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Spring/Summer 2018

Portland English as a Second Language Scholarship Fund is now...



SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MAINE IMMIGRANTS

English and Job Skills for Life



Six of SMI's scholarship recipients attended the Fundamentals of Legal Interpreting training at House of Languages during Summer 2017- Learn more about House of Languages in the

Scholarship Spotlight section below—Here is a photo of the entire class, with SMI Scholarship recipients noted:

Back row, from left: Constant K., Nanouchka M. (SMI Scholarship recipient), Christian B. (SMI Scholarship recipient), Ahmed H., Anas A. **Middle row, from left:** Djima A. (SMI Scholarship recipient), Chanelle I., Janice J., Majlinda M., Yvonne K. I. (SMI Scholarship recipient), Ghomri R. (SMI Scholarship recipient), Dolgormaa H. (HOL Director), Hanna S., Esq. **Front row, from left:** Theary R., Greta L., Lucia R. (SMI Scholarship recipient)

A Letter from our Board President



Happy Spring from SMI--

2018 is proving to be a year of change for our organization. Last December, we had a sendoff for board president, David Currier. He squeezed PESLSF into a busy professional and personal life and we benefited greatly from his leadership. Seen in the photo below are members of our hard working board, celebrating David's outgoing role as president and his new one as treasurer.

After years of grumbling over the length of PESLSF (say it quickly 5 times and you will understand), the board has voted to give us a new name, *Scholarships for Maine Immigrants*. Our new name, abbreviated to SMI, with the tag line, "English and Job Skills for Life," is both easier to say, and speaks to the broader mission of our organization.

We have a perfectly good website but we will have a more dynamic one by the fall, making it easier for students to find us and apply online for our Scholarship support.

Our mentor program, fostering a connection between scholarship recipients and Board members, is gaining traction. Our scope of educational opportunities has expanded so we now help students with English and job skills beyond USM and SMCC. The House of Languages which provides interpreter training has joined the roster of programs we support. (See below for more details on the programs and classes SMI supports.)

We are excited about these new developments and you will be hearing more in the coming months as we spread the word. None of these changes can happen without the generosity of our many donors and the dedication of a hard-working board. The biggest change we'd all like to see is the ability to help MORE students as they find their way to new lives in our country. Thank you for your interest in and support of PESLSF/SMI, which gives us the courage to change.

Let's hear it for change,

Debby Murray

SMI Board President



SMI Board members celebrate outgoing President of the Board David Currier in December 2017. He will remain on the Board as Treasurer.

Back Row: Susan Webster, Incoming SMI President Debby Murray, Lorie Dana, Kristine Hedtler and Susan Martens **Front Row:** Blanca Santiago, Valerie DeVuyst, David Currier and Solange Kellerman **Board members not able to attend:** Emma Adams, Eleanor Goldberg, Tess Grossi and E'nkul E. Kanakan

Board of Directors

Debby Murray, President
David Currier, Treasurer
Lorie Dana, Secretary

Emma Adams
Valerie DeVuyst
Eleanor Goldberg
Tess Grossi
Kristine Hedtler
E'nkul E. Kanakan
Solange Kellerman
Susan Martens
Susan Webster

SMI Welcomes Emma Adams to our Board of Directors

Who We Are



Formerly known as PESLSF, Scholarships for Maine Immigrants (SMI) was founded in 2000 to help New Mainers obtain the language skills needed to succeed in their new home country. Scholarships are awarded to local immigrants and refugees who have completed high school and need stronger language skills to realize their career or educational goals. To learn more, visit us at www.peslsf.org.



Can you briefly describe your background—personal and professional—and share the talents you bring to PESLSF/SMI?

I grew up in Maine but lived elsewhere, including 7 years internationally, for about 12 years. Most of my professional career has been in the travel and education industry, from designing customized group tours of Italy, serving foreign service officers and diplomatic staff at the American Embassy in Rome, working as a travel specialist at AAA, to managing the international curriculum of college study abroad students right here in Portland at CIEE. I also teach Italian, mainly an Italian for Travelers class, at a local language school, preparing students both linguistically and culturally for their experience overseas. After being away for so long, and having played a direct or indirect part in hundreds of people's intercultural and foreign language experiences, I'm deeply appreciative of the growth in diversity in my home state and makes this opportunity immensely personal for me...[read more of Emma's interview](#)

[here.](#)

Scholarships for Maine Immigrants News Update

New Name, Same Mission

SMI is very happy to announce our name change from 'Portland English as a Second Language Scholarship Fund' (PESLSF) to 'Scholarships for Maine Immigrants (SMI)'. Our new name speaks to our mission—just with fewer words. We are also planning to update our website in the coming months. Until then our website address remains www.peslsf.org; our Scholarship Application and PayPal account also remain PESLSF until the website update is complete. Donations to the PayPal site are still valid. More update news in the Fall 2018 Newsletter.



Many thanks to Duncan Stout and Mike Yoder at CD&M Communications for donating their time and expertise in designing our new name and logo!

SMI's Annual Scholarship Celebration

In April, we held our Annual Scholarship Celebration at the Portland Public Library. This annual event is a chance for all of us to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of this year's scholarship recipients!

SMI Scholarships for Portland Adult Education Graduates

For the first time, SMI will be offering two \$500 scholarships to June 2018 Portland Adult Education graduates (one male, one female) who are seeking credentials of value within one year of graduation. SMI Board President Debby Murray will present the awards during the graduation ceremony on June 28th at Merrill Auditorium. The PAE graduation is open to the public and celebrates the accomplishments of PAE's students who have attained high school diplomas and those who've passed the HiSET test (formerly GED).

Congratulations to our Recent Scholarship Recipients!



We're very proud to announce the 27 scholarships we awarded to 21 qualified recipients who have been or are currently in class since our last Newsletter. Several recipients applied for and received multiple scholarships. Students have received scholarships to attend the CNA training program at

Where are SMI's scholarship recipients from?

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dem. Rep. of Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Ivory Coast, Kazakhstan, Korea, Morocco, Peru, Russia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Ukraine, Vietnam.

Portland Adult Education, the Interpreter Training at House of Languages and English proficiency classes at USM and SMCC.

To see a full list of recipients, click [HERE](#). Only the first initial of recipients' last names have been used to protect their privacy. In addition, we are contributing financial support to David N., of the Dem. Rep. of Congo, as he makes his way through the many and costly prep tests that will ready him to take his Medical Boards in this country. His goal is to practice medicine here in the United States, building on his career as a doctor in the Congo. This is a challenging process and we wish him the best of luck!

For more information about the criteria for applying and the SMI Application Form and Financial Information Form, click [HERE!](#)

Scholarship Spotlight



*This Newsletter edition spotlights House of Languages and its director/founder, **Dolgormaa Hersom**. Located in Portland, House of Languages (HOL) provides language services in over 30 languages, as well as document translations. HOL offers training courses for qualified bi-lingual speakers. SMI began offering scholarship support for HOL training courses in 2017.*

Ms. Dolgormaa Hersom, who is known as Dolly, founded House of Languages in 2012. "There was a real need for qualified interpreters in hospitals and in the courts. With so many people in the Greater Portland area speaking so many languages, it is so important to make sure they can be understood and do business in our community."

Ms. Hersom has a first-hand understanding of life as an immigrant. She came to this country from Mongolia over 20 years ago speaking only a few words of English. After graduating from University of Maine at Farmington, she has worked in many different organizations, always with

the focus on language access and improving access to services for immigrants—including Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services and United Way of Greater Portland...[read more about Dolly's story here.](#)

For more information about House of Languages, visit their website:

<http://www.houseoflanguages.com/>

Programs and Classes Supported by SMI

As we make the switch in our name this year from PESLSF to SMI, we wanted to update everyone on what classes and programs we are currently supporting through scholarships. We are proud to report that since we first started awarding scholarships in 2000, SMI has awarded over \$170,000 in scholarships to a total of over 300 qualified recipients. In 2000, we began with \$8,500 in scholarships to a total of 25 recipients; fast forward to 2017 when we awarded nearly \$25,000 in scholarships to a total of 33 recipients (some recipients apply for and receive more than one scholarship).

We could not have made these awards without the ongoing support of our donors through our Annual Appeal. Due to the steady increase in support in the past few years, we have been able to expand the list of programs where we can provide financial support to qualified applicants. Here is a snapshot of the programs we are currently supporting:

- University of Southern Maine: Our first partnership was with the University of Southern Maine, where we have been funding courses in English proficiency since 2000. We continue to support classes during the Fall, Spring and Summer semester programs.
- Southern Maine Community College: In general, immigrant students at Southern Maine Community College have access to other forms of scholarship but we do provide support at this institution on a case-by-case basis.
- House of Languages: In 2017, we provided our first scholarships for Interpreter Training Classes at House of Languages (HOL) in Portland. We also directly funded training classes at HOL so that these classes could be offered free to students.
- Portland Adult Education: We have provided scholarship support since 2015 for qualified applicants to the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program offered by PAE. In 2017, we donated money directly to PAE to help fund job skills/computer classes.
- Other Scholarship Opportunities: On a case-by-case basis, we support prep tests for accreditation, certification and/or boards.

We are always looking for new opportunities to support immigrant students who are seeking to improve their language and/or job skills. If you know of a class or program you think we might be interested in, please email us: thefund@maine.rr.com.

SMI's 2017 Annual Fundraising Appeal Update

Earlier this year, we concluded another successful annual fundraising campaign. We solicit support only once each year so this campaign is critical to our mission. We are pleased to report that donations grew again this year, after a record-setting growth last year. We are now raising \$25,000 per year from well over 100 donors, and our goal is to give more than that amount away this year in scholarships!

We are very grateful for this support from our donors. You allow us to continue to extend financial support to immigrants who are pursuing studies to help them adapt to their new communities and to improve the lives of their families.

You can still donate online through a secure PayPal account [HERE](#) or send a check to Scholarships for Maine Immigrants P.O. Box 281 Portland, ME 04112.

We appreciate your sharing this newsletter with interested family and friends.

Thank you again for your support!

Donate Here!

More Community Resource Organizations Supporting New Mainers

If you would like to support New Mainers in other ways, you might be interested in knowing about these other organizations in the Greater Portland area (if you don't already). We are all under the same tent, working toward the same goals.

Please click [HERE](#) to see the list of organizations where you can donate clothing, household goods, food, your time and/or a check. Contact information (links or phone numbers) is provided to get you started. If you know of an organization to add to this list, please email us at thefund@maine.rr.com.



SMI is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
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Our mailing address is:

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