Enter an emergency room in America and there are doctors and nurses shouting directions and medicines, and individuals searching for a relief of pain. This sounds confusing, intense, scary and uncomfortable. Your only language is English and you enter an emergency room in China, Korea, or Spain. This sounds even more confusing, intense, scary, and uncomfortable. You don’t know the language, procedures, or your rights. This confusion and fear happens every day to immigrants and refugees in Philadelphia, but Project SHINE is providing hope.

AmeriCorps member and Temple University student, Josephine Figlia saw a growth in participation to the health literacy lessons, “from zero students our count now has risen to over 20! Teaching ESL with a health literacy focus has brought up many of the issues our students face in their everyday lives.” Figlia is an immigrant herself and is taking her experience as a career launch. “One day I hope to take part in immigration reform policy or work in immigration law helping to make the lives of my students and people like them easier. My passion roots in helping sustain society, seeing the big picture.”

The learning is full circle as Helen Hui, AmeriCorps member at Coffee Cup, has discovered, “Most of the elders I met were highly educated in their countries. We can learn from their history about history, we can learn a language as we teach a language; we can learn their culture as we share our culture. We can help them become valuable citizens as we learn how to treasure them. As volunteers, we have the opportunity to help make the immigrants elders’ new environment more manageable and in return we are intrinsically rewarded.”

The AmeriCorps Health Literacy program has been replicated at University of North Carolina, Greensboro and University of Texas, El Paso. Each of these sites has 20 members, including many older adult immigrants. Information in AmeriCorps can be found at www.projectshine.org and www.americorps.gov.
Is it possible for a required course to show the first hand value of being an engaged citizen, provide credit for volunteering, and give a global experience without leaving Philadelphia? Yes it is, thanks to the passion for community engagement that Carol Harris-Shapiro, PhD of Temple University brought to the Mosaic Seminar course.

Mosaic Seminar is a required course where Temple students read important world history texts, that are organized by themes: journeys, self and other, community, and ways of knowing. Each theme has three required texts and selective texts. Harris-Shapiro eliminated the selective texts to incorporate Project SHINE. She saw great books and great discussion, but a more powerful component when the themes come alive in the stories of the elder immigrants/refugees. In the journeys theme the students interviewed their learners, in self and other they looked at their own reactions to the tutoring experience; i.e. defensive mechanisms, in community and ways of knowing they discussed religion (visited a religious service) or talked about the cultures of immigrants/refugees at the site. The coursework included a weekly journal connecting the book topics to the experience with SHINE, various essays, learner centered projects (interviewing the learners, presenting on the site, etc), and comprehension tests on the books. “Temple students are getting head knowledge and action knowledge”, states Harris-Shapiro.

Temple University criminal justice/Arabic minor student, Madalee Haines had an interest in ESL however had no prior teaching experience which made her nervous, like a majority of students in the course. But, she was able to branch out, serve the community, and create a network with the Arab American site where she tutored at. Half of the students in Harris-Shapiro’s course didn’t know community service was a part of it, but Haines says with a confident smile, “The time and money is worthwhile.” Haines will now serve as the peer educator for the course. She understands being nervous and uneasy about not only teaching, but teaching elderly immigrants with limited to no knowledge of the English language. As a peer educator she will share the resources that SHINE has its website and its office library. She advises new students to be open to the new opportunity and states, “It is a privilege to get into a class outside the norm.”

This course plants the seed for a habit of volunteering. Students walked away with exposure to the immigrant experience, and a global perspective. Many have plans to include underserved populations in their career interests. Students told Harris-Shapiro, “I didn’t know I could teach” and “They (the learners) want me to come back every day.” It was the proactive students that truly succeeded. “It was a stretch, and not obvious to incorporate SHINE into the course. It was a challenge but fun.”

**Philadelphia Opportunities**

**volunteer@templecil.org**

SHINE tutors—2 hours a week for 10 weeks during the fall and spring semester.

AmeriCorps members— 9-10 hours a week for 8 months. Duties include: health literacy and health activities. Members receive a stipend and education award.

Internships/volunteer work— Available according to the interests of the student, course requirement, and needs in SHINE.

Student Advisory Board— Leadership program for returning SHINE tutors. Duties include, planning events, assistance with coordinating and training new tutors, etc.

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**The SHINE model is replicated at :**

- California State University, Fullerton
- City College of San Francisco
- San Francisco State University
- San Jose City College
- San Jose State University
- Emory University
- Georgia Perimeter College
- Charminade University of Honolulu
- Metropolitan State University
- Minneapolis Community & Technical College
- Hamilton College
- Utica College
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- University of Texas, El Paso

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