

Creating a community where literacy is available to all

Orange Literacy

Our mission is to help adults reach their education, employment and life goals. We do this by providing free, flexible instruction in reading, writing and basic math, English and computer skills and GED® preparation.

Inside this issue:

Our New Look	2
Know Your Community	2
Learning to Say I Love You in Chinese	3
A Call for Tutors	3
Student Stories Continued	4
Writers for Readers 2015	6
Friends of Literacy	7
Using New Skills—Family Literacy	8

From Our Students

Each year we invite students in our Adult Literacy program to speak at our Winter Celebration. They talk about what brought them to Orange Literacy, what they have learned and their dreams for the future. They talk of lost opportunities and impossible hurdles. They also talk about improved skills, newly discovered confidence and their willingness — and desire — to help others. And each year, without fail, they inspire us. We celebrate our students, and the tutors, volunteers, donors and staff who support them, with the writings from this year's program.

Gabriel Martínez

My English in this five months.

My name is Gabriel Martínez. I'm from Mexico, and I'm an Orange Literacy student.

I arrived in the U.S. five months ago with my partner we came to Ohio with his family.

I remember my first conversations, of course in English, after thirty minutes it was just like a blah, blah, blah, blah around my head and people surround me talking to me, asking me some questions, making me some jokes, and laughing,



Richard Schramm, Orange Literacy Board President, with students

sometimes I understand but, sometimes I just moved my eyes side to side or I just smiled trying to understand what they say or figure out

what they asking me, and what I can said as an answer, or what are they talking

continued on page 5

Fidel Campos

Greetings,

Good evening everybody, my name is Fidel Campos, I am a student from Literacy Council Program of Orange County in Carrboro. Thanks for this opportunity to share some important ideas in the name of my classmates.

As students we have had the luck of learning from teachers like Theresa Cox,

who creatively has been teaching us from different topics.

We have learned English since from own stories written by people from different countries, because she has been encouraging us to remember, tell, and write them. All of us think not only this is a good method, but also, it gives us the self

confidence of talking and writing; besides that we can listening to her reading in English among us. Always every class is prepared by her. All of this lets us to develop different skills from English.

I thought staying here in the United States could be too hard for me because of the language, but I was wrong.

continued on page 5



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A New Moniker, A New Look

Just call us Orange Literacy!

For years, our name has either been a mouthful – the Orange County Literacy Council – or a little confusing – OCLC is also the acronym for a very large, very well-known library cooperative. Orange Literacy

has been our domain name since, well, since everyone started having domain names. It's not just our domain. It's our Facebook page, our twitter handle, our pinterest site and our Youtube channel. So we thought we'd make it our name as well.

And thanks to the wonderfully creative - and just all-around wonderful - team at The Splinter Group, we have a new look. It's bold, modern and forward thinking. And it celebrates the empowerment that our students experience through learning.

Know Your Community

If you've ever visited another country, even for a short period of time, you know that the language is not the only barrier. There are cultural differences and norms that affect the way you accomplish even the most basic tasks like buying food, using public transportation or obtaining health care.

Our ESOL students experience these challenges every day. As they work to learn English, they also strive to understand the culture and customs of their new community so they can become involved and informed citizens. To help our students, we have created "Know Your Community," a series of videos that serve as virtual field trips for students to experience

services in the local community.

Students will be able to watch these videos from the comfort of their own home, from their smartphones, or from our computer lab to learn more about the process for going to the doctor, how to take the bus, the multitude of health services available at the Carrboro Community Health Center, and (for those who have obtained their U.S. citizenship) how to register to vote. Tutors can use these videos in their classes to preview these services in the community and can then plan lessons where students learn vocabulary and participate in role-plays to build conversation skills relevant to that topic.

If you'd like to take a look at the videos, go to <http://bit.ly/13kKgxx>. They're under the "Know Your Community" playlist on our Youtube channel, (Youtube.com/orangeliteracy). Linda Glenn (formerly Linda Cornelison, one of our 2012-2013 AmeriCorps members) put them together for us. Our thanks to Piedmont Health's Carrboro Community Health Center for allowing us to use their facility for filming and for providing help with the script for the health care videos. We plan to produce additional videos later this year so stay tuned for more installments in the "Know Your Community" series!

Joy Turner, Program Director

A Note from the Executive Director

We've made a few changes to our look over the past year—our 30th(!)—and the results are energizing. With guidance from current and former Board members Cindy Hamel Sellars, Tamara Rice, Sally Greene, Jeff Polish and Kate Torrey, and the very talented people at The Splinter Group and Figure 8 Films, we have a new logo, a shorter, pithier name—Orange Literacy—and a series of videos explaining the life-altering effects of improving literacy skills by those who know it

best—our students. Our thanks to you all.

While these changes are helping us do a better job of telling our story—the story itself is growing. We continue to expand the classes and tutoring opportunities throughout the county, including our newest site, UNC Hospitals. And over the next year, we'll focus on building our Family Literacy Initiative, taking what has been a very successful program in Carrboro (one that we do in

partnership with El Centro Hispano and the Orange County Partnership for Young Children) and offering it to parents and children in other parts of the county. In order to prepare children to start school with the skills necessary to learn, we need to adequately prepare their first teachers—their parents. Parental literacy is the single strongest indicator of child literacy. I hope you'll be a part of this exciting venture.

Alice Denson

Learning to Say I Love You in Chinese

From 2009-2013, I lived in Singapore where a large majority of the citizens speak Chinese. By the end of my stay—I was 75 years old—I could say “hello” and “thank you” in that language and not a single other thing. But because the official Singapore language is English, I didn’t need any more than that. Grocery store labels, subway directions, street signs, whatever one needed to make one’s way were in English, Standard Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay. Yes, it’s true that the spoken English is so heavily accented it’s called “Singlish,” but after a couple of months, I could get the gist of what I heard, even on the phone.

The elderly Chinese speaker in our country doesn’t have that experience. Here, English is all there is—spoken, written, broadcast. The increasing number of Chinese grandparents who have come to the US to help look after their kids’ kids, are confronted with a language that uses a Latin alphabet, nothing like “Chinese characters,” each of which represents a monosyllabic Chinese word or “morpheme.” The well educated Chinese reader recognizes about 4,000-6,000 characters, the meaning of which often depends on tones of pronunciation and context. Thus a single character can have many meanings. An unabridged dictionary like the *Kangxi Dictionary* contains over 40,000 characters.

A Call for Tutors

If you have ever thought about volunteering as a tutor, now is the time. We have several openings, particularly for ESOL tutors for parents of students at New Hope, Grady Brown and

Wow. No wonder my aging brain mastered only two phrases.

But wait. To a Chinese speaker and reader, English is just as overwhelming, if not more so. True, there are only 26 letters in our alphabet, but owing to the assimilation of words from many other languages throughout history, modern English comprises a huge vocabulary with complicated and irregular spelling. *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists more than 250,000 words, not including many technical, scientific and slang terms.

In the last several years, Orange Literacy has realized larger and larger demand from the county’s growing community of Chinese elders for lessons in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). To help these Chinese elders, Orange Literacy has developed a class—for beginners—that it teaches twice weekly in a classroom at the Seymour Center. I was lucky enough to land a five month volunteer job as an assistant tutor last year. Observing how the students—almost all of them in their 70’s—handled a huge learning curve was inspiring.

Every one of the students I met January 22nd was still in the class my last day on June 11th. And, over that time, the class acquired so many new students that a larger classroom had to be found. By that June 11th class, there were eight students

registered and in attendance. Undaunted, the tutor took them to a larger classroom where she continued with her power point presentations and pronunciation exercises, her introduction of vocabulary for practical usage (mailing letters, shopping for groceries, consulting doctors or helping with elementary school homework, checking books out of the library). And *all* of those students were *always* present. The only absences were due to return trips to China. The students were in their seats ten minutes early, always having done the assigned homework. Most of them created their own handmade “dictionaries” which they brought to class to update. And every single one of them congratulated me on my Chinese greeting (“*knee how*”) and my appreciative comment (“*say shay*”).

On my last day, one of them taught me a new phrase: “eye knee”(I love you). I said it to each of them as we parted, meaning it. If only I knew how to say “I admire your determination; I am awed by your spirit; and I wish I had worked as hard learning your language as you have worked learning mine.”

—Shannon Ravenel, VP, Orange Literacy Board of Directors



If only I knew how to say “I admire your determination; I am awed by your spirit; and I wish I had worked as hard learning your language as you have worked learning mine.”



Efland-Cheeks Elementary Schools. We also need Adult Basic Education tutors, primarily in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. We ask tutors to commit to roughly four hours

per week for 6 months. For more information about tutoring, check our website at www.orangeliteracy.org/tutor/opportunities-to-volunteer/.

www.orangeliteracy.org/tutor/opportunities-to-volunteer/

Nai Ow Mon Lon



Nai Ow Mon Lon

Hi everyone, my name is Nai Ow Mon Lon. I am a student at Orange Literacy. I came from South Burma (Mon State). First, I want to say thank you to my teachers - Matt Dailey who gave me an opportunity to give this speech today, and Ashley France, and all of my GED class tutors, and of course Orange Literacy.

I am a refugee from Burma, and I now live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. All four years of my life in the United States have been spent here in Orange County. Now I would like to tell you about the differences between my life today and in the past when I first arrived here. When I

first arrived here, I had a very complicated life because I did not know English. When I went to the clinic and the hospital, I always needed a translator on the phone. And when I got my first job at a hotel, there was a really big problem. After I was working at that hotel for awhile, my speaking began to improve because I had to talk to customers every day. Even though my speaking was improving, my pronunciations and grammar were not correct. After I worked at the hotel for a year, I began to attend ESOL class.

Currently, I am working at UNC in the Housekeeping

Department, and I am attending GED class with Orange Literacy at UNC. I would like to say that this class is valuable and important for my life. If I did not have this class, I might not have the better life that I have today.

Today, I can communicate with co-workers in my workplace. Today, I can really say that I speak English. I never thought I would be able to speak English and understand when people talk to me. I feel very lucky to be here in this country because my life is changing each day.

Again, I want to say thank you very much.

Maura Baca



Maura Baca

Hi! My name is Maura. I have two children. My son is Juan Pablo and my daughter is Tonantzin. I am happy to be here today. I am from Mexico. I live in Chapel Hill for two years. I love my family.

I want to thank those who help us and give us the opportunity to learn English because it is

necessary to help our children with homework and read books, and have better job opportunities. Also we need to understand and talk with the doctors when our children are sick.

Thanks to the teachers who have to teach us patience, thanks to the teachers who

care for us as we study English to help our children. Thanks to Joy, who is always there to support us, and Fanny who also taught us a lot and has given us much more information to learn.

Thanks.

Rafael Munoz



Rafael Munoz

Hi everyone. My name is Rafael Munoz. I'm from Mexico. I came to North Carolina in 2007. At that time, I had trouble communicating with people. This was typical for my friends and family that had come recently to the United States.

My uncle, in particular, came up with clever ways to communicate. He used to carry around a big stick. When he went to McDonald's, he would point his stick to indicate he

wanted a double cheeseburger (with extra bacon.) Once, when my uncle was trying to find a church, for prayer, he asked friends that were with him to kneel down in front of two people jogging by to ask them where the church was.

I'm an artist. I enjoy painting and drawing. At first, it seemed that I didn't need English for my art, because it came naturally. But I wanted to perfect my skills, so I started taking

classes. Now I needed English to communicate with my teacher. Also, I wanted to read art books and be able to gain more skills by studying.

All the time, I recommend, to my friends and co-workers, that they should study English to make their lives easier. Otherwise, they had better go find themselves a big stick.

Adriana Hernandez Leon

Good evening. My name is Adriana Hernandez Leon.

I'm from the state of Hidalgo in Mexico, and I have been in the United States for more than ten years. My husband works at The Siena Hotel, and I have two boys who are eleven and two.

My neighbor told me about the program at Orange Literacy, which could help me improve my English. When I went there, I

felt warmly received. My tutor has been Sandy Eisdorfer since February 2014.

Since we began working together, my vocabulary has increased, and my understanding of what I read has improved. Writing the essay at the end of every chapter has been a challenge, but I have enjoyed the challenge. One unexpected pleasure was learning how to

transpose my written essay to the computer, where it looks very professional, indeed!

I would really like to thank the staff and the volunteers at Orange Literacy. You all do a wonderful job helping people like me. I am very happy to have Sandy as my tutor. Orange Literacy is my favorite American organization!

Thank you.



Adriana Hernandez Leon

Gabriel Martínez *(continued from page 1)*

about?

So we moved to Carrboro NC last August, about a month later I started to take English classes at ESL on Franklin Street one month after that I begun to taking English classes in Orange Literacy when I really love my classes.

So I have been improving my knowledge not only in the language also in American

culture it is allowed me to participate in some different activities because little by little those blah, blah, blah, blah, has gained shape and become in words and images in my mind, I can speak more confidence.

I can understand much better. It's allow me to become a volunteer worker with ADA (Americans with DisAbilities) even take and teach

contemporary dance classes, because I am a dancer, and start to make some plans and new projects for the next year.

I would really like to say thanks to Orange Literacy, Candice Richey, Matt and all people who work in there of course to my teacher Theresa Cox. I look forward to my English getting better and better and getting rid of the blah, blahs.



Gabriel Martínez

Fidel Campos *(continued from page 1)*

Therefore, we are so proud of and grateful for our Theresa, which is in charge of our learning process from Orange County Literacy Program to whom in the name of our classmates I want to thanks for her effort to teach us and to thanks also to Orange County for keeping this Literacy Program.

Reading in class different stories and their themes from newspapers I've learned not only try to recognize different terms or words and verbs in sentences in the readings, but also understanding the messages of each reading and always appears new words, so, one of my goal every day is to learn a new word at least and

be able to share my knowledge with others.

I can't express everything I have learned of your culture from the classroom, for instance about Halloween, the Thanksgiving day and other traditions with a deep roots, religious, pagan and historical.

Now the festivities of Christmas and Hanukkah is coming, just let me share one remembrance when I was a boy, there was no light in my hometown at that time: Every December 8th, like today, we used to celebrate the Day of the Light, after participating in the mass, where the priest was blessing the light; we already had cleaned our streets in the neighborhood and

put the sticks along side of the street in several big batches.

At the end of the mass when all was dark, we went back to our neighborhood to put fire to the sticks and we enjoy walking along side of the street watching the lights, talking around the fire and putting fire to some firecracker as a symbol of joy.

Now I feel the same joy because I compare this tradition with the experience of learning English which is a new light for me and my other classmates to interact with people from other cultures.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity.



Fidel Campos



ORANGE LITERACY'S
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An evening of festivities featuring an intimate conversation between Allan Gurganus and renowned writers on the theme of "Writers from Writers," discussing the advantages and disadvantages of being the children of established writers, their own acclaimed works and the importance of literacy.

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 and author of *E. E. Cummings: A Life*



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Using New Skills

Eh Paw, an ESOL student in our Family Literacy Program, excitedly told me one day that she had successfully registered her young daughter in a karate class. The registration process can be challenging to a non-English speaker. It took courage on her part, and required her to use some of her English language skills and the guidelines she's studied in our parenting classes.

Eh Paw wanted her young daughter to be able to meet friends and enjoy activities outside of school, but she felt shy and uncertain about how to make this happen. We discussed it during Circle of Parents, a weekly parenting group that we hold in conjunction with our Family Literacy Program. Circle of

Parents teaches parenting skills and resilience based on a child's development. The program helps parents develop appropriate expectations, coping skills and healthy ways of interacting with their children.

During the meeting Eh Paw asked me what she should do if her daughter wanted to go to the movies with a friend. With the help of our translator, we talked about safe choices and expectations for social activities for children.

Eh Paw decided that she would like to enroll her daughter in a class at the Carrboro Arts Center.

Together we walked through the registration process. This must have encouraged her, because



Eh Paw with her two younger children

the next time I saw her, she announced that she had also succeeded in registering her daughter in a karate class! And by sharing her experience, Eh Paw became a role model to other parents in the group.

*Virginia Meldahl
Circle Facilitator
ESOL Instructor*

Writers for Readers—February 17, 2015

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