

BEACON HEADLINES

FALL/HOLIDAY 2007

Amelia's Successful Journey

BEACON is again celebrating a graduate of the program. Amelia, a BEACON learner for 1 year & 2 months, has completed and tested out of BEACON's ESOL and GED curriculum. Amelia came to the United States almost 2 years ago as an au pair from Brazil. She is a high school graduate in her home country and completed 2 years of undergraduate studies at the University Federal of Brazil. Amelia is currently working on an associates degree in architecture at Northern Virginia Community College. Amelia came to the United States to be an au pair, go to school and learn English. Her sponsor is AuPairCare, a provider of au pairs to the U.S. since 1989. Au pairs with AuPairCare are between the ages of 18 - 26, have experience caring for children and are graduates of high school among other qualifications. They have a sincere interest in learning and experiencing American culture as they enjoy spending time with their host family and the children in their care.

Previous to BEACON sessions, Amelia had no "formal" English instruction. She depended upon skills she learned from an American tutor in Brazil and then from her American host family. Despite missing her family in Brazil, Amelia enjoys the people in America and realizes her great fortune for opportunities to study and work. "Life here has been good," says Amelia.

Her thoughts about the BEACON program? "BEACON is an amazing program for whoever wants to really try and learn." Amelia's working relationship with her tutor, Ruth, has been very positive. Amelia has found her tutor to be flexible and giving and Ruth has helped her increase her English speaking ability to the point where she was able to qualify as an International Student. We congratulate Amelia and wish her all the good fortune she is working so hard to accomplish, it is well-deserved.



BEACON's First Student Advisory Committee: Continuing Mission Effectiveness

For the first time in BEACON's history, the program has established a Student Advisory Committee. The concept of creating this team was borne out of the program's desire to acquire a better understanding of its student base, along with the hope of developing a healthy channel for objective feedback and recommendations from a focus group of BEACON students. Adriana Morales, BEACON's client manager spearheaded the selection process with student attendance being the main criteria when considering potential candidates.

The committee is comprised of 5 students representing each of our day sites in the BEACON program. Matt Fitzpatrick, program and interim director, invited the students out to the St. Benedict Monastery on Nov. 26th to discuss guidelines and expectations for the inaugural committee. Students chosen are Jose Mendez of Georgetown South Community Center, Lilian Hernandez of Costello Park, Sandra Medina of Manassas Presbyterian Church, Angela Aguiniga of the SERVE location and Erika Orellano of the Baldwin Elementary School site. The members will be responsible for meeting once a month for the duration of one year. The first meeting of this group is scheduled for January 2008. The guidelines articulate that the students are responsible for coordinating the time and setting for the monthly meetings. Before each meeting, BEACON staff will provide the group with an agenda in order to lead discussion in regard to improvements to the program for students. Outside of the agenda formulated by BEACON, the team itself will have the freedom to discuss action items not listed, for example feedback surrounding current content being used in the classroom and the nature of its effectiveness. A second and third phase of the Student Advisory Committee includes the creation of a student newsletter about the BEACON program to be distributed exclusively for student use as well as the execution of a student-lead cultural fundraiser. In the most recent months, students have inquired about hosting a fundraiser to benefit BEACON, through the Student Advisory Committee, that opportunity can finally come to fruition. BEACON feels that the creation of this board will provide the students with another avenue of empowerment and independence as well as creating a mutually beneficial dialogue between student needs and staff actions resulting in building a stronger program and an even brighter future for learner families together.

Rewards through a Metaphor

Walter Godlewski can be described as nothing short of an inspiration for the BEACON Adult Literacy organization. Walt learned about BEACON when a job transfer with AT&T brought him and his wife, Ellen, to Virginia and they began attending Sunday Eucharist at the St. Benedict Monastery. After 35 years with AT&T's Sales & Marketing Department, Walt retired in 2004. Straight from the gate he began tutoring ESOL and pre-GED sessions at BEACON's Georgetown South Community site. His determined compassion for learners is a reflection of his immigrant grandparents' struggles without a formal education. "In fact, my grandmother never learned to read or write. I have always thought how much better her life might have been if she were literate," recalls Walt.

Walt has assisted several mothers in the BARN Transitional Housing program with pre-GED math instruction and initialized Saturday morning GED sessions at SERVE Emergency Shelter. He is currently working with a learner to develop her writing skills in a one-to-one match, has taken the time to be a certified assessor for BEACON and is the vice-chairperson on the BEACON Board of Limited Jurisdiction. Walt amazes us with his constant commitment to this organization. But, as he explains, "Working with adults is very rewarding. I'm particularly interested in working with them to establish near and long term goals, developing a study plan and then executing that plan." In speaking with Walt about learning sessions, he feels that every session is rewarding. He says that when a student finally reaches comprehension of a single lesson or task, the utopia that is seen in their eyes and face is the best result and reward for him as a tutor. The fact that one of his students created a metaphor in a writing assignment has been a memorable moment.

As a member of BEACON's Board of Limited Jurisdiction, Walt is a lifesaver. He has lead many fundraising efforts including the Tee Off "Fore" Education Golf Tournament and the Holiday Kettle as well as sitting in on program enhancement reviews. At this time, he is part of a group of tutors that are reviewing computer and internet-based GED software for the BEACON curriculum.

Walt and Ellen live in Gainesville and have two grown children, Amy and Jeff, as well as two wonderful granddaughters in which they devote much of their days. In his spare "retirement" time, Walt works in real estate sales, on the course at Stonewall Golf Club and plays golf. Walt has definitely been a huge asset to the BEACON Adult Literacy organization in so many ways. He takes it all in stride, "Ellen and I have been blessed in so many ways, we both believe in giving back to the community whenever we can." And, they do tenfold!



The 911 on BEACON LifeSkills Series

Fire safety and preparedness is a good thing for all families at all the times. BEACON wanted to make sure our learners and their families were well-informed for the winter months ahead by hosting a Fire Safety session on Wednesday, November 28 as part of our LifeSkills Series sponsored in part by the Giving Circle of Hope. Together the Prince William County Community Fire Education team and Firefighter Kevin Shafer, City of Manassas

Fire Department, advised and demonstrated for our learners and their children the importance of fire safety and car seat use. Firefighter Kevin showed the children the various stages of his uniform including hat and oxygen mask and stressed to them that firefighters come to their homes to help them, not to scare them. The children participated in a "Stop, Drop & Roll" exercise as well. He also pointed out to parents the importance of calling 911 if they are concerned about anything; suspicious smells, smoke or help with smoke alarms. The 25 students that gathered for the session came away with a better understanding of how to keep their families safe and a comfort level in contacting this valuable community service in a time of need or uncertainty. BEACON staff would like to thank Rosie Clark and her fire education team as well as Firefighter Kevin Shafer for the time they spent with our learners and their children. They are true community heroes!



Students Take a Summer Sojourn

One of the highlights in working at BEACON Adult Literacy is that you get to see people in all forms - teaching, learning, working, giving, laughing, and having fun. It has been months since the bathing suits were out and we were discussing bug spray and SPF levels with our students in our LifeSkills Series but we cannot forget the fun that was had by all at a July student activity. Each year longtime BEACON tutor and community service champion, Bill Tyler, arranges for a summer splashdown for BEACON students and their children at the Freedom Center. This year was no different except we have wonderful pictures to share with our readers! Prior to the Freedom Center swim days the students attended our Summer Safety seminar. At the Summer Safety seminar learners and their families were given information regarding bug sprays, sun block, car seats and child bicycle riding. Questions were asked and answered about poison ivy, oak & correct floatation devices for swimmers of all ages. Our learners soaked up the information then a couple days later splashed about at the Freedom Center. The winter hats, coats and gloves are the preferred seasonal attire right now but the spirit and joy of July will continue at BEACON this holiday season through teaching, learning, working, giving, laughing and more fun. If you are interested in providing enriching experiences through the BEACON Adult Literacy program, please contact our offices at 703-368-7491.



Development News:

Giving Circle of Hope Sponsors BEACON LifeSkills Series -

For the third consecutive year Giving Circle of Hope members have awarded BEACON Adult Literacy funding to support our LifeSkills Series. Giving Circle of Hope was founded in January 2004 and is considered a philanthropic giving circle or commonly referred to as "a social investment club". The Giving Circle of Hope seeks to make a difference in their community by investing financially and physically in organizations that assist vulnerable populations. Beside cash contributions, the Giving Circle invests personal time in volunteerism, drives, campaigns and charity events. The Giving Circle of Hope has been a wonderful friend to BEACON the past few years. And, have performed over 2500 volunteer hours and awarded over \$155,000 to their community since 2004. If a group is interested in learning about giving circles, Joan and the members are available to discuss how to begin your own giving circle. Please contact Jennifer Rader, development manager, at 703-361-0106 to make arrangements.

BEACON thanks the Giving Circle of Hope for their dedication to our program, our learners and their families.



We Challenge You To A Match...

Last March BEACON was fortunate to be chosen as one of 13 Safeway Foundation grant recipients supporting a GED curriculum expansion through the purchase of GED preparatory software. Since March the BEACON Board and staff have reviewed and discussed the practicality of obtaining an enhanced program from the originally planned computer based package. The original software was to have an unlimited shelf life and the ability to place it in several locations where learners could go to work toward their GED. While this is still part of the criteria, BEACON is now in search of a web-based tool in order to further extend the capabilities of the GED program and the accessibility to students. On line access will enable these learners to work from any location that has Internet access, a learner's home for example. The web-based software will also allow BEACON to partner with public facilities that have wider accessibility such as the libraries or wi-fi locations. This gives the learner the opportunity to work toward a GED in the evening hours or around their schedule where the basic package would only allow limited study opportunities when specified computers are available, largely during day hours. We've concluded it makes sense to implement both learning environments at the same time.

Here's the challenge.

Additional funds are needed to obtain the Internet-based curriculum. We are seeking to match Safeway's \$5,000 award by March 31, 2008 in order to roll out this full service educational tool to the community. Not many literacy organizations have had the ability to help their clients as we propose.

Won't you support us in this strategic initiative? Donations can be made by using the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your support, your gift will continue to benefit BEACON learners for years to come.

Holiday Kettle Coming Up!

Join BEACON this holiday season to spread good cheer, educate the public on adult literacy and raise money for our exceptional service to community adults and their families.

BEACON Board members, staff and volunteers will host the 3rd Annual Holiday Kettle benefiting BEACON Adult Literacy on December 14 - 16 and December 21 - 24. We will be accepting cash contributions at the ABC Store at Gateway Center in Gainesville.

When you donate \$5 or more, you receive a great stocking can cooler, a perfect tool to keep beverages thirst-quenching during the bowl games!

Verizon customers, you are able to contribute \$1 per month to Virginia literacy programs by checking the designated box on your Verizon bill. Verizon's generous program has granted BEACON Adult Literacy critical financial support for the past 2 years. BEACON thanks Verizon and Verizon customers!

Wish, wish, wish upon a list....

BEACON welcomes learner's children ages 5 & under at our day sites. In order to maintain the best learning environment for both child & parent, BEACON maintains a stock of child appropriate activities. The following is a list of items BEACON would accept for our little visitors:

coloring books foam floor mats
puzzles w/ knobs > 25 pcs blocks
plastic shape cutters learning toys
Play-doh/non-toxic modeling clay
Drawing board (Doodlepad)

Please contact our office if you have questions regarding the items listed above, 703-368-7491. We appreciate your contributions to the success of our learners.

Vision: *BEACON facilitates an enhanced quality of life for our learners and their families by providing free education programs. Addressing the changing needs of residents in the Western Prince William County area through a strategy that leverages well-trained volunteers, technology, partnerships and alliances, BEACON offers literacy programs to adults and empowers participants to achieve their goals.*

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Save the Date!

2nd Annual Tee Off "Fore" Education
Golf Tournament benefiting BEACON.

May 8, 2008