



in
our
words

Learner & Tutor Stories

Nashville Adult Literacy Council Presents

In Our Words

2022 Learner and Tutor Stories

The following stories have been written by adult learners and tutors
of the Nashville Adult Literacy Council.



**Nashville Adult
Literacy Council**

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Acknowledgments

The Nashville Adult Literacy Council would like to thank all of the learners and tutors who have contributed to this year’s edition of *In Our Words*.

We would also like to thank our staff and board members (listed below) for their continuing dedication to our mission. Special thanks to Emily Collins for providing the cover design.

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Foreword

— Kim Karesh, CEO



This year, NALC celebrates our 40th year of service. I remember when I turned 40. Something was...off. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. I was struggling to figure out my next step.

Not long after, I was on vacation with a nephew who had just graduated college. He was struggling to figure out his next step, too. I was lending him advice – good advice – and he was having none of it. How frustrating! I had nearly 20 years of experience to share, and he wasn't listening to me at all.

It made me wonder...who has 20 more years of experience than I? To whom do I need to be listening? With that, I made it my quest to meet more 60-year old women. Almost immediately, they seemed to appear in my life. One by one, we met for tea or lunch, and I asked each of them the same question: **What have you learned since you turned 40 that you didn't know before you turned 40?**

Most of them said that not much had changed. But when I probed about the stories of their lives, almost in passing, they recalled career shifts, surgeries, divorces, big moves, lost loved ones – all happening around the time they turned 40. They'd

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bravely adapted. Looking back, they realized they'd learned a lot! I listened. Their stories inspired me to leave my corporate career for nonprofit work, which has been one of the most rewarding decisions of my life.

As NALC turns 40, we have also gone through some of our biggest challenges, brought on by the pandemic. Like the women I met in my quest, NALC has spent this time learning and adapting. It hasn't been easy, but we've been brave, and now, we are producing some of the most successful programs in our agency's long history.

Sometimes, people talk about students at NALC as if they are the ones with something to learn, but this isn't the full picture. If we're doing this well, we're all learners, all of the time.

I feel both proud of and grateful for NALC's staff, learners, volunteers, and supporters. You've been brave through some difficult times, and I thank you for making this all possible. In the next pages, you'll read about the impact of your efforts through the words of our learners, volunteers, and staff. Enjoy.

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2020 Submissions

This is the first edition of *In Our Words* that we've produced in three years! However, in 2020 we collected submissions prior to closing our physical location due to COVID-19 and during the first months of isolation.

From devastating tornadoes, the coronavirus pandemic, and mass protests over police reform, 2020 will be remembered as a historically important and personally challenging year. We want to showcase the individual experiences of our learners and tutors from this time.

How to Be a Better Person for My Son

— Dontae Easley

The way I will make my life better for my son is to go to work. I will show him a better way in life, and that the streets are not a good place for him. I will show him that I am the best Dad to him that I can be. I will always be there, no matter what.

Untitled

— ALW

I think 2020 has been a messed-up year for everybody. Many celebrities like Riley Gale, Conchata Ferrell, and Jerry Stiller have died. I am not worried about covid at all. At first, I thought it was hilarious how everyone was freaking out. I was not laughing physically, but mentally in my head. But now the lock downs are getting annoying. At the same time, me being anti-social and a private person, I don't want people in my space or business. At school, I try not to show that, but when I am out in society in a restaurant or when I'm at home, I stay to myself. I try not to let this show. I don't want people to think, hey there is something wrong with this guy. I am just waiting for the school to open back up. That's all I want. But I am getting a lot of schoolwork accomplished at home.

Stay Away

— Robert G.

Stay away from me Covid 19.

I cannot have you inside of me.

I get sick even thinking about a temp of a hundred and three.

I got to be able to breathe.

I cannot have my lungs on fire, burning me up on the inside.

I cannot take it, if you turn my blood thick like honey.

My heart needs to be able to pump.

You could ravish my body and make it break.

Covid 19 stay the hell away from me.

I have lived in Nashville most of my adult life.

Broadway is one of the main streets in Nashville.

It's where the visitors go to restaurants, listen to country music singers, and have a good meal.

They also can do a little shopping if they like.

Broadway Street is always packed full of people and cars from morning til night.

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When Covid 19 rolled into our town without any notice, it closed everything down.

That is the first time I have ever seen Broadway Street empty – not a soul around, no cars, no people, no horse and buggies, not even music anywhere around.

You can stand in the middle of the street and look from one end to the other and not see or hear anything.

People are laid off from work, some have even lost their jobs due to the Covid 19 virus.

Everyone has to practice social distancing to keep the virus from spreading.

Children's schools are closed. They have to go to school at home.

Being locked up inside your home for months can sometimes take a toll on your mental health.

It can cause stress and depression, being separated from people you love.

So Covid 19, if you don't get us physically, you will get us mentally.

If you come my way, I am going to fight you – whichever way you come.

Special Olympics Is Good for your Child

— Tracey Griffin

Special Olympics is important. It is important, because athletes learn about making friends. It is also important for your child to exercise and the Special Olympics provides exercise for your athlete. My last reason is that athletes learn good sportsmanship.

Special Olympics is good for your child, because they learn how to make friends. When you have been competing for a long time in different events, you make friends along the way. They might not live where you live, but you make friends in Special Olympics. That is one reason Special Olympics is important.

Besides making friends, doing your events, whether it is swimming, running, basketball, or tennis gives your athlete exercise. Exercise is something your body needs to function and be more productive. This is why exercise is so important, and Special Olympics provides it.

Sportsmanship is also important for your child to learn. Winning is not everything in Special Olympics. Sometimes your athlete will lose. It is important that they learn good sportsmanship by saying good race, good luck, or even congratulations if they lose. It means a lot coming from one athlete to another. It will help that other athlete not feel so bad. Athletes have a hard time being a good sport, because they want to be so competitive. Even though I am a great

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swimmer, I have sometimes not been a good sport. However, Special Olympics has helped me overcome that.

Special Olympics not only provides an opportunity for making friendships, it also helps your athlete to get exercise and compete in an event. Athletes also learn a lot about sportsmanship. Therefore, Special Olympics is important for your child.

Wow, 2020 in Nashville!

— Vanessa Smith

What a year?

The Tornado hit in Nashville

Then Covid-19 hit the world

A lot of people lost their stuff and lives too

And the days seem blue

They open the bars, but closed the churches

What in God we trust?

WOW, what a year?

Sunday seems like Monday

Monday seems like Wednesday

Before you know, its Sunday again

WOW where did time go?

CDC says wash your hands,

Wear your mask

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Take off your mask and don't forget to practice social distancing

Maybe one day I can hug you again

Wow, what a year?

Did we forget to pray?

Do we still trust God?

Wow, it is 2020, but where did God go?

Stopped Clock

— Moonjeong Kim

Because of the pandemic, the lives of my family and me have changed completely. Since March, my son hasn't been to school and my husband goes to work every morning wearing a mask. And I couldn't go to ESL classes. It feels as if the clock in the heart of my family has stopped since March. I think everyone, not just me, is having a difficult time.

However, there were many changes in my mind.

First, I feel grateful for my son's school. I used to think it was only a place to go every day. I didn't know that it was a wonderful place to my son. Because my son has no siblings, school is the only place to socialize, so it was so sad that he couldn't go to school.

Next, I feel grateful for the opportunity to have English classes. I thought I would not be able to take English classes anymore because of COVID-19, but through Zoom, I can take classes again. Thank you NALC for giving me the opportunity to study English.

Next, I feel grateful for the health of my family and me. I'm thankful every night for the health of my husband who goes to work every day, and the health of my parents in Korea.

Last, I feel grateful for the daily life. Even though I wear a mask, I feel happy just walking in the sunshine. It is also

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good to take off my mask and smell the air when there are no people. Although, it is still hard to take care of my son all day at home, I'm happy that I can't miss my son's growth for a moment. And I feel that my family, which has no other relatives or friends in the U.S., has become stronger and closer since the pandemic.

After the pandemic, I believe the day will soon come when my son will go to school without a mask, my husband will go to work without a mask, and I will have classes with my tutor without a mask. With that thought, I can endure a hard and tiring day.

I hope the stopped clock in everyone's mind moves again.

About Me

My name is Moonjeong Kim. I'm from South Korea. I came to America two and a half years ago for my husband's work. I live in Brentwood. I love crocheting and knitting. And I like to take a walk in the park.

Untitled

— Sahiba Sediqi

My name is Sahiba. I am from Afghanistan. I came to the United States in 2019, because my husband lived here. I came here to live with him and now I have a beautiful daughter. Her name is Iqra, which means to read. I love her and her father. We are a good family, and we are very happy .

When I went to Nashville Adult Literacy Council, I met Julie, who is a very good person, and she helped me a lot. She introduced me to Margaret, my English tutor. I LOVE her a lot. She is a very good lady. She helped me when I took my driver license permit and when I have problems. I am so glad and thankful to have met her and have her. Now, she is like my family.

I study English, do all house chores, like cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc. and take care of my daughter. My great ambition is to be a nurse and help people, and to sponsor my family to bring them here from Afghanistan. They are unsafe in Afghanistan because there is war.

How 2020 Has Changed The Way I Learn Languages

— Mandy Bickett

2020 has certainly been an unexpected year for everyone, bringing countless hardships and long days to a time that, for many, was supposed to be full of family, travel, and the everyday life that we've always known. With the rise of COVID-19, we all bore the weight of change in our lives differently, forced to focus on maintaining stability in various ways. My personal year with coronavirus, particularly in my experience with foreign languages, has faced a shift in perspective, as well as a change in my university plans for the foreseeable future. Being quickly confined to the language opportunities that only the internet could provide, I noticed that where I thought my world would narrow, it actually expanded. Despite the enormous change that has come my way, I was grateful for the opportunity to refocus my role as both a student and a tutor of foreign languages, for both this year and for the years to come.

Originally, I had planned for 2020 to be a year that was filled with travel and studying abroad. When the year began, I was living with my parents in North Carolina, having just finished my winter semester at Belmont University. At the time, I was making arrangements for my study abroad semester in Regensburg, Germany, which would have begun the first week of March. The abroad experience was intended to be a semester that would help me improve my German, as I've

been a German major at Belmont since 2018. Upon returning home in July, I would have prepared for my remaining two semesters at Belmont in order to finish my courses in English Literature and German. Already, my 2020 experience was a year that I had dedicated to the foreign language arts, intending to improve my personal skills and continue to work on my degree.

Unfortunately, but not tragically, my abroad semester was cancelled altogether at the end of February, and I was left to face a four-month period in my hometown, free from school. I was lucky enough to be able to live with my parents at home and choose what I wanted to do with my time. Not being used to the feeling of infinite free time, I ultimately settled on reading many, many books and studying German by myself at home. Duolingo, Moleskine notebooks, and late-night emails to my German professor quickly became part of my routine. It was not the foreign language-learning experience that I had envisioned for myself, but it was productive and fulfilling -- so fulfilling that I eventually began learning another language: Scottish Gaelic. By the time the summer came, I may not have been immersed in the cultures of these languages as I had planned, but I was engrossed in the progress I was making on a daily basis, both in my language studies and in my reading.

My daily routine took somewhat of another unexpected hit during the latter part of the year. In July, my brother had a hiking accident and sustained serious injuries, which spun the

lives of my family out of control. As a by-product of this event, I decided to stay home from school for another semester, taking only two classes online through Belmont to maintain my position as a part-time student. One of these classes was my internship with the Nashville Adult Literacy Council, which I have been fortunate enough to complete online. Since August, I have met with my student every week to practice English. At first, the thought was daunting; I wasn't familiar with ESL, especially from the perspective of a teacher. As the semester progressed, however, I became more acquainted with my student and more comfortable with what to do during our tutoring hour, and the opportunity to teach a foreign language, as well as learn one, has been incredibly eye-opening and inspiring. Additionally, I'm blessed enough to be able to work for Belmont's Language Learning Center online as a German tutor, which has likewise advanced my confidence in tutoring. My routine with learning languages, though briefly put to a stop earlier in the semester, has resumed now to the point that it once was, with the addition of an online Irish language class that I take through my local community college. Despite the many, many twists and turns throughout the year, I've managed to keep my experience with foreign languages in sight, keeping hold of my personal passions to pursue my potential career.

When I look back at the year I lived, and I think about the year that I thought I would have, I notice how much my perspective of foreign languages has changed. I'm glad to have held my interest and focus in these subjects, despite the circumstances. To me, it seemed so easy to learn a language

when I had the opportunity to be immersed in the culture from which it came. Having travelled abroad before for a substantial period of time, I understand how helpful immersion can be. However, when I look back, I think I mourned the loss of my 2020 abroad plans too much. Even though my experience with foreign languages was confined to my home in North Carolina, I became so passionate about advancing forward in my languages that I not only studied German every day, but I picked up two new languages and two language tutoring jobs. My tutoring jobs, especially, have shown me that language is about communication and connection -- and connection can be as simple as a lesson through a screen. My ESL student has beautifully described language learning as “discovering new worlds,” and I think that that is the lesson that I’ve learned from this year. I once thought that discovering a new world could only happen if I studied hard and immersed myself abroad, but my 2020 experience with learning a foreign language has shown me that it’s the everyday connections and the everyday progress that makes learning a foreign language so unique.

My future, like the future of so many people in the world right now, has been significantly altered by the events of this year. Like so many people, I am more uncertain now than I have ever been in my life. However, if I can count one gain, I can count my journey with language. Where I used to think that language-learning required grand actions and adventures, I know now that it can be as simple as a conversation with someone or just the passion to do better. Learning a new language is often not as neat as we think it will

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be, but that's okay. As long as we can nurture our desire to learn, the way in which we learn will not knock us down. What I have learned from this year -- the relationship, the personal growth, and the exploration of new worlds -- are things that I will carry with me into my future, both in my career and my personal life. COVID-19 has set into motion a turn of events that has allowed me to redefine my passions, and while it wasn't an easy year by any means, I will carry with me the value of a language-learning experience forever.

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— Erin Stender

I was terrified the first time I tutored a student at the Nashville Adult Literacy Council. I worried about teaching a student incorrect information or not knowing something I was expected to know. Each time, I would sit in my car and brace myself to enter, worried about “failing” as a tutor.

After the first few weeks, I began to recognize regulars and view them as friends. It turned out that these people, who I spent so much time worrying would hate me, were the most caring and intelligent people in the world. I began to look forward to tutoring at NALC and catching up with my friends.

The first time I realized that my time at the NALC would change me forever was talking to my friend Demet. Demet, a doctor working and learning at Vanderbilt, was someone I always looked forward to talking to. I loved reading news articles with her and talking about the differences in the medical systems around the world.

Demet was one of the many students I was sad to never get to say goodbye to. As Covid-19 spread throughout the United States, I relocated back home without the time to say goodbye to students or tell them how much I loved learning with them. While I’m sad that the pandemic ended my time at the Nashville Adult Literacy Council early, I am thankful for the work I was able to do and, more importantly, I am thankful for the amazing friendships I forged with people from all around the world.

Rosa Parks

— Daniel Eubank

Rosa Parks was a black woman who never thought she would be famous. Let's start at the beginning. Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. Parks grew up poor and had bad health from the first part of her life. So she decided to become a vegetarian for health and longevity. She also believed like her friends Coretta and Dexter Scott King that animals should also be free from being subjugated and abused. Parks was most known for sitting down for black rights on a bus. This sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955-1956. She seems to light up the room when she walks in it.

Stormy Morning

— Robert G.

I was awakened early morning March 3, 2020 by hearing tornado sirens going off. Strong wind was howling around the apartment building. The thunder and lightning were lighting up the sky.

I turned on my TV to listen to the news cast. Channel 5 news cast said an F3 or an F4 tornado touched down in Nashville, carrying wind speed up to 150 miles per hour. It came across channel 5 news station. There were two tornados, the second one was the one that done the damage. They said seven people were confirmed to be dead.

I could not go back to sleep. At daylight I went outside and looked around for damage. Just had a couple of tree branches down that's all. The tornado did not bother my part of North Nashville. I tried to drive over in the other part of North Nashville but it was blocked off. Police would not let you through because of down live wire lines and poles and trees across the road.

The next day neighbor was helping neighbor and volunteers came with chain saws to help cut up the trees in people's yards and homes and streets.

Some families had to relocate because they did not have electricity. They were put up in hotels around town by FEMA.

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Churches around town gave out cleaning supplies and boxes of food. Food trucks sat up in different places around town and gave out hot food to people who did not have electricity for weeks. They had so many volunteers that come in to clean up debris they had to send some back home to come back another day. That's the kind of people we have living here in America.

What a Welcome to Nashville!

— Suzanne Vine

When I moved to Nashville a year ago, I had no idea how difficult 2020 would be. I thought 2019 had already shown me how difficult life could get. In the summer of 2019, I had just finished the adventure of living for 5 years in Amsterdam, the Netherlands with my husband. The day after we flew back to the U.S. to visit family in New Jersey before our move to Nashville, my husband collapsed at a restaurant. His heart had stopped. He spent two months in intensive care in a hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We finally moved to Nashville over two months after originally planned. I felt lucky that despite everything he had gone through, he was still alive.

We didn't know a soul in Nashville. When my husband returned to work in December 2019, I knew I needed to make connections here, and fast. I was an elementary school teacher for many years before our move to Amsterdam. While in Amsterdam, I began teaching English to adults. I found their eagerness to learn so inspiring. I knew firsthand from struggling to learn Dutch just how hard it is to learn a second language. I could empathize with the experience of feeling frustrated and even stupid at times when I stumbled over words and couldn't understand what locals were saying, no matter how hard I tried.

When I saw NALC mentioned in a local newspaper, I got in touch right away. I started tutoring Moon soon after I finished

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my training. I realized right away what a hard worker she was. I was immediately impressed by her determination to learn English. I knew I had found an important way to connect to others in Nashville.

When the pandemic hit, we couldn't continue our in-person tutoring sessions. I wasn't sure if online tutoring would work. I had never used Zoom before. However both Moon and I were willing to give it a try. We started our Zoom sessions in early June. Each week, I look forward to seeing Moon's face on the screen, and to learning and laughing together. She is so far from her parents and other family members, who live in South Korea. We talk about how hard it is to be far away from family during the pandemic. Although I'm not nearly as far from my family as she is, I am also not able to see my children or my mother or siblings in person. The pandemic has taught me to be grateful for what I do have. I'm grateful to Moon for inspiring me during these difficult times.

Burlington English Prompts

Burlington English is the online English Language Learning platform that we use in classes and tutoring. As part of our lessons, many students are prompted to write about themselves and their lives. In the following pages you'll find a variety of writing based on these prompts.

Prompt 1: Write about yourself.

— Snahider Vega

My name is Snahider Vega and my wife is Janiree Vega. We are from Venezuela. I like to read the newspaper and my wife likes to watch TV. We live in Murfreesboro, and we have one dream. Our dream is to speak and understand English very well. We like to make new friends because this country is our new home. We will achieve these goals with the help of our tutor.

— Johana Brito

My name is Johana Brito.
I am from Venezuela.
I came to America to have better life.
I live in Nashville.
I study English at night.
In the future, I want to be the owner of a dance academy.

— Fadumo Adan

My name is Fadumo. I am from Somalia. I have a husband and 5 kids. Their names are Salman, Salma, Sultan, Sara, and Sumeya. I also have 2 cats. Their names are Salam and Samira. I have been in Nashville for 19 years. I want to learn English. When I do, I want to help people learn English. If I had a job I would be a Social and Community Service Manager. Those are people who help the poor.

What is Ramadan:

Ramadan is a very important month in Islam.

The purpose of Ramadan is to experience the feeling of hunger the poor feel everyday. We fast for 14 hours.

Fasting:

Adults usually fast whole day. Some children fast for half a day, or eat a snack every once in a while.

Food:

During Ramadan we eat lots of different types of food. The food we eat the most is probably samboosa. We also eat lots of fruit and types of bread. We also eat different types of mixtures of vegetables and rice and chicken, fish and meat.

— Nubia Elizabeth Perilla-Lopez.

My name is Nubia Elizabeth Perilla-Lopez. I'm from Colombia.

I think I'm an empathetic person. I try to hear and understand the people, so I can help them. I'm very friendly with people. I'm a little bit shy. I'm shy when I don't know the situation, I prefer to be quiet. My family says that I'm methodical and analytical.

I would like to work in a Supervisor position because I'm empathetic and kind to people I will be able to manage people. Supervisors need to get along with coworkers and work together for the same goal. How I'm methodical and analytical I can lead my team to do that.

— Nga Pham

I used to live in Vietnam. I moved to the United States in 2019. My first year wasn't easy. There were many things to learn. But I wasn't alone. My husband, he is a American. He helped me find a school English class. Today, I live in Antioch Tennessee. I am working to hard. I saving money for my own age.

— Jungah

Who am I? Hello, My name is Jungah. I have been married a man who was born and raised in U.S. for 14 years. We have very different culture, race and language. But we are still married so that means I am very adaptable person as well as him.

And my husband says I am a perfectionist. He knows me too well. I have lots of projects piled up in somewhere waiting for my attention. If I start a project, I can not do any other things until I finish it perfectly. My personality always lead me to make tasks bigger than they need to be.

What should I do for living? It's hard question.

I am saticefied with what I have. So I don't have a strong motivations to improve myself. Only one thing, I would love to take my English level to the next level, because my English speaking skill is not satisfy me so far.

— Soo Kim

My name is Soo Kim.

I am interested in volunteering at children's Center.

I have two children, two nephews and four nieces. I love children and they love me. I took care my nephews and nieces. They love me and I love them. They always contact me and I listen to them well.

— BN

I used to live in the South of Vietnam. I moved to U.S. in 2016 with my wife. Some my friends helped us to looking for a job. I really got a difficult time for first 3 years and then we were divorce after that. I moved to Nashville in 2019 and has started working in nail salon. Now, I am taking an English class with my tutor and I probably will go to Nashville Tech for studying the course I like. I hope I'd be a medical assistant.

— KL

My name is Karol Loyola.

I am from Peru.

I came to America with my family for my husband's work.

I live in Nashville.

I study English in the morning two days a week with my teacher Mark.

In the future, I want to be a lawyer, this is my big dream but the first I need to study and improve my English.

— Nejat Hamza

My name is Nejat Hamza.

I came from Ethiopia.

I speak Amharic.

I live in Nashville TN.

I studay English at day.

In the future, I want be a Chef.

Prompt 2: Write a description of your personality and the job that you think is right for you.

— TH

What kind of person am I? I'm a careful person. I usually think about things from multiple points of view when I make a decision. My family says I'm flexible. When I face a problem, I can adjust my style or think of an alternative plan depending on the circumstances. I'm also responsible. When I set a goal or have a task, I strive to achieve it. I never leave it half done.

Now, what should I do for a living? I think being a nurse would suit me. The situations always change, and a mistake can be fatal in the clinical environment, and a nurse should manage them cautiously and properly. And the most crucial fact for nurses is that they have people's lives in their hands. They have to do their best responsibly. Based on the above reasons, I believe nursing would best match my personality.

— Raissa Amah

What kind of person is she? She is empathetic. She understands people's feelings. She is very kind and patient. She always helps people. But when it comes to talking in front of many people, she is shy.

What could she do for a living? Becoming a receptionist

will be perfect for her. Receptionists have to be empathetic, kind and don't need to talk in front of many people (shy or not). She can always use her patience with the customers and also understand their feelings so that way she can help them better. For all these reasons, I think a job as a receptionist will or can be right for her.

— Pahola Jurado

Being your own boss or working FOR someone else?

Some people have dreamed of being their own boss since they were children. “Three in five (62 percent) Americans want to make their dream of owning a business a reality in 2018, according to research”¹. Many researchers have argued that to work as their own boss gives people an independent economy, organization, structure and quality of life, for example managing their own time does not have a price. However, people don't know the requirements to start to build their own business, people need capital, financial structure, inversions, do duties, pay taxes, and for the most part, entrepreneurs have a big responsibility with their other salary people, their employees. To be an entrepreneur is not easy, it is not just to have an innovative idea.

In my opinion, working for someone else has more advantages than having your own business. First, people can earn the same quantity every time, people don't depend on selling according to the season or if people invest in their business, second, people can have their benefits like health

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insurance and taxes, each month people have discount to pay the taxes gradually, third, people haven't the responsibility to pay other workers, so people avoid paying large sums of money and just have specific responsibilities, the duties for people which were hired, rarely people do not work longer than the contracted time, and if this happens, they earn extra money.

In conclusion, working for someone else gives more organization finances and quality of life, this gives people more stability and benefits, also workers have fewer responsibilities. Furthermore, people have more time to spend with the family in comparison with the entrepreneurs. This is what I call quality of life.

Bibliography

<https://nypost.com/2018/01/17/most-americans-dream-of-being-their-own-boss/>

— Azar

My name is Azar. I speak three languages; English, Persian, and Turkish.

I know how to use a computers just little. In the future I want to talk English to my friends and my son-in-law and my grandchildren.

Prompt 3: Write about a positive school experience.

My Positive School Experience

— Victor Roncalla

When I was in high school I always wanted to be part of the Computer Class. I remember when I tried to enroll the first time, the teacher told me, “We don’t have more available seats. You can try the Carpentry Class.” So I enrolled in the Carpentry Class.

“Things happen for a reason. Maybe this is what I need”, I said. But to be honest wood waste and my asthma didn’t mix well. “I will try to enroll in the Computer Class again next year”, I said.

So the next year I tried again. This time the teacher told me, “I admire your tenacity but I’m sorry we don’t have more available seats yet. If you don’t like the Carpentry Class, why don’t you try the Electricity class.”

I said, “Ok. I will try one session of Electricity Class.” I thought Electricity Class was more interesting than Carpentry. However, I believed that it was not my cup of tea. The next class, I went to the Computer Class, said hello to the teacher, and sat in a chair next to a classmate. I didn’t move from that chair during all the class. My classmate and I were sharing a single computer all the time but that did not matter, I felt very

happy in that class. I said, “Yes. I did it.”

I was part of the Computer Class for the following 3 years until I finished High School. I’m pretty sure that this helped me decide what career I wanted to pursue. My name is Victor Roncalla. I am very happy to work as a Senior Software Engineer today.

A Positive School Experience

— Elizabeth Perilla-Lopez

My positive school experience was when I moved from basic level to advanced level in English class.

I felt very nervous at the beginning. I thought I was not going to be able to understand my teacher, classmates, and class activities.

I felt nervous and scared at the beginning, but after a few weeks, I felt better and calmer.

My teacher and classmates helped me and my family also supported me. This made me feel more confident about the change.

My teacher told me, “Good job, your pronunciation is improving.” My classmates also said, “You are doing well.” And my family supported me by telling me, “You will be fine.”

At this level, I feel better. I have learned more and also understand more from my teachers and classmates.

I feel that taking this English classes helped me to achieve my goal to obtain my U.S. citizenship.

— Maria Madrazo

My positive school experience was talking with others in English class, I understand the school meetings for my son better. I felt happy when talking with partners or classmates. I felt nervous and sometime forgot the words, I felt fearful at the beginning of English class but my teachers helped me a lot in class. I understood the better when my teacher said, “Read this sentence again.” Today, I understand better than a few months ago.

Prompt 4: Write an essay about your goals.

— Anna Kiryushkina

I set an ambitious goal to improve my English skills during one year.

I have been studying English since the five grade of elementary school, then continued studying in university. The English classes at school were really boring. Most of the time we just learning grammar rules and did reading. There were almost no speaking practise. Later I understood that I was taught to pronounce some words wrong starting from the school. When I was studying at school I didn't take English classes seriously. I thought that I don't need to know English, because I wanted to be engineer. In university there were English classes just first two years. The lessons were mainly focused on studying vocabulary related to engineering. And again no speaking practise. When was a university student, I realised that English is a must if I want to work in foreign company. And I took a few English courses and studied by myself. After finishing university I was hired by foreign companies Nissan and Nokian Tyres. My English level was enough to communicate with foreign colleagues. When I moved to the US I started feeling uncomfortable, because I didn't use to American English. Americans speak really fast, quite often using the shortened words and some people have very strong southern accent. Very often people can't understand my English. I really want to change it, because I'm feeling uncomfortable speaking with locals. When I achieve my goal I can make local friends and change the career field.

I enrolled to English classes and studying with a tutor two times weekly. I decided to read at least one English book per month and speak more with locals at work.

I believe that I can succeed and reach my goal. It won't be easy, but I really want it.

How I Achieved My Goal Quickly

— Mami Deguchi

Being positive and open-minded is particularly important to life because it gives you a lot of luck. You will receive many benefits from it as well. I received an email from Maggie at NALC today. She needs permission to use my old essay that I wrote just when I joined the NALC in May 2022. I didn't even remember what I wrote so I just read the copy she sent. It was only a couple of months ago, however my situation is completely different now and I realized that I had already carried out my goals. Regarding the old essay, I had set two goals which were short-term goals and long-term goals. My short-term goal was losing weight and my long-term goal was attending college. First, it was quite easy to achieve my first goal since I start playing a pickleball. Pickleball is a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping pong and the fastest growing sport in the U. S. A. I have just fallen in love with this sport and started playing every day. Sometimes it is hard to go somewhere you never know but I just jumped into the new world even though I did not speak English that much. Thankfully, I have met a lot of good people there and made some friends, furthermore, I have lost six pounds

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without realizing it. Therefore, I would like to suggest to all the people who live in a foreign country just do whatever you deserve without any hesitation. Life is shorter than you think. Secondly, my long-term goal to attend college was a little more difficult than my short-term goal, in the financial difficulty. I wanted to attend college, but the tuition was expensive for foreign students. I was stuck with this issue and there was a deadline for Fall semester. I have asked Maggie and Crystal how I can resolve this matter and they were tremendously supportive. Especially, Maggie worked with me to complete a lot of documents to quote the in-state tuition and it worked very well so that I could go to college with in-state tuition. If I had been shy and hesitant to tell them about my situation or ask their support, I could not have achieved my goal so quickly. In sum, it is important to be flexible and have a strong will with optimism that takes you where you would like to go. Consequently, one day I would like to be a person who gives support to anyone who needs it just like I have received.

Mami also wanted us to share her previous essay about goals to show her growth:

I have set two goals for myself.
a short time goal of mine is that I want to lose my weight.
a long time goal of mine is that I want to go to college.

I am going to go to FL next month, I would like to wear my swimsuit which I brought from Japan.

It doesn't fit me anymore. I really like it and I want it to fit

again.

To achieve my goal, I need to exercise at least three days a week, and shouldn't eat any snacks.

I am taking pilates classes everyday but I am still eating snacks.

Right now, I am taking ESL class and doing tutoring to improve my English skills.

I hope to go to college soon.

It won't be easy, but I am confident that I will reach my goals.

Prompt 5: Write about a financial goal.

— Anna Kiryushkina

I would like to save money so that we can buy our own house. I'm planning to put aside 10% of my monthly income so that we have enough money to make a down payment. Buying my own house is important for me because the rent keeps going up. When we buy a house, we can use the rent payment for paying a credit. Currently we are renting the old house because there are not many options in Dayton, TN. Our monthly utility payments are quite high because the house doesn't have a good insulation. After this dream of buying a new house comes true, I would like to keep saving money. My next goal is to save enough money for the education of my child. It is important to get a proper education so that my child has good career prospects.

Prompt 6: Write a description of your eating habits and goals.

— Faten

I have healthy eating habits, but they could be better. I eat for breakfast a cheese sandwich, and cup of coffee. For lunch eat usually protein like chicken, steak, salad and bread. For dinner I don't eat anything, but sometime drink hot lemon. I am trying don't eat a junkfood, soda, and a little ice cream.

— Leticia

I need to start changing my lifestyle.

I think my lifestyle is just good; well just part of it because I like go to the gym during the mornings maybe three or four times per week, I like to be active in this way I can maintain my brain more focus, to stay in shape, feel better everyday, stay calm, in few words it is my relaxing time to think about me and my body.

But only this part of being active its my good part, and its only 30% of a great lifestyle. The most important part it is the food (my big problem, in special during the weekends).

My daily diet; I really need eat more fruits but most important vegetables(I need eat more fiber) also I should add more protein. I love grilled chicken and fish, but I do not eat it as often as I want so I need to start with this little changes

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because the big prize at the end is my health to live my life as I want : happy.

— AC

My goals about eating are having every day from the different groups of food, for example for breakfast try to have a grain like oatmeal, granola, fruit like blueberries, strawberries, dry fruits like pecans, almonds, cranberries. For lunch are having more vegetables than protein, for example trying to do small portions of proteins and add more colors to the vegetables. I'll do the same with dinner. Adding more vegetables. That's my eating goal habits.

My Summary Of A Healthy Lifestyle.

— Yanitza Monteon

I think that I have a healthy lifestyle, but always I could do more for my body.

I try every week to include a different plan to be healthier.

My eating habits are better than the last year. On the one hand, I increase eating more fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, I decided to reduce the ingestion of red meat to only one or two times a week.

I like to eat too many cookies for the breakfast and I know this practice is a bad habit and not convenient for my healthy diet and lifestyle.

I'm in good shape. I do work out 5 days a week, for example, I lift weights three times and do Pilates twice a week; so I consider it a perfect plan for my medical conditions.

I need to change my breakfast such as eliminate the cookies for a more balanced meal. My brother recommended that I switch the cookies for oatmeal every day.

My husband suggested I reduce the times of work out a week the consequences are wearing and tear on my joints, but I think this good habit strengthens my immune system.

Prompt 7: Write a description of your shopping habits.

— Leticia

My general shopping habits depends of what I'm buying for example if it's clothes, food, technology, and always checking if it's also expensive or cheap.

I think I'm a impulsive buying person and I know that I always need to do a list when I'm going to the store or supermarket if I don't have a the list with me when I'm walking across the hall I can find a lot of new things perfect for me that I never imagined before to have it or need it.

When I need to buy a expensive article I always check the prices, all the options to make a good decision also asking for recommendations with the correct person.

I'm not a big fan of buying online I prefer be presencial with my purchases because I need to see and feel the product; well this was thought before COVID so now I feel more comfortable buying anywhere but always remembering (trying) to have a list with me.

— Yanitza Monteon

My shopping habits are similar in cheaper purchases. I'm usually a smart buyer, but once a time in a month I buy online things on impulse.

All the time when I need to buy expensive purchases, for example, a car, insurance, technology, etc, I tell to my husband; we take our time and look for reviews of other buyers, compare prices online, and pray to God for directions. We consider ourselves smart shoppers.

On the other hand, I can use a shopping list when I go to the supermarket for groceries or medicines on Walgreens; because I have a budget, every month as I must make the most of my knowledge of finance.

In the future, I want to change my spending online things on impulse because Amazon offers Prime customers free, fast and easy delivery; and attractive products; but the problem is the highest prices. So I can buy them items in other places more shippers than on Amazon. One time in a month I buy online things on impulse.

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Submissions

The following pieces have been submitted by learners. Some have also been included in our monthly student newsletter, *In Our Words*, which is emailed to all active learners and mailed twice a year. This newsletter is also a place for learners to share celebrations and staff to share organization updates with learners on a regular basis.

Untitled

— G.W.

I come to Martha O'Bryan to get a better spiritual life.
I come to several classes.

I volunteer to pack up food boxes.

I talk with other people and put the food boxes in their cars.

I want to get better relationships in my life.

On Sunday,
I put the church music on my radio and turn it up real loud.

I talk to God about my family that has passed away from me.

It's a hard life without them.

I miss them a lot.

Kim and Crystal Hanging Out with David Grohl and the Care Bears

— Avery Whitehead

Crystal and Kim would sing on the Foo Fighter stage with David Grohl and the Care Bears, dancing, doing the robot, and drinking a milkshake.

*Footnote: “There goes my hero. Watch [her] as she goes.”
from “My Hero” by Foo Fighters

Untitled

— Faten

I’m from Egypt. I have four kids.

I’m all the time busy lol. I didn’t continue my education, I stopped in high school. After came to U.S. show I can continue my education online it’s big chance to me because I have kids I can’t go anywhere. First taken English language because I want to talk with my children good and I can understand them. After that get I can continue my high school it’s big dream to me. I can make it true. I’m so glad.

Thankful for NALC to help us to make the dream true.

Essay: Before and After

— Daniel Eubank

Daniel's First Essay

If I kud go bak to Schule. I wud. Bekus I wont to I urn now thaings. Olesow it wuld late me git a bater job. It wold halp me beld konfudens and selfustem abowt mi self.

Bekus I wont to I urn now thaings. Naleg is a grat thaing to have. Having No leg halps you all thruw your life. You can do thaings uther people can not.

Olesow it wuld late me git a bater job. The bater you are ajucated the bater job you can git. The bater job you git the bater you git pade. The bater you git pead the bater life you can have.

It wold halp beld kenfudens and selfustem. Win you can say I ded that all biy my salfe. That malks you file good. It halps you hold your head up hi no mater wut.

If I kud go bak to schule I wold. Onley good things can cum out of it. The Osumnes of I urning. Bater job oportunties wile com yo,ur way. It wile beld konfudons and selfustem. So ef you thank abowt it it cud chanj you fore aver. See all good things can hapen to you.

Daniel's First Essay after revision:

If I could go back to school, I would. Because I want to learn things now. Also, it would let me get a better job. It would help me build confidence and self-esteem about myself. Because I want to learn new things, and knowledge is a great thing to

have. Having knowledge helps you all through your life. You can do things other people cannot.

Also it would let me get a better job. The better you are educated, the better job you can get. The better job you get, the better you get paid. The better you get paid, the better life you have.

It would help build confidence and self-esteem. When you can say, I did that all by myself. That makes you feel good. It helps you hold your head up high no matter what.

If I could go back to school, I would. Only good things can come of it. The Awesomeness of learning. Better job opportunities come your way. It will build confidence and self-esteem. So if you think about it, it could change you forever - see all the good things that can happen to you

My Story

— DeLois Chumbley

The Paint and Sip class was fun. First, we painted t-shirts. We got to paint our own shirt. We painted white t-shirts. I painted butterflies and flowers and circles. My kids like my t-shirt so much, that they wanted to take it home. But I said no.

The second time we had paints and we copied designs onto a board. The design was butterflies and trees. I hung my picture in my living room.

At Martha O’Bryan Center we went into the children’s room and made a dessert with Oreo cookies and pudding and gummy worms. We ate our desserts.

I missed the event where a man came and talked about each of us writing our life story. I missed that class.

I think it is nice that Martha O’Bryan offers us things to do like this. We look forward to doing a class again this summer. It will be a lot of fun.

The First Chapter of My Life in the States

— Saori Hildebrand

In 2019, I moved to Nashville from Japan to follow my husband who just started going to Vanderbilt law school in the summer. I was genuinely happy and supportive of his decision, but on the other hand, I wasn't sure if I really could live comfortably in this country with my limited English abilities. In order to wipe away those worries, I started taking some English classes at Vanderbilt in 2020. But then all of a sudden, the pandemic happened. All my classes became online, and I started feeling the need to have some different opportunities to learn English, hopefully one on one. At that time, my friends told me that they were having English sessions with their tutors introduced by NALC.

I immediately contacted them, and Crystal introduced me to Al as my tutor. He is the perfect tutor for me. He knows a lot about Japanese people and Japanese culture through his career. He also understands why I make such mistakes because he knows some words and grammar in Japanese. Those facts and his passion to teach helped me improve my English quickly. At our sessions, and sometimes even outside of the sessions, including our spouses, we always had a great time. Whenever I talk to him, I always feel that we are more family members or friends than just a teacher and a student.

After I started having sessions with him, I also had a lot of adventures in my life here. My husband and I had taken a road

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trip to the West to see all the National parks such as Grand Canyon and Zion for 3 weeks, temporarily lived in Atlanta and New York City for 3 months and took a cruise to the Caribbean with our family. Other than that, how lucky I am, I have visited more than 20 states since I moved here. One of the other things is that I started doing volunteer work at the Frist Museum. Once every 2 weeks, I communicated with the visitors and helped them make their own art projects. I also got a part-time job at Starbucks. I was able to enjoy all those adventures and challenges I had even more, because I improved my English communication skills since I started having sessions with Al through the NALC program.

Thus, I genuinely express my gratitude to Al, Crystal, and NALC for providing me such an amazing opportunity to improve my skills and grow more confident of myself. My husband and I are moving out of Nashville soon, and having our new life in New York City. Now, when I ask myself if I have the ability to live in this country, and if I can find some great opportunities by using my skills when I get to New York, the answer is YES. Because I know that whenever I need some encouragement, the words Al always gave me, “your English is amazing, you can do it, don’t be nervous and you are already wonderful”, will remind me that I am going to be OK.

Untitled

— Fr. Nicholas Cho

I came to America in 2019 to serve as the priest/rector of the Korean Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit. Our church is located on attractive grounds at 5325 Nolensville Pike. Of course, most of its members have been Koreans for the 27 years since it was founded, but I cannot rely only on our common language. It is necessary for me to continue improving my English for many reasons. Some are personal. Both of our sons speak excellent English. One just graduated from a US college and the other is attending. Both are doing very well. My wife and I can't let them stay too far ahead of us in English! Also, we enjoy drives to other places throughout the South, and that makes English quite useful.

My English is very important for our church. We want to increase the number of English speakers at our services, some of which are already held in English. Members and non-members use our gymnasium, including its basketball, volleyball, and badminton clubs. I want to communicate with all who come. Our goal is to reach out to all people and become a genuine part of the Nashville community. Also, many of our members are older persons who have even more difficulty learning English. I often help and accompany them on their contacts throughout Nashville, such as trips to the doctor and understanding local customs and regulations. Finally, as an Episcopal priest I must relate with other clergy

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persons in my denomination and other church and civic groups throughout the state, individually and in conferences. We are part of a bigger picture.

English is very challenging to learn. My vocabulary and reading are good, but speaking and comprehending speech are most difficult for me. Prepositions are really hard, but my teacher won't let me skip past them! We also work on strange expressions, such a "putting lipstick on a pig," that Americans have so many of. Those can sure be hard to understand, but are important since neither in Korea nor here are things always meant just like they are said. Nashville Adult Literacy Council is very important for my family and for all that my church touches in its community.

Journal Entry for My Tutor, Mark

— Zhouli (Leo) Quan

Hello Mark! Did you have a good weekend? Finally, the craft show was over. It was funny and impressive. During these days, I had a lot of things to talk about with you.

At first, I thought this craft show was interesting for me. Though I had some experiences with craft shows in China when I was in college, it was totally different this time. Because it was the first time to prepare a craft show with my family members, preparing what we would sell and need. I thought that even though we wouldn't make big money after this show, this experience was meaningful to me.

Then, I liked the people I met in Linden, Tennessee. On the way to the show, I had a discussion about the people in the US with Cary. Because I saw a lady who was a staff in the store and she shared a video about a day in her store. In that video, though she just said how are you doing to her customers, her customers said a lot of bad words. But those people we met were different. Those customers would say your crafts were beautiful and shared some stories about them. Some people when they saw I was taking some pictures for Sini, they would come and say where was a better place to take pictures. They impressed me a lot.

This craft show let me know more about the people in the US. Though it made me tired, I think it was worth it.

Goals Essay

— Lupita Villarreal Key

I have set a really important goal in my life.

Since I finished college, I wanted to keep studying and get a Master's Degree.

I needed a high level of English, that's one of the reasons I decided to move to the USA to improve my English. Right now, I'm taking English classes and I'm looking for a better job so I can start working as a professional.

I've been looking to start classes about Industrial Engineering so I can refresh myself since I haven't worked for about three years in this field.

It's been a big challenge for me to start my life in this country from scratch, but I'm really excited to see what's my next step in my life.

Since writing this essay in May, Lupita has gotten a new office job and will be starting a Master's program at MTSU this fall!

Mosquitoes in Dong Thap Muoi

— Yen Ngo

Not long ago, the South of Vietnam was a fertile land, accreted by alluvium from the Mekong River. The Mekong River is one of the largest rivers in the world, originating in Tibet, flowing through many countries and eventually south of Vietnam. In Vietnam, the river divides into nine branches like nine dragons pouring into the Pacific Ocean, so it was named Cửu Long (River of nine dragons).

The climate in the south of Vietnam was mild, neither too hot nor too cold, there were never storms or cold winters. Under the water it was dense with fish and shrimp, on the ground all kinds of animals, in the sky all kinds of birds. People lived in harmony with nature and never had to worry about lack of food. There are only two seasons all year round: dry season, no rain, rainy season, lots of rain. During the rainy season, the water rose and flooded. But when the water rose, the rice tree always rose above the water level and bloomed and bore fruit, providing rice for the people, that was called “Rice of Heaven”. In the rainy season, the water level rises, also known as the “floating season”. As the water receded, it left behind a more fertile layer of silt. Just like that, year after year, creating an extremely rich nature with all kinds of fragrant flowers and sweet fruits.

However, there was a small area (Dong Thap Muoi), flooded all year round, very few people, animals and plants could live

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there. There were a lot of mosquitoes and leeches there, so there was a sentence: “Mosquitoes sound like a flute blowing, leeches wade (swim) like “bánh canh” (a kind of noodle made of rice flour)”. Mosquitoes are so numerous that when they bite someone, they have to connect to each other to form a long tube like an oil pipe or a train, one car connects to another.

Today, the land that used to be flooded for half a year, every year, extremely rich natural area has gradually become arid land because the Mekong River has been blocked to build hydroelectric dams upstream (in China). Salty sea water penetrates deeper and deeper, destroying freshwater ecosystems.

Korean New Year

— Fr. Nicholas Cho

Seolnal traditionally was based on filial worship of deified ancestors among family members who gathered Seolnal morning. It carried very sacred meaning, much of which continues today.

In modern times, Seolnal has come to convey a sense of poetic joy, liberating people, at least for a while, from the stresses of an often self-focused secular urban life. It does this in part by maintaining the tradition of bonding with ancestors.

The holiday is meaningful for the country as well as for individuals. People often travel to their hometowns (causing many huge traffic jams), wearing new clothes (Seolbeem), where they conduct ceremonies and honor traditions. One of these is to bow to one's seniors, parents, and grandparents, after the ceremonies. The bow is called Sebae and involves kneeling, as one places his or her head to the floor. Next, there will be visits to relatives or neighboring seniors, who, in turn, give money, rice cakes, and fruits to their visitors.

Also, on their New Year's Day, Koreans offer each other blessings and engage in traditional play activities and competitions, which inspire community spirit. The main game is Yuknoly in which a wooden stick is thrown high and stones are moved depending on how it lands. Too, Koreans eat special food on Seolnal. Mainly this includes rice cake soup. To make this, white rice powder is kneaded, pounded, molded,

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then sliced into ovals before boiling. One belief is that eating this soup increases longevity by a year.

Seolnal is a day that will continue, hopefully, to keep traditions and blessings from the past alive today in Korea as well as among us in America.

Staff Submissions

Sarah's Retirement

NALC's beloved Sarah Coode has retired, and cherished staff member, Crystal Gimesh, is now leading our Literacy program. Read Sarah's farewell letter here:

Dear All,

It is with a grateful heart that I announce my retirement. I have been with the Nashville Adult Literacy Council since 1996. These have been wonderful years for me. Years full of life and learning and love and laughter. I have grown as a person and as an educator. And I have you all to thank for this.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work with my adult students. My **students** are role models of courage and perseverance. I will be forever grateful for the many gifts my students have brought into my life.

Lessons my students have taught me:

- Be patient and kind
- Be a good listener
- Learn something new everyday
- Be flexible
- Say I'm sorry
- Share hopes and dreams
- Forgive quickly
- Try something new
- Live in this moment

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- Smile more
- Applaud often
- Choose happiness today
- Never give up
- Tomorrow is another day

I am equally grateful for the hundreds of **volunteers** I have had the pleasure to work with these many years. NALC could not exist without volunteers. I thank you all for investing your time and talent with us and with our students. Thank you for welcoming strangers into your lives and sharing their journeys.

I want to send out a fond thank you to **Nashville Public Library (NPL)**. I have memories of such wonderful times in each library (touring the Main Library with my DC4 students, sheltering from a tornado in the Pruitt Library conference room, and helping a student vote at Bordeaux, to name a few.) All these memories bring me joy. I am so very grateful for the support NPL has offered to all the adult education programs in our community.

And to our **Board of Directors** - thank you for your welcoming smiles and open hearts. Thank you for seeing and understanding the joys and sorrows involved in all we do. Thank you for caring about all who live in our Nashville community.

Public Education in the USA was started as a way to create a literate society so that we could remain a democratic society. If Democracy is the foundation of this country, we at NALC are a brick in that foundation.

A dear thank you to my fellow **co-workers** past and present. It has been a joy! We help with skills needed to participate in our community. We are stepping stones on the way to independence. We are the connecting force between our students and their jobs, their health care, and their future. We are the stairway students use to travel from a place of insecurity to a place of opportunity and independence. We celebrate their successes every day, as our students take on roles in our community. We make community possible.

Cheers to you all:

Students, Volunteers, Board, Library, and Co-workers past and present.

Thank you. I will miss you. My years at NALC have been wonderful. You are forever in my heart.

I hope to spend my retirement years in our Nashville community volunteering in various enterprises, enjoying music, and continuing to promote lifelong learning for us all.

Sarah Coode
Literacy Specialist

400 Words: a reflection

— Kim Karesh, CEO

There is no courage without fear, so we're not embarrassed to say we were afraid. A pandemic. What would happen to our learners? Our volunteers? Our agency?

The Nashville Adult Literacy Council (NALC) teaches reading, writing, and English-speaking skills. We're an agency of words, and words were whirling in the early days of COVID-19 – words that our learners couldn't understand. They would depend on us as a source of calm.

Triage first. Who lost jobs? Who needs food? Who can't pay rent? Help them.

Ask them, "What do you need most?"

"Literacy," most of them reply.

Research next. In the 1918 influenza, mortality went up 32% for every 10% increase in illiteracy. Literacy is urgent. It's life or death. We can't stop our mission – not now.

Protect the agency. Consternate. Cut the budget. Lose valued employees. Grieve. Accept. Unite.

We're the learners now. We have to learn everything for the first time. New lessons and registrations and technologies:

Zoom, Canva, WhatsApp, Google Forms, Learning Upgrade, Burlington English, Facebook Groups.

We teach these new tools to learners...online...mostly without English.

“You’re on mute,” we say. We make pictures with arrows on our screens. We watch furrowed brows lean close to the camera. We cheer when it works.

And boy, does it work. It works better than anything we’ve ever done. Attendance is up. Average hours of instruction are up. Retention is up. Classes are full; waitlists grow again. Spouses, children, and neighbors from countries like Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Venezuela crowd around computers and help each other. Beautiful.

It dawns on us. We won’t just “get through” this pandemic. We’ll reimagine our future. Anything’s possible now. What’s next?

Build infrastructure. Update laptops, printers, office space, accounting, online phones, data systems, social enterprise, strategic plans.

Don’t forget self-care! Meditate, celebrate, and cancel Thursday’s meeting. Everyone needs a break.

Time to thrive. Launch new testing systems. Hire new employees. And for the love of all that is good, bring back

IN OUR WORDS

volunteer tutors. We've missed them. We run into them in local parks sometimes. "When can I help?" they ask, faces bright.

"Soon," we promise.

Last year, we couldn't teach them what we hadn't yet learned. But generous funders supported us through trying times, and now...now we know what to do. Our whole community is about to experience the rising phoenix of NALC, not because we were unafraid, but because together, we're courageous.

About the Nashville Adult Literacy Council

Since 1982, the Nashville Adult Literacy Council (NALC) has been dedicated to empowering adults through literacy. We provide free tutoring and classes to adults seeking to improve their reading, writing and English-speaking skills. This past year, we served more than 350 adult learners in Nashville with the help of 125 volunteer tutors.

1 in 5 Nashville adults is at the lowest level of literacy.

Literacy is the foundation for a better life. Adult literacy rates impact every part of Nashville: employment and poverty levels, healthcare costs, K-12 school performance, family and community relationships, and general dependence on systems for support. NALC offers multi-generational independence through literacy.

13% of Nashville's population was born outside the U.S.

Many of these individuals are without basic English language skills, which severely limits their access to jobs, educational opportunities, and citizenship.

Empowering Adults Through Literacy

NALC provides our learners with a safe place to learn and grow. We recognize that not everyone learns in the same way or wants the same things. That's why we offer free one-on-one tutoring in addition to classroom instruction, so each learner gets the attention needed for success. Our lesson plans and materials are adapted to each person's goals so they can feel

the difference in their day-to-day lives. Whether it's working toward getting a driver's license, earning a new job, or simply writing a love letter for the first time, we value and prioritize each individual's learning needs. As a result, we help people become more independent, improving their families' lives for generations to come.

How You Can Help

Our mission to empower adults through literacy would not be possible without our volunteers and donors. Our volunteer opportunities are detailed on the following page. For more information on how to sign up or to make a donation, visit nashvilleliteracy.org, email us at info@nashvilleliteracy.org, or call 615-298-8060.

Volunteer with Us

You can help change the life of an adult learner by volunteering as a NALC tutor for just a few hours a week. No teaching or foreign language experience is necessary, as we provide all the training you'll need to be an effective tutor. We have two main programs you can volunteer with: English Language Learning and Adult Basic Education.

English Language Learning

When? At a set meeting time convenient for you and a learner.

Where? Online using Zoom or another meeting software.

Who do I help? The same English Language Learner each week.

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How often? At minimum: once a week for three months.

What's my support? NALC staff will provide training, ongoing resources, and Burlington English.

Adult Basic Education (Literacy)

When? At a set meeting time convenient for you and a learner.

Where? Online, over-the-phone, or any public location.

Who do I help? The same person each time, someone who speaks English as their primary language, but wants to improve their reading & writing skills.

How often? At minimum: once a week for three months.

What's my support? NALC staff will provide training, ongoing resources, and lesson plans.

Donate

Your gift to the Nashville Adult Literacy Council helps our staff and volunteers meet the needs of our current and future learners. Here is what your dollars do at the Nashville Adult Literacy Council:

- \$25 = one book for one learner
- \$50 = books for a learner and tutor pair
- \$150 = one Burlington English License
- \$500 = one laptop for a learner or tutor
- \$1,000 = one volunteer tutor training session

Share

Short on time and cash? There are still many ways to help:

- Invite us to your civic club, professional organization, or place of worship to speak about our program.
- Refer an adult who might need our services.
- Recommend us to a friend or family member who might be interested in volunteering.

To find out more visit nashvilleliteracy.org or connect with us on social media.

Facebook: [nashvilleliteracy](https://www.facebook.com/nashvilleliteracy)

Twitter: [@NashvilleLit](https://twitter.com/NashvilleLit)

Instagram: [@nashvilleliteracy](https://www.instagram.com/nashvilleliteracy)