

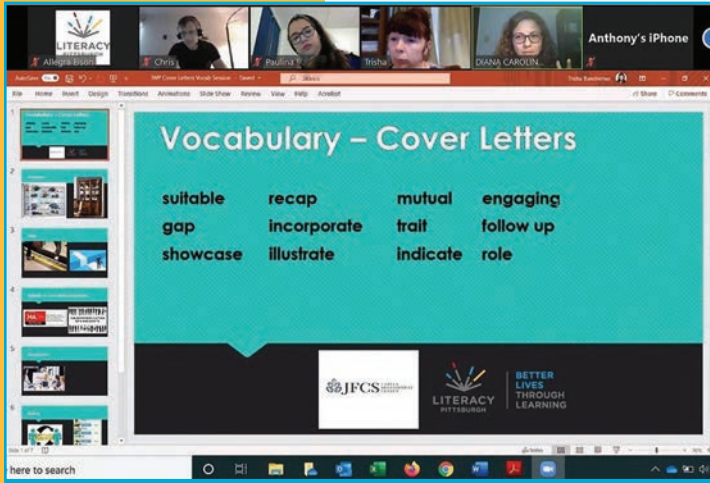
SPRING 2020

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The SPARK

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES SPARKED BY YOU!



Flexibility is an important quality for employees. Participants in the Immigrant Workforce Program proved their ability to adapt when this 9-week class switched to an online format after its first week. The program is a collaboration with Jewish Family and Community Services. Lessons include workplace vocabulary, job search strategies and resume preparation.

LEARNING NEVER STOPS

Virtual classes, YouTube videos and Zoom tutoring keep students engaged.

Like other education institutions, Literacy Pittsburgh faced a daunting challenge as nonessential businesses were ordered to close in mid-March. Because of your commitment to our mission, we were able to mobilize quickly with innovation and flexibility to engage students in new learning opportunities.

While we knew digital literacy was the next frontier for our work to ensure students are ready and relevant for the workforce, we were engaging with digital platforms sparingly, trying to learn before teaching. We were also keenly aware of limitations our students faced in accessing technology.

Over the past several weeks, we have

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NEW TUTORS, NEW STUDENTS WELCOME

Thank you for ensuring our students can still work toward their goals.

Like everyone, we're considering numerous factors in developing plans to reopen our offices and classrooms. While we can't wait to see each other in person again, learning will continue virtually until we can address health and safety requirements for everyone's well-being.

In the meantime, we welcome new students and volunteer tutors. We know that unprecedented levels

of unemployment will hit the most vulnerable in our community the hardest. Helping these individuals gain the skills to compete for available jobs is Literacy Pittsburgh's expertise.

Orientations and tutor training will be done virtually until we can safely reopen.

A variety of learning options are available to students. Volunteers will receive

extensive support for digital learning to ensure a successful experience for both tutor and student.

To find out about becoming a student or volunteer, visit our website at literacypittsburgh.org.

Our staff members continue to work remotely. If you have a question about our programs or services, please visit the Contact page of our website. ●

LEARNING NEVER STOPS

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developed a variety of new learning options:

- All classes now offer live virtual instruction.
- Volunteer tutors are learning new ways of teaching and are keeping in touch with their students via FaceTime, Zoom, email and phone.
- Teachers launched a YouTube channel that has grown to more than 140 lessons. As of this writing, the channel has garnered more than 16,000 views and nearly 900 hours of watch time.
(tinyurl.com/LPEnglishclass)

Students have gained confidence in unfamiliar platforms and met us every step of the way with gratitude and a willingness to learn.

- Students are utilizing online learning platforms such as USA Learns and Khan Academy.
- Our Family Literacy program created a virtual storytime YouTube channel so parents and children could continue a favorite class activity. Partners such as The Grable Foundation, The Mission Continues, and South Hills Interfaith Movement recorded stories, along with local celebrities such as Pittsburgh Steeler Stefen Wisniewski, WTAE News Anchor Mike Clark, and Second Lady of Pennsylvania Gisele Fetterman.
(tinyurl.com/LPFamilyLiteracy)

Students have gained confidence in unfamiliar platforms and met us every step of the way with gratitude and a willingness to learn. We have a long way to go before we are truly maximizing distance learning and digital platforms, but we've greatly accelerated our pace. To quote Krishna, one of our graduation student speakers, "It doesn't matter when you start. Make sure you start." This crisis has unleashed our courage and creativity. We are excited for what the future holds as we refine and expand these new initiatives. ●

STUDENT GRATITUDE

Because of you, Literacy Pittsburgh could react quickly in extraordinary circumstances and develop virtual learning options. Our students have risen to the occasion and are so grateful for the opportunity.

"Thank you for not giving up on us. We appreciate it!" -S.D.

"I'm happy to see you again. You are so kind, and your classes are very interactive, fun and very helpful for me. Thank you." -P.A.

"We are trying to adapt to this new reality. Thank you very much for making the classes available online." -J.S.

"Thank you very much for all you have done for us during the outbreak. I'm so moved by your efforts." -E.M.

"I was very happy for your message. I miss you, Teacher Nancy, and my friends. Take care of yourself. I also watch your videos and thank you for your effort." -N.A.

"Every video helps me a lot. Thank you My Teacher!" -E.S.

"Thank you Teacher Sara so much for the video. This video was really helpful for me with my pronunciations. We appreciate all the work you are doing for us." -S.R.

A ROAD MAP FOR SUCCESS

The Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC) program helps newcomers access vital services and establish a successful life in Pittsburgh.

The current crisis has created hardships for so many—health worries, unemployment, and the inability pay for rent, utilities or food. While these situations are affecting many people around the country, immigrants and refugees face special challenges. Living in a foreign county with a language barrier and little community or family support makes it that much harder to address these issues.

Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC) helps individuals access needed resources and learn how to navigate difficult situations independently. This program was established in 2013 in response to a needs assessment showing that immigrants with limited English proficiency and/or

cultural barriers have trouble accessing services they are entitled to in our region. Individuals may self-refer to ISAC or be referred by a community organization.

The five-agency partnership is spearheaded by Jewish Family and Community Services and includes Literacy Pittsburgh, Casa San Jose, the Latino Family Center, and South Hills Interfaith Movement to extend the reach of services throughout the county. Last year, the ISAC program completed 7,106 referrals to 1,087 different programs and providers.

Literacy Pittsburgh was chosen to be a part of this partnership because of its history as an expert in assisting the immigrant



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community. Literacy Pittsburgh's ISAC team meets with clients both on-site and off-site throughout the county. During normal operations, we host Office Hours at our Downtown Center three times a week, where students—as well as the community—can receive services on the spot, with the help of interpreters if needed.

Clients receive hands-on assistance

and referrals for utility assistance, housing, healthcare, immigration papers, legal services, government assistance applications and communication with school staff. In addition, the ISAC program educates local service providers about immigrant and refugee populations so they can become more culturally sensitive. Visit isacpittsburgh.org to learn more. ●

ISAC IN ACTION: MEET JEAN

Jean, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was referred to Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC) by a partner agency because he lost his job and was in danger of eviction. His ISAC service coordinator connected him to an employment program, which helped him secure a new job in less than ten days. ISAC emergency funding also allowed Jean to pay for rental late fees and court costs and avoid eviction. He hasn't missed a rent payment since. Jean returned to ISAC for help obtaining his green card and applying to bring his family to the U.S. Eleven months after his first meeting, Jean has a stable job and is reunited with his family.

MATH READINESS OPENS DOORS

Builder's Guild of Western PA partnership prepares students for trade apprenticeships.

A cornerstone of Literacy Pittsburgh's Ready and Relevant initiative is to develop partnerships with key providers to solidify our role as an important on-ramp to the workforce development system.

For several years, Literacy Pittsburgh has worked with the Builders Guild of Western PA by referring students to their pre-apprenticeship program and hosting them as a vendor at our career fairs.

In January, we strengthened that partnership by providing math instruction and test-taking strategies for

an initial cohort of 21 students enrolled in the Introduction to the Construction Trades pre-apprenticeship program. Students in this training program learn about work-site safety, basic skills, equipment, and apprenticeship programs.

Participants who successfully complete this program are guaranteed entry into a Trade Apprenticeship Program.

"We are pleased with the expertise and passion of Literacy Pittsburgh to reach out and support adult learners. The pre- and post-assessments give the participants



Photo Courtesy of Builders Guild of Western PA

Applying for apprenticeships in the skilled trades require a math assessment that includes basic algebra, fractions and measurements. Many ITCT participants have been away from math for five years or more, and Literacy Pittsburgh helps them brush up on vital skills.

inspiration and confidence with their increased math knowledge. We look forward to more graduates passing the math assessments at their respective

skilled trade careers," said ITCT Program Director Chaquita H. Barnett, MS.

Additional class sessions are planned in 2020. ●

LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

Our rapid shift to virtual learning for a population with limited exposure to technology has served as an example to other organizations, locally and nationally. We were honored to be invited to present at a recent educational session hosted by the Jefferson Regional Foundation.

"We were so pleased when English Language Learning instructors Sara Cole and Nicole Johnson served as panelists for our Virtual Forum session on designing virtual programming," said Mary Phan-Gruber, CEO of Jefferson Regional Foundation. "They shared their lessons learned and tips on moving into virtual teaching, offering important insights for other organizations."

Nicole Johnson



Sara Cole



Literacy Pittsburgh helps adults and families in Allegheny and Beaver Counties become ready and relevant for the workforce through free classes and one-to-one tutoring. Students improve reading and math skills, get their high school credential, learn English and gain workplace skills. Last year, more than 5,000 individuals developed the skills to succeed in college, job training and careers.

411 Seventh Avenue, Suite 525
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 393-7600
www.literacypittsburgh.org

A copy of the official registration and financial information for Literacy Pittsburgh may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free, within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

