



Sharing Language--Building Community

Summer Thoughts

Recently, we were asked if there really was a need for ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in Williamsport. I was surprised. However, I realized that each week at Thrive our team is privileged to be around people from many different countries who now call Williamsport home, and not everyone has that opportunity. We meet many people here from other countries and get to help equip them for success on individual, family and community levels each week. We even get to watch as they share skills and knowledge with each other and the larger community.



Intermediate ESL Students

To help provide a glimpse of whom Thrive is privileged to serve, here are some statistics from July 2015-June 2016. In that time, Thrive had 42 adult and high school students who attended ESL classes. We also took care of 8 children so that their parents could attend ESL classes, and that need is rapidly increasing. Our students were originally from 16 different countries including Brazil, Burma, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Japan,

Korea, Mexico, Oman, the Phillipines, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. Especially because they are from so many different places, it can be a challenge to find a sense of community in Williamsport. However, it is amazing to see how they form community together and start moving out to participate in the larger community as employees, neighbors, church members, parents at schools, volunteers, and other roles.

According to recent census data, there are 1,460 people in Williamsport who speak a language other than English at home. Many of them may fluently use English outside of the home, but for those who are still working on it, we look forward to connecting with even more people who want to improve their English skills.

During the same week I was compiling our statistics from last year, I also had a phone call that reminded me in a different way of the need for ESL classes. The call described the situation of a young woman from another country who had recently come here because she was married to a Williamsport resident. They were concerned because she felt isolated and unable to navigate living here for herself and their child, and she wanted thought of going back home. While listening, my mind was balancing two pictures. One was the description of what she was going through, and the other was the hope, community, and learning opportunities if she could connect with ESL classes. Sometimes knowing we can serve

certain numbers of people is important. Sometimes, knowing we can be there for one person is important.



Discussing after Class

Thinking though the numbers and that student's story reminded me to be thankful for the teachers, volunteers, board members, and donors that make up Thrive and allow us to serve. Just in ESL classes, we are currently blessed with 7 adult class volunteers and 1 youth class volunteer.

Additionally, we have many students who study foreign languages so that they can also interact with international people in our community or farther away as well as with teachers who lend their skills to teach the foreign languages. In that July 2015-June 2016 time period, we also had 6 youth students studying Mandarin Chinese, 4 middle/high school students studying French, 22 youth students studying Spanish, and 24 adults studying Spanish. Their daily and weekly effort can make a huge difference for them and for others they encounter.

For those who meet the need and make the ESL and foreign language classes and our other outreaches possible, thank you!

~~Jody Lantz, Exec. Director

ESL Classes

- ❖ Mondays & Thursdays
- ❖ 7:30-9:00pm
- ❖ Beginning & intermediate level classes

High School/Adult Beginning Spanish Classes

- ❖ Thursdays
- ❖ 7:30-9:30 pm
- ❖ Session 2 is planned to start on Sept. 8th.
- ❖ Register by August 31 at www.thriveip.org.
- ❖ This session is a continuation of the summer session 1 and would be appropriate for students who know just a little of the basics of Spanish.

High School/Adult French 2 Classes

- ❖ Thursdays
- ❖ 7:30-9:30 pm
- ❖ Planned to start on Sept. 8th.
- ❖ Register by August 31 at www.thriveip.org.
- ❖ This session is appropriate for students who have already studied French 1 or have a similar knowledge of French.

Immigration Legal Services Provider?

To help meet the need for immigration legal services in the area, Thrive is continuing to make progress towards being ready to apply for BIA accreditation/recognition. We have volunteers nearing completion of an immigration overview training course and have been able to attend CLINIC's program management training and job shadow a couple days at the immigration legal services office at Allentown Catholic Charities.

Our goal is to be able to help qualified people with basic immigration applications for things like green cards, citizenship, DACA, and family-based immigration. We're also hoping to be a point of connection to help refer people with more complicated needs to reputable lawyers or more advanced non-profit legal offices.

Keep watching as we steadily work on this new outreach! We are hoping to submit our application for BIA accreditation/recognition by early fall.

Event Spotlight

Usually we feature people here, but we've had so many exciting events this summer, that we're pausing to share a few of them.



Many thanks to the Crosscutters & Woodlands Bank for having Thrive as one of their featured organizations for Charitable Tuesdays!



Photo Credit: City Alliance Church

Thanks to City Alliance Church for offering multi-cultural events to embrace those from other cultures living in the city!



This summer and spring, we celebrated the contributions of several teachers who are moving on to new places and welcomed new volunteers who are eager to be involved.



Burmese Food--Aug. 23rd

Stop by City Alliance Church from 5-7pm on Tuesday, August 23rd and pick up some Burmese food as delicious takeout. Quantities will be limited, so pre-order by Aug. 20th at www.thriveip.org. We'll be glad to send a reminder email so you don't forget. It is a great way to support Thrive, get a delicious meal, and avoid cooking.

The menu includes chicken and potatoes over rice, fried glass noodles, and eggs with tomato sauce. Even if you're new to eating different ethnic foods, we think you'll find the flavors to be mild and a fun treat for your family.

This event is part of what we hope will become a monthly series featuring take-out food from different countries prepared by our volunteers and staff. The process is designed to support cross-cultural experience, language learning, cultural skills, job training, and an accessibly priced meal. Special thanks for this event to the Peter Herdic House, the Community Kitchen, and Chef Hosch for helping with cooking, space, and serving as well as to Tebbs Farms & Greenhouses, Two Boys from Italy Restaurant, and Sam Caldwell for help with ingredients.

Calling All Artists

Thrive is seeking to draw attention to the idea that everyone is valued regardless of their background, immigration status, language, etc. One way we are doing this is through a t-shirt contest. We are seeking designs that express the theme of "valued". It is a great way to share your artistic talent & help Thrive. The submission deadline has been extended to August 31. Go to www.thriveip.org for more details. Also, watch for upcoming voting on our Facebook page and a chance to purchase a shirt with the winning design.

Ways to Get Involved

Volunteer-- We are looking for volunteers for the following positions:

- Nursery helpers--age 14 and older--Mon./Thurs. from 7:30-9:00pm
- ESL tutors--Mon./Thurs. from 6:30 to 7:30pm
- Drivers to pick up students--Mon./Thurs. approximately 6:45 to 7:30pm
- Public relations volunteer--flexible times to help with marketing

We are glad to help provide training. State-mandated clearances are required for those in contact with youth.



Churches--As a Christian organization, Thrive aims to connect with local churches who are interested in partnering with us through praying for us, welcoming those from other countries, and helping financially. If your church would be interested in having a staff member share as a speaking engagement or just one-on-one, please feel free to contact us.

Donate--Thrive offers services at rates that are below our actual costs and offers other services for free. We welcome donations of any size to help us meet our operating expenses like teacher salaries, books for low-income students, and supplies for our international student outreaches. We were approved last year as a 501(3)(c) organization, so donations to Thrive are tax deductible. Beyond that, each donation helps you to partner with us in our mission. Donations can be made online at our website or sent to our address on the bottom of the page.

Our Mission Statement

1. To welcome international people living in our community with an attitude of mutual respect and inclusion
2. To share God's love through educational, social, and spiritual opportunities that encourage connection with others, realization of goals, and the ability to thrive in new contexts
3. To equip teachers, volunteers, and community members with skills to help them serve in similar ways locally or around the world