NAAM Newsletter - Spring 2021

Our office at 330 Lynnway is opening gradually and we are always available and happy to meet with clients and students. If you need to meet with any of us, please email us at info@naamass.org and we will get back to you shortly. Here are some things we have been up to these past few months:

Announcements:

- At this time NAAM staff is discussing a return-to-workplace plan. For the time being we are planning to move with the hybrid model with classes and student activities remaining online, and case managers returning to the office gradually on a more regular basis. We are discussing what kind of protective measures should be considered at our workplace to ensure safety of all employees and clients at the center.

- Our beloved Dulany Alexander has decided to take a break from her teaching, technological support and other multiple duties at the New American Center and move to travel, relaxation, life enjoyment, health and soul care! We are immensely thankful for, and proud of, all Dulany has accomplished during her tenure at NAC. Her legacy includes teaching English, citizenship, basic computer skills, providing technological support to all of us, teachers, case managers, students, clients, bringing volunteers, financial resources, her own masterful organizational and navigational skills to develop and implement our food delivery project, transitioning it into the on-going program and physically delivering food to the doors of our clients/students. With her savvy and social skills, she navigated the NAC family through challenging times of this last dramatic COVID year. We will be celebrating Dulany's achievements in an informal - but wonderful - way, at the Salem Willows on Thursday, July 1st. This will be our first face-to-face meeting since March 2020!

- For the last three months (March-Present), in partnership with LEO, ECCF, and United Way, New American Association of Massachusetts has been able to distribute more than $65,000 in rental and utility assistance to over more than 100 clients.

- If you need assistance from NAAM or have questions about programs and services please send an email in any language to info@naamass.org.

Food Deliveries:

- We continue offering weekly food deliveries based on the needs of our students and clients. My Brother's Table remains to be our faithful and loyal partner which works with NAAM on this project. To continue offering food deliveries to our constituents we will be collaborating with the city of Lynn and LEO. We plan to continue offering food as long as the need for this service exists in our community.

- We are also happy to share that Essex Community County Foundation (www.eccf.org) in its efforts to inspire innovation and build food ecosystems for Essex County, has awarded NAAM with The Food Systems Resiliency Partnership Grant to continue fighting food insecurities in our communities by offering food deliveries to the people in need of such service.
COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach:

In partnership with Health Resources in Action, NAAM has continued our COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach, educating our community on all pros and cons of vaccination, sharing resources, hosting workshops, translating materials, helping people get to vaccination centers, and providing interpreters as needed. Some of our outreach has included:

- In May, 10 more of our clients were able to make vaccine appointments and get vaccinated after initially expressing hesitancy when the rollout began.

- At the start of June, more than 30 clients also attended a virtual Vax Conversation Hour that was hosted by NAAM and Chief Medical Officer from the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, Dr. Zandra Kelley. Clients were active and engaged and there were more than 20 questions recorded regarding vaccine safety and concerns throughout the presentation. NAAM plans to translate the recorded version of this presentation to Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Arabic in the near future.

- With the help of genius filmmaker Liz Soolkin, NAAM plans to continue to make pro-vaccine media content that encourages clients to seek out reliable sources and ask good questions when talking about the vaccine. Dr. Haptu from the Lynn Community Health Center was kind enough to record her own video, expressing her personal point of view and reasoning on getting the vaccine. We plan to release translated versions of this video sometime in the near future.

- NAAM is hiring for a Vaccine Outreach Coordinator, with the main goal of getting more people vaccinated. Their main responsibility will be to find even more effective ways to inform and educate our clients about the vaccine so that families can make the wisest and best decision for themselves.
Updates from our Lowell Office:
Some good news is that we are now full-time in Lowell, and looking forward to expanding the program! I currently have a caseload of 41 clients. I continue to refer people to the Lynn office for remote ESOL and help with immigration issues. I’ve provided driving lessons for 4 people.

Case Management & Employment:
- Along with all of our students and clients, we at NAAM are grateful and relieved that the pandemic has come under better control and that restrictions have been lifted from state offices and local businesses. Because of these positive developments, we are seeing promising employment prospects for our job-seeking clients. After these many months of reduced air travel, Logan Airport is ramping up for a busier summer, airport companies are advertising positions, and employees who had been working part-time are now being called back to full-time positions. Some of the local medical assembly companies have increased production and they continue to seek new employees, as they have for the past several months. Retail businesses and restaurants are also now looking for workers, and there continues to be a demand for warehouse workers and delivery drivers of all kinds, as well as health care workers.
- In addition to helping clients with job applications and interviews, we continue to assist clients with managing their unemployment claims and making the weekly benefit requests. As always, we welcome inquiries and are happy to assist in any way we can. Please reach out to Will, Lynne, Natasha or Venette if you need help with an unemployment claim or submitting a job application, help getting an appointment with the RMV for any reason, would like to join one of NAC’s classes, or need another type of assistance.

Citizenship:
- The citizenship program is up and running. We are hosting remote classes on Zoom twice a week. 25 students signed up for this quarter’s class. We are hosting consultation meetings remotely as well, and in person by appointment only. If you or anyone that you know needs free citizenship classes, or free citizenship application help, please contact Will Pena at 781-593-0100 ext. 14.
• We have been offering extra tutoring for students to study and prepare for the citizenship interview and exam. NAAM was able to hire 8 alumni of our citizenship group to tutor current students. Each student who received tutoring and had an interview date scheduled passed their citizenship tests!
• The next session of citizenship classes will begin July 8th.

**Morning ESL Classes (Dan, Khara, Gina):**

**Dan’s class:** “A student went home to Honduras for a 3 week visit and attended class every morning on Zoom. When it was 16 degrees here, it was 82 in Honduras. Another student went to Brazil to visit family. She also came to class on Zoom.”

**Khara’s class:** “Students are learning English from ‘ESL Class Learn English Speaking for Beginners American English in Real life Unit 7.’ They also learn through VOA lessons. They learn to introduce themselves. They learn present continuous tense of verbs. They learn about the different businesses. They attended the meeting on the benefits of COVID-19 vaccinations organized by the NAAM. Some of the students have attended the virtual tour of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.”

**Gina’s class:** “Topics and activities in class have been wide ranging from special videos and presentations on the COVID 19 vaccine to following the Derrick Chauvin trial and sharing our concerns and fears which resulted in a visit from two representatives from ECCO June 8. English learning revolved around conversations about different periods/places of our lives, i.e. childhood, our neighborhood/hometown, friends, school, etc. and turning those conversations into written autobiographies. This, in turn, uncovered weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure which we studied after editing each written piece together. Another ongoing activity was sharing our favorite (English language) songs and learning new expressions, phrasal verbs, etc. that are common in spoken American English but not often found in language learning texts.”
Afternoon ESL Classes (Dulany, Bobby, Suzie, and Kathryn):

Dulany’s class: “This spring we regrouped: some people have gone back to work, and new students have joined us. That was a little scary for the new students because some of us have been studying together since before the pandemic, so we know each other pretty well. Now, after a few weeks together we are pretty comfortable with each other again. We started using a new textbook series, and then Dulany announced her retirement at the end of June. She took the liberty of skipping the unit named “School”. That seemed like a good place for the class to start with their new teacher when they come back from the summer vacation in July. Meanwhile, we are working on the unit called “Friends and Family”, which sounds like a great framework for exploring ideas for things to do with our children this summer. One member of our class never lived in the US before the pandemic, so she and her children don’t know all of the fun things that there are for families to do together here. Lots of places are opening up, but a lot of the regular summer things to do are not going to be open this summer. Here’s hoping that we can give each other some fresh ideas for summer activities!”

Bobby’s class: “Things in my English class have been going well. I added around 8 new students in the past couple of months so that has been a nice adjustment. I’ll be wrapping up teaching at the end of the month and giving students a short vacation before they pick up classes again with Mia, the new LPS teacher. In our class, we have been reviewing questions using To Be, Have/Has and Do/Does/Did as well as going over vocab using quizlet sets. I put together a review game of jeopardy which the students got really into.”

Suzie’s class: “Our big news is that one of our students had a beautiful baby girl on June 1!”

Kathryn’s class: “Not too many updates. It’s a pretty standard beginning ESL class for parents and family members of LPS students. I can say that my daughter (16 months old) is a frequent guest in my class and the students love to see her.”
Learning English through Art, Technology, Wellness, and Music:
The past months have been exciting for the ELT-I program. Although we continue to meet virtually, the students find it convenient. We have five at times more students/clients who connect on their devices while at work. Others enjoy what they are learning so much they connect while in transit. We had a couple of trips to the farm. The students found it interesting where syrup comes from, how it is made and the various ways it is used. We learned about plants that we can grow for food in our region, and each family had a plant kit delivered to them. We will be planting cucumber seeds, watching as they grow, and hopefully enjoy them in salads, juices and other recipes we learned about. We also had the privilege of having a tour by the MFA or Museum of Fine Arts. They shared paintings from their exhibits of beautiful and colorful portraits. They were magnificent! We hope to be able to visit in person in the future.

- **Art:** we looked at paintings from Marsha Hammel, described the spectacular colors, textures and each student shared what they observed. We learned how to make sentences from our observations then move on to forming paragraphs.

- **Technology:** we learned how to find different sites where we can get accurate information and not to rely solely on social media. [www.bmc.org/covid-19-vaccine-talking-about-vaccine](http://www.bmc.org/covid-19-vaccine-talking-about-vaccine). We watched the 3-minute video on how the vaccine works in different languages for clear comprehension. We were encouraged to speak with our healthcare provider for more information. We visited THE CITY OF LYNN at [www.lynnma.gov](http://www.lynnma.gov), The MASS.GOV [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov) site and all the students were encouraged to visit The NAAM at [www.naamass.org](http://www.naamass.org) at least once per week. We reviewed different App that the clients have on their phones and showed how others can be of benefit and put to good use by the students.

- **Wellness Class:** In Wellness, we learned the benefits of a healthy diet, getting the proper amount of sleep, staying hydrated and getting out moving our muscles while keeping ourselves safe and wearing a mask.

- **Music Class:** Music is always enjoyable, we start the session by watching a video of the song of the day, sometimes performed by different artists with their own styles. Each student then has a turn to read a few lines of the lyrics to the song and the instructor helps explain, clarify and helps us with our pronunciation. Join us Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday at 1:00pm and Fridays at 11:30am.
Youth Programs:

Afterschool Program –

The 2020-2021 school year has come to a close! NAC Afterschool Program stayed online for the year and we continued to offer homework help, enrichment activities, movies, and conversation practice. Some highlights included:

- In March we hosted two vaccine workshops with representatives from Lynn Community Health Center. Students were able to ask their questions about the vaccine.
- Lynn students returned to school in-person in April and we supported students through the transition back to school, ACCESS testing for ELs, MCAS testing, and final exams.
- Enrichment activities included microwave cooking, science experiments, art, and singing.
- Through funding from Youthworks, we were able to hire 5 of our high school students to help with afterschool program. The teen staff helped elementary schoolers with homework, led games, and facilitated conversation. Thank you to Abeer, Akha, Israa, Modestine, and Shaina for their hard work this semester!
- Another big thank you to all the staff members, tutors, and college interns who supported NAC Youth Program this school year: Amy, Annalise, Bethany, Bony, Cat, Clara, Darlene, Grace, Harena, Harriet, MaryBeth, Mo, Molly, Reem, Rouaa, and Tiffany
- We are incredibly proud of all our current and former students who graduated from high school this year. Congratulations on this huge accomplishment!
Mentoring:
This spring, we offered social workshops to discuss topics that are important for youth. Workshops were hosted by Richard Valentine Jr. from Family and Children’s Services. Topics included identity, racial and gender stereotypes, healthy relationships, and conflict styles. Participants were very fascinated by these topics and were eager to ask more questions and share their personal experiences regarding the given topics.

Summer Program 2021:
NAC Summer Program will be July 6 to August 13 this year. It will be a hybrid program, meaning that some classes will be online and some classes will be in-person. We are excited to announce a new partnership with Root in Salem, who will be catering nutritious summer meals for our students.
We hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy in these difficult times. We look forward to the day that we can once again greet you all in person at the New American Center.