

What if...

What if your language abilities prevented you from answering the phone?

Sometimes students are reluctant to answer the phone because it is more difficult than face-to-face communication. They will either wait until someone else is home or call the person back so they have time to formulate their answers. Some students save messages for their teachers to explain and differentiate between important messages and those from solicitors. Volunteers help make students more comfortable answering the phone and making phone calls. Students practice so they can call their teachers to schedule changes and manage their appointments independently.



What if you could not seek the proper assistance if your child had an emergency?

Students typically know to dial 911, but often cannot handle what comes next. Some have difficulty responding to the operator. Volunteers practice with students to memorize basic information, such as their name and address, and how to communicate with emergency responders. We also help students distinguish when calling 911 is necessary.

What if you could not read to your children at night?

As 41% of our students have limited or no schooling, IRWP offers their first opportunity for literacy. We provide children's books for story time. Volunteers can help students practice new words and comprehend stories. Mothers take pride in using their new skills to teach their children English. Their children gain a love of books and are better prepared to excel in school. Students with school-aged children can help with homework and communicate with their children's teachers. Students with higher reading skills have started reading for fun, with some making vocabulary lists to ask their teacher about in class.

What if you did not understand how to go grocery shopping?

Some students are initially confused by American supermarkets, often having shopped only in market places. They are unfamiliar with the types of food available and cannot read the labels. Many were so intimidated that they would wait for their husbands or teachers to accompany them. Volunteers teach students about American foods and ingredients to help those with religious or dietary restrictions. They can now shop for food and cook the new dishes their children may want to eat. Field trips to Soulard Market and international stores show students additional shopping options in the community.

What if you needed computer skills, but you could not attend a class?

Students often have or desire jobs that require various levels of computer literacy. Several volunteers have taught students basic word processing to write letters to employers, landlords, and friends. Students wanting extra practice have learned to use online educational websites. One IRWP student works as a housekeeper at a hospital that changed its system to email for scheduling. She risked losing her job. Her teacher helped her with her computer skills and gave her the job security she needed.



What if you had to constantly rely on interpreters to communicate?

Everyday communication can involve landlords, utility companies, bankers, and physicians. Frequently, children must interpret for their parents. Classes can focus on the words needed so students can handle these situations independently. Lessons include writing a check or balancing a bank statement. For students that have children with special health concerns or face many medical problems themselves, communicating with doctors without translators is a goal. Volunteers teach common and specific medical terminology to increase their understanding during doctor visits.

Our mission is

to increase the independence and reduce the isolation of immigrant and refugee women by teaching them basic English and practical living skills in the security of their own homes.

From the Director

Join us in celebrating the incredible growth in the number of hours taught, students served, and volunteers participating at IRWP this past year. In all, the program has grown over 15 percent, with 150 students taught by 140 volunteers. We have now assisted students from over 50 countries! Individual accomplishments speak louder than program numbers, however, and students' hard work has paid off. They have made great strides towards independence, such as our two students who opened their own businesses. We applaud their entrepreneurial endeavors.

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Even though our program has grown, so has our waiting list. Approximately 70 women have been waiting for a teacher at any given time. When matching volunteers and students, IRWP staff members consider locations, schedules, skill levels, and personalities. Although we try to pair students with teachers as quickly as possible, referrals for isolated students in need of English have continually increased. Students come to IRWP through referrals from community organizations, individual doctors, friends, family, and neighbors. Because we want every student to be successful, we make sure to pair each individual with the best teacher for them.

As IRWP is proud of this year's successes and expects to achieve even more next year, we always welcome new volunteers, giving more students the opportunity to learn. I hope that this newsletter will inspire people to donate their time, resources, or finances to help IRWP flourish in the coming years. Visit our Facebook page to learn about upcoming events and other ways you can support IRWP.

Pat Joshu - Executive Director



Famous Quote

"Your words are the greatest power you have. The words you choose and their use establish the life you experience."
– Sonia Choquette

Thank you to all of our wonderful supporters who made learning fun for 150 students in the last year!

Special thank you to the foundations for their wonderful support.
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Everyone that attended events, purchased raffle tickets, and donated to our silent auctions.

New Language, New Experiences



Kaythy and her son at Eckert's

Since IRWP student Kaythy began studying English with her teacher Kathleen, the two have gone on several outings. These trips exposed Kaythy to fun and educational things in St. Louis, where she resettled in 2007. When Kaythy's son later began school, she could participate in his class field trips with schoolmates and other parents, but was nervous. Would she know what to do? Would she be able to talk with other parents? She expressed these worries to Kathleen.

For this new experience, Kathleen accompanied Kaythy and her son's class to Eckert's Orchards. With Kathleen there to coach her throughout the trip, Kaythy felt comfortable participating in the day's activities. Kaythy even borrowed a Flip Camera from the IRWP office and took videos of the children, speaking in English about what they saw and learned. She gained the confidence to independently join other school trips to come.

Since then, Kaythy has accompanied her son and his class on a trip to the St. Louis Science Center. She and her husband even spent a day as volunteer parents at the zoo. With her teacher's help and her dedication to learning and using English, Kaythy has become active in

her new city. She is now able to share all the advantages with her family, leading the way for lots of fun and educational opportunities for them to enjoy together in the future.



Kathleen and Kaythy

Program Corner



How do you teach a student who speaks no English at all if you do not speak their language?

Lesson plans are written for teaching in English, starting at each student's individual level. Those who do not speak any English will start with the very basics. Every teacher receives a picture dictionary to use, facilitating understanding. Our students and teachers can communicate relatively easily, even if the student knows only a handful of vocabulary words. Having lessons in English gives students a great opportunity to start learning and using the language.



Is a teaching background required to volunteer?

It is not! We provide lesson plans, materials, and training for all of our volunteers. Lesson plans are easy to use, and we are available to volunteers on evenings and weekends for additional support. Typically, classes are for one hour, two times per week.



Does everyone start at the same level?

No. Our lesson plans cover five different levels from the most basic to the more advanced. We assess beginning levels according to students' backgrounds, proficiency, and native language similarities to English. Classes are customized for each student.



What types of skills do you teach besides English?

Students have many challenges from going to the grocery store to reading their electric bill. Lessons include practical living skills such as how to complete forms or compare costs. In one situation, a student's face had broken out for the first time and she did not know what to do. She and her teacher took a trip to Walgreen's, bought facial soap, and practiced washing their faces together! Whatever the challenge, volunteers give students the necessary tools to create their own solutions.



Are cultural differences between our teachers and students a problem?

Students come from a variety of backgrounds. Learning about one another's cultures can be a positive and interesting learning experience for both teacher and student. Teachers receive information on their students' traditions. For example, some cultures require people to take off their shoes before entering a home. Likewise, students can ask their teachers specific questions regarding American customs.



What are students' goals?

The first thing students usually express is the desire to communicate with others. They would like to talk to neighbors or other parents. Many hope to gain employment, improve their job skills, or obtain U.S. citizenship. All students have multiple goals, big and small, that they work diligently towards each week. Goals evolve over time as students accomplish different steps and gain confidence.



How can I become involved in IRWP?

There are many ways to be involved!

- Volunteer to teach
- Give a financial gift
- Join our Board of Directors
- Become an event sponsor
- Donate a gift certificate or basket for silent auctions
- Sponsor a third-party fundraiser
- Invite us to speak at your parish or organization
- Donate supplies for our students and teachers:
Dry erase boards, markers, erasers, index cards, copy paper, spiral notebooks, pencils, sharpeners
- Recycle your used ink jet cartridges with us



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Student Library

Moms love reading to their children. With hectic schedules, reading together gives mothers and children a chance to bond during quiet time. Wanting to foster this valuable tradition, IRWP created a library of books for students and their children to use together. Many students began borrowing books, trading them in for new titles when they had been enjoyed. Students are also encouraged to keep as their own those books that become family favorites.



The library started small, with books collected cheaply from book fairs. It gained a huge boost when the Center for International Education at Webster University held a book drive, donating over 750 books to the program. Professors, staff members, students, and community member gave books ranging from children's books to ESL textbooks. This wide array of titles gives choices for IRWP students at all levels of literacy.

Webster's donation inspired others to make their own literary contributions. We have had an outpouring of books from retiring teachers, volunteers, and community members who acknowledge the validity of reading. Our students so enjoy this library and we welcome any book donations to keep spreading the love of reading to our mothers and their children!

**Volunteer to teach today - one hour, twice a week.
Lesson plans, training, and materials are waiting for you!**

Save the Dates

Festival of Nations, August 25 & 26, 2012
Visit us in Tower Grove Park on Saturday and Sunday

Trivia Night, Saturday, September 29, 2012
St. Catherine Laboure, 9740 Sappington Road

Hoolie, Sunday, March 10, 2013
Maggie O'Brien's Restaurant, 2000 Market Street

Trivia Night

Join us for the 13th Annual Trivia Night/Silent Auction!

Tables of 8 @ \$20 per person

Can't attend? You can still purchase raffle tickets for the \$500 cash prize or enter the raffle for a beautiful handmade quilt. Visit our website to see the quilt or to download a reservation flyer.

Your business or group can be a Trivia Sponsor! Sponsorships start at \$100 for Silver Level.

Donate a basket, item, or gift certificate for our silent auction.

Your support can help us attain our goal of \$12,000 to help our students can reach new levels of success! Call 314-771-1104 for more information.

Visit our website at www.irwp.net to learn more.