

ADULT EDUCATION

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NEWSLETTER



ESL Graduate Juanatano Ramirez Receives U.S. Citizenship

As big days go, Oct. 28, 2016 was one of the biggest days of Juanatano Ramirez's life. On this day Juanatano took the oath of allegiance and was sworn in as a citizen of the United States. His journey to citizenship required hard work, determination and perseverance—and persevere he did.

Juanatano's journey began in 1988, when he first arrived in the United States and got his first job in Fresno, California. Juanatano worked in California for 11 years, but moved to Illinois in 1996 due to a lack of work in California. "It was not easy for me to come from California to here," Juanatano says. "The biggest issue was English." Without it, Juanatano could not communicate with his coworkers or rise the ranks at his job. In 1998, Juanatano began taking ESL classes at Triton College, eventually graduating from the ESL Program in 2008.

After becoming proficient in English, Juanatano now had the skills that he needed to apply for U.S. citizenship, continue his education and get a better job. In the end, he did all three. In addition to being a new U.S. citizen, Juanatano now holds a CNC Machine Tool Technology Certificate and currently works for Crafts Technology in Elk Grove Village as a machine operator. "I'm proud of myself for passing all of the obstacles on my way and becoming a citizen," Juanatano says. "For me, someone who came from a poor village in Guatemala, it's amazing. I want to say 'thank you' to this country because it gave me the opportunity to have everything I have now."

Juanatano received his citizenship training here at Triton College. If you're interested in citizenship classes, please come to the AE Office for more information.



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE ADULT EDUCATION COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY!
Thursday, May 25 at 7 p.m., Robert Collins Center, Auditorium**

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Eduardo Echeverria

Beyond ESL: An Interview with Eduardo Echeverria, ESL Graduate and Board of Trustees Scholarship Recipient 2015

How did the ESL courses that you took here at Triton prepare you for college classes?

I believe the classes I took were perfect to improve my English. It gave me courage to confront barriers that I have never thought to overcome.

What are your educational and career goals?

I would like to be a personal trainer but I know that it won't be easy to accomplish this goal. I am in the process of pursuing the Personal Trainer Certificate at Triton College. Although I'm still working on my goal, I believe it's worth it.

What would your advice and encouragement be to other English language learners who are contemplating continuing to study here at Triton College after ESL?

I'm really convinced that education is the correct way to reach your goals for a better future. As an immigrant I came to this country without speaking any English. I'm really happy that I am close to reaching my goals.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience in ESL, your experience on the college credit side?

My teachers showed patience, dedication, and effort to me and my classmates. I met people from all over the world. The conversation circle held every day at noon helped me a lot. I really recommend it.



Silvia Rodriguez

Advice from Spring 2017 GED Graduate Silvia Rodriguez

Never Give Up!

I feel so proud of myself. Recently I got my GED Certificate. Since my childhood, my dream was to study until I get a degree. But there have been many obstacles in my life. For a long time I tried to study on my own for GED without obtaining good results. Then I decided to seek help at Triton College. The opportunities I found at Triton College exceeded my expectations. Easy enrollment and flexible schedules help the students to choose their times.

In my opinion the biggest difficulty that students can face is themselves. Many people tried to discourage me by saying getting the GED Certificate was very difficult. Hearing the same, some schoolmates gave up. But when I felt like giving up I fought as a warrior doing my best until I got it.

On my first algebra lesson the teacher Mrs. Hernandez, told the students "Relax math is so fun." (And it is if students follow step by step.) Then Mrs. Hernandez recommended reading a book every day. Following her recommendation I started to read the book *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. Some quotes from this book were etched in my mind...

"There is only one way to learn. It's through action. There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve, the fear of failure." When you want something all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it. "Never stop dreaming," says Coelho.

The first days of school weren't easy. I take care of my three kids and work the nightshift at the same time. Thanks to the great support of my husband at all times I kept going. Also, my 10 and 7 year olds helped me with my tasks and the new baby. So I was able to keep up my studies.

If I could give any advice to the GED students, it is once you have made the decision to start studying do not give up be firm in your resolution until you reach your goal as I did. Follow the advice of your teachers. At the time to take the test on the computer do not get nervous, relax and do your best.

Si Se Puede!

Silvia Rodriguez

Brenda Salgado, ESL Level 5

The Pleasure of Singing

Every person in this world can benefit from singing, whether the people in question believe they can sing or not. I think this is a way to relax and at the same time enjoy what you do. There are physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits. For this and many more reasons I enjoy singing.

Singing increases the amount of oxygen you take into the body and brain as you take a deep breath. Singing also stimulates the thyroid gland, which helps to balance metabolism, as well as the fact that singing makes you feel good physically. Learning to sing has great mental benefits too. For example, it improves your reading skills and your motor skills as you learn to sing from beginning to end.

Learning to sing releases emotional blockages; sometimes blockages that we've had for years. You can direct your emotions in a positive way, and you can express your feelings by singing. Singing can make you cry, can make you laugh, and releases emotional stress. Singing is actually a real natural pain killer.

Singing is a form of meditation that helps you to connect spiritually with God and disconnect from the stressful world you are living in. This helps you to create positive energy and to have a happy mood that you can transmit to others.

In conclusion, singing opens windows which help me physically, emotionally, and spiritually. All this benefits my life in many positive ways.

Byron Guzman, ESL Level 4

Learning English

Learning English at Triton College is an important event in my life. I started to study level 1 of English in the summer of 2015 because I wanted to make friends and speak with persons who speak English. I also wanted to get a better job. My brother brought me to Triton because he learned English here. This even is important for me because I've learned so much English and I got a better job and I've made a lot friends. Now I can read books and speak English.

Ion Balanescu, ESL Level 4

Coming to U.S.

Coming to U.S. is an important step in my life.

I came to U.S. in May 2015 with my wife and our friend's mother. We met our friends in the airport and we drove to their house. During the first week we bought a car and we searched for jobs. I found a job in a Romanian company and my wife found a job in cleaning service. It was very hard to rent an apartment because everybody requested a good credit score, but when we came we had no credit history. Finally a Romanian owner gave us rent. We met a lot of nice people in the Romanian factory. After five months, we started taking ESL classes at Triton.

After seven months, we both changed our jobs and we started working for the O'Hare airport as office agents in cargo area. My wife is still working there, but after six months I found a job with double pay as a land surveyor.

This experience is important because it changed my life.

Fadhil Tawfeeq, ESL Level 5

Keeping Calm with Music

With life, often full of stress and hard work, we always need to find a moment to relax, be calm, and have pleasure. Music is a source of pleasure in my life which can be an emotional outlet for emotional balance. Moreover, it gives me the opportunity to play traditional music and preserve my cultural heritage. With music, I can also share beautiful moments with my family.

The emotional impact of the music helps me to get rid of the pressures of life a lot through the positive impacts it brings to me and to the people around me. Whether at home with the family, or in the work environment, it helps me to express my point of view in a positive and comfortable way. I feel that playing music can also help me to get rid of negative feelings and allow them to turn to positive feelings of comfort and calm intervention on behavior, and it helps me stand in the face of difficulties. Also, playing music helps me to mentally focus and brainstorm, which makes my mind more energetic and makes me able to get rid of stress and tension. As a result, this helps me to make the right decisions. Furthermore, eastern (Oriental) music, specifically Arabic Iraqi heritage music, uses a Quarter Scale of a tone, which gives beautiful impact when listening because of the unique type of melodies. Therefore, playing this music helps me to be in a peaceful mode.

Everyone has fond memories of his life in various stages of childhood, and for me, the most beautiful memories when life was simple, beautiful, and full of vitality. More than 18 years have passed since I left my country, Iraq. My life has turned out to be full of fatigue and stress, so I find traditional Iraqi music playing a way to help me get rid of stress. When I remember childhood days, I feel relieved and calm. Also, it helps me to meditate and keeps my mind away from a stressful lifestyle.

Music helps me to communicate with my family, especially the music that we all admire and always listen to. We can be together in the moments when we need to be close and support each other. Playing music with my family, and especially with my daughter, lets me feel comfort, happiness and peace when watching the smile on her face and her joy, which helps me to get rid of any feeling of tiredness and tension. Furthermore, some old songs have distinctive lyrics and distinctive melodies which are full of beautiful meanings of love and peace. These songs let us all feel we are in our home country again when we live in a strange country different from our country and our culture.

Music is the language of love shared and peace in all the world, in all languages and in all cultures. Through sending messages of love for others and in my personal life, I find music a source of comfort and relaxation and the light that illuminates the road in the darkness of the difficulties of life. Playing music creates pleasure in our lives whether by expressing ourselves or inspiring others through it.

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.

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 at the AE office and are due by April 21, 2017.

Jesse Sullivan, GED® Student

Is a higher education worth it nowadays?

Yes!

"Is college really worth it?" This is the question many students start to ask as the college costs increase and jobs are harder to get. Can you get ahead without college education? Higher education is overpriced, so is the debt really worth it? I believe it really is. Through higher education we are becoming being a better version of ourselves, which is a priority to having the life we all hope for. Guess it all stems from the resources and background we come from. The future job market can be risky. All over the years college students confirm their education was worth it. Everyone knows working towards a college degree is time consuming and can be expensive. The payoff may not be your dream job right away; it does guarantee more job choices.

As a part of my class on October 17, 2016, I surveyed a few people at Triton College. I've asked my subjects three questions pertaining to pursuing higher education. All interviewees agreed with me that it is worth it and all said that having a college degree leads to better jobs, better pay, and completed goals. A degree can open doors to a better future. But young adults who graduated from college last spring will get their first payment notice for their student loans soon. This delays graduates from saving for retirement, buying a house or getting married. They inevitably will ask the questions "Was my degree worth it?" Many will question that investment. However, various studies show students who have graduated college in the past strongly agree it was worth the cost. It is important that student themselves need to be motivated, talented, and creative in order become successful.

The big question is, "are you willing to pay now, in time and money, for the following long-term rewards?" Does a college degree impact your working future? Research shows of all of the new jobs now being created, most will require education beyond high school. It's a sign that employers wants a worker that is serious about the job, knows how to learn, and can achieve goals. Employers often see college graduates as more motivated. It is important to mention that the average weekly salary of workers with a college degree has doubled compared to a worker with a high school diploma or GED. In my opinion more money, good benefits, and job security is anyone's motivation. What you put in, is what you get.

Companies crave people with experience. It's a horrible cycle because to get experience you need a job and vice versa. You need a degree to get your foot in the door. Of course, there are other resources and affordable alternatives. For instance knowing someone with a business to teach you a trade or to build the experience needed. Online education is an effective alternative to the traditional classroom and more cost effective. Online classes are less distracting, more flexible, and less time consuming alternative. There are plenty of resources to assist with obtaining a college education, besides the traditional classroom experience.

Earning a college degree is such important step in life; it has become part of the "American Dream." You go to college, get a job, buy a house, and raise a family. It may not always be that simple, but it always starts with your college education. We don't know what our jobs will be like in ten, or twenty-five or even fifty years from now, but we need to be developing skills that can be applicable to any discipline like leadership, communication, and critical thinking to become a valuable asset. So, yes a higher education is valuable, because it leads to becoming a better version of yourself.

Kirsten Skrzypczynski, GED® Student

Teenage Pregnancy Struggles

Young teenage boys and girls are bringing babies into the world when both are nowhere near ready nor prepared for the big challenges that lay ahead. There are three big issues that we need to address: first – ignorance, secondly – father abandonment crisis, and finally – not getting enough support.

When it comes to teenage pregnancy, ignorance is one of the main issues that teenagers struggle with. Let's look at the issue of safe sex. We all had health in middle school and high school; we all learned the consequences of not protecting ourselves when safe sex was not used. But somehow when it comes to teenagers most of them believe pregnancy just can't happen to them. According to Teen Pregnancy Statistics in 2013 "273,105 babies were born to women ages 15-19; 89% of teenage parents are unmarried, and 77% of the pregnancies are unplanned." Infants born to teenage mothers are at a higher risk of health issues. Pregnant teenage girls are "less likely to gain the adequate birth weight, resulting in, low-birth weight for the child. The mother is also less likely to get her prenatal care, eat healthy, and is more likely to use drugs while pregnant" according to Teenage Pregnancy and Health Risks to the Baby section of Health Communities. Therefore teenagers definitely need to know how important it is to use protection. There are many different forms of birth control as well as condoms to keep these young teenagers safe.

One of the biggest problems in teenage pregnancies is father abandonment. In the article The Father Absence Crisis, studies show 24 million children in America – one out of three – live without their biological dad in the home. These children are more likely to suffer emotional and behavioral problems. When I found out I was pregnant with both of my sons, my children's father walked out on me and my sons. He eventually came around, but would only be around for about a week, then disappear again for weeks at a time. I could tell my oldest son was affected by this. After all, his father was the only male figure he knew. In result, he began acting out more and became more aggressive than children his age. To him that was the only way he knew how to show his emotions – in anger. Now that my kid's father has straightened up and does what he has to do for our kids, I definitely can see a change in my oldest son's attitude and behavior. Of course, my son still has his moments where he acts out, but it really goes to show how much a father's absence can affect a child's life.

Finally, imagine yourself a girl in high school. You find out you're pregnant, you quit school, and have to somehow make ends meet. There are diapers to be bought, new baby clothes every few months, wipes, a crib, bath supplies, toys, formula, baby food, etc. When it comes to teen moms, they have a small rate of educational success. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures website "only 40% of teen mothers finish high school and fewer than 2% finish college by age 30. Many teenage girls don't have the support by their families in order to finish school, most families encourage teenage girls to get an abortion rather than having the baby." When it comes to financial support, most teenage girls are left on their own, and if they're a dropout, the only job they can get is a minimum wage job.

Reiterating, the three aspects we need to address are ignorance, father abandonment crisis, and not getting enough support. I hope all teenage girls and boys will really think about real life struggles when not using protection, because not only these struggles affect the teenagers themselves, but they affect their babies as well.