

CLC Launches New Program

The Community Learning Center is excited to announce the launch of the Early Childhood Education and Career Training Program, a newly created joint program of the CLC, the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood and the Office of Workforce Development. The purpose of the program is to provide top-notch training for early childhood educators, both to expand the field in general and to meet the staffing needs created by the City of Cambridge's imminent rollout of universal Pre-K.

The Early Childhood Education and Career Training Program offers two tracks. The internship track, with 11 current students, offers 24 weeks of online classes; a 480-hour paid internship (\$17/hr.) at one of seven internship sites in Cambridge (infant-toddler or preschool); weekly in-person classes at the CLC—for which participants are also paid; coaching; and assistance with resume and job search. There are also nine students in the scholarship track, for those already employed in childcare settings.

Participants who finish either program track earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, a national credential that allows holders to serve as either lead teachers or assistant teachers, depending on the state. Earning the certificate is no small task. On top of completing the 480-hour internship, candidates must complete a portfolio, earn pediatric first aid/CPR certification, complete 120 training hours, pass the CDA multiple choice test, and participate in a 2-hour classroom observation conducted by a specialist from the Council for Professional Recognition.

Sarah Figge Hussain, a past CLC volunteer and teacher, was recently hired as the Fulltime Trainings Advisor for the program. Sarah started at CLC as a volunteer classroom aide before joining as a part-time teacher in 2017. She has also been part of the Outreach Team since 2019. In her new role, Sarah conducts outreach to build the program, provides logistical support and coordination, and serves as the class advisor. Her main partner is content expert Rita Rzezuski, also a faculty member at Bunker Hill, who serves as the CDA Educational Coach and ECE Career Training Program class teacher. Rita oversees participants at their internship sites, ensuring that they are having a quality learning experience, and helps them prepare their CDA portfolio and get ready for the site visit.

The new ECE Career Training Program will help the CLC and its partners to elevate the work of the linchpins of healthy families and communities: early childhood educators.

Get Involved!

To become a CLC volunteer or join the Friends Board, contact Maria Kefallinou at mkefallinou@cambridgema.gov or (617) 349-6363

Friends Welcome New and Familiar Faces to Board



The Friends of CLC are very excited to welcome two new Board members.

Eleanor Stafford, a valued member of the CLC staff for eight years, recently left for a job at Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) in Andover.

At the CLC, Eleanor served many roles, including curriculum coordinator and teacher for the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Reading program, ABE program coordinator, and Bridge to College coordinator and advisor. In her current job at GLTS, she does institutional writing (e.g., newsletter, website content, and grant narratives) and helps vocational teachers – plumbers, electricians, cosmetologists, auto mechanics – develop their curricula and teaching skills.

An English major at Harvard, Eleanor has pursued an interest in writing throughout her career. Her former jobs include 4th and 5th grade teacher; learning disabilities specialist at Lesley University's Center for Academic Achievement; EqualAccess program manager for Libraries for the Future, a nonprofit dedicated to envisioning libraries as civic centers; GED teacher at a homeless shelter in Dorchester; ESL teacher at Harvard Bridge to Learning and Literacy; and then the CLC.

Along the way, she got her M.Ed. at Lesley, where she found her classmates to be "progressive, idealistic people from all backgrounds" and her experience there to be "inspiring and amazing." Eleanor continues with two of her past jobs: leading intensive courses to prepare teachers and paraprofessionals for the MA Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) and literacy trainer for Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts.

As a single mom of a preteen, busy professional, and now a Board member, Eleanor feels she's living proof of the adage, "If you want something done, ask the busiest person you know."

Achilles Gatsonis was born in Massachusetts to two parents who immigrated from Greece. He graduated from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), where he studied



Chemical Engineering. In January, he will start a master's degree in Biomedical Engineering at Brown University. He is also in the process of applying to medical school.

Achilles is excited to engage in service-oriented work, particularly where he can make use of his scientific and technical background. In high school, he worked with the Seven Hills Foundation on a team project to develop an assistive device to help people eat independently. For two years during the COVID pandemic, he was the networking chair of the WPI chapter of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. In this position, he organized online seminars with industry professionals to provide students with networking opportunities, while also learning about the different facets of chemical engineering and potential career paths.

Drawn to the Friends of the Community Learning Center by a passion for education, Achilles is inspired by the meaningful and crucial work done by nonprofits such as the Friends. He plans to use his technical background to help the Friends develop a more effective website and online presence. He and the other members of the Friends' Technical Team are currently investigating online methods and resources to help raise awareness about the Community Learning Center via the website.

We cannot stress enough how happy we are to have both Eleanor and Achilles on the Board of the Friends of CLC.

Stories from the Student Success Fund

The Student Success Fund, launched this year, has had an immediate impact on students' lives. Here is one example:

Maria Gorete Veader, a 2021 graduate of the Bridge to College program, is currently working towards her associate degree in Medical Information Management at Bunker Hill Community College. In the spring of 2021, Gorete received a \$1,000 scholarship from the Friends. As a result of the Friends' increased funding capacity last year, Gorete was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship in the spring of 2022. In her words, "[The increase] made a big difference. I can finish my courses faster. . . . If I didn't take the money, I don't know if I could manage because my daughter is also in college."



Go Paperless!

In order to stretch your donation dollars and save our natural resources, please go to www.friendsofclc.org/contact and sign up for online communication. We will not sell or share your email address or use it more than a handful of times a year: for the spring and fall newsletters, the annual appeal, and updates about important events such as graduation and the annual Benefit for Bridge. Online communication saves trees and helps us keep channeling more than 90% of our funds to direct services. Thank you for your continued support!

Message from the President: Searching for the New Normal

As we settle into the third winter of COVID, it feels as if everyone's dearest wish is "just to get back to normal." But what does that mean? Gather in person or on Zoom? Masks or no masks at the grocery store? Include vaccination status in an RSVP? It's impossible to go back to the days when we didn't have to think about such things, and equally impossible to predict what the future holds in terms of pandemic challenges and responses. It seems that the "new normal" is "no normal."

In one area, though, we can count on consistency. Our students at the Community Learning Center have never let go of their dream of improving their lives through education, and the staff is rock-steady in their commitment to helping the students achieve their goals. Face to face or online, masked or no, the CLC continues to pursue its mission with grace, flexibility, and a good measure of ingenuity.

We at the Friends of CLC are pleased to bring you word of new faces and new initiatives in our ongoing work. In this newsletter, we introduce two new Board members, both with deep roots at CLC; and we tell you about an exciting new program that, like everything we do, helps give our students a better life by building their skills and knowledge.

Through these turbulent times, you—dear readers and donors—have been an all-important presence enabling us to keep fulfilling our mission. Thank you for your continued support. We wish you a joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy 2023.

Gratefully yours,

President

Friends of the Community Learning Center

Call to Action

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 Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Online at: www.friendsofclc.org

Through Amazon Smile: Designate .5% of your online purchases to Friends of the Community Learning Center [EIN: 04-3148659]

Or through your employer's Matching Gift or Charitable Designation program.