



The volunteers with EBLP provide tutoring for international adults wishing to improve their English language skills. The articles in this newsletter represent the accomplishments of just a few of our students. The newsletter also includes articles by program staff.

www.elainebaconliteracyprogram.wordpress.com

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**Newspaper and
Website *News for You*
is a Teaching Tool**

By Beth Flynn

For a number of years, before the pandemic, I used the paper version of *News for You*, a newspaper for language learners whose first language is not English, in face-to-face classes at Portage Lake United Church. The ten copies of the paper were sent to Andrea Hauge-Bacon, previous director of the program, and delivered to the church. An important part of the session was having the students read a paragraph or two from the article out loud in turn. I would correct pronunciation, and we would go over vocabulary and definitions that the paper would provide. I sometimes slowed the reading process down by asking students to read and then summarize a particular article. They would read their summary, and we would discuss the article.

Since the pandemic, however, we've been meeting on Zoom and using the online version of the newspaper. The online version has

some useful features that the paper version does not have. It provides the text of an article as does the print version as well as exercises, an archive, and vocabulary, and a reading of the article by a professional reader. As in the past, students read a paragraph or two from an article out loud in turn. Now, though, we go over the vocabulary, listen to the professional reader, then do the exercises.

The articles are timely and diverse. Often the lead article is about national politics. There are also human interest stories, about animals, for instance. The articles are short, interesting, and an appropriate level of difficulty. One time we read an article about the Electoral College, and one of the students came to the next class happy to have been informed about it because the College had just met. In a recent session, we read an article about the storming of the Capitol building by Trump supporters. One student had already read about it in articles on Facebook. Sometimes students

make reference to articles we've previously read in class. There is also a crossword puzzle and a word recognition exercise in each issue. The online version is included on the website of the New Readers Press, which has useful discussions of citizenship, adult education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and workforce readiness and books that can be ordered. In many ways, the online version is a richer resource than the paper version had been.

During a class session, students generally do Zoom on one device and *News for You* on another. I do too. It takes some orientation and adjustment, but things are going smoothly now. Students are comfortable with the paper and the way we use it. Recently, for instance, my internet went out shortly after class had begun so I could not participate, but one of the students called me at the time the class was scheduled to end and reported that they had finished the article we were working on and did another one as well. I was pleased that they had worked independently. There was, after all, a native speaker at the session--the professional reader.

For access to the paper, contact me.

Learning English

By Lucky Li, China

I came to Houghton with my family in March of 2016. I am one of the luckiest people because I met Frann the day after we arrived in Houghton at the Canterbury House. She asked me if I needed any help learning English. Of course I said yes. From then on, Frann became my tutor and taught me all about American culture.

Later, I met Andrea, Beth, Denise, Linda, and Mary. I used to take English classes in a church every Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Every Thursday I participated in International Neighbors activities. In the English classes, we could practice speaking, listening, reading and writing through newspapers and specific textbooks. By joining International Neighbors every Thursday, we learned about the culture, tradition and customs of countries in the world, especially the United States. At the same time, Frann, Andrea and Beth encouraged me to do some volunteer work in churches, schools, and libraries so I would have more opportunities to practice and improve my English.

We moved to Canada in the summer of 2019. Starting in March of the following year, everyone was locked down at home. I am so lucky to start taking classes with Beth and Frann online. I can also meet old friends in the classes. I am very grateful for this. I hope I can continue to have an opportunity to take English classes from such excellent teachers. What a wonderful thing this will be.

My Journey to Learn English

By Dejlal Mezeel, Iraq

When I was a kid, teaching English in Iraq began in the fifth grade of elementary school. But after 2003, teaching English began in the third grade. Schools teach reading, writing and English grammar, but they don't focus on speaking or making conversation. So English was like other lessons, we studied only to get a good grade. My grades were excellent in every class I had from elementary to college.

I graduated from the college of Electrical Engineering, University of Baghdad in 1983. I had worked for 33 years in a public company responsible for telephone services, and I had many training courses about installing, operating and maintaining telephone communication equipment. These courses were in Japan 1986, Lebanon 2009 & 2013 and Sweden 2013. Studies for these courses were in English. At that time I was good with English terms that related to work.

In 2016 I retired from work and spent the time at home. Gradually I started to forget speaking in English because there was no need to speak English in the community.

The last two years I started to learn how to speak English by myself depending on the internet webs and many android applications on mobile. I also have read and listened to reports on TV or Facebook, but there was no one I can speak with in English to improve my speaking skills.

when I got to the "USA," I had difficulty talking to others. That's why I started to find courses for improving my English speaking and try to do my best.

English In Thailand

By Pichai Sripaipan, Thailand

I was born in Thailand. I began learning English when I was in 5th grade. I remember well how it was taught by the Thai teachers.

After learning the alphabet A B C, all English word / alphabet had to be transferred to Thai alphabet and vowels, that certainly comes out with an imperfect pronunciation and it sounds like Thai rather than English.

At grade 7, both my parents worked hard to put me into a private Catholic school. Some books and mathematics were taught in English, but the teachers were Thai with a Thai accent. Therefore my speaking English has been the Thai way all along.

In college, all terminology was in English. I was able to read English textbooks but continued to speak English the Thai way.

After coming to America, slowly I was able to speak some easy words the way it should, but overall I still don't speak like the American people. Reading, listening to the news, watching television, films or YouTube, or learning to sing the popular songs (correctly) do improve my English somewhat. It won't be easy to switch the way I speak for several decades, but I hope joining the EBLP English classes will help me pronounce and speak English better.

Voice of America

By Dejlah Mezeel and Denise Heikinen

For several years our literacy program has relied on *News for You* as its main teaching resource. *News for You* publishes news about America and the world that is especially written for international readers who are new to the English language. Our program's subscription to *News for You* continues to be an invaluable service for our tutors and students.

However, for those looking for an additional source for world news and information, *Voice of America* offers a free online service that provides news and information as well as an assortment of features and articles about national and international news, sports, nature, and the environment. Dejlah Mezeel uses both sources and says: "Both *Voice of America* and *News for You* are great for listening and reading, but VOA has additional features and categories for learning English." Dejlah points out that *Voice of America* articles are written for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of English learners and adds that VOA's daily audio broadcast and its many videos help readers understand idioms and grammar. For instance, Dejlah recently listened to a VOA small conversation about the use of the infinitive form of the verb and she was able to apply that lesson to her own written reaction to a different article. Another helpful category of VOA is called "Ask the Teacher," in which readers can address questions to grammar experts and get feedback. Also, the "video" category includes choice quotes from movies or TV news. The "US History" category contains many articles about American history and the Constitution. Furthermore VOA's App, Website, and Facebook editions are free and easy to use.

Go to <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/>. Also go to the App Store and download the App. In Dejlah's words, "VOA/Learning English is like a sea filled with great treasures, so you can get it all."

Farewell - Marianna Ewert

By Andrea Hauge-Bacon

The Elaine Bacon Literacy Program members are thankful for the many years that Marianna Ewert has served as a teacher of English, and friend to students and their families from all around the world. She and her husband, Gary, have creatively included them in the life of the community and their home. An annual camping trip to the Apostle Islands was part of the adventure and learning experience. And Gary taught driving to those who needed the instruction. Many needs of students and their families were addressed.

All of us wish Marianna well in the months to come. Good health and many blessings!



Covid Innovations

By Denise Heikinen

Happily, the Elaine Bacon Literacy Program has adapted well to the changes to our regular practice that have been made necessary since the pandemic so abruptly disrupted our daily lives; in fact, it's not a stretch to say our forced isolation has infused the program with a renewed spirit of



innovation and cooperation. All of our members have been able to adapt to online classes. Zoom has become our friend! We have even been allowed to welcome back former students Lucky, from Canada, and Anna, from Florida. Our move to safe socializing at beach meetings this summer and other activities also opened up a sense of shared appreciation for what we all really mean to each other.

My own personal favorite concession to new Covid rules is the Scavenger Hunt that developed as an alternative to MTU's Parade of Nations because it offered me and my new student Dejliah a fun way to get to know each other and become good friends. As we know, for the last 30 years, MTU's popular Parade of Nations celebrated the Copper Country's multicultural presence, but Covid restrictions prevented the parade

from occurring this year. I was initially skeptical about substituting a scavenger hunt for the Parade, but Dejliah Mezeel, my student recently arrived from Iraq, expressed interest in learning more about this American hunting custom, so we signed up as a "hunt team," which meant we needed to decipher clues to items hidden in Houghton and Hancock and record their QR code. Our first hurdle: Whatever is a QR code? But Dejliah figured it out and explained it to me.

Though I barely remembered my one and only scavenger hunt more than 60 years, I passed myself off as an expert hunter. I felt assured that at least I knew enough about the Copper Country and its history to decipher the clues. Not so, as it turned out!

Our first clue was easy and led us to the Hancock Beach where a question was asked about what a baseball player might do when running toward home plate. Tigers fan that I am, I knew to look under the *slide* for our hidden box, but first I had to explain to Dejliah that, no, baseball players do not have to bring their plates from home in order to play the game! Another clue steered us to the big tree on campus where we had to ask a passerby to scan the QR code because neither of us was tall enough to reach the box stashed deep inside the tree. The wording of the next clue was too well disguised. Something about it being "a cherished Copper Country installation"



capable of leading people up or down but without itself moving at all! What? A



friendly competitor team took mercy on us and just straight out told us that that box was hidden on the stone stairway in Hancock on the north end of the bridge. Ah ha! Got it! The clue claiming that a “shepherd” would give us an assist if we were “good” easily led us to Good Shepard Lutheran Church where even Pastor Bucky Beach chipped in to help us find the box. After circling the church a couple of times, Dejlah found it in plain sight!

At the Stadium we were stumped again by the clue that said to look for “the seventh oldest of something in the world” so we decided to use our phone-a-friend option and called Frann Grossman for help. She googled the clue and told us Dee Stadium is

indeed the seventh oldest hockey stadium in the world! Who knew? Well I suppose anybody who bothered to read the historical marker right next to me would have known!



From there we began to scrounge under the flower beds around the statue of the miner at Franklin Square until I suddenly realized the clue specified a soldier, not a miner! So we hurried over to Veteran’s Park!

By the end, our hunt took us to Verna Mize Park, Daniel Heights tennis court, the spiral of rocks by the bridge, and the Hancock exhibit on loan from the Detroit Institute of Arts. The scavenger hunt proved to be a fun way for tutor and student to bond and become friends while learning about American culture. I hope the scavenger hunt becomes a regular feature even after the Parade of Nations returns.

I’m not suggesting that pandemics are actually good for anything, but when change is forced upon us for any reason it might not hurt to approach the change with an open mind and make the best of it. Shaking up the status quo with new ideas can be fun and worth the effort.

My New Journey

By Shasha Zhang

My family took a trip to Detroit for my naturalization exam at the beginning of January, 2021. It took us nine hours to get there from Houghton.. Since the pandemic we hadn't had a chance to travel in more than one year, so we were excited to go to Detroit. My 7 year-old twin daughters were excited to spend their allowance in a big city, and I was excited to go to an Asian store to buy Asian vegetables and fruit.

This is the big moment for us who wanted to immigrate to the U.S. I had four weeks to prepare for the exam. My tutor Denise Heikinen helped me to go through the 100 examination questions. It includes three parts: American Government, American History, and Integrated Civics. Some of the questions were easy for those like myself who have been living in the country for years like: Who is the President? When is Independence Day? When is the last day we can send in federal income tax forms? etc. Some questions confused me, so Denise explained them to me. For instance, questions about the structure of the American government, such as its voting system, the Constitution, the responsibilities and power of the President, Vice President, House of Representatives, Senators, and Governors needed more study. She also explained American history to me. I also searched online about the process of the naturalization exams. A useful video I found is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73hmnUzTxSY>. There are also some helpful videos about the civic questions for the Naturalization process. My favorite video helped me remember the questions and answers by repeating them twice. I listened for a few days before I took the exam. While driving to Detroit I played the video in the car and the whole family competed to answer the questions. It was really fun. My 13 year-old son Daniel was able to answer the most because he's been studying American history and civics at school.

My interview appointment was at 1 pm, and I arrived 15 minutes early as required. When the

immigration officer called my name, I followed her to one of the offices. She asked me to raise my right hand to take an oath. Then she went to another room and asked questions through an online platform. She started by asking me my name and why I was there. Because we were online, I couldn't hear her very clearly for the first few minutes and had to ask for her to repeat the questions. After a while I adapted to this new environment and became more comfortable. I answered 6 questions correctly out of the 100 questions about American Civics, History, and Government that I had prepared, which was all I needed to do in order to pass.

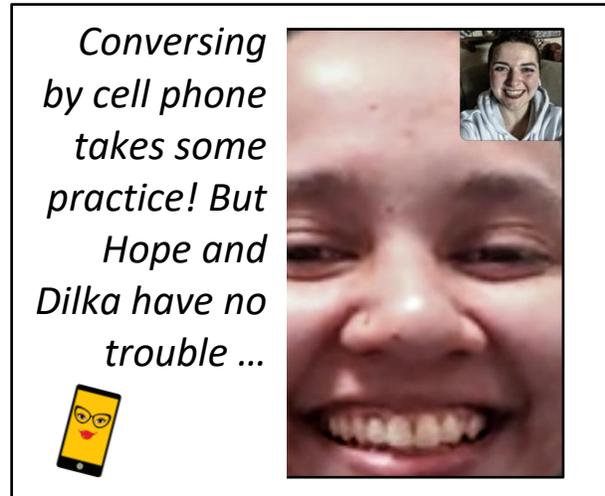
Next, she asked me questions about the USCIS Form N-400 that I had already submitted. She first asked me about my marriage, my recent travel history, my employment status. The form had asked 50 yes or no questions about my previous history and activities concerning political and legal information. The reading and writing part of the exam followed the questions. This part of the exam was more difficult than the Civics and History questions because it used big words that I was not familiar with and needed to study beforehand. Then the interviewer asked me to read three sentences to prove I can read English and then I was asked to write a sentence she had read to me. I wrote that we have one hundred Senators. The whole process is about 40 minutes.

When I returned back home I received a letter after five days from USCIS giving my oath ceremony schedule, which took place at the end of February. I am very excited to have become a U.S. citizen because now I can vote.



Conversation Partners Spark Cultural Exchange

By Frann Grossman



In addition to frequent conversation practice with our board members, students enjoy hooking up with community volunteers to exchange stories about family and culture. Due to Covid-19, conversation partners have moved from coffee shop visits to online video chats.

Kudos and virtual hugs to the following:

- **Hope McBride**, a recently graduated dental hygienist, says her hourly visit with Dilka Nishadini from Sri Lanka is the “highlight of my week.”
- **Michiko Nielson**, a recently retired manager with a high-tech firm, met Dejlal Mezeel from Iraq while the two were walking in their Hancock neighborhood one day. They walk together now, weather permitting, or chat online weekly to keep in touch.
- **Patti Lund**, former longtime member of the EBLP board and active in International Neighbors for decades, connects with Anna Hill of Ukraine. She was especially helpful

quizzing her friend on U.S. citizenship exam questions.

- **Candy Peterson**, author and Isle Royale wolf study partner who has also been engaged with the Houghton community for decades, loves conversing with Dejlal. Candy has gifted her friend with invaluable entry to her community zoom groups, as well.
- **Judy Foster**, retired physical therapy assistant and silent sports aficionado, got together for walks and talks with Xuehua (Sherry) Shen, a visiting scholar at Tech. Xuehua has since returned to her teaching post in China but still drops in on our Zoom classes when possible.