



# Friends News

Newsletter of the Friends of the Community Learning Center

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## Happy 50th Anniversary, Community Learning Center!

By Abra Berkowitz

It's hard to believe that it has been 50 years since the Cambridge Community Learning Center (CLC) opened its doors to Cambridge adults. We have grown from our humble beginnings in 1971 into an adult education center that at its pre-pandemic peak served about 1000 students each year. Today, the CLC offers free classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (GED/high school diploma preparation), and college readiness and career training. This year, we are excited to offer a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training program for both English Language Learners and native English speakers. Our Bridge to College program continues to prepare adults for college and offers free college courses with Bunker Hill Community College. For adults interested in entering technology fields, we maintain a wonderful partnership with a local nonprofit, Just-A-Start, to provide training in Information Technology (IT) and Biomedical Engineering Technology.

The past two years have given all of us significant challenges. However, we are happy to say that we have responded to the pandemic by continuing with our mission of "Transforming Lives Through Adult Education." This is what Melissa Ridley, a Cambridge resident who just graduated from our Adult Basic Education program by passing her HiSET tests, said about the program: "I'm so grateful to everybody for helping me out. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the CLC. I look forward to pursuing more education down the road and starting my new job as a Technician Assistant at Mass General Hospital. The teachers at the CLC are great-- everybody is great!"

Students take classes onsite at our main building in Central Square and on Rindge Avenue in North Cambridge. We learn safely through mask wearing and social distancing, while also keeping windows open and our new air purifiers on. We also offer some online classes in English/ESOL. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we had 75 students graduate from our programs last year!

Celebrate 50 years of the CLC with us! Find out more about our programs, and how you can support them, by calling 617-349-6363 or by visiting us at 5 Western Avenue in Central Square.

*Melissa Ridley (left), Cambridge resident and ABE program graduate, with her math teacher Nancy Ishihara*



## Meet Our New Board Members

The Friends of the Community Learning Center are delighted to welcome two new members to our Board: Louis NeJame and Britt Hall.

**Louis NeJame** is a strategy consultant who works with clients in and around the education sector on their most pressing strategic issues. His consulting work has given him experience working for private equity investors, institutions, emerging ed-tech companies, and large foundations. In partnership with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, he helped conduct a large-scale research study on the state of courseware and digital tools in higher education and how it relates to equity.



Through Louis's work, he discovered a passion for adult education and its ability to support students of all ages in their pursuit of socioeconomic stability and prosperity. After being connected to the Friends and seeing the inspiring work the CLC does, he was immediately eager to jump in and find a way to apply his professional skills to an organization with such a powerful impact. Louis hopes to bring structure and leadership to the program's fundraising efforts, in order to bring the Friends more financing so they can continue to effectively aid students in Cambridge.

**Britt Hall** has a 40-year background in developing and maintaining applications aimed at assisting municipal and state governments and nonprofits in managing their technology. He has designed and managed software that helps institutions handle their finances, property valuation and taxation, human resources and payroll, infrastructure, mapping and Geographic Information Systems, and public safety. The Friends of CLC will benefit greatly from his technological expertise.



Britt also has a decade of experience as an outreach social worker, much of it based in Cambridge. Serving on the Friends Board appeals to him because everyone deserves access to a good education, and the Community Learning Center opens the doors to success through its great educational programs. Britt recalls his own father's words of wisdom: "Get the best education you can; it's the one thing that no one can take away from you."

## Certified Nursing Assistant Training Programs: Promising New Collaboration

The CLC has been offering Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training programs for many years. About 30 students graduate from these training programs every year.

Healthcare is growing much faster than other industries, and the demand for healthcare professionals is very high. Responding to this need in our community, our programs support our students to acquire the skills they need to become licensed CNAs, as well as to secure a job. The CNA Training programs offer a CNA training curriculum provided by Laboure College; contextualized reading and math curricula to support the reading and math skills of the program participants; a job readiness curriculum to prepare them for the demands of the workforce; and job placement activities to help them secure positions as CNAs in healthcare facilities and hospitals.

This year, the CLC is thrilled to collaborate with the Laboure College of Healthcare to provide the CNA training curriculum. The mission of Laboure College is "... to educate the diverse, compassionate, and highly skilled healthcare professionals that our communities need." Our students will have the chance to use top of the line healthcare equipment and technology in the college's leading-edge simulation labs on campus. They will also be able to refine their skills and will acquire real-world experience through clinical placements at top hospitals and health clinics.

In addition to the two CNA training programs for second-language speakers, the CLC will offer a CNA training program in the spring of 2022 for native speakers who are Cambridge residents.

## CLC Fulltime Staff Members Are Multitasking Heroes

The Community Learning Center is almost unique among adult basic education institutions in making a significant number of its teaching jobs fulltime, with paid holidays and benefits. This is made possible partly by a generous commitment from the City of Cambridge, partly through the support of funders and donors, and partly because of the willingness of CLC's amazing staff to take on a staggering variety of roles.

Yan Zheng is one of the staff's multitasking heroes. Her background is in career advising, and she wears a number of hats at CLC:

1. She is the Coordinator and Career Advisor of the Certified Nursing Assistant Program for second language learners.
2. She is CLC's Career Advisor, constantly connecting with employers, especially in the health care sector.
3. She teaches Job Readiness classes.
4. She is one of the ESOL Advisors, advising and supporting students to make sure that they are in the right classes and programs, informing them of their options to further their education once they graduate from the CLC, letting them know about career pathways and trainings, and supporting them in their search for employment.

Yan's parents are immigrants, whose focus has been on surviving and providing for her family. Yan has a real understanding of CLC students, the majority of whom are trying to do just that. And yes, she was smiling while describing all these significant jobs!



## Message from the President:

Celebrating 50 Years of the Community Learning Center

*In 1971, the Cambridge Community Learning Center opened its doors, launching a rare and successful collaboration with the city's Department of Human Service Programs. With the establishment of the Friends of CLC about 20 years later, a brilliant public-private partnership was born.*

*Over the past 50 years, the Community Learning Center has become one of Cambridge's most beloved and most effective organizations, launching thousands of adult students on the path to higher education, better careers, U.S. citizenship, and personal fulfillment. Read more about it in this newsletter, along with several other developments we are happy to share with you:*

- *A new CNA certification partnership is providing top of the line training to students entering the nursing field.*
- *The Board of the Friends of CLC has gained two talented new members.*
- *CLC staff members are honing their multitasking skills during the pandemic.*

*The Community Learning Center is surviving and thriving, thanks to the dedication of its extraordinary staff and to donations from generous donors like you. As the coronavirus stretches into its third year, continuing to disrupt our fundraising cycle, the Friends of CLC are ever grateful for your continued support.*

*We wish you a joyous holiday season and a happy, healthy, and peaceful 2022.*

Warmly,

*Phyllis Benjamin*



## Benefit for Bridge 2022

In lieu of an in-person fundraiser for the Bridge to College program, the Board is planning some exciting online events. We will keep you posted!

## CALL TO ACTION!



To become a CLC Volunteer or join the Friends Board, contact: Maria Kefallinou [mkefallinou@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mkefallinou@cambridgema.gov) 617.349.6363

Please continue to support the Friends of the Community Learning Center during this critical time. If you believe that educated citizens make strong, healthy communities and local economies, please **donate** by check to:

**Friends of the Community Learning Center**

5 Western Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

OR

Donate online at [friendsofclc.org](http://friendsofclc.org)

AND/OR

Donate .5% of your online purchases on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

**Friends of the Community Learning Center**

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