

English for Speakers of Other Languages

Washington and Lee University

Volume 4, Issue 1

February 2015

What's New

ESOL 13th Anniversary

It is our pleasure to offer once again the ESOL Newsletter! ESOL stands for English for Speakers of Other Languages. Thirteen years ago, an ESL Group was founded under the Nabors Service League at Washington and Lee University. Today, ESOL is a successful student volunteer organization with an amazing impact in the community. Each semester, eager Washington and Lee students with an interest in international cultures and service help facilitate communication in Rockbridge County. The organization provides the following services, all at no cost:

-English tutoring in home, in school, and after school. Positive mentors for youth.

- Interpretations for parent-teacher conferences, medical appointments, etc.

-Tutoring in other languages, when requested

-Translations of documents for community agencies

ESOL is comprised of four main sections: in-school education, translations, adult and family education, and the international trip. The first three focus on local needs, and the international trip is aimed at global outreach and experiences for W&L students.

ESOL Family Dinner 2014 Photo



Alumni Corner



Aria Allan graduated from W&L in 2012 and is now a 2L at the W&L Law School.

What did you learn from your experience tutoring in ESOL?

After graduating from W&L, I spent about 6 months in Lima, Peru as a volunteer English teacher in an immersion school (the children were taught half the subjects in Spanish and the other half in English). My experiences as an ESOL volunteer provided the foundation for my work in Lima and taught me how to work with people of all ages and skill levels. While I mainly worked with the elementary-aged children, I also helped the faculty and administration with their English in upper-level conversation classes. Being an ESOL volunteer taught me different approaches and learning activities and—most importantly—to have patience with my students and with myself as we worked through the language together.

What is your fondest ESOL memory?

I worked almost exclusively with an adult immigrant who was new to the Lexington/Rockbridge area. Over the two years I tutored him, I was able to watch him grow from a shy man into a confident and intellectually curious community member. He spoke very little, disjointed English in the beginning but developed into a strong reader and speaker. To see his curiosity develop (in two languages, no less) was quite remarkable and incredibly rewarding.



Aria, what advice do you have for ESOL tutors who are learning to become teachers?

First, you have to be willing to take a deep breath and recognize when one of your lesson plans or activities isn't working. It's always hard to accept that the lesson you spent hours planning isn't working the way you had hoped, but you have to bounce back and change to suit the students' needs. Second, embrace the changes! It means you're growing as a teacher. Finally, relax (this was hardest for me). I always wanted every student to be perfect—but celebrating the small victories is just as important as teaching the lesson.

How have you applied what you learned from ESOL in your current work?

I'm now in law school, and a wonderful part about being an ESOL volunteer is that you work in multiple languages and start learning how languages relate to each other. This innate linguistic background is imperative in law when you spend hours poring over opinions and treatises. Learning languages and seeing how non-native speakers learn English is a wonderful way to approach legalese.

W&L students began ESOL in the Fall of 2002. Volunteers recognized the needs for language instruction and services for the growing Latina/o population in Rockbridge County to ease the transition into life in the area. It is our pleasure to dedicate a section of our Newsletter to the ESOL alumni who helped make the organization what it is now. We give alumni who participated in the growth of the organization a chance to write about their perspectives and memories of ESOL. If you'd like to be interviewed, let us know!



Sharon Patterson (RCPS) and ESOL President Kate LeMasters ('15) at a community dinner

Staying in Touch

We would love to hear more about our alums and what they are up to. If you have a moment to drop us a line, please do! Our advisor is Professor Ellen Mayock, and the organization's e-mail address is esol@wlu.edu.



ESOL Accomplishments

This past semester the organization has made great strides in helping the Rockbridge Community. Through expanded recruitment, the volunteer participation has increased over this past semester. ESOL currently has a hundred volunteers teaching, tutoring, interpreting, and translating in the Rockbridge community. The organization has also grown this semester through the purchase of educational resources for our teachers and tutors. These new resources consist of textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, math flashcards, board games, and, especially, children's books in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The organization also hosted a community dinner for its ESOL clients, teachers, and tutors, which was an excellent way to thank everyone for a great semester.

This past semester, our Translation team was hard at work. Led by Daniel Rodríguez, they completed two lengthy translation projects. The first was for Rockbridge Area Health Clinic, and the second was for the Staniar Gallery's Latino Artist exhibit, which will be displayed in the spring of 2015. Finally, they were able to complete short translations for Rockbridge County Public Schools, Rockbridge Area Hospice, and Lexington City Schools.

The organization has been running monthly teacher training workshops to continue to improve our growth and helpfulness in the community. This upcoming March, ESOL is preparing to send three student leaders, Kate LeMasters, Jean Turlington, and Noelle Rutland, to the TESOL Conference in Toronto! They will attend workshops and gather new materials to enhance the teacher workshops here on campus upon their return.

Finally, this term, Winter 2015, ESOL is co-sponsoring a Spanish conversation class. All students registered in the class spend 1-2 hours a week working at ESOL community placements. These include HeadStart, Lexington City Schools, Rockbridge County Schools, the Rockbridge Area Health Center, and the Washington and Lee Immigrant Rights Clinic. Also, in late March, ESOL will co-sponsor the visit of Professor Nuria Mendoza Domínguez, expert on audio-visual translation and translation protocols. Keep an eye out for publicity about the public lecture, workshop, and class visits of Professor Mendoza!

ESOL Leader Reflections

We spoke with Kate LeMasters, current ESOL president and Senior about her experience in the organization.

What have you learned from your experience tutoring and as a leader in ESOL?

My experience with ESOL has taught me more than I can say. I've learned the value of listening to families and students about what their needs are, the importance of coordinating services as much as possible (from tutoring to mentoring to providing meals and more), and just how critical it is to build sustainable relationships between W&L and community partners in order for our university to have a role in helping catalyze positive change. As a leader in ESOL, I've learned how vital each volunteer, each community member, each faculty partner, and each person being tutored is to this organization. What we do only has value because of everyone who is a part of it and I'm still growing in my appreciation for everyone who has dedicated themselves to this program in some form or another.

What advice do you have for current tutors?

I encourage current tutors to really get to know the families and students they work with beyond their need for tutoring. These kids may need role models, a friend to play basketball with, or someone to go on a walk with just as much as they need academic or English tutoring. I would also encourage them to commit themselves to their placements over the long term while at W&L, not to think of it as a semester- or year-long commitment but as an incredible opportunity to build relationships outside of W&L in our community for their entire four years here.

Do you have any plans with ESOL after you graduate? What will you take with you as you go into the real world?

I know I will take invaluable and intangible things with me from ESOL after I graduate, many of which I'm sure I cannot fully foresee now. The experience I have had with ESOL has taught me the value of listening to others to better understand their needs, which is something that will guide me next year and in the years to come. I am pursuing a career in global public health and listening to people seems obvious but is often overlooked in this work. I will also carry with me the importance of having holistic services for people, as I believe this has made a huge difference with what ESOL has been able to accomplish. By viewing everyone we work with as people who we truly care about and as people we want to succeed, I think we have been able to cater holistically to people's needs and, at least I hope, have contributed somewhat to the progress they've made in their English, school work, confidence, and more.



ESOL & EWB Partner Up

ESOL and Engineers Without Borders (EWB) have established a great partnership. ESOL volunteers participate in EWB's yearly trips to Bolivia, Guatemala, and other locations to help the local communities. This year, ESOL will also be helping tutor the members of Engineers Without Borders in Spanish prior to their departure to Bolivia. The project with which ESOL will be helping EWB this year is a trip to Bolivia to build eco-latrines this summer, from May 18th to June 18th. This project has been carried out for several years in various locations and has proven to be very successful. The eco-latrine is a design that works as a shower and bathroom. The water is heated up on top of the eco-latrine, and, once warmed, it can be used for showering. After the shower, the water can then be used for other tasks.

Another project on which a few members are working is a trip to Pueblo, Guatemala, for a Bio-sand water filtration system. There has been a problem with the filter, and, therefore, the volunteers on this year's trip hope to fix the unexpected problems from the last trip, implement an arsenic filter for the water, and take more samples from their water source.

If you are interested in participating in one of this year's EWB projects, please contact, Cort Hammond (hammondc15@mail.wlu.edu) and Matt Lubas (lubasm18@mail.wlu.edu).

Donating to ESOL

One of our most challenging tasks continues to be raising enough funds for our yearly operating budget. If you are considering giving to Washington and Lee, please keep ESOL in mind. Thank you!

