



Adult Learning Center News

Summer 2015

Volume XII, Issue 2



Director's Message

Deanna Strand

As I looked out over the assembled group of family members and friends in attendance at graduation, I saw an amazing and inspiring diversity.

The crowd was striking in its reflection of the full, challenging lives our students live and the obstacles many of them had overcome to become high school graduates: disability, long work schedules, unemployment, turbulent home lives and distant families. There were children of all ages, the offspring and siblings of the graduates. There were middle aged and elderly people, the spouses, parents and grandparents of graduates. There were health professionals in scrubs and laborers with sunburned skin, who had clearly come straight from work to support their graduate.

One family took up the better part of a full row of chairs.



Felicia LaBranche, DALC Graduate of the Year

This family included nieces and nephews, a mother and aunt. They had travelled from Massachusetts to surprise their graduate.

We ran out of handicapped seating because of the large number of walkers and wheelchairs that accompanied the guests. Another family included the blind parents and two children with autism of one of the graduates. They spoke to me after the ceremony of the family's shared trait: stubbornness. "If you tell me I can't do something, that's just the thing I'm going to get up and do," said the graduate's proud father, whose daughter had suffered a near-fatal car accident and was told she would never walk again. This night she walked onto the stage to receive her high school credential AND accept first place in the essay contest.

The other essay contest winner talked about the learning challenges she has faced on her long and circuitous path to high school completion, which included re-taking

one of her tests in Maine and working with a tutor. She continues to attend DALC, intent on entering Great Bay Community College.

None of the people in the audience or who walked across the stage that night believe that an education can or should be taken for granted. Every one of them knows you have to fight for the privilege to claim the title "high school graduate."

As our Graduate of the Year, Felicia LaBranche said in her remarks, "you have to fight for what you deserve, define success for yourself and embrace the positive influences in your life."

Each year at graduation, I talk about the importance of every person in the auditorium in bringing the graduates to this day. This year in particular, I couldn't have been prouder to be part of an organization, a city and a state that make sure that all of its citizens have the opportunity to learn and finish high school. Thank you for your part in making education possible for everyone.

Be a part of our success:

- ◆ Serve on a committee
- ◆ Become a volunteer tutor
- ◆ Join our Board of Directors
- ◆ Take an enrichment class
- ◆ Teach an enrichment class
- ◆ Become a Friend of the Center by making a donation
- ◆ Include us in your estate planning
- ◆ Become a corporate or event sponsor

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In Their Own Words...

The "Lucky" Number 250 by Jing Shi

People always think that some special numbers have special meanings. For example, Chinese people don't like the number "4" because they worry about some bad things happening – "4" in Chinese has the same pronunciation as something bad happening. American people don't like number "13." It is the same thing.

Yesterday my whole family took part in the 34th Red's Race. And my husband got the number "250." That made my day. Also when he shared the picture, a lot of people made jokes with him. "250" actually is not a good word in China. If people say you are such a "250" person, that's totally mean. There is no doubt that she/he is unfriendly. "250" means you look like an idiot. But you can make fun of some very familiar friends, as in my husband's story.

We will keep the number in order to mark the special moment. I hope we can have more funny memories like this as we get older.

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

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Center Stars - Afshin



Afshin speaks carefully and clearly in English. Occasionally, he will pause as he struggles to find the English word. It is absolutely amazing he did not speak English nine months ago when he arrived in the U.S. to join his wife.

On a student visa trying to better his English, he hopes to also become a student at UNH once his English skills have improved. Afshin comes to the Center four days a week to Joyce Malley's pronunciation class and Level 2 English class. Her Level 2 class has just finished

decorating Easter eggs. Whisks, tongs, and other items to make eggs were spread out on the tables to identify. He says that Joyce is very nice, and he loves the class. He explained that he needs help with listening, pronunciation, speaking, and English writing. He gets it all in the Center classes. And, Joyce says that Afshin is determined.

When UNH was on winter break and the Wildcat bus service was on a limited schedule, he would arrive at the Center at 7 a.m. for his 9 a.m. class. Dedication.

When in his home country of Iran, Afshin was an instructor of building inspections at a university. He has a Master's degree in seismic and civil engineering. Yes, they do have earthquakes in Iran. He has personally experienced two large ones.

His wife arrived in the States two years ago to begin studying to get her doctorate in civil engineering. During their separation, he said they kept in contact daily through emails and Skype.

He remained in their home in Gilun, which is in the north with mountains and the Persian Sea. He said the climate is moderate, not too hot and not too cold. The city he lived in has been dubbed the "Rain City." No, he did not experience snow except seeing it in the mountains. He smiles as he says that New Hampshire's snow is fine. And, yes, he has made a snowman.

Since his wife is busy with her studies, Afshin does the shopping and cooking. He showed photos of the Persian food he can cook. One of the photos was of a barbari bread he bakes, and which they eat with cheese and Persian delectables.

They have not done a lot traveling, but he said they have traveled to Boston and New York City. He hopes to travel to Washington, D.C. this summer. With his determination, anyone can see he will both improve his English and get to D.C.

Red's Run for a Better Community 2015 - Thank you!



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Keep in touch between our print newsletters by signing up for our emails at

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doveradultlearningcenter.org

Located in the McConnell Community Center, Dover Adult Learning Center of Strafford County helps adults in the Strafford County area enhance their life-coping skills and improve their lives through basic education, job training, high school completion and enrichment classes. We help our students become more effective lifelong learners, family members, workers and citizens.