

## ELC Pencil Drive



The pencil. He's a humble little guy. Unpresuming and simple. But his true colors emerge in each student's hands.

He becomes powerful...as the student picks him up to write her name for the first time in her entire life. He's crucial...as he and the student churn through multiplication problems. He's noble...as the student drafts up his first résumé, dreaming of his new job.

What would we do without the unassuming pencil?

Every year, our students share about 300 pencils — and we need to make sure there's enough inspiration to go around...so we're counting on you!

**What?** ELC Pencil Drive!

**The goal?** 300 pencils — with good erasers — preferably pre-sharpened (to avoid wear on our sharpeners and staff).

**When?** Before May 1st

If you can pitch in a few pencils — or a few dozen — just drop them off at the school office. We will treasure them...a lot!

**Make your donation today!**

*The English Learning Center is a program of Our Saviour's Outreach Ministries*



**The English Learning Center**  
2315 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Phone: 612.874.9963

Fax: 612.871.0017

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Coming Soon:  
A New Website Design  
[www.osom-mn.org](http://www.osom-mn.org)

## Our Mission

**Educationally empowering immigrants and refugees toward self-determination.**

Every gift you give — whether in-kind, monetary, or your time — makes getting an education possible.

Your partnership provides...

- Classes in English, computers, math and citizenship exam preparation
- Transportation service for students
- Referral and advocacy services for students
- Training for volunteer instructors

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Minneapolis, MN  
Permit No. 31801



## Student Profile



Letters represent sounds — and we put them together to form words, sentences, road signs, prescription labels, your daughter's report card, The Constitution, or even To Kill a Mockingbird. If you are reading this article, you take that fact for granted. But it is not obvious to everyone.

Studies report it takes about 12 years for someone who is unable to read or write in their native language to become fully literate in another.

One student, Ege, is three years into that journey and he has just overcome one of its most important challenges. Just a year ago, if Ege was asked what sound a letter makes, he would simply repeat the name of that letter. "Yes," you

might say, "that is the name of the letter, but what sound does it make?"

Again he would name the letter in question, certain his answer was correct.

But at some point in the last year, that changed; at some point Ege realized that letters represent sounds. To a 76-year-old man who has never learned to read or write — not even his native tongue — this is truly an accomplishment. And to the staff and teachers who have worked with him over the past three years, it borders on astonishing.

This is not to say that reading is suddenly an easy process for Ege. But these days he's demonstrating early reading skills — following each letter with his finger and carefully forming the individual sounds that make up word after word. For his teachers and staff,



*Ege, English Student*

it is like watching a student who, just a year ago could not even hold a guitar, suddenly take one up, look at a sheet of music, and start to pick out the notes of a song.

It's still a mystery what finally made the pieces of understanding fall into place for Ege. But what is certain is that three years of determination are starting to pay off.

## Inside This Issue:

2  
Letter from the  
Executive Director



3  
Volunteer Highlights  
& Opportunities



4  
Pencil Drive

## Countries of Origin of ELC Students:

Argentina	Ethiopia	Morocco	Sudan
Benin	Ghana	Nepal	Tibet
Cameroon	Guatemala	Nigeria	Togo
Congo	Honduras	Oromia	Ukraine
Ecuador	Iraq	Saudi Arabia	Viet Nam
Egypt	Liberia	Sierra Leone	
El Salvador	Mexico	Somalia	

## STAFF LIST

**Sandy Aslaksen**  
Executive Director  
612.871.5900 x1  
sandy@osom-mn.org

**Nicole Pettitt**  
Development Director  
612.871.5900 x3  
nicole@osom-mn.org

**Marny Fyfe**  
Program Director  
612.874.9963 x4  
marny@englishlc.org

**Claudia Holt**  
Volunteer Coordinator  
612.874.9963 x2  
claudia@englishlc.org

**Mohamed Assalle**  
Van Driver/  
Educational Assistant

**Seyou Nurie**  
Student Records Coordinator

**Sarah Shankle**  
Program Assistant and  
Citizenship Coordinator

**Alia Scanlon**  
Computer Lab Tutor and  
Student Support Assistant

## Letter from the Executive Director

### Dear Friends,

These are difficult days. All around us we hear references to the struggling economy. Companies close and jobs are lost. Savings are spent, and funds are harder to find. Every part of our community feels the effects; urban or suburban, newcomers or long-timers. No one is immune.

But in the midst of these times, I am inspired to continue walking forwards in courage as I witness the determination of the people at the English Learning Center.

Our cover tells the story of Ege, a 76-year-old man who never learned to read or write in his native language. He's beginning to read in English. Studies say it should take him 12 years. Ege has persevered in his studies with us for three years, and is making great strides.

On page three, read of the determination of our math tutors — some of whom have been teaching with us for over 15 years. Every week, they dedicate an hour to our students — many of whom have never been to school and are learning to add and subtract for the first time in their lives.

It sounds so strange to us. Yet, it's true. Many people face our current crisis with

far fewer resources than you and I have — but with the determination to make it through, stronger and better. We have so much to learn from one another.

It is said that much is expected from those who are given much. Even in these difficult times, as we look around the English Learning Center, we see clearly: if we were born in the United States, we have been given much.

I want to issue a call today. Are you inspired by Ege's determination? Are you amazed at our math tutors' perseverance? Then come and be part of this movement. Choose to serve. You will make a change, and it will change you.

Our staff and current volunteers welcome you — no matter where you are in your journey — uncertain, scared of the language barrier, wondering what you could possibly offer...or maybe absolutely confident you have what it takes to make a difference.

Our students have never needed you more. Maybe you'll find that you've never needed them more, too.

Warmly,



Sandy Aslaksen  
Executive Director

## Student Writing

### Editor's note:

Following are some English writing samples. Where you see errors, please note we have kept the spelling and grammar in the notes exactly as our students wrote them. You are reading the authentic writing of adults who are

learning to read and write in English.

Dear my Teacher,  
Now we are the end of the school, we go our vacatin so that I lake to writ to you this letter to thanke you for the time you splendid to learn us sitisenshp. And I want to congratulate for Christmas.  
– **Citizenship student**

Thank you so much for the time you spent with our class. Really, we enjoyed to learned us more about math.  
Thanks.  
– **Math 6 student**

Thanks you my teacher math 100% percent I happy teacher everytime.  
– **Math 3 student**

## Volunteer Highlights



ELC Math Teacher and Student

Despite our name, English isn't the only subject taught at the English Learning Center. \_\_\_\_ of our students are also enrolled in math classes. While most other learning centers require a basic level of English before entering and advancing in math classes, we take a different approach at the English Learning Center.

Our unique program allows students to work at their own pace on basic math skills, regardless of their English level. Students work independently through workbooks created by our staff on concepts as simple as counting, or as advanced as geometry. Even though the students hold the reins of their learning, the ELC employs a special group of volunteers to guide their practice.

When prospective volunteers call to inquire about opportunities at the ELC, and they hear about the math program, a typical response emerges: I'm not really a math person. Many are surprised to learn that if you can count to 100, you can be a math tutor at the ELC.

Why? Because many of our students have never attended school in their home countries — just learning to count in English is a big step. The most important skills for teaching math are patience and a sense of humor.

And it doesn't matter what your background is. Our math volunteers come from all walks of life, from English majors to engineers. They spend just one hour each week helping students through their math questions and struggles...things like practicing counting money, carrying digits when multiplying large numbers, or just learning the words "subtract" and "add".

There is no lesson planning involved, no activities to create — just a willingness to be flexible and respond to the questions their students are posing that night. And each night, at least one math teacher returns to the teacher room with a story about class that's both heart-warming and hilarious.

The volunteers who have been with the ELC the longest are nearly all math teachers. They say it's fun, flexible, and the impact they can make in just one hour can be seen almost immediately.

So, dear reader, can you count to 100? Then a classroom of new immigrants is waiting for you to help them do that, too! Call Claudia, our Volunteer Coordinator, today at 612.874.9963, to sign up.

## Volunteer Opportunities

**"No experience necessary!"**

Looking for a way to get involved?

The English Learning Center is always looking for committed volunteers to teach English, math, citizenship and computer classes. The following are ways you can get involved:

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Volunteers**  
M,T,W,Th  
Volunteer hours: 5:45 – 8:45pm;  
Class hours: 6:45 – 8:30pm

Lead a class of 10–15 adult immigrants and refugees in learning English. Books with lesson plans, materials (visuals, tapes, realia, etc.), and additional resources provided by the ELC and by staff members.

**Math Volunteers**  
M,T,W,Th  
Volunteer hours: 5:15 – 6:45pm;  
Class hours: 5:30 – 6:30pm  
Assist a group of 5–15 adult immigrants and refugees in Math.

You needn't be a "math person" to volunteer in a math classroom!

Students work through math workbooks at their own pace. Volunteers rotate around the classroom, assisting students one-on-one or in very small groups to explain new concepts and guide students through practice exercises.

**Computer Volunteers**  
M,T,W,Th  
Volunteer hours: 4:30 – 6:30pm  
Assist computer students one-on-one during open lab time.

Volunteers assist students individually with computer skills and procedures. Volunteers may also have the opportunity to develop classroom projects.

The ELC is a great volunteer opportunity for people interested in education or connecting with the immigrant and refugee populations in Minneapolis.

For more details please contact:  
Claudia Holt, Volunteer Coordinator  
Email: claudia@englishlc.org  
Phone: 612.874.9963 ext. 2.