

Employers & New Mainers Resource Center unite to build worker skills

The mission of PAE's New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) is to support Maine's economic development by meeting employers' demands for a skilled and culturally diverse workforce. It helps immigrants and refugees overcome barriers to successfully enter the US workforce.

Since January 2014, 546 individuals have participated in job skills classes, workshops, professional networking groups, and/or employment case management services.

Building on PAE's very effective Job Class program, NMRC programs follow national best practices including the *Welcome Back Initiative*, with NMRC now a state affiliate, and provides the integrated education and training required by new federal WIOA laws. NMRC collaborates with other service providers and is accessible to adult education offices and individuals around the state through its website and one-on-one consultation.

NMRC targets sectors in which the largest number of participants have experience. Focusing on career clusters and skills gaps, NMRC works to link participant skills and employer needs by engaging employers in the process. NMRC works with employers to match people with jobs and involve them in Job Readiness classes and professional networking groups.

Employer collaborations include:

- *Goodwill Workforce Solutions* developed a computer/IT work experience program, combined with a workplace English class, with the goal of moving students into on-the-job training and permanent employment.
- UNUM volunteers helped create an English for finance professionals course with support from CEI through the *Cohen Foundation*. The course will conclude with a networking event.
- *Opportunity Alliance*, *Sea Breeze* and *Arcadia New England* participated in networking events focused on health care and landscaping.



NMRC services for new Mainers include:

1. **Case management**, advising and individualized help.
2. **Professional networking groups** for doctors, computer/IT professionals, and engineers.
3. **Classes:**
 - **Job Class A & B** introduces US workplace culture and job search skills assistance using computer tutorials. All students develop a professional job search portfolio.
 - **Contextualized English Classes** for specific sectors: English for health professionals, and pilots for IT, accounting, finance and economic professionals.
4. **Workshops** offer topics on Career Fair preparation, applications, resume writing, job search and interview tips.
5. **Employer networking events and job fairs** create opportunities for employers and job seekers to meet face-to-face and learn about job requirements and openings.
6. **Advice and assistance with credential evaluation**

Friends of Portland Adult Education supports the work of NMRC through grants from: *The Betterment Foundation*, *Maine Community Foundation - People of Color Fund* and *Undapassawana Fund*.

We share NMRC/PAE student success stories on page 2 – the story of Danny and Victoire Liwanga.

Visit the NMRC website:

<http://www.nmrcmaine.org/>

or contact Sally Sutton, Program Coord.

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Director's Update

I have come to understand our work at PAE and our role in the community more deeply over the last 2 years, and it is clear to me that we are an integral part of making and keeping Portland a vibrant, welcoming community.

We've all heard that Maine is at full employment. Well, we know that is not necessarily true. The individuals, who are not currently working have the most barriers to employment. Many of our students fall into this category because they are experiencing homelessness, have been laid-off from their long time job or just arrived in Portland from a war-torn country.

Our job is to bridge that gap for people. Whether it be learning English, basic computer skills or completing a high school diploma, **we meet people where they are**

and help them get where they want to go. We help people transition to college; we help people build new skills to enrich their lives. Our enrichment programs are often the only connection city taxpayers have with Portland Public Schools.

We help people get jobs! PAE is an integral part of the workforce pipeline in greater Portland. Businesses come to us looking for employees. This message needs to be clear as we face tight budgets. Our students are the future workforce and taxpayers in Portland.



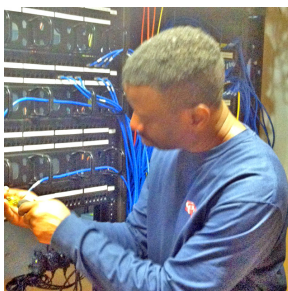
Beth Campbell, Director of Adult and Community Education

The job hunter's perspective: recent asylum seekers share their experiences

Meet two New Mainers from the Democratic Republic of Congo: **Victoire Liwanga** works at Planson International as an Account Assistant. **Danny Liwanga** works at Connectivity Point as a Structured Cabling Technician

What is your work background?

Danny: My work background is in the telecommunication industry. I worked as an engineer in transmission for 13 years, and my main duties were to install, to configure and to analyze performance of transmission equipment on the network.



Victoire: I worked as an assistant in administration, marketing, procurement and operation departments with international and business organizations for 15 years. I was administrative support to different specialists and managers.

What was difficult about your job search in the U.S.?

Danny: English was a big barrier even on the phone or face to face interview. So I did my best to improve my English and today I can say my English is good. Without internet in the apartment, it was impossible to look for jobs at home.

Victoire: It was not very difficult to find a job, but I think it was also a question of time. As every job seeker wants, we want to find the job at the first application. I got my work permit around July 10, applied for this job in August and after many interviews I got the offer in September. So for me it took just one and a half months.

What helped you in your search?

Danny: Portland Adult Education (PAE), especially NMRC and the computer lab helped me a lot. Also, attending Job Class, which taught me what job is like in US, it helped me to understand and to perform a good job search. The IT group as well was helpful.

Victoire: I was told that in the US you cannot work without a work permit. I began to search for volunteer jobs to keep my brain working and learn the customs in the US workforce. My volunteer jobs, my network with different American friends, supervisors, PAE and NMRC support helped me to find a job.

What advice would you give to other New Mainers looking for work?

Danny: There are a lot of jobs in Maine. If you have a work background, do not give up looking for work in your background. Even if you do not have a work background, PAE / NMRC will help you to find work in Maine.

Victoire: I would advise new Mainers that it is important to learn and improve your English. This is the first step. Search for volunteer jobs which help to open doors to a network where you can serve while searching for jobs and beginning a new life in the US. As my husband said, PAE and NMRC are useful resources for new immigrants in Maine.



Is there anything else that you want to share?

Danny and Victoire: NMRC/ PAE offers a lot of opportunities. Also, it is important to read the board next to the office and to create your own network with American people to improve your English and when they get to know who you are, they could be a good referral and reference for you when you are ready to work. Always practice English in ESOL classes when you have time this helps to make progress.

We are thankful for all support we received. PAE and NMRC have helped us to find jobs.

Again, thank you and best regards,
Victoire and Danny Liwanga.

The New Africa Conference

by **Coco Kazadi**, PAE College Transition student

I was introduced to the Camden Conference by Anja Hanson, my academic adviser at PAE. One day in a routine one-on-one conversation she asked me, "Have you heard about the Camden Conference?" She gave me a quick description and added that I would be interested since this year's theme was "The New Africa". She was right. As an African, the theme hooked me and I registered right away.

I did that with a question in mind: "What could be said today about Africa that has not been said by so many writers and speakers up to now?" I didn't know that I was just about to experience the most attention-grabbing and motivating gathering I have ever gotten a chance to attend.

From the first to the last day of the conference, I was captivated by the broadness and quality of the information dispensed and its relevance. The procession of speakers was not less impressive; all speakers were expert in specific fields: a notorious writer, an ex-high-ranked intelligence agent, a politician, and even a presidential candidate. Each one of them offered a compelling presentation that linked well with the others so meaningfully and spoke equally to the theme. I didn't come out of the conference the same but profusely informed about international, political, social and religious issues.

The Camden Conference instilled in me a new layer of leadership attributes and tweaked the lens through which I see and connect with my homeland and the rest of the world.

College Transitions Success Stories

PAE's College Transitions (CT) program offers academic preparation to 40 students per year to accelerate their success in college. Funding at the state level makes this highly efficient program possible and enables students to save their federal financial aid for college completion rather than remediation. A recent CT student expressed what the program meant to her, "Thank you so much. If I'm doing well, it's all because of PAE, and I'll never forget that." Zakia Momand is one of nine CT alums to earn spots on SMCC's Fall 2015 Dean's List.



Students at USM are thriving too; both recent CT alums earned straight As in their first semester. A former CT student started at Smith College this fall, and another student awaits admissions news. These students do the hard work, but financial assistance by the Maine Community Foundation is essential. In two years, ten students have received \$1,000-3,000 in Rockefeller Scholarships.

PAE Students Learn about the History of Immigration in Maine

In January, two ESOL5 classes visited Maine Historical Society's fascinating exhibit, "400 Years of New Mainers," thanks to Friends of Portland Adult Education.

Students had fun finding the flags of many of their home countries painted on lobster buoys hanging by the museum's entrance, which is part of an art project aimed at welcoming New Mainers to Portland.

Immigrants from several countries are profiled and artifacts brought by immigrant families are featured. Students were surprised and delighted to see a Koran on display and asked if they could contribute their own artifacts.

A looping video tells the story of the Lewiston High School soccer team that won the state title last fall. Many of the players are refugees from Somalia and other African countries.

One student wept with joy when she recognized a Lewiston High soccer player who grew up in her neighborhood in Turkey. She hadn't seen him for many years.



Muganizi, Emily, Zulu, members of ESOL5 class in front of the Maine Historical Society's Longfellow House.

One section discusses conflicts over the centuries between immigrants and other residents of Maine. A painting depicts the burning of a Catholic church in Bath in the 1800s. A photo shows a huge gathering of Ku Klux Klansmen in Portland in 1923.

Students were surprised and unsettled to learn that the Klan once had a large presence in Maine that targeted French-Canadian Catholics. One student noted the irony of Americans founding this country in order to have religious freedom and then denying that right to others. Another student remarked that immigration and religion are an explosive combination.

Two students from Central America scoured the exhibit for stories of Latino immigrants, and they were disappointed to find only one photo. One of them brought the problem to the attention of the museum's education director.

Another student summed up what he learned at the exhibit this way: "A lot of people came (to America) from lot of places for a lot of reasons."

By Shoshana Hoose, PAE ESOL Teacher

Education at Work for Maine awarded to PAE

In November, PAE was awarded the *Education at Work for Maine Award* from Finance Authority of Maine (FAME)! Director Bethany Campbell shared the stories of PAE alums **Fartun Hirisi** and **Hughes Ingabire** (pictured to the right) with a big crowd. Many thanks to *FAME Finance Authority of Maine* for this honor!



Graduation date set

Save the date for Graduation!
Thursday June 16th
6 pm at Merrill Auditorium

PAE alum attends State of the Union

Tabin Tangila Mesu Kamba, former Portland Adult Education student, attended President Obama's State of the Union address in January as a guest of Rep. Chellie Pingree.

NMRC is building worker skills

Continued from page 1

Articles on immigrants in the Maine workforce

The impact of New Mainers on the economy in Portland, Maine Biz:
<http://www.mainebiz.biz/article/20160125/CURRENTEDITION/301209995/immigrants-key-to-what-maine-needs-to-solve-its-demographic-challenges>

The focus of immigrants filling the gap of retiring workers in Maine was featured in the Bangor Daily news:
<http://bangordailynews.com/2016/03/04/politics/5-barriers-still-preventing-immigrants-from-doing-more-to-fill-maines-workforce-gap/>

CEI's new report: Building Maine's Workforce: How Maine Can Embrace Immigrants and Strengthen the Workforce:
<http://www.ceimaine.org/news/cei-report-immigrants-can-strengthen-maines-economy/>

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From Friends of PAE Board President

FPAE supports and promotes the valuable work of PAE staff and students. During the last year FPAE raised \$160,664 and spent \$177,751 (the difference represents carryover grants that now have been spent down). Of these revenues \$46,114 were unrestricted funds from individuals and donor advised funds. We have come a long way in three years!

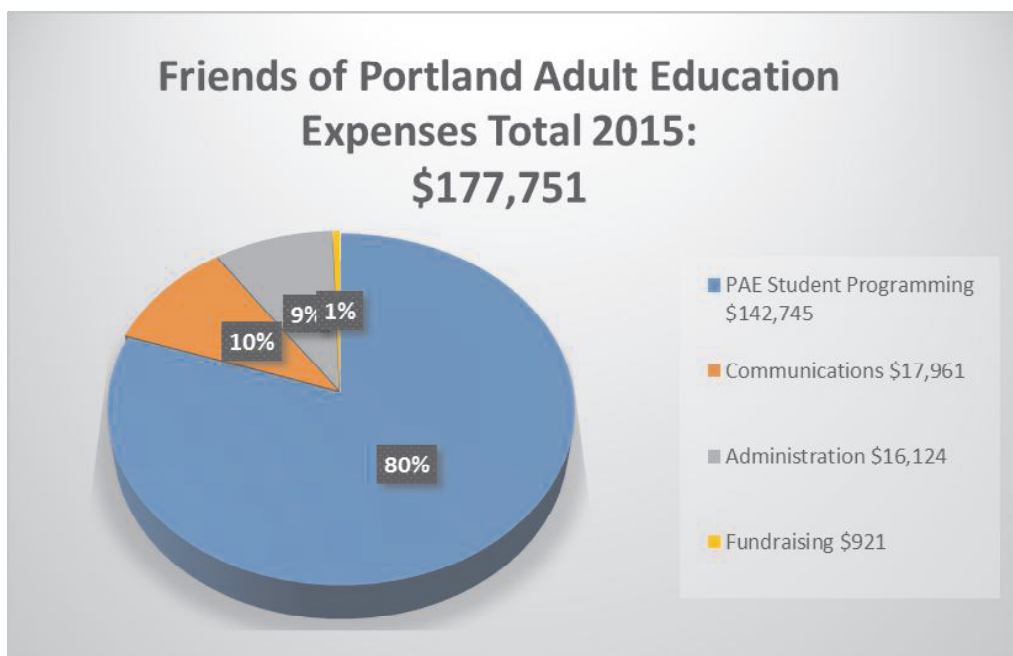
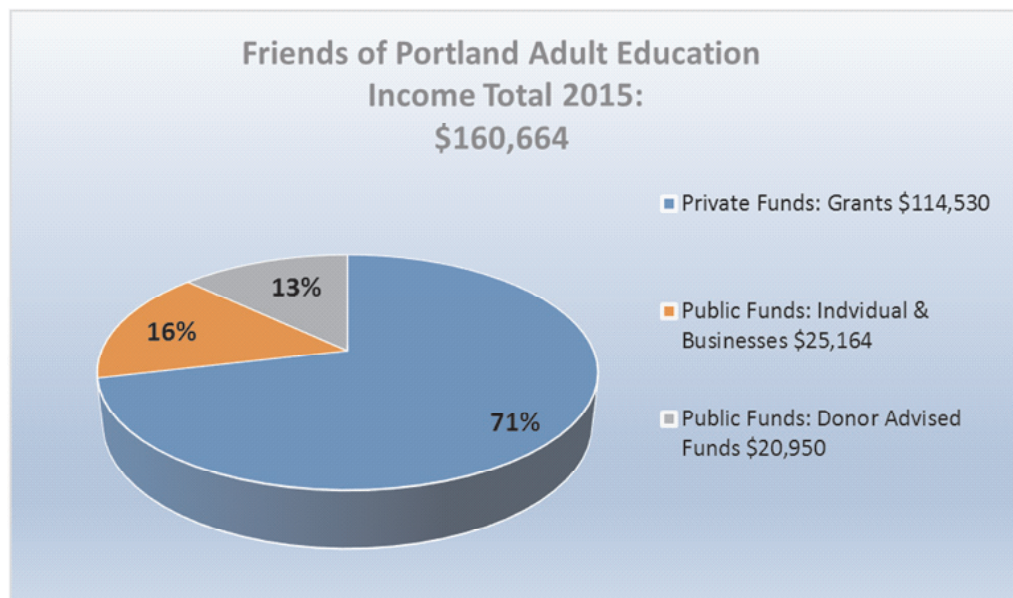
FPAE has recently focused on ways to support students and to promote long range planning. FPAE has supported field trips to the State House, the Portland Historical Museum, the Observatory, and Body Worlds. FPAE also supported a visiting artist who worked with six different PAE classrooms. Finally, FPAE, with donor advised funds, continues to support \$5,000 of scholarships to PAE classes a semester.

With the generous support of the *Harmon Foundation*, FPAE was able to support a comprehensive market analysis for PAE. This will examine workforce trends and in-demand career clusters to inform future programming. Stay tuned for our next newsletter where the impact of this report will be discussed.

On behalf of the FPAE Board, I wish to praise the excellent accomplishments of PAE students and staff during the past year. They continue to inspire us all.



Rob Wood, President of Friends of PAE



Business / Organization Donations

Amazon Smile
Bigelow Investment Advisors
Flatbread Company
Hub Furniture Company
Key Bank Employee Volunteer Program
Prudential Foundation
Matching Fund Program
Unum's Finance Community Building Team

Donor Advised Funds

Maine Community Foundation:
The Dara Jeanne Kaufman Fund
George L. and Clara S. Shinn Fund
The Sherman Family Foundation

Grants to Friends of PAE

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Emanuel & Pauline A. Lerner Foundation
Evergreen Foundation
Harmon Foundation
Nine Wicket Foundation
Simmons Foundation

In-Kind Donations

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Carolyn & David May
Donna & Roger Beeley

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In honor the patient and kind people who answer the PAE phone -
 Mary Luby

In honor of Grace d'Entremont-
 Nicole d'Entremont

In honor of the courageous and wonderful adults who seek new lives and magnificent staff that supports their journey and is inspired by their courage-
 Arline Saturdayborn

In honor of Nancy Fox & Arline Saturdayborn
 Gail Cinelli

In honor of Erik R. Johnson

In honor of Patricia Kachmar-
 John Kachmar

In memory of Susan Lebach

Rosenbloom-
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In memory of Paula Piller-

Solange Kellermann

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