



## The Conversation

March 2022

### Greeting, Friends of Welcoming the Stranger!

This January, the WTS Board appointed Patricia Lorenz as Executive Director. Ms. Lorenz will oversee the organization's mission to provide adult immigrants and refugees with the skills and resources to thrive in the U.S. "Patricia stepped in as Acting Director in March 2020 and steered our organization through the unique challenges posed by COVID," shared Bill Kennedy, President of the Board of Directors. "This promotion to Executive Director recognizes Patricia's dedication to serving the refugees and immigrants in our community, the Board's strong and productive working partnership with her, and our excitement and confidence in her ability to lead WTS into a new phase of growth."

Ms. Lorenz is also an alumna of Welcoming the Stranger's citizenship preparation program. She was sworn in as an American citizen at a ceremony in Philadelphia on April 2, 2021, one of ten WTS students to attain citizenship last year. Patricia, congratulations on your appointment as Executive Director and on being one of only three individuals to lead WTS during our 21-year history!

The 2021 year was very good for WTS students and teachers, who continued to meet online in virtual small group classes. With the help of dedicated volunteers, WTS was able to provide 167 classes, including ESL, computer literacy and citizenship preparation, for 275 students (to see graphs and charts reflecting the year's accomplishments, [click here](#) to access the **2021 WTS Impact Report**). This year, we hope to offer 40 classes and serve 130 students each term

### News from the office



Last Year 167 Classes 41 Volunteers

This Winter 39 classes 24 Volunteers

In the winter term that just finished, we were challenged by having 27% fewer volunteers than the previous year and as a result, 25% fewer classes. However, thanks to the dedicated efforts of our

volunteers, the number of students per class increased 7% compared to the prior winter term and we were able to serve more students than we did last winter. To summarize: last winter we had 33 volunteers, 52 classes and 130 students. In the recently completed winter term, we had 24 volunteers, 39 classes and 140 students.

We have also initiated new efforts to gain additional volunteers, and this is already proving successful thanks to a press release created by the Marketing and Communications Committee and published by the Bucks County Herald in their editorial page, Welcoming the Stranger received 22 new applications from potential volunteers. Seven new volunteers will be teachers in this spring term, and two more will help with administrative tasks. Anyone who is interested in becoming a volunteer can fill out a form by clicking [here](#). Volunteers can apply now, and staff will contact them to explore fall term opportunities.

Thanks to the Newtown Friends Meeting for inviting Patricia Lorenz to speak about the important work that WTS is doing. Announcement of the presentation was published in the Newtown Patch, the Bucks County Herald and the Advance of Bucks County.

### **Thank You to Our Many Supporters**

We would like to express our gratitude to the foundations that help make our programs possible:

- Connelly Family Foundation
- Alfred & Mary Douty Family Foundation
- Doylestown Presbyterian Church
- Genuardi Family Foundation
- McLean Contributionship
- Patricia Kind Family Foundation
- Philadelphia Foundation

We are also grateful to the many individuals, organizations, and churches that help to underwrite our programs and keep them relevant and free to our students.

Individual donors contribute 64% of our budget; foundations 32%; and organizations and churches 4%.

### **Volunteer spotlight: Nancy Miller**



When Nancy Miller retired and decided to volunteer with WTS, she wasn't a stranger to teaching. While working full-time as an optometrist, she had assisted in a GED program in Philadelphia and tutored children at her local elementary school.

Still, Nancy didn't leap into teaching WTS students immediately. She chose to start as an assistant and apprentice to lead teachers until she was comfortable enough to head her own class.

Nancy has taught with WTS for almost five years now. She points out how profoundly social media has changed the life of immigrants in recent years in that they can now stay in close contact with family in their country of origin.

She, herself, has learned that the English sounds that are challenging are highly dependent on a student's first language. She cites the tonal languages of Asian speakers and their lack of experience forming the hard endings of English words.

Nancy has also learned to work with the cultural differences that lead some students to be more reserved and others more outgoing. One of her most extroverted and ambitious students came from Ukraine. She took a part-time job specifically to practice English and added English classes at Bucks County Community College to her work with WTS.

While appreciating her students' differences, Nancy is clear about their commonalities.

"All the students I've taught have been grateful to be living in the U.S.," says Nancy. "They want to be accepted and most want to fit into our culture. The students that I have had the pleasure to get to know over the past several years are warm and considerate people. They are always so grateful for the help that WTS has afforded. They are quick with a thank you, but they have given me much more than I have given them."

## Meet Board Member Richard Keeler



Richard Keeler has served on the Board of Directors since WTS' designation as a 501(c)3 in 2008. Like many of our volunteers, it was his own life experience that first drew him to Welcoming the Stranger. Rich's wife, Mary, is originally from Malaysia. When she immigrated to the U.S. and applied for citizenship, Rich and Mary were dismayed by the lack of resources to help her through the process.

"We found that government agencies were pretty unhelpful when it came to preparing for the citizenship exam," Rich recalls. "Mary was initially told to study all of American history and government. When we eventually discovered that there's a specific set of questions to prepare for, tackling the exam became much more realistic."

Mary studied diligently and attained U.S. citizenship in 1990. A few years later, the Keelers' church was hosting WTS founder Rev. Sturgis Poorman's first citizenship classes and Rich stepped up to assist.

"I thought about what we went through, and my wife and I decided that this was a good way to give back to the community," Rich says. "I started out assisting Sturgis with the classes and as Welcoming the Stranger grew and he was needed to start other classes, I took over as lead teacher."

Rich has now been teaching citizenship courses for 21 years and many students have attained their dreams of naturalization under his tutelage.

Over the years, Rich's passion for making citizenship accessible has never waned.

"Knowing the plight and financial burdens that people coming to the United States face, and the fact that many are working two and three jobs to make ends meet, makes free classes in English, computers, and citizenship absolutely essential," he reports. "It's my fervent hope that we can continue to keep these classes free. I would like to thank each and every one of our donors and volunteers for their generous support – without them we would never have been able to bring these services to immigrants and refugees for over 20 years. Whenever someone donates to our organization, they can be sure that they're helping someone to adjust to life in a new place and achieve their goal of becoming a citizen of the United States."

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