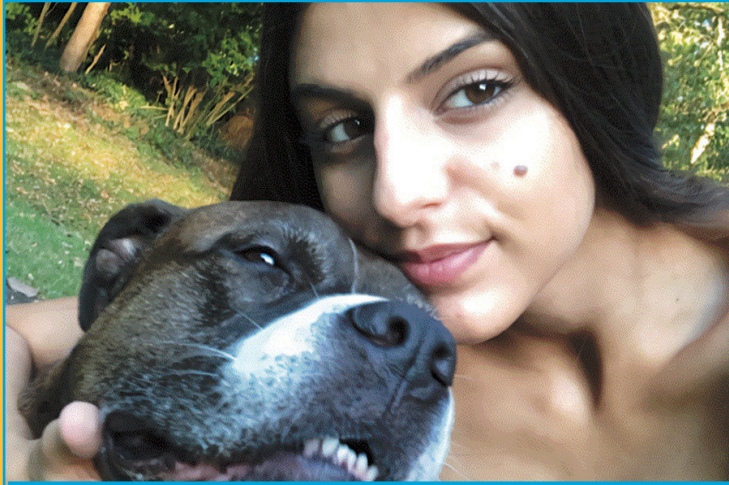


Summer 2024

- 2 MOS Certifications
- 2 Future Carpenter
- 3 From Refugee to U.S. Citizen
- 4 Making Connections

The SPARK

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES SPARKED BY YOU!



Five years ago, Nicolette was so proud to be recognized as a high school graduate at our GED Graduation. Today, she is the proud owner of Parlor of the Pooch in Brighton Township. We are overjoyed that Nicolette is living her dream thanks to your support of our programs.

LEADING THE WAY IN PA

Thanks to you we exceeded standards—and helped students reach their goals.

Across Pennsylvania, there are 35 adult and family literacy programs that receive Department of Education funding. Programs are evaluated and ranked on a variety of criteria from student enrollment to test scores to GED completion.

Literacy Pittsburgh led the state in many categories. The strength of our organization is due to the outstanding support of our donors, volunteers, and partners. Most importantly, dedicated and driven students are behind these numbers. On these pages, you will meet a GED graduate headed to college, a refugee who is setting an amazing example for her

Continued on page 2 >>

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS: ZAC

Creating a bright future thanks to you!

“I remember signing up for Literacy Pittsburgh in early September of last year,” Zac recalls. “I was in a rough spot in my life at the time and realized that I really needed to get a GED and receive a higher education.”

Zac attended PA Cyber but struggled with depression and anxiety, making it difficult to complete his work and his grades fell. He says he’s thankful to the teachers and staff there for helping him as much as they could. In 2023, he left PA Cyber and decided to pursue his GED

credential soon after.

He started classes at Literacy Pittsburgh in early January 2024 after taking a placement test. He says that the hardest part was staying consistent, something that challenged him during high school as well. In just a few months, he earned his high school equivalency diploma.

“My family really helped me,” Zac explains. “I had many doubts but it’s because of them encouraging me that I stuck around and got my GED.”



Zac has been accepted to IUP and is currently in the process of signing up for classes. He credits his teacher Terra for helping him polish his personal essay for his application. And, of course, his teacher

Continued on page 4 >>

LEADING THE STATE

Continued from page 1

daughters, and an immigrant who is starting a trade program. These are the truly important successes.

During 2022-23, the last complete year compiled by the state, Literacy Pittsburgh enrolled 1,895 adults, exceeding contracted enrollment by 28% and outperforming all other programs in this metric.

Most importantly, dedicated and driven students are behind these numbers. These are the truly important successes.

Our class-based instruction was number two in the state for high school equivalency (GED) accomplishments. We were number one in the state for post-secondary transitions.

Literacy Pittsburgh's volunteer tutoring program is unparalleled. We are the largest tutoring program in the state with 576 students receiving this mode of instruction. We are number one for educational level gains, finishing 18% higher than the next closest program. We are also number one in high school equivalency and post-secondary placement amongst tutoring programs.

We have steadily improved our GED and post-secondary numbers thanks to the tremendous support we've received for our Ready & Relevant programs. Our students are equipped to make a difference for their families and for our region. •

FUTURE CARPENTER: MEET JORGE

Jorge, who attends an English Language Learning (ELL) group at Crossroads West Church in Oakdale, was recently accepted into the Carpenters Apprenticeship Program at the KML Carpenters Training Center. Jorge is the second ELL student recently accepted into the program, which is an amazing accomplishment for both of them. Jorge consistently attends class and is thankful for his tutors, Jenny and Susan.



MASTERING MICROSOFT OFFICE: MEET PORTIA

Last year, 33 people earned 43 MOS certifications.

Portia felt frustrated at her job because she lacked the computer skills needed to complete required tasks. While job searching online at the library, she found Literacy Pittsburgh and signed up for computer classes in Downtown Pittsburgh.

"The classes were both easy and hard," Portia explains. "I began Excel in tears not really sure how to even operate the laptop let alone learn the material."

She credits her instructors for breaking down the lessons into small understandable bites and showing much patience.

Once she earned her Microsoft Office Specialist certification in Excel, she decided to keep going and took classes for PowerPoint and Word, earning those certifications as well. Three certifications allowed her to earn an additional certification: Microsoft Office Specialist - Associate.

"At first I wanted the Excel certification to help me on the job I have, then I wanted them all because why not? Education was



being offered to me for free!"

Portia worked in food service for over 20 years and the certifications offered her a way to do something different and gain the confidence that she can do the job. She says she can now build a resume she can be proud of.

"Thank you all so much for turning such a simple skill into a major accomplishment," Portia says. "My brighter future thanks you too!" •

FROM REFUGEE TO U.S. CITIZEN TO GED GRAD: MEET MHRA

Showing her daughters to never give up—and that hard work pays off.

Mhra came to the United States from Myanmar in 2014 with her husband and oldest daughter as refugees. Like many others facing political violence and ethnic oppression, she wanted her family to live in peace and have better opportunities for education and employment.

Fluent in Mon and Burmese, she knew little English. Mhra enrolled in our Family Literacy program just days after arriving in Pittsburgh. The program offered childcare and was located close to her home. She took English classes for several years and then transitioned into a class to prepare

for U.S. citizenship. In January 2020, Mhra was sworn in as a U.S. citizen. Her next goal was to earn her GED credential so she could go on to college. Mhra passed the first of the four sections in 2021, two more in 2022, and the final section of the GED exam in April 2024. She earned her diploma in time to participate in our May graduation celebration.



In 2024, Mhra earned her high school credential and plans to go on to school to become a medical assistant. She celebrated at our GED Graduation with her husband Nai Ah Ta Mon and daughters Mi Non Ong, Ai Pon, and Kon Htwaw.



In January 2020, Mhra became a United States citizen, granting her the right to vote and travel freely.

“Mhra has always been driven, from learning English, to getting her citizenship, getting her GED and now her path in college,” explains Director of Child and Family Programs Caitlin Griffiths. “I am impressed by the example that Mhra sets for her three girls, showing them

to never give up—and that hard work pays off.”

Now that her daughters are older, Mhra looks forward to attending college to become a nursing assistant, a job that is in high demand.

“Literacy Pittsburgh is my second family,” Mhra explains. “Without Literacy Pittsburgh, I couldn’t improve my English or achieve my goal to pass the GED and move ahead.” •

LITERACY PITTSBURGH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Andrea Clark-Smith UPMC

Immediate Past President

Steven Sokoloski Highmark Health

Vice President

Leslie Gromis Baker Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney

Secretary

Scott Bartlett Rich Foods

Treasurer

Danell R. Cooper, CPA KidsVoice

Earl Buford CAEL

Nancy J. Crouthamel Civic Volunteer

Ellen Duffield Highmark Wholecare

Rich Fitzgerald Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission

Ellen Freeman Freeman Immigration Law Group

Emmanuel George Covestro

Richard M. Heiser FedEx Ground

Kevin Kinross Carey Group

Michael E. Lamb McNees

Steve Mazza Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters

Tina L. Myles Pressley Ridge

Katie O’Connor Buchanan Ingersoll Rooney

Dr. Katy Rittle Duquesne Light Company

Rebecca Roadman University of Pittsburgh

Bill Southern Block Communications

Jen Styran Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Kathleen M. Sullivan Clark Hill

Erin Weber Raymond James

Dr. Yaqi Wo PPG Industries

Karen R. Worcester Hope Gas

GAINING WORKSKILLS, MAKING CONNECTIONS: MEET RODCHILD

Immigrant Workforce Program opens the door to a better job.

Rodchild came to the United States as a teenager from Haiti three decades ago. He worked with our partner Jewish Family and Community Services to help him find jobs over the years. He learned about the Immigrant Workforce Program, a collaboration of JFCS and Literacy Pittsburgh, and joined the Spring 2024 cohort. Through

IWP, immigrant job seekers prepare for the American workforce through English lessons, digital literacy, and one-on-one career counseling.

“IWP was very educational,” Rodchild explains. “I have done work in the past but I never had a chance to upgrade my resume. With IWP, I updated my resume and learned job searching.”

He also had the opportunity to meet different employers. One of those was Pittsburgh Regional Transit and Rodchild was offered a position as a bus driver with good pay and benefits.

“It was a lot easier, knowing what to expect,” Rodchild explains.

He has now set his sights on becoming a U.S. citizen. “It’s not



that I never thought of becoming a U.S. citizen but the more you’re here, the more you appreciate everything. My country doesn’t offer the same freedoms.” •

ZAC

Continued from page 1

Emily made sure he gained the algebra skills he needed to pass the math section of the GED exam.

“Literacy Pittsburgh means a second chance to me. I didn’t take school seriously and at one point I felt like I

messed up my entire life with no way of repairing it,” Zac explains. “But Literacy Pittsburgh was there for me.” •

Zac, pictured with his mom and sister Samantha at graduation, thanks his family for their encouragement. “I’m happy that I could make them proud,” he says.



LITERACY PITTSBURGH

OUR MISSION

Better lives through learning.

OUR VISION

A more inclusive and productive community driven by access to education.

OUR VALUES

- We believe that all people deserve the opportunity to learn in a place where their strengths are celebrated.
- We respect all people and their ability to shape their own lives.
- We have a duty to earn the trust of everyone we work with.
- Our collective well-being depends on welcoming diverse cultures and perspectives.
- As a leader, we embrace the responsibility to innovate, model best practices, and grow.



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

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

