

The Conversation, March 2023



Greetings from Welcoming the Stranger!

Please read the latest happenings made possible by all of our generous friends and supporters. We ended 2022 with much success and 2023 is off to a great start. Thank you for letting us share the good news this spring.

News from the Executive Director

We are only able to advance our mission to provide free English, computer, and citizenship preparation classes thanks to our dedicated volunteers. Last year, we had a total of 617 class enrollments by 340 students. Of these enrollments: 473 were in ESL classes, 88 were in computer classes and 56 were in citizenship preparation classes. Ten WTS students gained U.S. citizenship.



Fifty-three volunteers taught one or more ESL and citizenship preparation classes. Of these, 33 were returning volunteers and the other 20 were new to our program.

We continue to serve a growing diverse population from many countries around the world. In 2022 our students came from 53 different countries:

36 % from Latin America, including Mexico, Central America and South America,
34 % from Asia, exclusive of Russia,
25 % from Europe, including all of Russia, and
5 % from Africa.

About Our Classes

Our *Winter 2023* term officially ends on *March 31*, and we are currently putting the finishing touches on our *Spring 2023* term schedule. Once again, we will be offering catalogs of both in-person and virtual classes. Our *Spring term* will begin on *April 10, 2023*, and continue through *June 30*.

We are pleased to offer all levels of online ESL classes - Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced, as well as multi-level in-person classes at eight locations. We will also be offering multiple computer and citizenship classes, both in-person and online.



Levittown Class



Morrisville Class

Meet WTS ESL Student - Kumi Sakato



One quality which stands out among so many of the students enrolled in WTS ESL classes is their determination to master English. In 2019, Kumi Sakato moved with her husband and two young children from where they lived near Tokyo, Japan when he was sent to work in the US branch of a Japanese company in Bensalem. “My husband gets to practice his English all day at work, and my two children, ages 4 and 7, use English in preschool and elementary school, but I don’t have those opportunities. We all speak Japanese at home. But the wife of a work friend of my husband, who previously took classes with Welcoming the Stranger, recommended I do this, and I’m so glad I did!”

Kumi has a degree in English American Literature from a small Japanese college, and she has visited a few other places in the US, but she felt a need for conversational English practice. In Fall 2022, she enrolled in a virtual Intermediate ESL class and

continued with a class in the Winter term. She plans to keep enrolling each term as she feels her teacher has been “very wonderful because she asks students what they would like to learn at the end of each class.” Kumi is always the first to respond with questions everyone can discuss during the next class to improve their speaking skills.

Kumi uses every chance she has to improve her English skills, and views movies in English with subtitles so she can hear American pronunciation. She values her children’s playdates so she can practice her English with other mothers.

Kumi’s goal is to greatly improve her English speaking ability during the next couple of years. There’s no doubt she will succeed, given her dedication and WTS’ help.

“I love the smiles!” - WTS Volunteer Teacher Marjorie Shiekman



What motivates dedicated volunteers like Marjorie Shiekman? Back in 2020, during Covid, a neighbor told Marjorie how rewarding teaching ESL was. After researching where she could teach, she fell in love with our name, as well as our responsiveness to her wish to teach online. A former attorney, Marjorie had interest in both ESL and citizenship preparation classes. To date, she has taught or co-taught six classes, including

beginner, intermediate and advanced ESL, as well as citizenship, which she co-teaches with another very experienced volunteer.

She finds the online classes convenient and believes the *Ellii* online resource library, paid subscriptions to which are provided by WTS, to be comprehensive and user friendly. “It is so easy to plan fun lessons about every topic. What I really like is the practical lessons *Ellii* offers for teachers to use with their students—helping them find jobs, go to the doctor, shop at the grocery store, talk to their child’s teacher and more. There are also lessons about their new country—US history and customs, idioms, and holidays.”

Inspired by her WTS experience, last summer Marjorie helped a friend who was hosting a Ukrainian refugee couple in her own home. They did not know any English so Marjorie stepped in and helped the couple learn English. They had been communicating with their host family using only the Google translator app. Initially, she worked on her own with them as no WTS classes were in session, but as soon as the new term started they enrolled and Marjorie designed a very specific curriculum for this couple who wanted to get certified for jobs driving trucks. She tailored lessons so they could learn complex

trucking terms and technical information and they were able to pass their trucking exams. They are both now working as truck drivers, 'their dream job!'

Marjorie also works hard to promote WTS to encourage more volunteer teachers to sign up, as the need is so great. She says the students are so appreciative and at the end of each class they say, 'Thank you, Teacher.'

"I measure my success by the number of smiles I see as I look around during each class! It is so emotionally satisfying for me to help these individuals in this way. They are so highly motivated and exactly the kind of people we want to come to our country and stay here. I feel so fortunate to be able to help them."