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## In This Year Like No Other, Our Supporters and Tutors Step Up

Coping with the Covid pandemic hasn't been easy for anyone, and for some it has been tragic. But through it all, thanks to Lincoln Literacy's funders, donors, and volunteer tutors, we have forged ahead. Together, we shifted our classes online, equipped our students with Chromebooks and internet service, raised over \$100,000 on Give to Lincoln Day, and rolled out new programs to help displaced people find new jobs.



Dr. Mike Eppel, Senior Award winner, with the Fall 2019 CNA class.

Woods Charitable Fund named our new Bridgeway to a Better Life project its 2020 Breakthrough Initiative and granted us three years of funding to build it.

The Bridgeway project assists vulnerable people, including our immigrant and refugee populations, up, through, and beyond basic language and literacy skills and on to prep classes that help them get credentials, land jobs, build careers, lift their families out of poverty, and live their dreams.

It all started with our CNA Prep program, so we were thrilled when the volunteer at the heart of it, Dr. Mike Eppel, was selected for a Step Forward award. Gov. Pete Ricketts led the online award ceremony on Oct. 29.

A video tribute to Dr. Eppel noted the many facets of his volunteer service, including traveling to southeast Asia to give medical aid to Rohingya refugees. As for Lincoln Literacy's CNA Prep initiative, ServeNebraska calls the program "a huge success."

Continued on p. 2

## New Skills Lead Students to New Jobs

Kifah al-Shabeeb is a man of many parts. In his homeland of Iraq, he managed construction projects. After he and his wife, Khitam, arrived in Lincoln as refugees, they both honed their English skills, took part in Lincoln Literacy classes, and went on to earn Computer-Aided Design degrees at Southeast Community College.

Next, he went through the six-week Manufacturing Certificate program led by the Lincoln Manufacturing Council and the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development, with help from Lincoln Literacy.

Now, Kifah is happily employed as a test technician at Agility Fuel Systems, a global company with growing facilities in Lincoln. He puts his computer skills to use in testing fuel cylinders before shipping. *Cont'd p. 3*

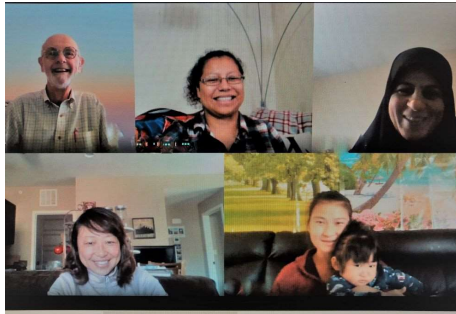


Before shutdown, tutor Kevin Coughlin helps Lincoln Industries workers.

**Looking to enrich your life and help another? Try the most satisfying volunteer gig in town!**

Lincoln Literacy depends on volunteer tutors to get the job done. We offer training and support to the volunteers who teach our students. Both tutors and learners report satisfaction levels above 95%. For more info, click "Get Involved" on our website, [www.lincolnliteracy.org](http://www.lincolnliteracy.org).

♦ **Stepping Up, Cont'd from p. 1** Of course, Dr. Mike is not the only one doing great work as a volunteer. Among the many who've stepped up during this crisis, space allows us to mention only a few. Jeanne Baer pioneered our first online class on March 19th. We "broadcast" it from "Studio Lincoln Literacy." Jeanne's been conducting her weekly conversation group from home ever since. Chet Kinkaid had been tutoring beginning English learners at Culler Middle School. After the shutdown, Chet started working individually with each of them through WhatsApp. She's since created a brilliant online file of tutor resources. Earlier this year, Kim Claybaugh suffered terrible injuries in a traffic accident. While still recovering, he resumed tutoring. Chris Stone and Patty Herrman teamed up to create online English pronunciation classes, plus reading and writing classes. Seniors are supposedly technophobes, but Jim Potter, now a great-grandfather, showed great determination in mastering our unfamiliar online platform. Each Monday morning, he joins a small community of women from around the globe to share laughs, stories, and insights into coping with the pandemic raging in Lincoln, while strengthening their English language skills. Along with these few, we thank **all** our wonderful volunteer tutors!



Jim Potter, upper left, leads a weekly online class.

## Refugee Family Flourishes in Lincoln

Like many of Lincoln Literacy's students, Rang Lawn and Cing Kang are refugees. They grew up in Burma (officially Myanmar), but like thousands of other members of ethnic minorities they were forced to flee for their lives. They sought shelter for a time in Malaysia, but remained unsafe and were so destitute that they couldn't even afford a bicycle.

Luckily, they were admitted as refugees and resettled in Lincoln in 2015. With help from Lincoln Literacy, the whole family has flourished. And lucky for TMCO, Rang Lawn has proven to be an excellent worker at the manufacturing company. Working in fabrication, he's mastered a variety of high-tech tools. The company, which exports metal products worldwide, has promoted him to team leader. Rang's hard work, loyalty, and skill were key to his advancement, but he couldn't have done it without the English classes Lincoln Literacy offers -- including weekly classes at the TMCO plant itself.

Meanwhile, his wife and three children have also been learning through LL family literacy classes. Cing is studying for U.S. citizenship and looking forward to a bright future. "I want to help my children," she says, "The next generation can get a good education, a good job, and a better life." The American dream: it never gets old.



Future star? Cing Kang, Khaulpi, and Rang Lawn all learn with Lincoln Literacy.

"Rang progressed immensely. Now he is the first shift's team leader. Management trusts him. He would not be able reach that position without improving his English skills."

— Ed Rhoades, TMCO fab manager



Even through a mask, the delight on a child's face shines through.

## FLAIR: Relieving the Gloom with a Gift of Books

Our fall Harvest of Books has never meant more — and it's all thanks to you, our supporters, and the good people at United Way. For over a decade, the FLAIR program (it stands for Family Literacy Activities for Immigrants and Refugees) has helped kids from around the world gain a love of reading and all the books they could want. But this year poses special challenges. FLAIR continues online, but many of the families we serve can't afford children's books. So, on a bitter cold Saturday morning, we stuffed gift bags into our trunks and departed the Lincoln Literacy parking lot on a caravan of kindness. Driving from one house to the next, we (safely) delivered these bundles of literacy. The children, trapped at home by the pandemic, were overjoyed to get books.

**Help Us Build Our  
Fund for the Future:  
Leave a Legacy  
for Literacy!**

You can make a bequest, designate a life insurance policy or a portion of your estate, or look into a charitable annuity to help LL into the future. Contact us for details.

You can also support our present-day work by making a tax-deductible donation online at: [lincolnliteracy.org](http://lincolnliteracy.org)



## ♦ New Jobs, Cont'd from p. 1

Agility is glad to have him. "Kifah is a great team member," says Operations Director Kirk Hazen, "He has raised the level of performance in the testing group and is contributing at a high level." Kifah kindly credits LL. "The classes I took helped in my career," Kifah says. "Lincoln Literacy is the main reason that I got the job at Agility." What he doesn't mention is that he and his wife, Khitam, give back by volunteering as math tutors in our GED prep classes on Tuesday evenings.

Khitam, pictured at right with Kifah, is also pursuing a career through Lincoln Literacy. She'd love to be a math teacher. For now, she hopes to get a job as a paraeducator. To prepare, she took



Kifah al-Shabeeb at work. Photo courtesy of Lincoln Manufacturers Council

our new online para-prep class. Coordinator Shari McCright, herself a retired public school teacher, says, "Her voice was always energetic and positive. She has many talents to share with others. She has many experiences with children, including volunteering to help elementary school students with math skills. She will make an amazing addition to any school community!" Never one to stop learning, Khitam also takes an online reading class with tutor Patty Herman.

The couple arrived in Lincoln in 2013. They appreciate the quiet community and kind people they've found here, but they sorely miss their five children and eight grandchildren. All but one daughter remain in Iraq. Still, the couple hope that as they advance their skills, the opportunity to reunite will come about.



## Crossing the Bridgeway to a Better Life

Like many other refugees from Myanmar, Vung Cing arrived in Lincoln with hopes of a better life. Her home country, also known as Burma, has been torn by conflict among various minority ethnic groups since 1962, when the military seized power in a coup. And, like many other refugees, Vung and her husband, Cin Kam, turned to Lincoln Literacy for help in learning English.

In June 2018, she began studying with us in hopes of developing her speaking skills, and soon added several other classes to hone her reading, writing, and general knowledge. "I gained confidence to speak out," she recalls. "I overcame my fear of speaking English."

That led her to take the next big step. This summer, in the midst of the pandemic, she enrolled in Dr. Rich Toracco's new job prep class. Toracco, who made a career as a UNL professor specializing in workforce development, now devotes his expertise to helping Lincoln Literacy's students advance their careers. That summer course enabled Vung to land a job as a supermarket cashier.

But Vung wasn't done. She recently got hired at higher wages as a machine operator at Schneider Electric, an international corporation with a manufacturing facility here in Lincoln. Renee Cox, who heads adult skills development at Lincoln Literacy, said, "Vung Cing is an incredibly motivated and self directed individual. She has specific goals and works hard every day to reach them. It is a pleasure to know her



Vung Cing has a way of turning dreams into reality as a student and friend." Vung may not be done yet. She yearns to one day open her own beauty salon. Just watch her go.



Proud mom, with her daughter at left. Way to go, Ingris!

## Double Your Score, Double Your Wage

Ingris Gonzales (at left with her daughter) had a low-paying job. She knew that learning English was key to moving ahead. When the pandemic hit she was one of the first to make the jump to online classes. Studying in our dual-language classes for Spanish speakers, she raced ahead, rising two levels in a year. That gave her the courage to seek new employment, and she found it. She now works for Nature's Variety — at virtually twice her previous wages.

"I was very nervous, especially about interviewing and completing the job application," she says, "Thanks to Lincoln Literacy, I gained the English skills I needed to interview on my own and land a great new job."



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**Our mission: to strengthen  
our community by teaching  
the English language and a  
variety of literacy skills to  
people of all cultures.**



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This Newsletter are **True,**  
And Were Enabled by **You!****

Proud to be  
affiliated with:



## Refugee Dreams of a Return to Nursing via English

A little more than two years ago, Larysa Hlyniuk arrived in Lincoln, with her husband, a one-year-old daughter, and two sons. The family are refugees from Ukraine, where violent upheavals have made life perilous at best. From the moment they arrived at the airport, Lincoln's vibrant Russian-Ukrainian community embraced them. Larysa knew no English but was determined to flourish in her new hometown. She loved being involved with fellow Ukrainians, but Larysa also wanted to be part of the larger community around her. While her husband, Leonid, began work as a truck driver, she enrolled in a family literacy class at her sons' school. The LPS-run class was taught by Lincoln Literacy's Elena Toftul, herself a refugee from Ukraine many years ago.

Back in her home country, Larysa was a highly qualified nurse. Now residing in a state that faces a dire nursing shortage, she dreams of rejoining her beloved profession.

"One day," she says, "I will be a nurse again." She's counting on Lincoln Literacy's CNA prep program to start her on that journey. That, however, is her long-term goal. For now, Larysa is concentrating on her English through Lincoln Literacy's online classes. In just one year as an English language student, she raced from level 0 to level 4 on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST). This is a huge success, considering that the online classes she attends are the only exposure she gets



these days to the English language.

"I want to be confident with my English, before I make any professional moves" Larysa explains. "One step at a time!"

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