

The Conversation

October 2022



Greetings, friends of Welcoming the Stranger!

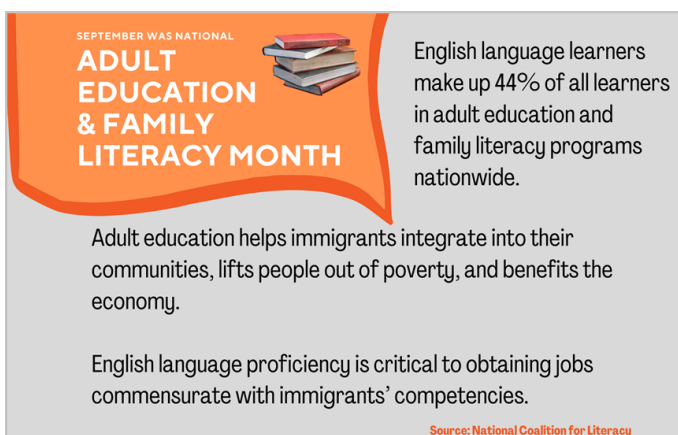
This edition of “The Conversation” is full of good news made possible by your partnership and support. Thank you! We hope you enjoy reading our latest updates and profiles of our inspiring volunteers.

News from the Office

Welcoming the Stranger rolls into fall with exciting momentum from the summer. In July, WTS supporters like you voted by the hundreds and successfully won a \$1,000 donation for us from McHales Cares. Thank you!



Fall 2022 marks a major milestone for WTS: we're finally able to hold in-person classes for the first time since the pandemic began (photo above). Students and teachers are thrilled to gather together. At the same time, in recognition of the value of virtual classes for many students and teachers (scheduling convenience, no childcare or transportation needed, and so on), we're also offering online classes this term. It's a powerful combination that we call a hybrid program, and it's likely to be the future of WTS. Our ability to launch virtual classes and execute them well has been a silver lining of the pandemic and it allows us to expand our reach to many more English language learners in the greater Bucks County and Philadelphia areas.



SEPTEMBER WAS NATIONAL
**ADULT
EDUCATION
& FAMILY
LITERACY MONTH**

English language learners make up 44% of all learners in adult education and family literacy programs nationwide.

Adult education helps immigrants integrate into their communities, lifts people out of poverty, and benefits the economy.

English language proficiency is critical to obtaining jobs commensurate with immigrants' competencies.

Source: National Coalition for Literacy

A Passion for Education



Dedicated teachers don't just teach a curriculum – they encourage, support, befriend, and truly impact the lives of their students and colleagues. Susan Roop, WTS' Program Coordinator, is one such teacher.

Susan's career was in the law, but her passion has always been education, specifically language and reading acquisition and sociolinguistics. Prior to becoming an attorney, she taught reading and language arts to high schoolers. Even before retiring from the legal profession, she felt drawn back to the classroom as a way to pay forward the benefits and opportunities that have enhanced her life. In 2018, after about 15 years as a volunteer ESL teacher to immigrants in Bucks County, PA and Lambertville, NJ, she chose to affiliate her Lambertville class with Welcoming the Stranger's program offerings. Since November 2020, she has also served as WTS's Program Coordinator, interviewing prospective volunteers and providing ESL teachers with guidance regarding students, curriculum and other classroom matters.

"Welcoming the Stranger offers me an opportunity to improve the lives of local immigrants and refugees under the umbrella of an organization whose values are consistent with my own," Susan says. "We are committed to the successful integration of our newest residents into the fabric of American life, even as we acknowledge the importance and worth of their native cultures and languages."

Susan is a great cheerleader for her students. She knows them as people who work hard, care deeply about their children, and aspire to establish themselves as productive members of their local communities.

"My students have come here from different countries for different reasons: to improve the educational opportunities available to their children; to improve their employment opportunities; to live without fear of repression. I have seen them gain confidence in their ability to go about their daily lives in an English-speaking environment. I have also seen them become comfortable with and supportive of each other," says Susan. "All share a decision to leave behind a familiar country and culture in order to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families, yet each brings along a unique life story, a set of unique experiences, and his or her unique social and cultural DNA. They are variously funny, generous, engaging, smart, curious, and empathetic. As my colleagues have often remarked, 'We learn as much from our students as they learn from us.'"

Susan wants WTS's supporters to know that the demand for education among adult immigrants and refugees has not diminished. On the contrary. Each time

conflict or famine or cataclysmic weather events strike somewhere on our planet, new immigrants and refugees come to the United States and many settle in our area.

“Welcoming the Stranger must continue to increase its resources - human and financial - in order to meet the needs of this growing population,” she says. “Without our dedicated volunteers and donors, we would not be able to offer the education and support that can enable local immigrants and refugees to thrive in this country.”

In her leisure hours, Susan walks along the river, reads broadly and tries to learn as much as possible about the languages spoken by her students. She loves movies and plays and looks forward to returning to cinemas and theaters soon.

Meet Board Member Ginny Lavanish



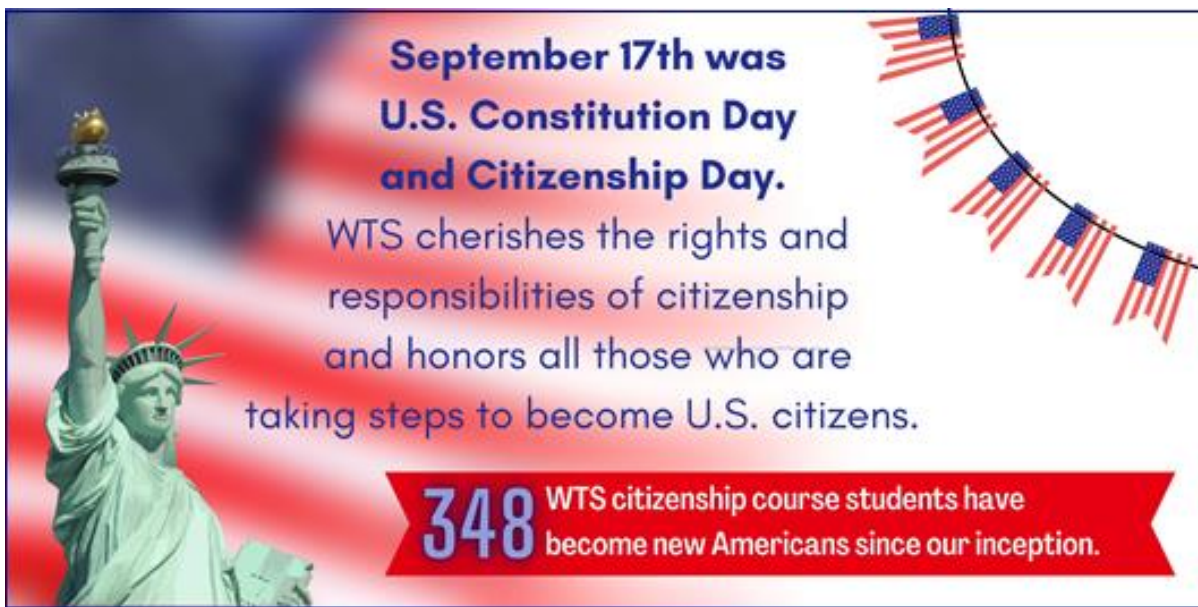
My background is as a high school English teacher and I have also been involved in my local church in many leadership capacities over the years.

My connection to WTS began with my involvement with Lower Bucks Center for Church and Community and that organization took on Welcome the Stranger as a ministry in 1999. I continued on the board when WTS broke off on its own in 2009.

Over the many years of my volunteering with Welcoming the Stranger, I have seen the number of students served and volunteers recruited grow significantly. The organization has expanded its scope, implemented new and creative ideas,

increased efficiency and learned how to successfully pursue grants. The mission, however, has never changed.

I am very inspired by the resilience and persistence of the immigrants and refugees who come to America seeking a better life. My favorite part of working with WTS has been hearing the heartwarming stories from our students about the friends they've made, the obstacles they've conquered and their gratitude to Welcoming the Stranger for fostering their successful integration into their American communities.



**September 17th was
U.S. Constitution Day
and Citizenship Day.**

WTS cherishes the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and honors all those who are taking steps to become U.S. citizens.

348 WTS citizenship course students have become new Americans since our inception.

[To make a donation, please click below. Thank you!](#)