

Literacy Matters

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Newsletter for Donors and Friends of Oakland Literacy Council

Graduate's new sushi restaurant is like 'sun shining through the rain'

Opening a restaurant during the pandemic takes courage, but then so does immigrating to a new country with one's family. Daewoon Choi has done both.

Daewoon brought his wife and teenaged daughter and son to the United States in 2017 from South Korea.

After working in restaurant kitchens for three years, the 50-year-old took the leap to open his own restaurant with a business partner in May 2021.

Sushi Yeoubi is tucked into a strip mall in Lake Orion. For now, it has three employees and functions as a carryout establishment, although the space has tables where customers can eat the fresh California rolls, spiced tuna, and other specialties that they have purchased at the counter.

The restaurant's name *Yeoubi* means "sun shining through the rain," Daewoon explains. It is a fitting expression for something good happening in the midst of a difficult time – like launching a restaurant in a pandemic or learning a new language and new culture in a strange country.

Supporting Daewoon through the stress of establishing himself in the U.S. and starting a business has been his Oakland Literacy Council tutor, Sue Iles.

"I came here, and I had no friend in America," Daewoon says. "I talk about my problems with Sue and share my ideas. She's now a very good friend."

In keeping with the Council's mission to meet students where they are at, Sue has helped Daewoon learn the language of day-to-day American life such as home, yard, and car maintenance as well as the language of his new business venture such as the terms in the lease agreement with his landlord.

"The skill I am most proud of giving Daewoon is confidence," says Sue. "Confidence to talk on the phone, to look at Americans and make small talk, to communicate with bankers and landlords and building inspectors. He was already brave enough to emigrate with his wife and adult children and smart enough to use the web to learn how to fix anything and to start a new business with all the COVID-19 restrictions."



OLC graduate Daewoon Choi prepares sushi at his restaurant, Sushi Yeoubi. The restaurant is located in Lake Orion. (www.sushiyeoubi.com; 947.886.2190)

In This Issue

Digital Walk-in Help - 2

Donor Spotlight - 3

Graduates Honored - 4

Student is seeking to 'come out of the pandemic with more'

Since the pandemic began, we have all experienced some type of loss. But instead of loss, Rachester Motley set her sights on what she might gain.

Rachester remembers praying, "Lord, I want to come out of this pandemic with more. Let me come out with something new from this."

A year later, that "something more" is coming to fruition in Rachester's life. She's enrolled as an Oakland Literacy Council basic education student and is making great strides in her reading ability.

At 66 years old, this step marks a big change. "I used to have the attitude that I was too old," Rachester says. **"But then something came over me and said, 'you're never too old to learn, you can do it' ... I wanted to become more independent at my age."**

Following that realization, Rachester was introduced to Oakland Literacy Council by community partner Neighborhood House. Then it was time to tackle the first hurdle — learning to use a computer so tutoring could take place virtually. Oakland Literacy Council provided Rachester with a computer and instruction to help her master the basics of using Zoom and the appropriate educational software.



Rachester and her tutor use the Barton curriculum for adults with possible learning disabilities. Rachester also enjoys reading biographies in their sessions. "I love that reading lets me hear other people's stories and learn about them."

From there, Rachester began meeting virtually with her tutor, Jill Cook, twice a week.

Rachester's goals include using email more often and learning how to securely pay bills and shop online. Rachester speaks most passionately about the personal growth she's experiencing thanks to her newfound skills.

"I have more confidence in myself," she says.

"This is making me stronger, making me believe in myself. It's a wonderful feeling."



OLC student Diana learns to download attachments from her tutor at a drop-in session. Now she can complete her weekly homework assignments.

Your donation dollars power up new drop-in digital literacy help sessions

Sending an E-mail. Surfing the web. Getting on Zoom. For many of us, these are common day-to-day activities. They are activities that have become essential for navigating life, including meeting with an OLC tutor.

For students who have never used a computer, it can be challenging to learn basic computer functions. **So this fall, OLC began hosting drop-in computer help sessions every Tuesday from 4:00 - 6:00 pm.** OLC digital literacy coordinator Patti Shayne explains, "Our first goal is to give them a jumpstart so they can begin meeting with their tutors and begin building literacy skills."

The drop-in sessions give students one-on-one time with staff to master basic computer functions and learn to use the educational software. They also have the chance to keep building digital skills for home and work.

Board president stepping down after 25 years of service for adult learners

Donor
Spotlight

"We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Judy Lindstrom."

That's how OLC founder Robert Gaylor sums up Judy Lindstrom's amazing leadership and contribution to Oakland Literacy Council.

Motivated by a love for reading and helping others, Judy Lindstrom began tutoring adults in 1997 with Oakland Literacy Council. In January 2005, when OLC became an independent organization, Judy became board president.

In January 2022, Judy will step down after 18 years as president and a quarter of a century of advocacy and financial support for adult literacy.

Through her selfless efforts, Judy has enabled thousands of Oakland County citizens to thrive in our community. She has channeled her welcoming nature, community network, and passion for literacy to raise vital funds that have both sustained OLC through economic challenges and fueled its growth.

In a letter to the OLC community, Judy shared, "I think I will cherish the little things most of all — the small but mighty accomplishments, the handwritten notes, the smiles, the triumphs, the 'can do spirit,' and the many lifelong friendships I am so lucky to have."

Judy will be honored with a reception in January and the creation of the Judy Lindstrom Educational Fund. To learn more, call OLC at 248.253.1617.



Judy Lindstrom welcomes guests to the Ex Libris preview event in 2020. Judy has chaired a majority of the 32 Ex Libris annual events, which have raised over one million dollars for adult literacy.

Thank you, Ex Libris 2021 Sponsors



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Page 3

40 graduates honored at ceremony



Kirk in the Hills shares its beautiful space to celebrate accomplishments and friendship.

It was an enthusiastic and emotional morning as students, tutors, staff, and board members gathered to honor students who graduated in 2020 and 2021. Graduates included ESL and adult basic education students. They represented nine countries: Brazil, China, Iraq, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, and the United States.

With the shift to virtual tutoring, several student-tutor pairs met each other in person for the first time at graduation!

Board President Judy Lindstrom recognized how students and tutors persevered through the challenges of the last year. "We've seen you grow in self-confidence and your ability to learn, to set goals for yourself, and to achieve those goals. And many of you have also gained wonderful friends here. And that is part of the magic."

Graduate Akiko agrees. Speaking about her conversation group leader, Kristin, she says, "She is the best tutor for me. And now I think she is my best friend in Michigan."

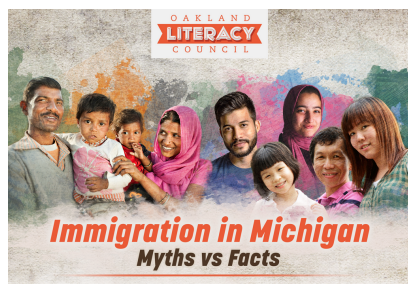


Students Marisol and Alma (upper left), Sara (above), and Jeongmun (left, with tutor, Phil) proudly display their graduation certificates after the ceremony. Graduates have reached at least the 9th grade level in Reading or Listening.



A record 105 students made educational gains in Reading, Listening, and Math in the 2020-2021 program year! Congrats, students and tutors!

View the recording:



www.oaklandliteracy.com/immigrationMI

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