

Keep up with people and events!

Summer Session classes begin May 7th. Contact Karla in [Admissions](#) to join.

Spring 2016

 Forward to a Friend



The English Center | [510-836-6700](tel:510-836-6700) | [admissions@englishcenter.edu](mailto:admissions@englishcenter.edu)  
| [www.englishcenter.edu](http://www.englishcenter.edu)

The English Center is an independent post-secondary vocational institution providing intensive English and career readiness training since 1977.

## Spring Has Sprung and Change is in the Air

By John Tang, Ph.D., Executive Director of the English Center



The English Center moves to Argosy University.

On May 1st, 2016, the English Center's main campus at Jack London Square will move to 1005 Atlantic Avenue in Alameda, which is currently the home of Argosy University. English Center programs will be co-located in the same building with Argosy University programs.

The motivation for the relocation is to reconnect the English Center with an institute of higher learning. As a result, there will be excellent amenities afforded to us at our new home. Argosy University features a college-level library with inter-library exchange capabilities. Ross Hall is a large meeting room that can be used to hold English Center graduations, career fairs, and other events. Additionally, the Argosy location offers free parking, an outdoor patio, and hiking trails along the edge of the Oakland/Alameda Estuary. Last, but definitely not least, the classrooms at Argosy University are spacious and equipped with latest in educational technology.

The challenge of moving to any location is that we'll have to reestablish ourselves at that location. This will not be an easy task, but we have done it before, and we can do it again. The essence of change is adaptation, not only to a new location, but also to a new organizational culture and to new procedures.

Oakland has been home to the English Center for past 39 years. We'll miss our old digs at Jack London Square, but we'll continue to have an Oakland presence with our 7700 Edgewater Drive, Ste. 540 offices. Because we have highly trained and dedicated staff, I feel confident that we will go boldly into our new home with renewed passion for our work.

Do you want to study at the English Center? Contact [Karla David in Admissions](#) for more information.



Meet us at our new classrooms starting May 9.

**The English Center**  
Argosy University  
1005 Atlantic Avenue, Alameda CA 94501

**The English Center Pittsburg**  
453 Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg CA 94565

## Growth at English Center Pittsburg

By Magdalena Montalvo, Manager, English Center Pittsburg

The English Center began services in Pittsburg in November 2013 with the Welfare-to-Work contract serving East Contra Costa County. The Career Readiness Program began accepting students in the Fall of 2014. Pittsburg classes began with six students in 2014 and has grown rapidly serving Pittsburg, Antioch, East, and Central County residents.

We are proud to provide specialized training in ESL, computer applications, and job search skills. Our goal is to equip our clients and students with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy. Even those whose formal education is lower than the 6th grade, and those with no prior English or computer skills are welcome, as long as the students are willing to work hard. In fact, we provide a full range of levels, including preparation for college, to low-income communities in Contra Costa County.

Each teacher here is dedicated to the success and growth of our students and brings to us a Master's degree and specialized training in teaching ESL. Our teaching methods are student-centered, using curriculum based on individualized needs and abilities.

Our students are primarily speakers of Spanish and Arabic. They share their cultures and customs and often bring food and celebratory styles to create a wonderful community where students, teachers, and staff are connected in an amazing learning experience. These are the many reasons, why I love the site manager role at the English Center Pittsburg.





Building a culture while learning together in Pittsburg

## Spring Growth: More Testing and Corporate Training for Industry

### New Test Administration Site

by Geo Smith

The English Center successfully launched its ibTOEFL Administration site in January, located in Oakland on Edgewater Drive, near the Coliseum. This new expansion gives our vast International community a beautiful testing environment with two labs powered by advanced technology. Our mission to serve immigrants in this way helps people attain their educational goals and so much more. We are all proud of this achievement.



Geo Smith, Technology Education Coordinator and CTI trainer received carefully crafted chickens from a

### CTI Reaches Out

by Lynne Wilkins, Director of Corporate Training

Corporate Training for Industry is a department at the English Center that delivers customized training to corporate clients and community organizations all around the Bay Area. The English Center comes to your business or community group to improve communications and skills customized to your needs. New courses and workshops include Desktop Operating System and

satisfied resident of Bridge Housing  
Affordable Community Property.

PC Support, Wide Area Network  
Connectivity, Voice over Internet

Protocol (VoIP), Cloud-Based Computing, Effective Business Writing and  
Effective Communication at Work. For more information, contact [Lynne  
Wilkins](#), Director of Corporate Training for Industry.

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## Helping Refugees Succeed

by Julia Tran, ACVESL Coordinator

I'm proud to be the new coordinator of ACVESL, Employment Services and Vocational English as a Second Language for Alameda County Residents. This group of students has become an integral part of the English Center campus. Our goal is to support recently arrived refugees get a job and contribute to the workforce of the East Bay. Our work is part of a bigger consortium of community-based organizations: Lao Family Community Development, East Bay Refugee Forum, International Rescue Committee, Refugee Transitions, Peralta Community College District/One-Stop Career Center, and Burma Refugee Family Network.

Together, these dedicated organizations help refugees develop their English skills and provide employment services to help them become competitive applicants. A large number of our clients have successfully entered the local workforce. I am happy to be newly engaged as coordinator of this excellent program.





ACVESL students from Myanmar (Burma) and Eritrea explore Google Maps.



## Happy to Help at the English Center

By Angelica Vera, Registrar

My job at the English Center has brought me a lot of satisfaction. Definitely, the most important part is my work with students. I make sure they are in our database and I manage their attendance issues. When they have personal difficulties, I listen and decide when it is right to give them an LOA. That's a Leave of Absence. The other part of my job is really serving the school. I prepare reports of attendance for the federal government. These reports are very important for us, and they have to be perfect.

I started at the English Center as a receptionist back in 2000 right after I was a student here. I remember my kids were all little then, and this was a good step for me. The work environment of the English Center has given me a lot of happiness. It really is like a big family. The students feel this and it is easier to progress. I see people come with no English and leave speaking fluently.

I know that my work is important especially for the students. They need to be brave to get out to look for a job. A lot of people get their start here, just as I did years ago.





Angelica Vera is the English Center Registrar

## The English Center and The Diversity in Health Training Institute

By Rebecca Clayton

The Healthcare Careers Pathways Program (HCPP) alumni and current participants promise to contribute greatly to the U.S., and to meet California's need for a more diverse healthcare workforce.

HCPP's current cohort is off to a wonderful start with field trips, classes, guest speakers, and regular coaching sessions for our current participants! We visited Highland Hospital and Asian Health Services, toured their facilities and learned about career opportunities. Back in the classroom, participants explored a variety of allied health careers. They developed job readiness skills such as presenting with Powerpoints and applying other computer skills. More exciting activities centered around healthcare systems, healthcare approaches and traditions, cross-cultural communication in the workplace, and the most common chronic illnesses. Guest speakers included a representative from the Korean Community Center of the East Bay who presented on the Affordable Care Act, and a doctor of naturalistic medicine. Finally, coaches worked with all the participants to form career plans and set professional goals.



[Contribute to the English Center](#)

## The English Center and Community Life

[OZY: A Very Refugee Thanksgiving Video](#)



World Class journalists from [OZY](#), a media company, visited the English Center during our Thanksgiving celebration in November 2015. Watch the beautiful video and read the article by Taylor Mayol [here](#).



## Chinese New Year: Let's Be *Fu*

By Elena Sorokova, Instructor

February 8th was a bright chilly Monday when we celebrated the start of a new Chinese Lunar Year. The idea to throw a party for the school was very spontaneous and time was short. Fliers were made and distributed, decorations purchased, activities prepared, and everyone was looking forward to the event.



We invited the rest of the school to stop by for some treats and activities. Chinese students introduced us to some traditions and symbols associated with this holiday in China. Our guests were offered fortune cookies with future predictions, which was a new experience for many. They

organized a number of traditional activities, such as puzzle solving, red envelope cutting, "FU" which means luck, fortune, character drawing, and Zodiac sign readings. There were even small rewards for those who succeeded in the activities. Overall, in spite of the limited space and time, it was a good community-building experience.





A happy crowd samples Chinese New Year activities.

## Financial Skills are Empowering

by Kaya Cohn, Programs Coordinator

In January and February 2016, our students studied financial literacy in their Community English classes. The students first learned about checking accounts and how to write checks. They read bank statements, such as checking account statements and credit card statements. They learned how to avoid paying interest on credit cards by paying the entire balance. Finally, students compared multiple credit card offers to find the best offer. Our students were very interested in learning how they could build up their credit so that in the future, they would be able to get unsecured credit cards, car loans, and home mortgages. Some of the classes went on a field trip to Wells Fargo to inquire about getting their secured credit card deposit back from the bank. They left the bank feeling empowered.

## Volunteers Make Global Connections

By Janice Tolman

The end of military rule comes at last. This is very important for Pthwa, a refugee from Myanmar, formerly Burma. Pthwa's tutor, Barbara Simon Harris brought in the SF Gate article to read together: "[Myanmar democracy takes momentous step with new president.](#)" There is also a place in the new democracy for Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace laureate. Delighted, Pthwa took the article home to show her 10-year-old daughter. They will celebrate the end of 54 years of military rule that has shaped their lives.

To volunteer, contact the Volunteer Coordinator, [Janice Tolman](#).



Student Pthwa Wah and Tutor Barbara Simon Harris

[Contribute to the English Center](#)

## Inspiring Student Profiles

### Lillian Duran Perez

by Pantaleon Florez, Instructor

Lillian Duran Perez is a photographer who arrived to the US from Cuba just four months ago. Leaving behind the majority of her photography equipment, she set out to see what America had in store for her. As a person with high aspirations and artistic drive, she was inspired by other newcomers to begin what will be her first American project. Lillian is



Lillian gave a presentation on her native country, Cuba.

particularly interested in society, immigration, and ethno-photography. This is why she wants to create an ethnographic photo project with her peers at the English Center. The project will be centered on one question: Why did you come to the US?

With the help of teachers at the English Center and of her own volition, she has already approached possible participants to start her project. The question she is asking may seem simple enough on the surface, but the intricacy of the answers is far from simple. Regarding her own answer to this question, Lillian has found that she is still searching for and finding answers for herself. As life is constantly in flux, so too are the answers she keeps discovering. Her project intends to gather stories like her own and also help elevate the stories of her peers to share with the American people.



Photo at a political rally by Lillian Duran Perez.



## Speaking and Listening with Ali Reza Haydari

By John Rice, Instructor



"I like the United States because it has all kinds of people and cultures. They are like a large garden: all kinds of flowers."

Ali Reza Haydari grew up in Bamian, Afghanistan. Ali's first language is Dari and he learned Turkish as well.

Today, Ali lives in Oakland and studies at the English Center. His school days are filled with reading, writing, listening, and speaking English with teachers and classmates. Twice a week, after Ali's morning classes, we meet in the break area for tutoring and conversation practice.

Often we talk about using English in situations outside the school: riding the public busses, working with the IRC to find a new apartment, or contacting the California DMV about a change of address.

I once asked how he felt about living here. He said he was surprised by the sight of people from so many different backgrounds living, working, and speaking together. Ali was also pleasantly surprised by the help he sees here for people like him with disabilities, so we can all use the walkways, buildings, and transportation system.

Looking to the future, Ali dreams of working in the solar energy industry after completing an engineering degree: perhaps working part-time in electronics assembly and electronics testing while in college. I'm sure he can succeed by applying the same curiosity, persistence, and attention to detail that he shows in his English classes. I hope that someday Ali will look back to the English Center with good memories, to a place that for a time helped him find his way in this world.

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## Student Activities



Students explored the San Francisco Botanical Garden as the Spring B session began.

### Spring Activities

by April Shandor, International Student Activities Coordinator

The English Center's first session of 2016 gave the students the opportunity to participate in several activities. In observance of African American History Month. Students watched the movie *Selma*, which documents the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership in the historical voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. Level 5 student Silvia Petricioli said that she was inspired by the film.

Free yoga classes have been held once or twice each session and have been open to those who are new to yoga or already have experience.

The classes are gentle, therapeutic classes and give the chance to stretch, exercise, and rejuvenate. Level 2 student Chely Ramirez likes yoga class because it helps her relax. She would like to invite more students to come.

During the last week of the Spring A session, students got to visit the newly re-opened [Berkeley Art Museum](#). The new location of the museum is a block away from the downtown Berkeley BART station and steps from the entrance to the University of California, Berkeley campus. Semhar Woldesilassie, who is currently studying in Level 1, is a professional clothing designer from Eritrea. She enjoyed the trip to the museum and was particularly interested in an exhibit showcasing a sculpture similar to what is used in Eritrea as part of the clothing-making process.

## Fall 2015 Promotion Ceremony

### Platon Nazarov, Validictorian

Good morning. Let me introduce myself. My name is Platon Nazarov. I am from Russia. I was born in Siberia. I have lived in the United States for one year, and I have been a student at English Center for eleven months. During this time, the English Center has become a second home to me, and my first introduction to American culture. I'm grateful for this unique opportunity to study here in California, among people from all over the world.



My time at English Center has been a wonderful experience in interpersonal relations and community-building with learners from

different races, religions, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds. It is a great opportunity to develop communication skills, along with patience and respect for different people.

When my family lived in Moscow, we felt like foreigners. In Russia, if you have an Asian face, you are viewed as a stranger, uneducated, and uncultured. We are Russian citizens, but we did not feel comfortable in our own country. Today, my family and I don't feel like foreigners, and we are no longer afraid for the future. My son has always wanted to live and study in America. Now, I have the chance to help my adult son realize his dreams.

I remember my first days at English Center. Ms. Brodskaya helped me fill out financial aid applications. Ms. Wilkins spoke clearly, and I felt confident because I could understand everything she said. I want to thank the English Center staff and administration, and the state of California for its support of new immigrants.

Teachers, many thanks for your professionalism and your love for your work. I have learned many different skills from your classes. For example, with Ms. Silva, we learned strategies which American students use to organize their studies, like using a binder. Ms. Tolman's lessons on nutrition were fun. I always read nutrition labels before buying something.

When I go to interviews I remember the advice from Mr. Bellis. However, to be honest I still have a problem with eye contact. Next, I can write an essay. Ms. Sorokova taught me the first steps, and Ms. Marsh helped me to master the structure of a five-paragraph essay. In Ms. Cohn's Community English class, I learned important vocabulary for everyday life in the United States. Ms. Crawford's advanced grammar class helped us master the use of mixed tenses.

I'm very happy to be part of the new IT project with Mr. Tang and Mr. Giomi. This class is a good direction for people looking for new opportunities in the computer industry. In addition, by January, 2016 I will have graduated from English Center's Health Career program. Thanks to Ms. Aineb and Ms. Clayton for helping health care workers

transition into careers in the U.S., and helping those who wish to begin work in the health system.

Dear students, I strongly recommend, take every opportunity you can to develop yourself during your time at English Center.

Finally, I want to say a special thanks to the English Center tutors, for your big hearts, and for your heroism. Yes, for your heroism, because I haven't met such people in my life because in Russia there are no volunteers. I have enjoyed conversations with tutors, I have improved my English, and I have learned a lot of information about American traditions. I did it because I believe it's important to respect the culture of my new country, the land where I live now.

Today, I'm ready for a new life. I got an excellent basis for that here at the English Center. Thanks for listening.

[Contribute to the English Center](#)

## Cal State University Interns: See Us with Fresh Eyes



Imani Sanders, Gina Espinoza, Cindy Robinson, Harpreet Kaur, Nallely Cruz, Flor Paz, and Alexandra Ngo [not shown] completed their course requirements under the direction of Sociology professor, Dr. Duke Austin at CSUEB.

## The Right Place to Gain Perspective

By Nallely Cruz, CSUEB

When I first found out that I would have to do community work as a requirement for my course, I could not anticipate the impact it would have on me or my impact in the community. The English Center attracted me because my parents are immigrants. To this day, they have trouble speaking and understanding English. I loved the idea of being able to help other Latinos.

I was well aware of the fact there are all kinds of immigrants, but I had my mind set on helping Latinos because I wanted to contribute to the success of my culture. However, the English Center gave me the opportunity to work with students from different cultures which made things different and fun. I had the opportunity to gain a different perspective on each culture. Working with the students has been a wonderful and eye-opening experience.



Nallely Cruz Hernandez served as TA and tutor.

As I began to work with students who required extra help, I realized I chose the right place. Most students at the Center have jobs, families, and other engagements that can make attending school difficult, but they are determined to succeed. I truly admire the students at the English Center because I know from experience how going to school and working is difficult. The success of the students is based on their personal determination. They are also supported by all the wonderful teachers and staff. I am particularly grateful to teachers Jackie McNabb and Phan Ly, and to Janice Tolman for coordinating the interns at the English Center.

## Social Justice Warrior!

by Imani Sanders, CSUEB

My time at the English Center was initially full of scurrying and scrambling to finalize my schedule, but I was also hoping to engage in work for social justice. Yes, I was supposed to make purposeful strides to improve lives, and become a social justice warrior! Yes, I was supposed to play that role. It turned out that I played the



opposite role: I was the student re-learning about society and the issues of the silent and oppressed, the population of immigrants, old and new.

My class at [California State University East Bay, Sociology and Social Services Department](#) embraced the ideology of social justice but often in ways that were intangible. We read about types of social justice often proclaimed as important within Bay Area culture, especially activism! But reading and writing about ideology that is not being put into practice is unproductive and hinders growth.

Volunteering at the English Center provided inside perspective to the diligent and often painfully critical work that isn't seen, yet active in the definition of true social justice. The majority of the students I worked with were parents, survivors of obstacles beyond my imagination, or they were people that have lived in the U.S. for years but had recently decided to invest time in their educations.

The students taught me perseverance even through difficulties and the teachers taught me the critical work that goes into making the best decisions for the students. By working with students of different nationalities and teachers of different backgrounds, I saw the active desire to promote growth for everyone.

The work done at the English Center will not just empower first generations but the generations thereafter. The English Center spreads seeds of knowledge that bloom, not just in the lives of students, but their relatives, family, and communities in which they will be active. I was blessed and honored to learn from and become a student at the

English Center.

To become a volunteer tutor or teaching assistant, contact [Janice Tolman](#), Volunteer Coordinator.

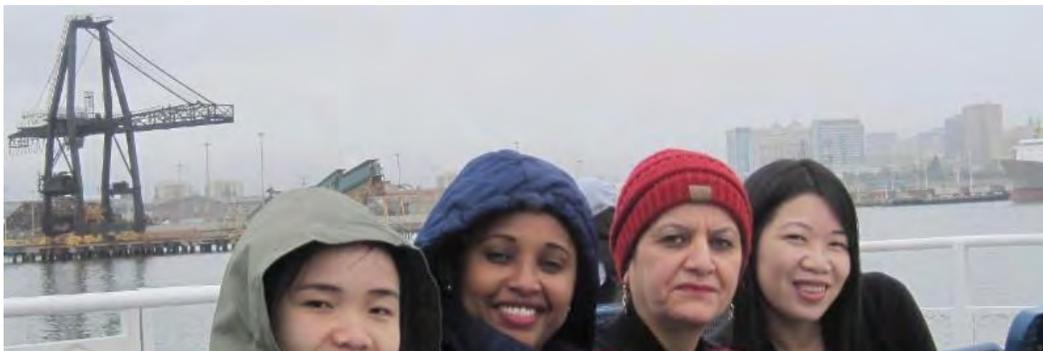
### [Contribute to the English Center](#)

The [English Center](#) is a nonprofit organization. We rely on your contributions of time and money. Please donate generously.

## Student Life



A good-bye party for teacher Hazel Crawford brought out the fun at the English Center Pittsburg.





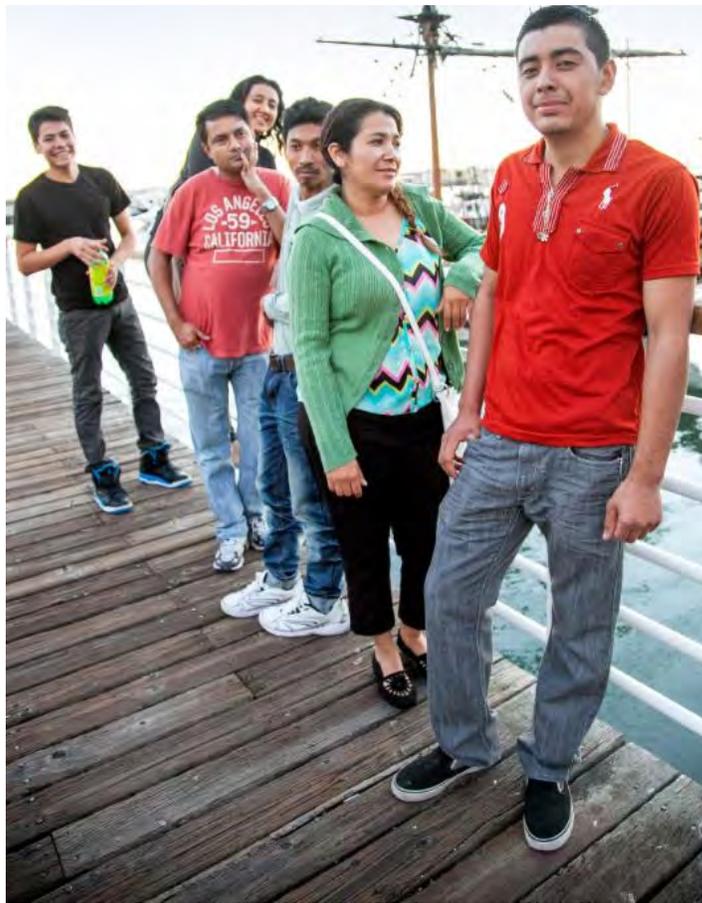
Students traveled by ferry to San Francisco to see the famous shops and the [International Art Museum of America](#) specializing in Chinese art.



Students wrote Love Tags for Valentine's Day in Jack London Square.

**Good-bye, Jack London Square! Thanks for the Memories**





We explored the old ships at Jack London Square.  
Photo by John Klein





We met Mayor Jean Quan on a trip to Oakland City Hall in 2014.  
photo by Janice Tolman



We toured the Potomac to learn about F.D.R. and WWII.  
Photo by Janice Tolman



[Watch Again](#) The 2014 student-made video is about effective teaching and learning.

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