

The Faces of Adult Learners: 25 Years in the Making

Donna Pomponio

Donna was 15 when she dropped out of school and got married. With a newborn baby and husband in tow, Donna crisscrossed the nation by bus. This was her classroom. Geography was experienced by passing the splendor of the Sierra Madre and Rocky Mountains and History created by participating in the marches and protests of the 60's.

After her marriage ended, a GED enabled Donna to pursue a successful career in business and real estate, all the while overcoming personal hardships such as the death of her 4 1/2 year old daughter and breast cancer. Eventually, Donna enrolled in college where she earned a dual degree in Painting and Art History. This experience led her to teaching. As an intern, Donna reincarnated the art program at the Notre Dame Education Center in South Boston. "Now I am working with young people who were in the same boat I was. I am the Program Coordinator helping out-of-school teenagers with their second chance at a high school diploma."



Adult Education Program:
Notre Dame Education Center
Adult Education Coalition:
South Boston Coalition for Adult Education and Employment

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative. (ALI)

What is ALI?

We are Boston adult basic education providers that receive funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or/and the City of Boston.

What do we do?

We provide services that help adult learners reach their educational and career goals as workers, parents, and community members:

- ◆ GED preparation
- ◆ English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ◆ Adult Basic Education: literacy and numeracy
- ◆ Transition to college and job training programs
- ◆ Adult Diploma

These profiles highlight the accomplishments and challenges of just a few of Boston's 6,500+ enrolled adult learners; another 5,500 are waiting to enroll.

Education: Improving Lives and Creating Opportunities!



Age: 37
Immigrated from Cape Verde in 1994
Adult Education Program:
"We're All In This Together" W.A.I.T.T. House, Inc.
Adult Education Coalition:
Roxbury Adult Literacy Coalition

Maria T. Barbosa

At the age of twenty-two, I immigrated to the United States from Cape Verde and everything changed. Now, I live in Boston and I am married with two sons.

In 2004, I experienced one of the worst years of my life. I lost my job and it was very difficult and stressful to find a new job because I did not have a high school diploma.

I was very scared that I was going to lose my house. I lost my appetite and felt sick everyday. Emotionally, I did not talk as much, and everything that used to be important to me did not matter anymore. To this day, I think that experience changed my life.

With my family's encouragement, I enrolled in W.A.I.T.T. House's adult basic education program in September 2005. Focusing on school work made me forget about my problems.

After a year of studies, I entered W.A.I.T.T. House's Pre-Diploma program, there I met representatives from the Career Collaborative. They helped me find a full-time job and continue with my education.

I recently passed the MCAS and will graduate with my high school diploma this June. I plan to become a Nursing Assistant and hope to enter Roxbury Community College's Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. Nursing is a great opportunity for someone like me who enjoys taking care of people.

For more info: Brunir O. Shackleton, Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services, (617) 918-5244 or brunir.shackleton.jcs@cityofboston.gov