The new school has year started off with a bang!
Pam Shaw, DALC Lead Counselor, says that this was one of the busiest enrollment periods she has ever experienced. But, it all went smoothly thanks to our patient, dedicated staff.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are full, and one even briefly had a wait list. Over 200 students from 50 countries have been served since July 1, 2014. That breaks the previous record of 45 countries represented in our classrooms in one year.

Nearly 275 students have sought help with academic skills already this year! Many of them are preparing for the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), which replaced the expired GED this year. A growing number already hold a high school credential, but need to boost their math or language skills to meet eligibility requirements or pass placement tests to get into college or a career training program.

About 23 high school graduates have also found their way into Dover Adult High School classes. Nursing students take Algebra, Biology and Chemistry, required prerequisites for admission into the Great Bay Community College (GBCC) nursing program. Other college bound students are taking Foundations of Reading or Foundations of Math with us. These two new courses, are equivalent to GBCC courses and successful students may move right into the next college class without retesting. This saves students money, time and frustration.

Another good sized group of students are still enrolled in high school and are either in danger of dropping out or need to recover credit. These students are getting a second chance at completing high school the traditional way.

Dozens more are discovering a new hobby like Zentangle, playing the Harmonica, Beading, and Beekeeping, learning a new skill in classes like CPR, First Aid, and Computers for Novices; or gaining practical knowledge in Home Plumbing Repair, Home buying and Retirement Planning.

Throughout our forty plus years, DALC has been providing a fresh start, a second chance or a new opportunity to Strafford County youth and adults. This year is clearly no exception!
In Their Own Words... Knowledge Cannot be Erased by Variya Tonpho

To me, knowledge is special. My knowledge was built by myself. I acquired it through experience or education. People can steal expensive things, but they cannot steal knowledge from me. If someday I fail, and I lose many things: a house, a car, a job, I will still have knowledge that I can use to start something new. I always tell myself, “Don’t give up! You have knowledge, and you have nothing to fear.” I believe that I can lose everything in my life except my knowledge. And you, what do you think?

Iranian Musical Instruments by Hamid Azhdehfar

In Our Own Words... is a collection of original writings. In poetry, personal reflection, and artwork, they reveal their diversity, as well as their commonality as learners.

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David wanted to attend adult education classes offered in Farmington where he lives, but his work schedule at a Rochester restaurant conflicted with the class times. Fortunately, David found out about the Strafford County Adult Tutorial Program, which has provided him with a volunteer tutor who can meet with him during his time off. In fact, David meets with two different tutors weekly, one on Tuesday and another on Wednesday.

David is determined to improve his reading skills. To quote one of his tutors, Mary Desfosses, "He is completely open to anything that will help him learn - using children's books does not insult him at all. He hasn't missed a tutoring session in a long time and has become better communicating by phone."

David loves to ride his motorcycle on country roads. He always enjoys the ride, but now the destination--a tutoring session--is equally important.

Nicole took a big step by coming to Kim Hanson's math class the first week of classes. Her goal is to pass the HiSET so that she can go to Beauty School. Another reason for getting her high school equivalency certificate is to set an example for her daughter. She says, "It's hard to push your kid if you didn't finish school yourself." Nicole almost graduated from high school in New York, but at the end of her senior year she had to drop out to work to put a roof over her head. She hopes that she can brush up on her skills and that a lot of the work in both Pam Shore's class and Kim Hanson's class will be review for her, but she adds, "my writing is not great." Also, she gets test anxiety. "I'm not a good test taker. I'm afraid I will get into the test and my mind will go blank."

Nevertheless, Nicole is ready to overcome that anxiety and take the test. She is determined to prepare herself to succeed. "My whole world will expand when I complete it."

Ellen Westbrook is principal at Westbrook Consulting Associates. She holds a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Michigan. Westbrook volunteers at the Center and is a member of the American Society for Training and Development, Council on Fundraising, and the New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits.

Martha S. Caswell is a consultant specializing in senior project management in the field of assessment testing and currently works with MetriTech, Inc. for the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test Program. Caswell holds degrees from Michigan State University, a BS in Psychology and a MS in Educational Psychology and is a member of the American Educational Research Association and the National Council of Measurement in Education.

Patricia D. Silverblatt owns her own consulting firm specializing in project management and interior design services for commercial and residential clients. She was Director of Facilities for Berwick Academy for more than a decade. Silverblatt co-founded Office Interiors, Ltd, an office furniture and commercial design company with 12 employees. She holds an MA in History from Fairfield University and BA in History and Business from Salve Regina University.

Morton H. Cherim is a Dover resident with an M.A.T. Biological Sciences Bachelor of Science degree from UNH. A retired science teacher from York, he was also a lecturer in the Biology Department at University of New Hampshire and served in the military, in both the Navy and Air Force. Cherim has been a volunteer cook at the Dover 'Soup Kitchen' one day per month for the last thirty years or so and volunteers for the Dover Public Library book sales.

Michael Kupfer is an Online Marketing Manager for Franchise Business Review and a graduate of CUNY Baruch College. Kupfer is a volunteer tutor at the Center. He helps out in the evening HiSET classes. Last fall he wanted to volunteer somewhere as he felt volunteering was important. He also enjoys basketball, hiking, and playing guitar. Kupfer is a frequent participant in marketing and social media events.
A Donor’s Tale

Dave and Maureen Staples have been supporters of DALC for longer than either of them can remember. It probably started when Jim Verschueren, a patient of Dave’s, was Executive Director of DALC. Dave and Maureen clearly value the transformative power of education. Maureen points out the importance of high school completion and ESOL classes for immigrants as essential to a growing and changing community. Dave, a lifelong learner, appreciates the cooking and art classes he has taken at DALC.

Keeping the money local is important to the Staples’. Both natives of Dover, they spoke passionately about the community they grew up in. Dave attended junior high school in the building which now houses the McConnell Center, and Maureen attended St. Mary’s, just a few blocks away. Dave was a Dover Boy Scout, had a Foster’s paper route growing up, and his first job was at the Weathervane. He says, “I was raised in this community and influenced by this community. I’m thankful for it and am giving back.” Maureen says she helps out because it “benefits everybody and improves the whole community.”

When I asked how they help out in the community, Dave and Maureen easily rattle off a long list of volunteer activities, board appointments and recognitions, including Volunteer of the Year in 2013 (Dave) and Distinguished Alumna of St. Mary’s Academy in 2014 (Maureen). But both are quick to point out that they don’t do it for the attention. They agreed to talk to me in part to encourage others to donate to, volunteer for or take a class at DALC. Giving back is just a natural part of who they are. They just can’t imagine not serving their community in any way possible. When people ask him why they get so involved in causes and the community, Dave says he replies, “Why wouldn’t I?”

Their help extends beyond simply writing a check. They do hands on work as well. Whether it’s making corsages or promoting a concert, they are up for the task. Their “Rock with the Docs” concert on November 14 will benefit Goodwin Community Health Center, where Dave serves on the board of directors. Dave likes to “keep it fun and raise money for a good cause.”

For the Staples’, making a donation or volunteering is about much more than helping out the less fortunate. It’s about breaking a negative cycle and giving those less fortunate people a chance to become productive members of society. The Dover of the future that they imagine includes opportunity for all and they are working hard to create it.