

# ADULT EDUCATION

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018 • ISSUE 4



### Former ESL Student and Westlake Scholarship Recipient Nears the End of Associate's Degree in Applied Science

**Fabiola Navarro** began taking ESL classes at Triton College in the summer of 2012, six months after arriving in the U.S. from Mexico. The first class that Fabiola took was ESL-E44, ESL Level 1. This spring, Fabiola will take her last class, OPH-251, Ophthalmic Procedures III, on track to graduate from Triton College with an Associate's degree in Applied Science (Ophthalmic Technician).

Fabiola has overcome many barriers along this journey, but the biggest challenge was the language, she says. "I had to take many pre-requisite courses for the Ophthalmic Technician program, and I studied very hard, but I never spoke in class. My biggest fear was speaking English."

Eventually, Fabiola resolved to overcome this fear, saying that she realized she would never accomplish her goals if she didn't start to speak. "I realized that if I don't talk, I can't do anything. I forced myself to speak. Today I speak a lot with my classmates and feel more comfortable because I have been with them for two years," Fabiola says.

Still, Fabiola's experience speaking English has not always been easy. "One time during one of my clinicals a patient was rude to me and complained about my English and made me cry. I felt so bad. But then I realized that I had helped many patients who understood me perfectly, and I thought: 'It must be this person's problem, not mine.' I still make mistakes because English isn't my first language, but that doesn't mean it has to be a big deal," Fabiola says.

Today, Fabiola is confident as ever, ready to start working as an Ophthalmic Technician. After she graduates in May, she will take a test to receive her JCAHPO (Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology) certification.

Fabiola's successful journey from ESL Level 1 to an Associate's degree in Applied Science is best summed up in her own words: "We have to work really hard for what we want. Nothing in this life is easy."

# Student Spotlight



## Michael Torres is Goal Bound

For as long as he can remember, **Michael Torres** has wanted to be a police officer. But that dream became less and less of a reality as Michael got older. At fourteen, he had to leave High School due to family problems and was never able to return to school.

Michael's early hardships followed him into his adult life. He had a difficult time finding work with no High School diploma. "It was very difficult to find a job. I got a lot of offers, but they asked me for my High School diploma, and I had to tell them I didn't have it," Michael says. Nevertheless, Michael was determined to find work, and he was eventually hired at Dynamic Manufacturing Inc. in Melrose Park, where he has worked full-time for the past two years.

Knowing that he needed a High School diploma to become a police officer, Michael enrolled in GED courses at Triton College in spring 2018. On March 20th, just a few months after starting classes, Michael passed the GED exam, the first step toward accomplishing his lifelong goal of becoming a police officer. But this is just the beginning for Michael. "I'm going to put this diploma on my wall to motivate me for my next degree," Michael says.

That "next degree" is an Associate's in Criminal Justice Administration at Triton College. Michael plans to apply for the Board of Trustees' Scholarship and begin the program in fall 2018.

Not everyone with a past like Michael's shares his grit and determination, and his story is an exception that proves a rule: No matter where you start out in life, it's never too late to chase your dream.

# Student Voices

## The bittersweet "American dream"

**Kenia Rodriguez, Advanced ESL Student**

The "American dream" is such a well-known concept – spread by the thousands of the immigrants that came here from all around the world. America was originally the land that provided a new chance, a new opportunity for those who wanted to find something their own country failed to give. Is this still the case? Is the "American dream" still existing?

I strongly believe that even though there is a YES in many aspects, it is not an absolute YES. Living in the US is a bittersweet experience. The sweet side is usually the money aspect. You have more financial capacity; you earn more for the job you do, especially in the offices that usually in my country are not so well remunerated. Consequently, you are able to dress better, eat fancier, and own things more easily. The quality of life is superior based on the material perspective. The services are better and so are the parks and government institutions. The social diversity is a huge opportunity to learn from other countries without traveling, but also traveling the world is more affordable because usually the dollar is a stronger currency.

The bitter aspect is that you, as an immigrant, live in a country with a broken soul – among the people that come here for the money, but try to stay loyal to their language and culture, and those who end up building their own little communities, hanging out mostly with others like them. These people are always missing their home and the land where they grew up. Then there is the other type of immigrant – those want to become a "true American", which often includes the wannabees that forgot their mother tongue and even become racist even to their own kind. Another kind are those who usually are the third or fourth generation living here and they have already lost every connection to their ancestral history, and therefore, see this country as "THE" country, instead of understanding that is just "a" country.

The US is the ultimate illusion, it is the best-seller lie, and it is a well-designed machine that produces, produces, produces, but never creates. The American culture is a mix of other cultures that stick together, but never blend completely. America is many countries in one and that means it has two sides: the poetic richness of the diversity, and the lack of togetherness that comes with the identity. America is just a beautiful-heartless-metal-house, but never a home for me.



## The American Dream

**Malgorzata Luczak, Advanced ESL Student**

Everybody I have known always have had some feelings about the idea of America –whether it be from movies, music, news – and it was this common imagination of better life which people have living there. But is this true that life here is easier and more comfortable? Of course I asked sometimes this question myself while living in my native country. Maybe I thought about America a little more because it is still present in contemporary media more often than other countries of the world, but at the same time it seemed more unavailable, because it is far, far away and traveling there seemed almost impossible.

But life sometimes make jokes and I found myself in the US. One year ago, after a long and complicated story, my husband and I decided to make a move to America. I started new life and started to discover my own “America.” I was surprised and disappointed equally.

My first impression was maybe a little bit more about me and not about America; it was that I don’t speak English. I was sure for years that I am communicative in English. Here, it appears that people speak completely different English than I have ever encountered during my experience in Europe. I can’t communicate with them. My first contact with American-English happened in Arizona, and maybe people there have some strong south-western accent. I don’t know.

America appeared to me as a country full of contrasts. During my travels here I have seen places so ugly, which I have never supposed existed – especially since the U.S. is deemed to be one the richest countries in the world. I saw people who were so poor and without any hopes. But I also saw from my car’s window some of the most spectacular national parks, deserts, strange and scary landscapes, which run for thousands of kilometers; images like these found on the surface of a moon.

I don’t know yet what “the American Dream” is for me – how does earning money here, finding a good job and being on at least middle-class level compare to where I am coming from. I am still in this process and I am always learning something new about that, mostly how complicated it is. There are a lot of offers, but also hundreds of interested people. I have still great hopes, but maybe now a little bit more realistic than before moving here.

I think America could be like be a “dream” and it could fulfill hopes of many people. Probably it is more possible for young, really talented and determined people, rather than for usual, grey men. My biggest hope is related to my daughter right now, because she starts her life here too and her process of assimilation is easier. She will have almost an equal start along with young people who were born here. Her life here could be participating in the real American Dream.

## My First Thanksgiving

**Yetzybeth Piedrahita, ESL Level 4 Student**

My dad and I arrived in New York last year at the beginning of the fall. We stayed there with my Uncle Fernando and his wife Gloria. They welcomed us into their home and treated me as their own daughter. My dad was very excited because he had not seen his brother for fifteen years. It was a lovely family reunion.

I was looking forward with excitement to celebrate my first Thanksgiving. The holiday is not a tradition celebrated in Venezuela, the country I am originally from. My Aunt Gloria had the amazing idea of hosting the dinner at the house. We invited all of our relatives and friends, each family was going to bring a dish to share.

My aunt and I looked up online some recipes to cook a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. She roasted the turkey and prepared the gravy from the leftover juices. I made the mashed potatoes and glazed carrots. We decorated the living and dining rooms with the warm colors of the season. My aunt hung little twinkling lights on the walls. The house looked beautiful, and we were ready to begin our celebrations.

Each family brought different kind of dishes, such as squash, broccoli and potato soups, chicken parmesan lasagna, Caesar salad, and roasted potatoes. My uncle bought pumpkin and sweet potato pies from his favorite bakery. My aunt’s best friend brought a delicious homemade apple pie.

When we were all seated, my uncle said a prayer to bless our dinner. After that, each one of us said what we were thankful for. I said I was thankful for the opportunity of being in this country, and also for being able to meet all of my relatives that live here who I had never met before. We had so much food that I didn’t know where to begin. Everything was delicious. By the end of the meal, my Uncle put music on and everybody started dancing.

I learned a lot about this meaningful tradition that is Thanksgiving. We spent a beautiful evening surrounded by friends and family, giving thanks for every blessing in our lives. It was truly a one of a kind experience. I’m looking forward to celebrating it this year with my other side of the family in Chicago.



*“The many faces of Triton College” by Sylvia Garcia Breton, ESL Level 5  
You can follow her art on Instagram at redmonth55 or on Twitter at @SylviaGarBre*

## **Student Voices continued.**

### **Should Every Child on the Team Receive a Trophy?**

**Diana Narvaez, GED Language Arts Student**

What you sow, that you will reap. There has been some debate recently about whether children will benefit if everyone on the team receives a trophy. I have to disagree with this dilemma of handing every child a trophy for a number of reasons. I believe children will grow up to feel entitled. Not receiving a trophy also teaches them a hard work ethic. Last, they grow up to be a functional part of society as adults.

If we let everyone get a trophy, children will grow up to feel entitled. As they grow, they will think everything is supposed to be automatically handed to them. They will think the adult world is going to be easy. There is also the fact that it is not fair to the children who did earn it. We need to teach our children it is not okay to think they are entitled to a trophy also.

I believe not receiving a trophy will teach them a hard work ethic. If they are handed everything, they will never learn how to earn things. Hard work gives them a sense of accomplishment that will encourage them to grow self-confidence. It teaches them discipline and dedication. A hard work ethic will go a long way in their future.

Our ultimate goal would be for them to grow up to be a functional part of society as adults. Honesty, is one of the traits they will or should hopefully, learn. Responsibility is also something that will come easy to them. They should learn patience along the way. These are good characteristics to have as an adult.

There is no doubt in my mind that children do not benefit if everyone on the team receives a trophy. I believe the overall outcome is greater than just giving in. Being entitled is not what we would want, so we need to teach them that hard work is an important part to making them a functional adult. Now that you have this information, I hope you choose wisely and think before giving every child on the team a trophy.

### **“My Happy Place” Descriptive Paragraphs by GED® Language Arts Students**

My happy place is Italy's Ocean this is the place where I visit whenever I'm stressed. In that place I can smell the Ocean. The water is clean and soft. The waves are creeping steadily towards me. The cool breeze caresses my hair. The children are squeaking on the beach. It's so wonderful to fall a sleep listening to the birds singing.

– **Amina Niyaki**

The music blasts in high volume. The wind blows through my hair. What is my happy place? Taking a late night ride to Downtown, right off of Lake Shore Drive, the drop off. You can hear the waves come to life. You can feel the lake breeze flow through your body. The water, as cold as ice, makes your body get the chills. There are many stars out it fills the night sky. A full moon right above the shore. This is my happy place, with the person i love. We vibe through the night, talking and listening with no judgements. All you can hear is the laughter.

– **Vanessa Granados**

I'm running eagerly to get in line. I'm next. I jump into the seat, buckle myself in, and I'm ready for take off. As the ferris wheel begins to go around, my happy place is Kiddieland and I'm like a kid in a candy store every time I go there. Even though I'm all grown up, I love being able to run around and jump from ride to ride. I have no worries about anything in life once I enter those amusement park gates. I'm looking at people standing in line purchasing popcorn from the food stands. I love going on the water rides and hearing the sound of the water going splash across my face. My next stop is the train. I'm riding and listening to the train go choo-choo and it goes off to an adventure around the amusement park. The bells on the train ringing ding, ding, ding, ding make me feel like I am going on a mini trip around the world. My final stop is playing the games. As I'm aiming the ball at bottles, I toss the ball and all the bottles come tumbling down. My smile is bright as the sun because I'm winning. What would I give to be able to live in my happy place forever!

– **Tanya Minor**

I love Christmas eve nights. I put on my pajamas and rush down the stairs to start a pot of hot cocoa. As I smell the scent of pine cones in the air. I Listen to soft Christmas music playing in the background. I also have cookies baking in the oven. I hear the crackling and popping coming from the fireplace. The lights in my window pane are blinking off and on in different colors of red, white, and green. Red bows come down the banister of my stairwell. I smell the scent of soul food cooking on the stove. As I'm wrapping gifts preparing for Christmas morning, the bitter cold frosts up the windows. I'm just enjoying the peace, relaxation, and scenery of my happy place.

– **Evette Crowder**

#### **CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Adult Education Newsletter welcomes writing submissions from all ESL and HSE students. Please email submissions to Mitchell Goins at [mitchellgoins@triton.edu](mailto:mitchellgoins@triton.edu).

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES SCHOLARSHIP**

All GED® and ESL graduates are encouraged to apply for the BOT scholarship which provides four free college courses. Applications are available in the AE office and are due by April 16, 2018.

**Mark your calendars for the Adult Education Commencement ceremony!  
Thursday, May 24 at 7 p.m., Robert M. Collins Center, Auditorium**