

## BEACON Fall 2019 Newsletter

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### Meet a BEACON Business Partner

When Deb Burroughs began her new position as Program Specialist with BEACON for Adult Literacy, she never imagined that catching up with a girlfriend would turn into such a mutually beneficial opportunity for her new workplace and her friend's. Over dinner, as Deb told her friend about her new role, Deb's friend, Amy Kuhls, who is payroll manager in the Human Resources Department at Acme Mechanical Contractors of Virginia, Inc., wondered aloud whether BEACON might be just the extra support needed for some of Acme Mechanical's non-English speaking employees. After discussing some details, Amy took the idea back to Acme Mechanical and a great idea was well on its way to becoming a reality.

ACME Mechanical is a commercial mechanical contractor for heating and plumbing that is based out of Manassas and has been serving northern Virginia and parts of Maryland for nearly 20 years. The company currently has 178 employees. Acme provides on the job training, even paying tuition for employees who are hired as helpers to attend apprenticeship school to receive plumbing and HVAC training. This gives employees the opportunity to pass their Journeyman Electrician exam upon completion of the four years of schooling.

With the new partnership, eleven Acme Mechanical employees are already enrolled in fall classes through BEACON to advance their English speaking, reading and writing skills. Acme pays for the students. Those who don't finish, will have to pay Acme back.



Acme student, Mynor, attending his English class

"We are very excited to be working with BEACON to provide this opportunity to our employees," said Carolyn Buckley, President of Acme Mechanical. "Acme Mechanical is an employee-owned and operated business that takes pride in extending respectful, personal, and trustworthy service to our customers. We maintain our commitment to excellence by supporting our employees' personal growth, working together as a family, and fostering long-term relationships with our customers."

Thanks to dedicated volunteers and generous donors, BEACON's classes are very reasonably priced and are centrally located in Manassas and Manassas Park, with both daytime and evening options.

"You never know when a friendly conversation will turn into a great partnership!" said Deb Burroughs, Program Specialist. "I am so impressed by Acme Mechanical. Literacy is so empowering and it's incredible for an employer to show how much they care about their employees by investing in their future!"

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## Volunteer gains a new perspective from a very basic question

### *The best kind of home is where you feel safe*

Tasked with helping to place new students at the correct level based on their English speaking skills, volunteer Colleen Reed found herself meeting and interacting with people from all walks of life as she assisted at BEACON's fall semester class registration for the first time. She used a questionnaire to evaluate the newcomers' comprehension and speaking. One of the standard questions on the survey was "What is your favorite part of living in the United States?"

"Everyone who comprehended the question, without fail, put the word "safe" in their answers. EVERYONE," Colleen said she was amazed to realize.

Lorraine, who immigrated to the United States only two months ago, is a student in the advanced class. She says she left Venezuela because of the bad economy and political unrest.

"I like America because I feel safe here," said Lorraine.



Lorraine in her English class.

Lorraine takes English classes so that she can communicate better and get a job. She says BEACON's classes have already been very helpful and she likes learning with her classmates. Although she struggles with learning the vocabulary words, she says she will continue taking classes with BEACON because the teachers are great.

Students who were more fluent in English listed safety as just one of multiple "favorites" in their answer to why they liked living in the U.S., with other reasons being advantages for their children, the ability to make a living, the possibility of owning a

home and getting an education. Those who could barely produce a sentence in English answered with just one word, "Safe."

Colleen says that helping BEACON truly gives you a new perspective on what safety means. From the Afghan woman who wants to be able to send her daughters to school, to the man from El Salvador who only shared that he had seen something that made him decide he and his son should get away immediately, she heard it every time. Each and every person she encountered--the women from Turkey and Haiti, and the grandmother from Iran--indicated they love living in the United States because it's safe here.

"There are plenty of things we could and should do better in the USA," said Colleen. "While we work on those things, let's all add kindness to our treatment of newcomers. They are coming from a place of fear and loss, and they see us as a representative of the best kind of new home: a safe one."

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## Student Spotlight on an Acme Employee, Victor

Like many parents, Victor's children are his driving force. As a student in a BEACON for Adult Literacy advanced class, he is eager to learn English so that he can help his children with their

homework.

Victor is from Guatemala and has been in the U.S. for 15 years. He has two children, a five-year-old and a thirteen-year-old. Victor is a plumber and welder for Acme Mechanical, a job he feels very fortunate to have. (Read the article above to hear more about our new partnership with Acme).

"It is a really good company because they take really good care of their employees," says Victor.

Victor praised the benefits Acme offers its employee, sharing that they pay well, offer good health insurance, great bonuses, and now, "They give their employees a chance to go to school to get better at English," Victor said, as he extolled Acme Mechanical's new partnership with BEACON.

"Definitely get in. They will help you learn and there's computer class. They will help you get better with English," Victor shares as encouragement to others who may be considering classes.

He says that the teacher in his class explains everything and, even when there are a lot of questions, he is very patient to answer and go over everything to make it clear. Victor says that taking English classes has given him the confidence to read with his 5-year-old daughter. He treasures the time they spend reading together and has seen a noticeable difference in her reading as a result.



Beginner English class

He also wants to improve his own English so that he has a better understanding of what people are saying at work. He hopes to continue advancing at Acme and perhaps become a manager one day.

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## Meet a BEACON volunteer instructor

Pat Hodgdon, BEACON True Beginner instructor, shares why she volunteers with BEACON and why the program is so important. "I think BEACON is important in our community because it makes the students feel welcome."

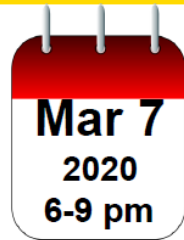
Watch Pat's video [here](#) or on our [Facebook page](#).





## 7th Annual Scrabble® Scramble to benefit:

**SAVE THE DATE**



for adult literacy

2 games of *team* competitive Scrabble®  
prizes food raffles

Visit [Beaconliteracy.org](https://beaconliteracy.org) to register your team of 4,  
donate to our cause, or sponsor the event.

We hope you'll join BEACON for Adult Literacy to support adult language learners striving to meet their personal and professional goals through literacy education.

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*BEACON for Adult Literacy serves the needs of adult English Language Learners in Greater Prince William by empowering them to achieve their education and employment goals. To learn more about how you can support our learners, visit our [website](https://beaconliteracy.org) or email [jmorazuniga@osbva.org](mailto:jmorazuniga@osbva.org) today!*

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