

Student Success Stories



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Claudia improves herself, inspires others

By Literacy Trainer Carla Adkins, adkinsc@lvccld.org, 702/507-3531
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"I wanted to improve my life, so I knew I needed to learn and improve my English," said Claudia Ocampo. She started classes at the CALL (Computer Assisted Literacy in Libraries) program and within six months credited CALL with helping her build the confidence she needed to improve the habit of speaking more English in public.

Strengthening her English language skills has opened many doors! She's been promoted to supervisor at Mariana's Supermarket. Working in an environment where the customers speak English and Spanish has given Claudia an opportunity to practice both languages. Claudia was very excited to have the opportunity to interpret for co-workers and customers.

Taking the weekly conversation workshops at Las Vegas Library also helped her practice all the things learned in class. Learning from music and singing Karaoke were other ways to practice.

She has been able to make new friends, read to her two daughters, and help them with homework. Claudia believes raising her girls to become fluent in English and Spanish is important to their life and culture.

Learning grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is great, but mastering English is not just about words, it's about how you use it to improve your life. Claudia's self-improvement has been an inspiration to herself and her family — and to her fellow classmates, as well.



GBC entrepreneur gains citizenship

By GBC ESL/Citizenship Instructor Hal Hibbert, harold.hibbert@gbcnv.edu, 775/753-2230



Paulina Hibdon was born in Sinaloa, Mexico. She met Zachery while he was doing exploration work for a Nevada-based mining company in that area. After 18 months in Mexico, Zachery returned to Elko with Paulina. They were married in 2007.

Paulina had come to the United States on a fiancé visa and received her permanent residency in 2009. She attended adult ESL classes through the Great Basin College program at Southside Elementary School for three years. She left the program in 2010, got a job at Little Caesars Pizza, and worked there for almost a year. She and Zachery had bought a house, so she quit her job to take care of the house and their daughter Elizabeth.

In 2011 Zachery was looking for a job in Australia, just for a change. Paulina still had her Mexican passport, and Elizabeth's passport had expired, so Zachery decided to stop looking for work overseas. This was when Paulina decided to become a U.S. citizen. She began the process in 2012 and received her citizenship in January 2013.

When Elizabeth started school, Paulina found herself with time on her hands, so she started her own business, Ledif Home Cleaning Services. She also decided to continue her education and started taking college classes at GBC. She completed five credits in math during the spring semester. She also finds time to volunteer one day a week in Elizabeth's class at Southside School.

NNLC graduates five GED® students

By NNLC GED/ABE Instructor Marianne Rasmussen, marianner@nnlc.org, 775/356-1007



Shown from left: John McFall, Madonna Lenden, Susie Cuddy, Kim Brown, and Roseanne Villalva

Five Northern Nevada Literacy Council (www.nnlc.org) students recently celebrated receipt of their GED® Certificates. Kudos to these hard workers, who proved that teamwork and persistence pay.

✦ Madonna Lenden was the first NNLC graduate to take the GED test online. She reports that studying for the test wasn't too difficult for her and passed on the first try! Madonna had previously completed four years of high school, but did not graduate because she didn't pass the math proficiency test. She decided then that she didn't need a diploma and got her CNA certification. A few

years later she decided that she would like to be a physical therapist's assistant, so she came back to school at NNLC to prepare for the GED exam. "It was fun. I really enjoyed myself and I miss coming to class," she said. Her advice to others: "Don't give up!"

- ✦ Getting a GED is "easier than you think it is, especially when you have a teacher to talk to," said Susie Cuddy, who passed the test after only one eight-week session. She had been a good student in high school, but dropped out when her mom died. After going through a period of depression, she woke up one day ready to take on her future. "It was like, 'Hello, world!'" she remembers. Susie enjoyed coming to class and working with NNLC's teachers and other students. She was a good student, diligent about studying and attendance, and now plans to study veterinary technology at Truckee Meadows Community College.
- ✦ Kim Brown quit high school for a steady job at JCPenney, but due to a recent corporate shake-up she was laid off — just four months shy of her 25th year of employment. For her first step in a new career, she headed to NNLC to get help with GED preparation. "I enjoyed being back in school, and I met some really good people. I couldn't have done it alone." she recalled. She was nervous about taking the test, especially the essay portion, but after many practice essays, she was ready. She passed the GED test and has started classes at the Horizons Computer Learning Center, where she is preparing for an office job.
- ✦ "This experience has been a huge mountain for me to climb," said John McFall. "It's been tough at times, but I've never been a quitter." That is obvious to anyone who has worked with John, or who hears his story. John started special education classes in the sixth grade because of dyslexia. He dropped out of high school in the tenth grade to do odd jobs, then worked for 30 years at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno. He passed all his GED subjects except math, but was told by a (non-NNLC) counselor, "You will never pass a math test." However, John was determined and with the help of Mike Cronmiller, NNLC's math teacher, he earned his GED Certificate! John's next step is to earn a forklift certification. "Don't give up," he advised, "If I can do it, anyone can!"
- ✦ Roseanne Villalva worked in the medical field in the past, but had been out of the workforce while she raised her children. "When I tried to get a job, I realized everybody wanted a GED," she said. She went through an eight-week session and passed all subjects except for math. She didn't stop there, however; she came back for more classroom instruction and one-on-one help. "If you don't quit, the faculty will help you, and you *will* pass," she said. Roseanne plans to pursue job training as an administrative assistant.



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