Finding Her Path to Citizenship

A determined learner. A dedicated tutor. A dream come true... thanks to you.

When Nelvia’s husband was deployed with his Army unit to Afghanistan, she knew she needed to quickly improve her English so she could best take care of her children. One of her friends had used Literacy for Life’s services, and she recommended that Nelvia come see what we could do to help her. Nelvia says when she first arrived at our offices, she quickly felt at ease with the helpful staff and volunteers.

Nelvia’s goal at first was simply to improve her English skills. Once she started, though, she decided to pursue a deeper desire—to become a U.S. citizen. She planned to surprise her husband by completing the process while he was deployed. But Nelvia didn’t expect it to be such a challenge.

Martha, Nelvia’s tutor, worked with her regularly to improve her English comprehension and speaking skills. Soon she had reached the level where she could pass the citizenship interview and exam—both very intimidating processes. Next, she had to face the application process, which is long, complex and overwhelming for someone whose first language is not English.

But neither tutor nor learner was willing to give up. Nelvia’s son even got in on the excitement, helping his mother prepare for the written exam.

The whole endeavor took over six months of studying and preparing, using the abundant resources available at Literacy for Life. Those included 100 flash cards with questions from the citizenship test, three different citizenship preparatory books, and pocket-size copies of the U.S Constitution. Additionally, an experienced citizenship tutor, Jim, helped boost Nelvia’s confidence by conducting mock interviews with her.

After overcoming all those hurdles with the assistance of the Literacy for Life community, Nelvia passed her interview and exam! Nelvia credits Martha’s tireless assistance in the process as a major key to her success. Martha says that it was Nelvia’s determination that got her through.

Nelvia is thrilled to be one of the many new citizens Literacy for Life has helped. She says she “loves everything” about the United States, and she’s particularly excited that she will be able to vote in the next election. Through the dedicated service of tutors like Martha and Jim, the resources available at Literacy for Life, and the generous gifts provided by donors like you, we will continue to make dreams like Nelvia’s come true—one learner at a time!
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TRIUMPHS of 2016–2017

752 personal goals met like getting accepted into community college, earning a certification for work, reading a book to a child, or understanding a doctor’s instructions for the first time.

333 volunteers changed lives by tutoring, teaching classes, serving as board and council members, and assisting the staff.

12 new U.S. citizens who studied American civics and history with their tutors.

921 learners served through one-to-one tutoring, small classes, off-site programs, the on-site computer lab, and distance learning programs.

$510,488 saved through volunteering from a combined 18,935 hours that tutors worked with learners at Literacy for Life.

Income and expenses:

- Income:
  - United Way: 1%
  - Government (state & local): 14%
  - Special events: 20%
  - Fees for contracted services: 8%
  - Foundations/corporations: 33%
  - Interest & Other: 2%
  - Individuals/private donations: 22%

- Expenses:
  - Program expenses: 87%
  - Administrative & fundraising: 13%
Your gift changed 921 lives this year!

Find out how...

Get ready to eat, drink and be well-read at this popular annual fundraiser!

Join award-winning author Beth Macy and Literacy for Life for scrumptious food and wine along with exciting live and silent auctions. All proceeds directly benefit Literacy for Life.

Tuesday, November 14
6:00 PM
Williamsburg Winery

Purchase your tickets now:
www.literacyforlife.org/RBTW