

HOME CARE

# INSIGHT

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THE MAGAZINE FOR NORTHWEST HOME CARE AIDES



**INSIDE**  
**PEER MENTORING  
AND YOUR CAREER**

**PLUS: CARING FOR YOURSELF  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING  
BENEFITS UPDATES AND MORE**

Home Care Aide DeeDee Lazik  
and her son, Zach.



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Students in OneAmerica's technology-driven English Innovations program prepare for a class session where they engage in a coordinated curriculum of English language lessons and computer literacy.

# BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS & MULTILINGUAL LEARNING

English language classes and Home Care Aide training in multiple languages helps ensure a diverse work force to serve diverse consumers

There is perhaps no skill more important for Home Care Aides to possess than the ability to communicate. For those whose first language isn't English, taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes can provide a much-needed boost both personally and professionally. And for Home Care Aides who care for consumers in their own language communities, it's also critical that Home Care Aide training is available in languages that workers speak.

According to a 2010 report by SEIU Healthcare 775NW, the Home Care Aide workforce is 28 percent people of color, with 20 percent born outside the United States. This population is slightly more diverse than the general population of Washington state, which is 23 percent people of color.

## The Tech Connection

While there are plenty of traditional classroom-based courses all across the state that students can take to learn English, one new option in the greater Seattle area is the technology-centered English Innovations program from immigrant advocacy organization OneAmerica, which is based on the idea that the entire community benefits when immigrants learn English. The pilot project was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"Our model is that we're teaching English and digital literacy combined," says Tracy Curley, program manager. "The student comes away from the class with better English skills and the ability to use the computer to fill out an application online, see how the kids are doing, and Skype with people back home."



Tracy Curley, program manager for OneAmerica's English Innovations program, helps a student.

There are between 20 and 25 students in each class, with one tech coach and four to five volunteers. Each student has a laptop that runs LiveMocha software, which serves as their English teacher. Classes run about 13 weeks, with students coming in three times weekly for two hours at a time. The locations

are based on where there's need and have been held at sites such as Sea-Tac Airport and Tutta Bella Neapolitan Pizzeria in the Wallingford neighborhood of Seattle.

"Attendance is a huge factor because the class is built on creating a strong community within the class," Curley says. "If you're not there one day a week on a regular basis, chances are you're not going to build that community."

There is no cost to students at this time, and each is given the resources needed to be successful in learning to use technology and improving English reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills.

"We give students a laptop for the duration of the class, along with an (Internet card), which allows them to have Internet access anytime, anywhere," Curley says. "They're able to do homework and take tests at their own speed, in the comfort of their own home or wherever they're at, and they're able to get correct answers to their questions right there rather than waiting for next week's class."

The end result so far has been promising. "The overarching thing we've seen is the student comes away from the class with a lot more confidence, whether it's at their job or in their personal life," Curley says.

### Culturally Sound Training

In addition to learning English, training Home Care Aides in their primary language is critical. This ensures students understand the training and communities have access to care from workers who can clearly communicate with them. The Training Partnership provides training to Home Care Aides in Korean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Russian and Spanish. Through a contract with one of the Training Partnership's training networks, the Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) is one sev-

## LANGUAGE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

### Alternate Language Home Care Aide Training

#### Instructor-led Training

The Training Partnership offers training in five languages other than English: Cantonese, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and Russian. Call the Member Resource Center and speak with a multi-lingual representative to schedule classes in alternate languages. In addition, if you speak a language other than those six, you can use a community interpreter to help you in class.

#### Online Continuing Education (CE)

There are 10 online CE courses available for students in Russian and Spanish. You can log in and take training anytime at [www.myseiubenefits.org](http://www.myseiubenefits.org)



### English Innovations

At this time, the next scheduled round of classes will be in Spring 2013.

For more information and to see a schedule, go to [www.weareoneamerica.org/english-innovations](http://www.weareoneamerica.org/english-innovations)

### English as a Second Language Classes

There are a number of ESL options all across Washington state. For a classroom setting, a community college near you is likely to have courses. Whatcom County College, for example, offers ESL classes in listening/speaking, reading/writing, civics, job skills, and family literacy every quarter. Tuition is \$25. Libraries, too, house many programs aimed at the ESL learner. The Seattle Public Library system features Talk Time (conversation groups), computer-assisted learning with special software and free training, basic computer skills classes, and English classes and grammar workshops, all at no cost.

eral organizations that provide trainings in workers' native languages.

"While I think it is always important for people who want to learn English to be able to do so, in the case of home care workers, I think it is even more important that they receive training and testing in their own languages," says Diane Narasaki, executive director of ACRS. "Those who speak a language other than English are usually linguistically and culturally competent to serve clients in the same language; these workers are critical to the home care infrastructure in communities where English is not the first language."

To that end, ACRS classes are offered

in languages including Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese.

"One of the things that we've encountered in feedback from people who have attended trainings in other places is the need for culturally based and culturally sound training," says Ben Cantrell, ACRS home care training program supervisor.

Still, for those who want to improve their ability to communicate in English, ACRS offers opportunities in that area as well. "For employment training programs, we do have a strong emphasis on helping the students or job seekers to gain their vocational English (skills) to meet the standards," says Gary Tang, ACRS Aging and Adult Services director. ■