



Friends of Portland Adult Education

From the FPAE Board President:

2023 Fall Newsletter

As fall ushers in a **new academic year** at Portland Adult Education, our school is once again abuzz with activity. Hallways hum with a familiar sound of reconnection; classrooms brim with the promise of knowledge; and the air is filled with a shared spirit of curiosity. The stage is set for a year of learning and discovery, as students boldly pursue their educational, professional, and personal goals.

With classes in full swing at PAE, I wanted to take a moment to share some exciting news with you. This past August, Friends of Portland Adult Education reached an incredible milestone, **raising over \$2 million** in support of students and staff at PAE! Throughout our 11 years, these essential funds have created a ripple effect of positive change. Together with our loyal donors and funding partners, we:

Provide crucial financial assistance. Each year, FPAE provides scholarships for advanced academic classes, vocational training, college preparation courses, and more. These scholarships are life-changing, opening doors to new opportunities and career paths for our adult learners.

Promote professional growth. Our teachers form the heartbeat of our school, and we recognize that supporting them is essential for enhancing educational outcomes. Over the years, we've empowered our staff with access to top-notch training, mentorship, and a diverse range of professional development opportunities.

Ensure equal access to technology. With gratitude to our donors and funding collaborators, we take pride in

furnishing students with laptops and other devices that foster dynamic, participative learning.

Most recently, I'm happy to report that FPAE made it possible for PAE to hire a much-needed **Communications and Outreach Coordinator**. This will allow us to further amplify PAE's positive impact in the Greater Portland community and beyond.

As I close, I reflect on how FPAE encourages our school to **dream big and achieve its goals**. And without you, our loyal friends and supporters, our work simply wouldn't be possible. Thank you for being a champion of adult education in Portland, Maine!



Sincerely,
Rob Wood,
*FPAE Board
 President*

A Message from Dr. Abbie Yamamoto

Executive Director of Portland Adult Education

The beginning of a new school year is always exciting! As we open our doors, we are honored to welcome students from every corner of the globe. Languages, cultures, and viewpoints converge spectacularly at PAE, creating a learning environment that's truly unique and ever-changing. **We all learn from each other at PAE**, and it inspires me every day.

As we step into the new academic year, I'm happy to share some leadership updates. **Bridget Kahn** has assumed the role of Interim Assistant Director of PAE, following Liz Love's departure in August. Bridget has been an integral part of the PAE community for 15 years, most recently serving as Co-Chair of

the Workforce Department. I'm thrilled to work alongside Bridget, who will play a pivotal role in shaping key operational areas of our school.

I'm also excited to announce that **Heather Moore Wood** has been promoted to Dean of Instruction at PAE. Heather – an accomplished ELA and History Teacher – has been instrumental over the years in developing PAE's Instructional Vision. In her new role, Heather will support our teachers in creating a classroom culture of respect and high standards. Her knowledge and expertise is a tremendous resource, and we are so thankful for her leadership and guidance.



I echo Rob's sentiments in expressing our **heartfelt appreciation to each of you**. Your belief in our mission, our students, and our staff truly means the world. Thank you for all you do to support and uplift Portland Adult Education.

From Dull to Dazzling: PAE's Basement Gets a Makeover

Thoughtful decor – and a new mural! – bring warmth and life to a shared space

Thanks to support from FPAE, the Beautification Committee at PAE recently completed a fun and transformative project: revamping our school basement! The once underutilized space has undergone a significant makeover, creating a more welcoming and inviting atmosphere for all to enjoy.

Fresh area rugs now adorn the floor. Colorful wall hangings have brightened the walls. And attractive plants bring life and charm to the communal space.

Additionally, we're thrilled to announce that a **large-scale mural** will soon grace the walls of our revitalized basement. The mural, a creation of local artist

Charlie Hindall, is a captivating blend of colors and vitality. It showcases an array of plants and flowers representing various parts of the world, a subtle yet meaningful tribute to the home countries of our international students.



Shaping a Greener World: Careers in Renewable Energy

New workforce training program leads to jobs in Maine's fast-growing sustainability sector

FPAE is proud to support a wide range of workforce training programs available at Portland Adult Education. Today we shine a spotlight on one of those:

Renewable Energy Careers: An Introduction to Solar Installation and Heat Pumps. Piloted last year, this pre-apprenticeship program prepares multilingual adults to enter (or re-enter) the field of renewable energy. The program was developed in partnership with **ReVision Energy** and **Portland Arts and Technology High School (PATHS)**.

As the global shift toward clean, sustainable energy accelerates, the demand for skilled professionals in the renewable energy industry is rapidly increasing. PAE's new program addresses this demand by connecting immigrants, refugees, and other New Mainers with comprehensive training and classroom instruction in solar installation and heat pump technology.

Many of the New Mainers in the program come from a background in engineering and other fields closely related to clean energy solutions. The program was co-taught by **PATHS** and PAE teachers, as well as industry experts from **ReVision Energy**. **PATHS** provided the space to learn through hands-on instruction and simulated projects. Other employer partners included **Evergreen Home Performance**, **Maine Solar Solutions**, and **Royal River Heat Pumps**.

"Our inaugural cohort consisted of 15 talented professionals representing diverse cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds," said **Abbie Yamamoto**, Executive Director of Portland Adult Education. "Over the course of nine weeks, participants learned new skills to forge their career pathways and to establish valuable connections within the industry. It is exciting to see some of them re-enter their fields or related ones, and for some, starting their journey in a new career."

Before coming to Maine in 2022, **Manuela Kayembe** studied civil engineering in Botswana. Her interest in sustainable energy solutions led her to PAE, where she enrolled in the program's first cohort. She said, "Being part of the very first Renewable Energy Careers program was an exciting and rewarding experience. Being at the forefront of this program allowed me to learn about solar installation, energy efficiency, and the latest industry advancements. It also allowed me to meet with incredible people from engineering backgrounds and also meet and interact with many of Maine's solar energy employers." Manuela added, "My goal for the future is to make a meaningful impact in promoting clean energy and creating a more sustainable future."

As of the printing of this newsletter, we're delighted to report that half of our 15 program graduates, including Manuela, have already secured jobs at either **ReVision Energy** or **Maine Solar Solutions**. Amazing!



Manuela Kayembe



Turning Tassels, Chasing Dreams

PAE celebrates 2023 High School Diploma and Workforce Graduates

The spirit and determination of PAE's adult learners is truly inspiring. They juggle demanding work schedules and family responsibilities; they adapt to new environments, languages, and cultures; and they often make great sacrifices in pursuit of their educational goals. It is these remarkable journeys that make PAE's graduation ceremonies so joyous and triumphant. In June 2023, we celebrated **two momentous graduation events** – one honoring students earning their high school credential and the other commending those who completed one of PAE's intensive workforce training programs. We hope you enjoy the stories and smiles from these milestone moments!



Ifrah Gadidche spent the past year in PAE's College Transitions program preparing to study nursing at Southern Maine Community College. Addressing the crowd at Merrill Auditorium, Ifrah said her first goal at PAE was learning English, which she did while holding down a job in the laundry at a local hotel and raising a family. She thanked PAE faculty for their constant help and encouragement to help students succeed. "They have not given up on anyone and that's why I love them," she said.



Sedrina Rodrigues arrived in Portland with strong English skills and an engineering credential from Angola. Not only did she earn a High School Diploma in a single year; she also completed PAE's Teller Training program and is now a bank employee. Sedrina told her fellow graduates and New Mainers, "It's hard to start again, but yes, you can do it. It's hard to learn again, but yes, you can do it!" Later, Sedrina was interviewed by Channel 13, serving as a wonderful spokesperson for her graduating class.



Singer and instrumentalist **Kiatumua Lukebana**, who arrived in this country from Angola less than a year ago, performed two musical selections: Lady Gaga's "Always Remember Us This Way," and "It's a Beautiful Day" by Jermaine Edwards. Lukebana had both graduates and members of the audience gleefully rising from their seats to dance and sing along. A wonderful moment of shared celebration!



After the graduation ceremony at Merrill, it's tradition for the graduates to pour out on to Myrtle Street. There, they embrace their families and friends who have supported them along their educational journey. The energy on the street is positively palpable, and it's captured brilliantly by photographer **Molly Haley**, a freelance photographer and photojournalist based in Portland. To learn more about Molly's work, check out her website at mollyhaley.com.



At the Workforce Graduation held at Casco Bay High School, nine students celebrated their completion of PAE's **Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Permit Preparation Class**. **Kingsley Nwankwo** said, "It was not easy, but with the help of PAE's program I was prepared for my CDL Class B exam. Thank you to my teachers for going out of their way in making sure that this dream came true. Now I have my dream job at METRO as a bus operator. Hard work and good studying will lead you to the kind of life you want to have."



Jean Marie Claude Buruga (left) and **Annastasia Candido** (right) beamed with pride as they accepted certificates marking the completion of PAE's **Hannaford Retail Leadership Internship Program**. During this 12-week paid internship, participants combined classroom instruction with on-site training and job shadowing at Hannaford. All four program interns are now employed in great positions at Hannaford where they will continue to learn, grow, and lead!



PAE's **Multilingual CNA Program** is a certification course specifically designed for English Language Learners. Students receive hands-on training in PAE's lab classroom and complete two weeks of clinical training at a local healthcare facility. **Semhar Gebrab** said, "The first time I started the class I was scared, but the teachers encouraged us that we can do it. I worked hard and now I am a CNA working at Maine Medical Center. I really would like to say thank you to Portland Adult Education."



Twelve students completed **Education Academy** at PAE. This program is designed for internationally-trained professionals who have worked as a teacher or are interested in becoming an educator in Maine by working as an Ed Tech or substitute teacher. Students complete five courses in order to pass the program, including a practicum experience in a local public school. Congrats, grads! Maine schools are lucky to have you.

Wherever you were born, raised, or lived, a path has led you here, maybe a day after your arrival to Portland, maybe ten years later. But what you all have in common, what we all have in common, is that our paths are all unique and full of grit. I am deeply proud of how much all of you have already accomplished and excited for how much more you will do.

Dr. Abbie Yamamoto
Executive Director, Portland Adult Education



A Fare Deal

Enhanced bus pass program will increase access to education at PAE

Transportation should never be a barrier to learning. Unfortunately, the cost of bus fare to and from school is prohibitive for some PAE students – especially those living outside the downtown area. Over the past several years, FPAE has distributed many thousands of bus tickets free-of-charge to help students access their education. These tickets have been “temporary” at best because they are printed on paper, good for one-use only, and manually distributed by our office staff every time a student requests one. In 2022 alone, we distributed over 15,000 bus tickets – not only a significant expense, but also added work for our already busy office team.

Today we’re thrilled to announce a more sustainable solution to the tricky challenge of bus tickets. Thanks to a new arrangement between Greater Portland METRO, PAE, and FPAE, **all PAE students are now eligible for METRO Dirigo Passes!**

These reusable Passes – linked to students’ school IDs – are good for unlimited rides to and from classes at PAE. Unlike the paper bus tickets, the Dirigo Passes only have to be issued once, at the beginning of the school year. Even better, they give students a **sense of control and ownership over their transportation needs.** It’s a fantastic student benefit that we’re happy to support.



METRO Dirigo Passes ensure students never miss a class due to lack of transportation.

Digital Evolution: Creating Tech-Savvy Scholars

New digital skills workshops boost student learning at PAE

As you know, FPAE is committed to narrowing the digital divide and **building equity in education.** We firmly believe that every one of our adult learners – regardless of their individual circumstances – should have access to the tools, technology, and support they need to fully participate in their educational journey.

With the support of our donors and funding partners, we take great pride in our ability to provide students with the means to thrive academically. This includes equipping them with laptops and other digital devices, which are now indispensable tools for active, engaged learning at PAE.

The distribution of school-issued laptops – which began as a response to the COVID crisis – has become an essential routine practice at our school. Today about **30% of our classes are conducted remotely or follow a hybrid model.** This underscores the critical need to keep PAE’s technology up-to-date so that students can access their education seamlessly.

This fall, PAE’s **Digital Innovations Team**, led by **Sara Staples**, distributed more than 700 laptops to students and classrooms. The team also offered **over 40 Digital Skills Workshops** to make sure that students have a solid grasp of using their laptops for class.

Thanks to these sessions, students are now “pros” at key platforms such as Google Classroom and Google Meet!



PAE’s Digital Innovations Team connects students with tools & tech for the new school year.

Remembering Shirley Martell

A longtime Friend of PAE who lived life in service to others

The PAE community recently lost a dear friend in **Shirley Martell**.

According to FPAE Board President Rob Wood, Shirley first started at adult ed in 1985 as a senior volunteer at the young age of 62. At that time, PAE was known as the Adult Basic Learning Exchange, with offices at 63 Preble Street. Shirley's position was an "ABLE Aide" and she performed such roles as receptionist, tutor, childcare substitute, and Portland historian.

Rob said, "Nothing ever phased Shirley and she was an island in the storm of several tumultuous

periods of PAE's growth. After more than 30 years of work, Shirley finally retired when she moved to her daughter's house in western Maine. She will be missed."

PAE was not the only organization close to Shirley's heart. She was an active member of Chestnut Street Methodist Church and Hope Gateway, a United Methodist community. She also spent many years volunteering for Portland area nonprofits including Wayside Soup Kitchen, the Eunice Frye Home, and the Parkside Neighborhood Center.



Shirley Martell

Fun Fact: Portland Adult Education estimates that Shirley hand-labeled more than 12,000 student files. Incredible!

Kindness Fund in Memory of Arline Saturdayborn

Help us spark joy and build community in Arline's name

Arline Saturdayborn left an indelible mark on PAE with her unwavering spirit of joy and compassion. Her warm smile and kind words uplifted others and fostered a sense of belonging among students and staff alike. Arline's legacy will forever be cherished, serving as a reminder of the profound impact one person can make through simple acts of kindness.

Today Friends of Portland Adult Education is proud to announce the **Kindness Fund** in memory of Arline. We invite friends, colleagues, and loved ones to honor Arline with a contribution which, in turn, will be used to spark joy and build community at our school. To learn more about this memorial fund, please visit www.friendsofpae.org/kindness.



Arline (left) with PAE student Guay Kelly

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Four new Board members will be appointed at our November meeting. Stay tuned for the details!





Donations are always accepted

Your gift empowers adult learners to achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals. To donate, you can:

- **Mail a check** to FPAE, P.O. Box 3185, Portland, ME 04104
- **Donate online** through PayPal at friendsofpae.org
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Stay connected

PAE is expanding our social media! You can now find us on Instagram **@portlandadulted** as well as on Facebook and LinkedIn. Follow us for feel-good news, great photos, and more. **Thank you for believing in the power of adult education in Portland, Maine.** We are lucky to call you a friend!