as, "What are your job skills?" and "How many of you were here yesterday, but not on Monday?" In pairs students replied in the obligatory 140 characters or less. Alyssa continues, "When they suddenly realized they were talking to someone who responded to them and asked questions about what they're learning the real fun began."

While anxious in their preparations about outcomes, the co-teachers were extremely pleased with the results. "Not only did students get to practice some spontaneous conversation using new grammar and vocabulary, but they did so in a medium that increased their overall digital literacy," Nathan reflected. "One student, Rosa, was excited to finally relate to her kids' use of social media for fun."

Are you interested in using social media in your class? Talk to staff about great ways to connect with your students while teaching.

Students Celebrate Spring Graduation



Above: Deputy Director, Lee Griffith at Spring graduation.



Students celebrate at the Spring graduation ceremony



Below: Student receiving graduation certificate.

ESL for Customer Service Jobs

Continued from Page 1

in self-confidence, how to identify and apply transferable skills, and using the S.T.A.R. (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method during job interviews.

The class has been such a success this Winter and Spring (almost 40 students have enrolled!) that we are planning to offer a continuation of the class in the Fall 2014 semester, ESL for Customer Service

Jobs II. In the second level, we plan to cover skills such as resume building, in-depth interview practice, working effectively on a team, reading job descriptions and listening strategies for getting the most out of conversations with potential employers. We are very excited to continue offering Workforce ESL classes to support our goal of improving our students' employment prospects!

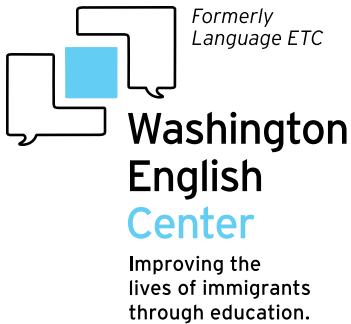
WHO WE ARE

With nearly 2000 students annually, Washington English Center 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.washingtonenglish.org



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**Washington English Center
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
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IMPORTANT DATES:

JULY 12: TEACHER TRAINING FOR SUMMER TERM
JULY 14: BEGINNING OF SUMMER TERM
AUGUST 24: END OF SUMMER TERM
AUG 30 - SEPT 1: CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY
SEPTEMBER 13: TEACHER TRAINING FOR FALL TERM
SEPTEMBER 15: BEGINNING OF FALL TERM
OCTOBER 13: CLOSED FOR COLUMBUS DAY

**For further information, call
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