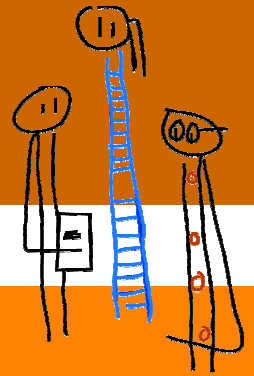


BRIDGE TO LITERACY

Fall 2010

Literacy Source | 720 N. 35th St. Seattle, WA 98103 | www.literacysource.org | 206-782-2050



Spotlight on Citizenship Program

By Scott Ventrudo



Citizenship students Margarita Arias and Yusuf Dilek with instructor Susan Beebe

For Literacy Source's foreign-born students, becoming a United States citizen (naturalizing) can be central to plans for improving life in Seattle. Citizens can vote in federal and local elections, run for elected office, serve on juries, carry U.S. passports and reunite with family outside of the country. Naturalization also grants intangible benefits, increasing feelings of security, belonging and acceptance and making America feel a little more like "home."

The road to naturalization can prove intimidating and frustrating, however. Students must complete both a lengthy and potentially confusing application and a citizenship test consisting of an English interview and an United States' history and civics examination. The stakes are high for residents in the naturalization process, and students often need assistance with some or all phases of it.

Literacy Source offers many options to meet student needs in completing each phase of naturalization. During Fall Quarter, we offered 4 weekly citizenship classes onsite, each designed for students at different levels both in English language ability and individual preparedness for the test. Literacy Source's more than 20 volunteer citizenship instructors and tutors have both the time and tools to meet the learning needs of each student.

We also partner with the Seattle Public Library to offer a twice-weekly citizenship class at the Southwest Library in West Seattle, an area underserved with respect to citizenship support services.

Each session of a citizenship class can take on a different "look," some serve as a forum to discuss and debate current events, while others serve as a traditional ESL class focused on U.S. history and civics information. Still other sessions provide students with fast approaching interview dates a chance to focus intensively on test material.

Apart from citizenship instruction, Literacy Source offers comprehensive individualized support during every step of the naturalization process. "We screen applicants and make sure that those who need help, particularly legal help, get the services and assistance they might not otherwise receive," Cat Howell, Literacy Source's Instructional Advisor and head of the Citizenship program, says. In regards to legal assistance, Literacy Source is pleased to partner with NWIRP, the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, who provides crucial legal assistance to naturalizing students.

Literacy Source has been providing citizenship instruction and support to immigrants and refugees in Seattle since the 1990s when the center was located in the Greenwood Library. We have received funding from the City of Seattle's New Citizen Initiative since its inception in 1997. Since 2001, over 200 Literacy Source students have successfully naturalized! We are proud that Literacy Source continues to positively impact lives by offering individualized, comprehensive and free assistance throughout the naturalization process.

Tutoring Spotlight: Kubrom & Ann

By Katie Pickard

For many students, one of the highlights of studying at Literacy Source is being matched with an individual instructor. For those in the program, one-on-one tutoring can be an important step on their path to naturalization. Whether reviewing names of past presidents or building confidence in their interview skills, tutoring students receive the specific instruction they need. As the experience of tutoring pair Kubrom Mihirga and Ann Dalton attests, the benefits often extend beyond learning the essentials to pass the test.

Kubrom Mihirga came to the United States nineteen years ago as a refugee from Eritrea. He has already seen success in the U.S., becoming the pastor of a local church and building a strong community around his family. One year ago, Kubrom and his wife, Asgedet Habte enrolled at Literacy Source and were quickly recognized for their kind spirits and shared dedication to learning. Both have taken advantage of a number of Literacy Source classes, building computer and English skills as well as preparing for citizenship. Beyond improving his own English skills, Kubrom enjoys the sense of kinship at the center, noting, "Brothers, sisters. It's community school. I'm very happy...we laughing sometimes. It's good community."

In preparing for his citizenship interview, Kubrom requested a one-on-one tutor. Although he was eligible to take the test in his native language based on his age and time in the U.S., Kubrom said, "I have choice [to take the test in] my language. But no, I live American, I want to be citizen American. I learn English. My test in English." Six months prior to his interview date, he was matched with Ann, and the pair got off to a running start. "I had such a fantastic student. He was just about ready to go when I met him. So it was...very fun to practice," said Ann. "And Ann's a good teacher," Kubrom said, "Yeah, it's good."

During their sessions, Kubrom and Ann focused on the N-400 application, which he would be asked about during his interview, as well as the 100 history and civics questions. Utilizing pictures and flashcards, they practiced sight words and repetition of specific facts and also gained a broader understanding of U.S. history and government. "Kubrom really has a good understanding of how things work, in addition to knowing the answers to the questions... I learned things about my government, my country, that I didn't know," explained Ann, "So it was a good thing for both of us."

I'm very happy...we laughing sometimes. It's good community."
-Kubrom Mihirga

On November 11th, 2010, the pair realized their principal goal. Kubrom Mihirga passed his interview and was naturalized as a U.S. citizen. "I'm very happy, because America I live 19 years. Citizenship not easy," Kubrom said. For Ann, as well as those who know Kubrom at the center, the exciting news was no surprise.

Since naturalizing, Kubrom has continued to meet with Ann, and they've set a new goal for the new year. "Perfect English, good communication," said Kubrom. And Ann adds, "He had his goal for 2010, to become a citizen. Check! And now, perfect English in 2011. He'll work hard toward that."



New citizen, Kubrom Mihirga with tutor, Ann Dalton

Literacy Source thanks all of our citizenship instructors, tutors, and students for their hard, diligent work!

Continuing student success!

By Scott Ventrudo

Among the many naturalized citizens at Literacy Source is Hibo Elmi. Born in Somalia, Hibo arrived in Seattle from Yemen in 2001. Having studied at Literacy Source since 2006, Hibo naturalized on February 26th 2010, after working extensively with tutor Diana Timpson. Both tutor and student thoroughly enjoyed the time spent studying together.

"Hibo... never failed to amaze and uplift me with her incredible attitude. She was so motivated to study and pass the exam that she made it quite easy for me. However the thing that will stick with me is her joyful attitude and outlook. She was always smiling.

My favorite meetings were when we forgot her upcoming interview entirely. We often went off topic and would spend the entire time discussing whatever came to mind. She shared her opinions on her background, religion, the political state that Somalia is in, and learning from her was wonderful for me.

But seeing her come out of her interview with a huge smile on her face was one of the most rewarding feelings I have ever had. I am looking forward to being placed with another citizenship candidate who will also have so much to teach me," Diana recounts.

Hibo passed her test in February, received a U.S. Passport in March and travelled to visit family abroad in April. "I hope to visit my family again soon," she told *Bridge to Literacy*.

Passing her citizenship test was by no means the end of the road for Hibo at Literacy Source. While working at the Fremont PCC market, Hibo continues to take classes at the center, including three during Fall Quarter. Now she says, "I want to work as a Nurse's Assistant, but I have to improve my English". Her English is excellent, and her dedication is even more impressive! Approaching the one year anniversary of her naturalization, Hibo Elmi is a continuing success at Literacy Source and in the United States.



Hibo and Diana, after Hibo's naturalization



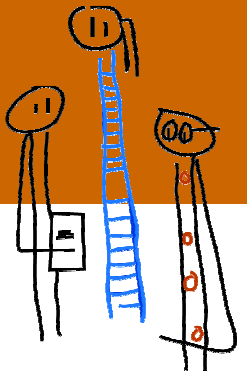
www.literacysource.org

206.782.2050
720 N. 35th St, Suite 103
Seattle, WA 98103

Stamp

BRIDGE TO LITERACY

Fall 2010



Volunteer

Volunteers make it possible for Literacy Source to serve 600+ students each year. We invite you to come to one of our **Volunteer Orientations**, which are held the first Thursday of every month at 1:00pm and 7:00pm.

Become a student

We offer free classes, workshops, tutoring, and learning resources for adults who want to improve their basic reading, writing, math and computer skills; learn English; study for a high school diploma or GED; or prepare to become citizens. Call 206-782-2050 to register for the next **New Student Orientation**.

Donate

Generous contributions from corporations, government agencies, private foundations, small businesses and individuals make Literacy Source's successes a reality. We are grateful for all our donors and invite you to join them in supporting Literacy Source in whatever way you can. **Visit www.literacysource.org to find out how.**

For more information,
visit our website!
www.literacysource.org

Get involved at Literacy Source!