



Our Mission: To provide free literacy instruction customized to the needs of adults throughout Washtenaw County, utilizing a trained network of volunteer tutors.



DRIVING LITERACY

15th Annual Benefit Gala

October 19th 6pm
Washtenaw
Community College
Morris Lawrence
Building

Exciting Live &
Silent Auction
Fine Wine, Craft Beer
& Retro Cocktails
Gourmet
Strolling Dinner

[Details & Tickets](#)



[Volunteer](#)

Spotlight on a Learner - Saadet Durmaz



Saadet Durmaz first arrived in the United States from Turkey in September 2011. While her first visit to the U.S. was three years ago, she's had to return to Turkey several times to renew her visa, so she has really only spent about 15 months in Ann Arbor.

In Turkey, Saadet studied English for several years but was frustrated to discover that her years of study left her unprepared to live in the United States. When she heard people speaking English, she could not recognize anything she heard. Initially, she was so discouraged, it outweighed her educational goals and she refused to practice speaking in English. After studying so long in Turkey, she realized that here in the U.S. she was truly still a beginner and had to face just how far she was from reaching her goals. What finally motivated her to put aside her ego and refocus on her degree plan? – Her partner, Sarah. “She is the most hard-working person I have ever known.” As Saadet says, “I could not ignore her determination to study and it spread to me like an infection!”

When she first arrived in Ann Arbor, she was definitely a beginner-level learner with limited English language skills. She began working immediately with Washtenaw Literacy joining one of our long-time beginner tutors, Evelyn, in her groups. “Evelyn is passionate about teaching,” says Saadet, “Her passion helped me when I was first beginning my English studies in the U.S. She is the type of tutor who shares all her energy with her students.” Even when Saadet returned to Turkey in summer 2012, she and Evelyn continued to write letters to each other allowing her to keep practicing her English and remain connected to Washtenaw Literacy.

In 2013 Saadet “graduated” from Evelyn’s beginner-level group to an advanced group with a tutor named Anna. The first few weeks challenged her confidence but, as she says, “Anna’s approach made me believe in my English skills and she encouraged me...with positive reinforcement.”

Not long after Saadet moved up to an advanced group, she gained enough confidence to challenge herself even further by joining an advanced TOEFL preparation group at Mallets Creek library. “I had watched this group from afar for 2 years,” Saadet says, “but now I’m proud to be a member of the group.” TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a very challenging examination required at most English-speaking universities for non-English speakers in order to study in a degree program and any English-speaking university. The exam requires learners to receive high scores in several critical areas including extemporaneous speaking and critical oral responses to a reading. Testers need to not only excel in reading and writing, but speaking and listening too.

All learners come to Washtenaw Literacy with a set of goals they want to achieve. Saadet is no different – she has a very clear path laid out for her future and she is not afraid to put in the hard work necessary to achieve each aspect of that goal. She remains motivated to stay on track by visualizing herself as a fluent English speaker. “I imagined my life – my career, relationships, success – after I had enough English and then I could see the number of opportunities for my future.”

Saadet’s short-term goal is to begin her graduate studies at Eastern Michigan University as a conditional student in January 2014. As she improves her English, she plans to transition to a full degree student in the Women’s and Gender Studies Master’s Program. She is most interested in studying gender and sexuality, feminist and queer activism, religion, and women in policy. In ‘academic speak’ that translates into studying comparative culture, LGBTQ studies, and gender studies so it is not surprising to learn that her 5-year goal is to complete her Ph.D. in Women’s and Gender Studies from a university here in the United States. Once she has received her Ph.D., Saadet plans to advocate for LGBTQ rights both in Turkey and in the United States.

Today, her primary focus in her ESL groups continues to be writing in English, as she finds it more difficult than other English skills. But, it’s not all about studying and practicing English. She knows how important it is to relax and enjoy life too. In order to maintain her work/life balance she often goes on long distance bike rides. It’s her favorite way to spend her spare time. And, she is also a good cook and is not afraid to be creative in the kitchen. “Sometimes an idea just comes into my mind,” says Saadet, “I start cooking with no recipe or plan. Sometimes I get disappointing results but usually the results are delicious.” What’s so great about Saadet is that this idea of challenging oneself, experimenting with ideas, recognizing even disappointment can bring rewards, permeates throughout all areas of her life.

Donate

Are you interested in volunteering with Washtenaw Literacy? Register now to attend one of our upcoming ABC's of Washtenaw Literacy Information Sessions to learn more about us:

[Tuesday, September 24th](#)
7-8pm
Nicola's Books
2513 Jackson Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

[Friday, September 27th](#)
3-4pm
Ann Arbor District Library
Malletts Creek Branch
3090 East
Eisenhower Pkwy
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

[Wednesday, October 2nd](#)
6-7pm
Nicola's Books
2513 Jackson Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

[Thursday, October 24th](#)
1-2pm
Dexter Library
3255 Alpine Street
Dexter, MI 48130

"The learners I deal with are not illiterate; some are highly educated in their home countries. But, for many people, it is difficult to understand how frustrating it can be to be in a country where you cannot communicate.

~ Nanna Facteau
ESL Group Tutor

Upcoming Events:

Pop-up store for Driving Literacy with [The Get-Up Vintage](#)

September 25th, 2013
5:30 - 7pm
Upstairs at Vellum
209 S. Main Street, Ann Arbor
Enjoy a retro-inspired cocktail from Vellum while you shop!

Fall Donor Reception for Sustaining Donors

November 14th, 2013
6-8pm
Location & Guest Speaker
TBD
This is not a fundraiser!

"Evelyn's positive energy, friendly attitude, and high standards motivated me alot."

~ Saadet Durmaz
ESL Learner

Saadet's final offering of advice to everyone, both learners and tutors alike: "Do not give up believing and trying till you have it." What great words of wisdom for all of us to embrace!

Senator Carl Levin to Host Driving Literacy Benefit Gala

Washtenaw Literacy's 15th annual benefit gala is around the corner. This event promises a fun-filled evening that provides critical funding for adult literacy in Washtenaw County. Driving Literacy (formerly World in a Basket) is the year's major fundraising event. Our programs count on the resources raised, around 20% of the agency's annual budget.

The event is hosted by retiring Senator Carl Levin who is a strong supporter of literacy efforts in Washtenaw County and throughout Michigan. "Senator Levin's top priority has always been the economic well-being of Michigan families and he understands the foundational role adult literacy plays in a strong Michigan workforce," said Amy Goodman, executive director. "We're thrilled to have his involvement in this fantastic evening."

"Driving Literacy" is a full evening with gourmet strolling dinner and desserts as well as fine wine, craft beer and retro cocktails. Live and silent auctions enable guests to bid on more than 100 unique items and packages – vacations, tours, spa days and more. Guests can keep an eye on their silent auctions throughout the evening, bid and pay for their won items on mobile devices with a new interactive feature from BidPal. (Kiosks will be available for those who want to be phone- and tablet-free for the evening.) The event's signature fast and fun live auction will close the evening. Select auction items will be available for online bidding beginning Friday, October 4.

While the Mad Men-themed 1960s cocktail attire is optional, Washtenaw Literacy is making it easy to get in the spirit and the real thing by teaming with Ann Arbor's The Get Up Vintage. A pop-up Mad Men store is planned for September 25th from 5:30-7pm at Vellum.

Tickets for Driving Literacy are on sale now and are \$85 when purchased on or before September 27th -- \$100 thereafter. Reserved tables of eight are available for \$680. Guests can purchase tickets online at the Driving Literacy website: bidpal.net/washtenawliteracy, or by phone by calling (734) 879-1320, or via email via info@washtenawliteracy.org.



Meet a Tutor - Nanna Facteau



Nanna was born and raised in The Netherlands. She moved to the United States, first to Long Island under the sponsorship of The Netherland-America Foundation to work as a microbiologist. She then returned several years later with her U.S.-born husband to raise their family. So, she knows firsthand the challenges non-native English speakers face when they arrive in the United States. While The Netherlands does require students to take 3 additional languages besides Dutch in order to graduate from high school (English, French, and German), living in the United States and speaking English to native speakers is vastly different than becoming a fluent reader of English in a classroom. Her own personal experience provides Nanna a rather unique perspective and understanding of the struggles her learners face when they arrive in Ann Arbor.

Here are some thoughts from Anna about her experiences as a tutor – enjoy getting to know her!

There are so many wonderful agencies where you can volunteer and make a difference in someone's life. What made you decide to volunteer with Washtenaw Literacy?

I know how difficult it is to arrive in a country where you have a hard time to communicate. English is also a second language for me and I remember how frustrating the first months in the U.S. were. I also tutored a Russian couple when I was living on Long Island. I like to do my part and give someone a hand. I also volunteer for FoodGatherers.

What has surprised you the most about your volunteer experience with Washtenaw Literacy?

I was surprised to see that so many people from so many different countries use the services of Washtenaw Literacy. I have had learners from Turkey, Japan, South Korea, China, Brazil, France, Somalia, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Iran, Sudan, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates. They have great stories to tell and I have learned a lot from them. Quite a few of my students have done well on the TOEFL test and are now able to continue their education.

Do you have a "favorite" moment from your experience working with a learner? What made it so great?

I have a group of 4-8 learners and the conversations we have about their home countries are very interesting. They share what they miss being away from their country and what surprised them the most about living in the U.S.

What has been the most challenging part of volunteering?

I don't know who will be there every week and the challenge is to make sure that everyone is learning

Upcoming Trainings and Workshops:

If you have attended an ABC's of Washtenaw Literacy Information Session, please consider registering for one or more of our recommended trainings or workshops.

Core Tutor Training:

Our premier 15-hour interactive training program

[September 23rd, 27th, 30th, October 3rd and 7th](#)
6:30-9:30pm
Comcast Headquarters

ESL Group Tutor Training:

Recommended 3-hour training module for group tutors.

[Wednesday, October 23rd](#)
1-4pm
NEW Center

Lesson Planning for ESL Group Tutors:

Recommended 3-hour training module for group tutors.

[Wednesday, November 6th](#)
1-4pm
NEW Center

Power Tutoring:

Washtenaw Literacy's largest annual professional development workshop for Tutors!

February 22nd, 2014
Washtenaw Community College
Sessions TBD

Get some fashion inspiration from our Mad Men Style Pinterest Board!



something during that hour and a half. Teaching the TOEFL class is a challenge because the learners are at different levels of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Very often I have new students and I have to prepare to make sure they all participate. I enjoy this teaching opportunity and look forward to meeting my learners every Friday afternoon at Malletts Creek Library. This has been a very rewarding experience for me and I am very proud of them.

What do you carry around in your tutor kit? What would you say is your "go to" item?

I have extra lessons, crossword puzzles, and "Bananagrams" that I use as backups. "Bananagrams" is a small yellow bag in the shape of a banana. It contains letter tiles as they are used in Scrabble; you can play all kinds of word games with them.

What was your favorite subject in school? Why?

History was my favorite subject because we had the most amazing teacher.

What would you tell someone who asked what it's like to work with adults struggling with illiteracy?

The learners I deal with are not illiterate; some are highly educated in their home countries. But for many people it is difficult to understand how frustrating it can be to be in a country where you cannot communicate. Fortunately, Americans do travel more and experience this problem themselves. Pronunciation is for some of my students the most difficult part; I hope they will not end up speaking English with a Dutch accent.

What's your first memory of reading? How would your life be different today if you couldn't read?

I read since I was 5 or 6. My mother read to us and my brother, who was 1 year older, taught me while he was learning how to read himself. It would be very hard for me if I could not read. I read the Dutch newspapers on line and the NY Times and Time Magazine and the New Yorker and I often have a book to start or finish. When I was a child, there was a library in my home town but you were not allowed to look for the books yourself. You had to ask the librarian for a specific book and she would give it to you. That was very annoying and I was so happy when, much later, you were allowed to go to the shelves and find your own books. I love bookstores and libraries and always visit them when I travel. I have five siblings and my sister told me recently that when they were playing board games at home I refused to participate because I was always reading a book. There was no TV at the time. I also do remember walking to school while reading.

Tell us one fun fact about yourself?

I like all kinds of outside exercise: hiking, swimming, skating, and especially, bike riding. I also loved to roller blade but gave that up recently. Breaking a leg or hip would not be fun.

If you could design a perfect day, what would it include?

A perfect day is a sunny day, in the winter or summer, and walking in one of the many Ann Arbor parks. I hope to do this very soon with my sister, who is coming to visit me from The Netherlands in three weeks. I am very happy that I moved to Ann Arbor to be closer to my daughter's family which includes two great grandsons. Ann Arbor is a very nice and interesting place to live and there is always much to do.

Inaugural Young Professional for Literacy Group a Big Success

On August 13, Washtenaw Literacy kicked off the new Young Professionals for Literacy group with a meet and greet at Vellum. Over 30 local young professionals attended the event, ranging from politicians to artists. Washtenaw Literacy staff members Liz Garaba and Allison Correll spoke about the literacy crisis facing our county and how the Young Professionals group provides a great opportunity to support the work being done by Washtenaw Literacy in a fun and social setting.

The Young Professionals for Literacy group is a very exciting new opportunity for Washtenaw Literacy to reach out to and be supported by a new generation of literacy advocates. The group will help to support Washtenaw Literacy through volunteering and planning their own fundraising and friend-raising events. The first official meeting was held on Sept. 4th at Dominick's with 9 attendees. During the meeting, they discussed the need for clear goals for the group to rally around. Their first volunteering opportunity will be our Driving Literacy event on October 19th where they will not only dress the part but assist with modeling the auction items! At the October meeting, the group will start brainstorming 3rd party events they can host for the agency! To learn more about joining the Young Professionals for Literacy group, please email correll@washtenawliteracy.org.



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