Bread
By Timea Wranek

My mom was born in 1954, in a Hungarian village in the countryside, far away from Budapest, the capital. There were four brothers and three sisters, and my mom was the youngest of the seven siblings. My grandmother was a matriarch without a husband. They lived, very poor, on the little farm - and everything changed in 1956. This year is one of the most important in the Hungarian history. The Revolution of 1956 was a nationwide revolt against the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and it's Soviet-imposed policy. On October 23rd, students and workers took to the streets of the capital and issued their Sixteen Points. More than 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet troops were killed in these days. Two hundred thousand Hungarians escaped because border fences had been broken down and minefields had been removed.

My grandmother and her family didn’t perceive problems from these historical events. One Sunday, one of the brothers, Ferenc, turned to his mother and said, “Mama, I’m going to get some bread!” They never saw him again. My grandmother, the brothers and sisters tried to find him. They asked the Red Cross asked for help, but no trace of him was found. The family hoped that he was emigrated and was living happily somewhere and that he would not seek his family because of the Hungarian political situation. Because of Communism, a relative living in the West could be dangerous. My grandmother died without ever seeing her son again. Fifty years later, someone rang my aunt’s doorbell. It was the lost brother. My aunt did not believe her eyes. They cried for a long time. Ferenc told her how he rushed over the border, and how he tried to find a better life in France. They tried to recall the past years and find out about each other. After a long conversation, they decided to go to meet another sibling. Then my aunt suddenly turned to my uncle and said, “Okay, I understand now what happened to you, but my most important question remains: Where is the bread?”

About the Author:
Timea was born in Hungary, where she was Human Resources consultant. She moved to New York City in August 2015. She lives with her husband Istvan, and their sons in Brooklyn. She loves reading and theater. She is enrolled in the Intermediate ESOL class, and her instructor is Donna Powers. This story was published in The NYU Literacy Review: Volume 16.
The summer of 2018 was filled with remarkable stories and great achievements for the Prospect Park YMCA’s New Americans Initiative and its participants.

After finishing off a very strong 2018 Spring Cycle with the extremely successful and delightful Spring Event, the 2018 Summer Cycle brought new and wonderful adventures. From a trip to a Broadway show, to our Welcoming Week event, there was seldom a moment of rest. Between the success of our participants’ newly naturalized as US citizens, to the great improvements made in the ESL classrooms we had much to be proud of this summer.

“**We came to America, either ourselves or in the persons of our ancestors, to better the ideals of men, to make them see finer things than they had seen before, to get rid of the things that divide and to make sure of the things that unite.**”

--Woodrow Wilson

**Readers, new citizens, staff and Counsel Member Brad Landers pose for a picture during the Taste of Culture Event.**

Early in the summer, a large group of students and staff members were treated to a Broadway show. The Phantom of the Opera was chosen, and this proved to be an excellent choice, for no one returned unsatisfied.

We closed out the summer with our exciting and successful second “Taste of Culture” event as part of national Welcoming Week. A diverse group of restaurants from the surrounding neighborhoods offered sample items from their menu, new citizens were recognized for their achievements, and three readers shared stories of their new lives in the United States.

The successes of this wonderful summer are a reflection of the dedication and commitment of the work done at the Prospect Park YMCA’s New Americans Welcome Center and its incredible participants.
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Q & A:

Yulissa Guerrero.

How do you feel about the Citizenship Prep Class?

Ever since I joined the New American programs, my self-confidence has reached a new level. I have learned about US history and government. Further, my participation in ESOL and citizenship class has helped improved my conversation skills.

How do you feel about the instructor?

Luis is skillful and experienced, that helps deliver quality instruction to people like me that are relatively new to English. He helps link us with resources according to our needs.

How do you feel about the NAWC program in general?

It’s a wonderful program that helps us grow, learn about cultures of the world and make new friends. With all the events and trips, it makes everyone feel like we’re a part of a larger group, a big family.

How do you feel about the work done by the YMCA?

The YMCA is a wonderful place because it gives people so much to do to improve their lives and their families. The YMCA is a part of the community and the lives of the people they serve.

Yulissa is currently enrolled in the Beginners ESL/Literacy & Citizenship Prep Classes.

STUDENTS SHARE THEIR STORIES:

My Small Friend

I have a nephew who lives in Japan. He is the son of my older brother and turned 8 in November. One winter, I received two pictures from him. The first one was a beautiful drawing of many flowers by colorful pastels. It was very sweet. The second one was very different. It was a picture of painted shoes with vivid yellow, red and a bit blue. I got an impression of melancholy, nervousness, and sadness. I found a small caption in the picture of shoes, "I draw the moment the airplane had flown away... when I went to the airport and said goodbye to Yuki." The two pictures were his artwork. I enjoyed it very much. These pictures were taken from an exhibition at his elementary school. When he was born, I was a student of Art University in Japan. I studied art and architecture there. Drawing pictures was my daily routine. Late night, when he was born, my brother was excited and sent me a picture of his face. It was a beautiful face of new born baby. Right away, I started to draw his face with some colored pencils - I had only yellow, red and blue colors. The next day, I went to see my baby nephew with the portrait and a bouquet of flowers. I often drew his portraits and sent them on his birthdays. Sometimes with acrylic, other times, with water color. Even when he was younger and could not speak as well, he understood what it was and shouted joyfully, “It’s ME! ME!” After his younger sister was born four years later, I became very busy with my work. I could not find time to draw pictures.

The time slipped away, he grew up to be a big boy. He never knew that I gave his portrait with limited colors of yellow, red, and blue, and a bouquet of flowers on his birthday. But now, I receive presents from my nephew that are pictures of shoes painted with yellow, red, and blue, and colorful flowers. I was surprised that the baby at that time had an understanding of art and expressions. In addition, we have sympathy through art. I realized that he felt sad and missed me without knowing about it. His notice gave me immense happiness on a cold winter day.

About the Author:

Yuki was born in Tokyo, Japan. She studied art and architecture at the University of Art in Japan. After receiving her master’s degree, she exhibited her work in Tokyo. In August of 2017, Yuki came to New York. She had received a grant to work at a nonprofit architectural gallery in Manhattan. She joined the Intermediate ESOL class at the Prospect Park YMCA in 2017.

Intermediate ESOL students at the Phantom of The Opera on Broadway.
Save the Peace

By: Iaroslav Roik

When I was a child, people congratulated each other by using greeting cards. On my seventh birthday, I received a few of those cards. One of them was from my grandmother. I had just started reading and understanding. I read my grandmother’s card aloud and slowly thought about every word in it. She wished me good health. I knew what good health meant. Rather, I knew how it was bad to have some illness when I must drink bad tasting medicine, I would lie in a bed all day and sometimes I would get some injections. That was a very good wish. The next wish was to be happy. I knew what it was – new toys, playing with my parents and my friends. Also, my grandmother wished me to be a good student. I knew if I would be good at learning I would have more options in choosing my future profession. But in my grandmother’s card there was one wish that I could not understand. That was wishing for the peace. And even it was one of the first wishes. What did the peace mean? Why did my grandmother wish it to me? The last war in my country ended about thirty years ago, which seemed to me an eternity at that time. I watched some war actions on TV news programs, but they were so far from my home. They were on another side of the world. The ‘peace’ was like air. What would happen with it? About 35 years later I unexpectedly remembered about my grandmother’s card. Yesterday, I planned my vacation with family, looked at the purchase of a new car, got worried about my job, and I thought what I should buy for my friend on his birthday. One, two, five days and everything changed. The value of my family property fell almost to nothing. When I used an old car, I was safer than in a new one. My vacation – I almost immediately forget about it. You even could not save and protect yourself, your children, your family and your friends. In one moment your health and wealth began to depend just on the peace. I recognized why the wish of the peace was one of the first in my grandmother’s greeting card. I recognized how the peace is delicate and fragile. Save the peace, pray for the peace, take toasts for the peace, wish the peace, be strong to protect the peace and be happy to live in the peace.

About the Author:
Iaroslav, known by his friends and classmates as Slavik, is from Ukraine. He has been living in the United States for more than two years, but he feels that he still has some difficulty adapting to “American Life.” His Intermediate ESOL teacher, Ms. Powers, is helping with his English proficiency. Also, the YMCA is helping him adapt to life in New York City.