

Skilled Immigrant Worker at Lincoln Industries Polishes English Skills to Win Mayor's Award

No matter how good you are at your job, if you cannot communicate with your supervisors and coworkers you will fall short of your full potential. Inefficiencies, miscommunications, and gaps in human relations cloud what otherwise might be a shining workforce example.

That was the dilemma facing Erasmo Galvan. An immigrant from Mexico, Erasmo had the skills and dedication to make it as a metal polisher at Lincoln Industries, but he lacked the English language skills to go all the way. Unable to communicate effectively, he kept distant from coworkers and lacked American friends. At a company that emphasizes teamwork, this was a distinct disadvantage.

Then in 2010, with help from his employer, he began to study English with



Erasmo Galvan (l.) receives award from the Hon. Carl Eskridge. several Lincoln Literacy tutors, including Megan Ramey, who nominated him for his exceptional dedication. Indeed, he has made great strides. His supervisor at Lincoln Industries has been amazed by his progress. *See Awards, pg. 2*

“New Beginnings” Turns Dreams into Realities

“I’ve wanted to learn how to read all my life.”

Tears welled up in the eyes of the middle-aged man as he sat down at the Lincoln Literacy recruitment table to sign up for classes.

One of the most painful things for adults to own up to is illiteracy in their own native language. It can literally reduce a grown man to tears. That's why, for decades, when it came to adult basic education Lincoln Literacy clung to its founding slogan: “Each one teach one.”

But the success of our English language groups, and the certain knowledge that many Americans who needed our services were not coming in for them prompted us to try something new. Earlier this year, in partnership with Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach, we gave “New Beginnings” classes for adult basic learners a try.

We knew we were taking a chance. After all, a person who has gone through public education in America and cannot read has, by definition, experienced failure in the



New Beginnings classes meet weekly at Matt Talbot.

classroom. Would classes for adults work? Would adults be willing to sit down with others who were quite possibly ahead or behind them in reading skills and try to learn? Could we manage such a classroom? We truly did not know.

But thanks to generous funding from the Woods Charitable Fund and gracious collaboration from the Matt Talbot staff, we got underway Feb. 14th. The results

See New Beginnings, pg. 3

Board of Directors

- David Bargaen , President
- Cynthia Martinez, First Vice President
- Kelly Neill, Second Vice President
- Denise Mainquist, Secretary
- Dave Barnhouse, Treasurer
- Nikki Bates
- Magdalena Benton
- Mike Eppel
- J. Michael Hemmer
- Rosa Hernandez
- Jane Renner Hood
- M.J. Humphrey
- L. Shanna Letcher
- David Merrill
- Renee Ninneman
- Lance Odom
- Kristin Ostrom
- Marlene Perkins
- Joanie Perry
- Adityaraj Purohit
- Samira Sabetrasekh
- Takako Sato
- Don Spinar
- Tana Wagener
- David Williams
- Mary Willis

In This Issue

2013 Awards	1
New Beginnings	1
World of Computers	2
Sheldon Art Museum	3
Husker Breakfast	4

If You Can Read This, You Can Surely Help!

Lincoln Literacy depends on volunteer tutors to get the job done. Every month, we offer orientation followed by highly effective training classes to prepare volunteers to teach our students, either in teams serving in classrooms or as one-to-one tutors. Surveys show our tutors love their volunteer work. For more info, go to lincolnliteracy.org, and click “Get Involved.”

At the Library, Women from Around the World Learn About the New World of Computers & the Internet



Layne Pierce shows students computer use.

When Bennett Martin Public Library got new computers this summer, one of the first things the staff did was to offer Lincoln Literacy the opportunity to give a class for refugees and immigrants on

them. We jumped at the chance. So did our students.

“Knowing how to make use of a computer is as much a part of literacy these days as reading or writing,” said Clayton Naff, LL’s executive director. “Most good jobs require online applications, and parents need to go online to access their children’s grades at school, plus there is the whole world of news, social media, and information available via computer.”

Women from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America took part in the free Introduction to Computers class. Young children of the participants enjoyed story time and literacy lessons from library staff.

The seven-week class started with the very basics: turning on a computer, learning how to use the mouse, becoming familiar with the keyboard and getting on the Internet. Soon, however, the students had conquered those challenges and moved on to more sophisticated stuff. By the end of the summer class, they were avidly “Googling” topics of interest online, including typing lessons and English language learning resources.

A key to the success of the program was individual attention from tutors. Lead instructor Joyce Hahn presented lessons each week, but then every student got help from staff, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers.

This was very important, because most of the students had little or no experience at all in the world of computers.

“I felt rewarded,” Hahn said after the summer class ended, “as did all of the tutors, to see the light in our students’ eyes, and the smiles on their faces as they mastered each learning hurdle.”

A significant side benefit of the class: every participant got a library card before the program was done. Hahn said they took almost as much pride in becoming library card holders as they did in learning how to use computers.

In view of the success of the class and its importance to Lincoln Literacy clientele, plans have been made to repeat the computer class in LL’s fall lineup. Bennett Martin Library Director Julie Beno has generously agreed to host the class at the flagship city library once again.



Nyamoch Tap learns to keyboard.



All participants in the computer class also got a library card.

◆ Awards

Continued from Page 1

“I have worked with Erasmo for 12 years,” Randy Conrad said. “His dedication to the job and to improve himself are unmatched. He has gone from someone that was quiet and kept to himself to someone that can carry on a conversation, communicate, and joke with you.”

Corey Petersen, Polishing Area Leader at Lincoln Industries, shares that view. “Erasmo’s dedication to his language development as well as his job is something to admire. I’m not sure I’ve met another person that works as hard as Erasmo does,” Petersen said, adding, “We are so glad to have him a part of our team at Lincoln Industries and are very proud of the personal development he has

been able to achieve.”

In presenting Galvan with the Mayor’s Award for Language and Literacy Achievement, City Councilman Carl Eskridge noted that, even with his full-time job at Lincoln Industries, the immigrant worker had advanced on standardized tests by two levels in two years.

“But,” he added, “it’s not just about testing. Erasmo has gone out of his way to become an informed and involved member of the community. He reads the newspaper every day, engages American friends in conversation, and helps others whenever he has the opportunity.”

Deserving as he was, Galvan was hardly the only one to be honored at Lincoln Literacy’s Annual Awards Luncheon, held June 22nd at Grace Lutheran Church.

See Awards, pg. 3

◆ New Beginnings

Continued from Page 1

to date have exceeded our best hopes. Standardized pre- and post-tests show significant improvement.

A woman who had tried for years without success to learn the alphabet has now conquered more than half of it. A man who had been out of work and nearly homeless after a disabling accident made it impossible for him to continue in the construction business or meatpacking has advanced by 10 points on a literacy test and has his sights set on a new career. (See Box at right.) Another man who has struggled with literacy has made such great strides that now he is studying for the GED exam at Southeast Community College so that he can at last gain a high school degree.

Energized by the results to date, Lincoln Literacy plans to open a second New Beginnings site this fall, in partnership with CenterPointe, another outstanding local nonprofit.

◆ Awards

Continued from Page 2

Other winners included: Mike Davis (Judy Ellingson Award for Tutoring Excellence), Terri Beard (Tutor of the Year Award), Dave Barnhouse (Lois Poppe Award for Volunteer Service), Abba Amy and Takako Sato (Student Leadership Awards), Rocio Puente (Learner of the Year Award), Sultan Periali (Little Learner of the Year Award), Saint Paul United Methodist Church (Champion of Literacy Award), Hayfa Al-Helfi (Distinguished Service Award), Carrie Knapp, Elektra Wrenholt, and Joy Nealeigh (Bette Boellstorff AmeriCorps Service Award).

Sheldon Art Museum Honors Lincoln Literacy and Others

Lincoln Literacy was thrilled to be among a dozen local nonprofits represented in the Sheldon Art Museum's special "Marketplace of Community Values" exhibit in June.

Immigrant artist Santiago Cal combined photos of Lincoln Literacy students and volunteers (below and at right) with plaster casts of hands holding pencils to portray our mission.



Exploited Rather than Educated, Man Finds New Hope

"In high school," recalls Craig, "I knew how to play basketball." And that was about all – the young man could not read, but he sure could play basketball. So they stuck him in Special Ed and continuously promoted him without ever addressing his learning disability. "When I was in 7th and 8th grade they had me playing with the 12th grade," he said.

Thanks to his athletic skill, Craig graduated from high school in Oklahoma, but he had only the slightest grasp of literacy. For a time, he supported himself by learning how to repair cars, but as computer manuals became an indispensable part of the job, he had to move on. He got work in the oil fields of Oklahoma, in construction, and then in a Nebraska meatpacking plant, where he suffered a disabling back injury.

His marriage broke up and he found himself jobless and near-homeless, with young children to care for. That's when he decided to give New Beginnings a chance. The class, he says, "has been helping me a lot. I can read more than I did before and I can spell a little bit more."

The first thing he asked for was help in reading the Bible. It's been a great comfort to him, says his tutor, AmeriCorps Member Carrie Knapp. "When Craig first started, we found it difficult to make it through a couple pages of the Bible in a class period. Now he's reading more rapidly; we're able to read a chapter and then some."

With those successes under his belt, Craig has found new hope and ambition. He is continuing his studies and considering applying to trucking school.





745 South 9th Street
 Lincoln, NE 68508
 402. 476.7323
 info@lincolnliteracy.org
 www.lincolnliteracy.org

Our mission is to assist people of all cultures and strengthen our community by teaching English language and literacy skills.

Lincoln Literacy is proud to be affiliated with:



Fifth Annual Husker Breakfast to Take Place Aug. 30th



Mike Babcock will speak on the season outlook at the Husker Breakfast.

Sponsored table: \$500
Table of eight: \$200
Individual tickets: \$25

Order online at lincolnliteracy.org, or call 402.476.7323.

Will the third time be a charm? As Nebraska's favorite football team prepares for its third season in the Big Ten, that is one of many questions swirling through the Husker Nation. Lincoln Literacy is honored to once again be able to present the witty and wise insights of the dean of Husker football journalists, Mike Babcock.

Babcock, the editor of *Hail Varsity* magazine, will speak at the Fifth Annual Husker Breakfast, on the day before the home opener. He will also bring copies of his book *Heart of a Husker: Tom Osborne's Nebraska Legacy* for audience members. Some former Husker

team members may be in attendance. Last year, for instance, ex-Husker defensive star Dr. Jeff Tomjack was there.

The breakfast will take place from 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. on Friday, August 30th, in the beautiful Nebraska Club high atop the US Bank Building, at 13th & M Streets in downtown Lincoln. Parking is available in the building, on the street, or across the street in the Cornhusker Hotel lot. The partially tax-deductible proceeds of ticket and table sales will help us to continue our language and literacy programs this schoolyear and beyond. Hope to see you there!

Go Big Red!



Help Support Our Work:

Join Lincoln Literacy!

Leave a Legacy for Literacy!

- ◆ When you contribute \$25 or more, you qualify for membership benefits, including free training, social events, and a vote at our Annual Meeting.
- ◆ When you leave a legacy, you designate a portion or percentage of your estate, helping ensure our future. Call us for details.

Please, donate now — online or in the enclosed envelope.

lincolnliteracy.org