

# LINCOLN LITERACY WORD ON THE STREET

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Summer 2019

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## An Indelible Mark of Progress Learning to Read and Write in English Wins Refugee Mother a Mayor's Award

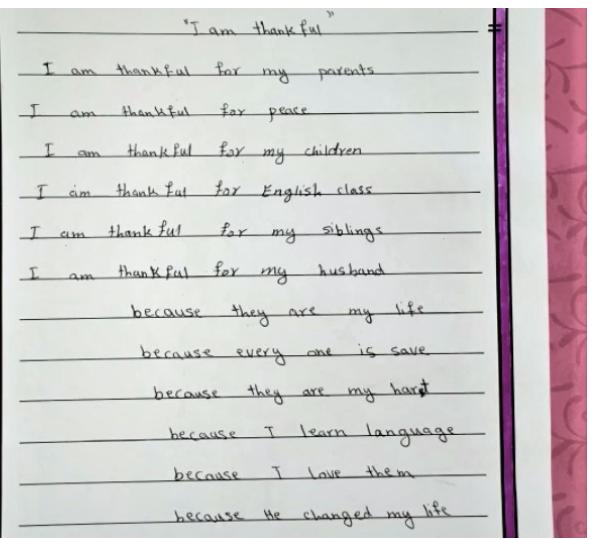
As anyone who's read Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai's memoir knows, in Afghanistan learning to read can be a woman's death warrant. For the fortunate few who fled the Taliban and found refuge in America, that's no longer true. Many are eager to learn and grateful for help in doing so — but it doesn't mean it comes easy.

"It's so much harder to learn to read in a language that's not your own if you've never been literate in your native tongue," said Clayton Naff, Lincoln Literacy's Executive Director. "We've seen that whenever we have refugees from a country that systematically shuts women out of education."

Against this backdrop, Sakeena Nazari's achievements shine. The 29-year-old mother of three fled Afghanistan with her husband, Juma. Accepted as refugees by the U.S., they were resettled in California in late 2016, but the family soon moved to Lincoln. In the fall of 2017, Sakeena started taking classes at Lincoln Literacy. Wanting to progress as fast as possible, last fall she enrolled in our five-day-a-week family literacy collaboration with LPS at Belmont Elementary. By the end of the year, she had been selected as winner of the 2019 Mayor's Award for Language and Literacy Achievement. In accepting, she read a thank-you note written in her own hand. (See *Indelible*, p. 3)



Sakeena Nazari, with son, thanks her teachers.



City Council Member Tammy Ward, standing in for the mayor, read from the poem at right, composed by Sakeena Nazari.

**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).

## Our CNA Students Complete College Class and Gain Certification A Second Group of International CNA Students Is Right on Their Heels

Late last year, in collaboration with Bryan College of Health Sciences, and with funding from the Community Health Endowment, we launched a bold experiment: to see if our volunteer tutors could help refugees and immigrants get through a challenging class at the college and become certified nursing assistants. In our grant application we wrote that we aimed to get half of the first group through the program. After all, this was a big step up for us as well as for the students. But to our delight, all six of the first CNA students made it through the class and got certified.

It wasn't easy. Throughout the spring term, our tutors, who are listed in the awards below, met with the students outside of class to help them understand not only obscure anatomical vocabulary but tricky English expressions like "out of bounds."

The newly minted CNAs are: Shatha Al-Tameemi (in photo, facing out), Ahlam Bakr, Tsedey Gizaw, Jaafar Hamad, Hewa Leland (in photo, facing left), and Saad Murad. (Photo courtesy of Bryan Heath.)

Meanwhile, from 25 applicants we selected eight students for a second CNA prep class. They come from Liberia, Mexico, Moldova, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Vietnam. That group of students have finished their LL prep class and will enroll at the College this fall.



Bryan College instructors congratulate two of the six first graduates of our CNA prep class.

## Meet the 2019 Award Winners

### Volunteer Tutor Awards

*Judy Ellingson Award:* Suzy Schulz

*Honorable Mention:* Kelly Ross

*Lois Poppe Award:* Sandra Johnson

*Tutoring Team of the Year (2):*

*CNA Tutors:* Mike Eppel, Mary Lutz, Cindy Sandene, Sarah Rogalla,

Kathy Gogela, & Pat Spitzer

*Belmont Tutors:* Renee Cox,

Ali Christensen, Sarah Cohen,

Jia Lu, & Patty Herrman

*Tutor of the Year:* Jeanne Baer

*Honorable Mention:* J.S. Engebretson

### Learner Awards

*Student Leadership:* Sumiyo Iwanaga

*Learner of the Year:* Salwa Adee

*Honorable Mention:* Hala Taha

### Little Learner of the Year:

Hassan Abdulaali

*Mayor's Award for Language & Literacy Achievement:* Sakeena Nazari

### Support & Service Awards



*Champions of Literacy:*  
Fred & Jenny Schelert  
(Fred at right;  
Jenny not shown)

### Distinguished Service Awards

*Board Service:* Kelly Neill & Mike Eppel

*Staff Service:* Victoria Welles

*Certificate of Appreciation:*

Charles Haacker, Photographer



Student Leadership Award Winner Sumiyo Iwanaga

**Help Us Build Our Fund for the Future:  
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You can make a bequest, designate a portion of your estate or a life insurance policy, 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)

## ◆ Indelible

Continued from Page 1

Sakeena may have escaped Afghanistan and its strictures, but she hasn't left all her concerns behind. Her parents and brothers and sisters remain in the troubled nation. "I worry about them every day," she told her teachers. Phone service is sporadic, so she sometimes has to wait days to hear from them. The Taliban is preventing her sisters from attending school, she said. She knows that under the current administration's restrictive policies toward refugee admission, especially from Muslim majority countries, their chances of joining her here in the U.S. are poor.

Nevertheless, according to the Belmont family literacy program instructors, Sakeena brought joy and hope to the classroom every day. "She comes in with a smile and an enthusiasm for learning English," said teachers Patty Hermann and Jia Lu. That showed in her performance: Sakeena went from a Level 4 at enrollment to Level 7 by May.

"She wants to learn about English, about people and about the new culture she finds herself in," adds Renee Cox, Lincoln Literacy's Adult Empowerment Programs Manager, who oversees the Belmont program. "She has dreams of becoming a nurse or a teacher." Sakeena hopes to enroll at SCC soon.



Parents in our Belmont program learn to use apps so they can study anytime.

**Lincoln Literacy's** work at Belmont represents a special outgrowth of our services. The family literacy program there is organized and funded by Lincoln Public Schools, but all the adult instruction — two hours a day, four days a week — is provided by us. To carry this out, we bring in graduate interns from UNL, as well as LL's volunteer tutors and staff.

## Jeanne Baer, Tutor (and Printer) of the Year

Lincoln Literacy's tutors have brought many different teaching styles into the classroom, but what Jeanne Baer does ripples far beyond her weekly conversation group. The Tutor of the Year produces a beautiful weekly newsletter that helps her students become aware of all the goings-on in Lincoln. One of her students remarked that Jeanne's newsletter "always prepares us for Lincoln's weekend events," adding, "That is so fun, all students like it. I want to say thank you!" But more than that, it's her personal touch that makes her students so appreciate this tutor. Dan Holmberg, the 2017 Tutor of the Year, said, "Her newsletter is great. I use it a lot."

In nominating her, one of her students wrote, "Jeanne teaches with love. She is patient, clear and emphatic." Jeanne has also taken on an individual student in a one-to-one match, has helped in our in-service training, and has frequently subbed for other tutors when they were away.

The colorful newsletter doesn't just print itself. Along with her lesson planning and teaching time, Baer puts in at least 15 hours a week of volunteer time. But it's a labor of love. After receiving the award, she said she's grateful for "a wonderful group of friends from all over the world." (Baer's weekly newsletter is available to all tutors on Canvas.)



Jeanne Baer, at right, holds her certificate alongside LL's Executive Director Clayton Naff.



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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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## We Check Into a Landmark Hotel to Help Staff Learn

In our continuing efforts to add value to our services and take them wherever they are needed, we have begun providing English classes to employees at the Marriott Cornhusker Hotel. Even though the classes start at 8 a.m., an hour before their shift, they have proven popular with the staff. Hotel management have been highly supportive. Three of our wonderful volunteer tutors, including Summayia Khan, pictured at the front of the classroom below, meet with the refugee and immigrant staff on Tuesdays and Fridays. The other tutors are Carter Moran and Meena Vasudevan. We're grateful to them, and to the Cornhusker Hotel for supporting our efforts to improve the lives and performance of their workers.



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