



**Providence  
Center** 

A Ministry of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

**Winter 2018**

## *A Letter from Our Director*



As I write this introductory letter, I'm listening to the joyful noise of our middle school classroom. Music is playing, kids are laughing, and I can hear the teacher and Teen Leaders interacting with the children, calling them each by name. Yes, it is loud. But it is the kind of loud that lets you know that Providence Center is a place of action and joy.

It is amazing what can happen to people when they are welcomed into a place of action and joy. Inside this newsletter you'll read about children who

are exploring their interests and passions in our clubs. And you'll hear from our adult students, parents who feel more confident because they can use their new English skills to support their families. Everywhere, you'll see smiling faces, bodies in motion, the glow of achievement.

You will also notice places where we invite you to take action—by donating, volunteering, visiting, or inviting us to speak about our work. Your actions help bring joy to our students, and we hope being a part of the Providence Center family brings joy to you, too. Let's inspire, and be inspired, together!

—David Chiles, Executive Director

### **Our Mission**

Committed to North Philadelphia's Fairhill community since 1993, Providence Center offers education programming for children, youth, and adults. Our mission is to educate people to have the power and spirit to transform their lives and community.

### **Our Programs**

#### **CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- Power After-School Program
- Teen Leaders
- Youth Activists Program
- Summer Leadership Academy

#### **ADULT EDUCATION**

- English Language Classes
- Conversation Groups

#### **FAITH AND FAMILY**

- Prayer Group
- Women's Retreats

### **Our Staff**

David Chiles,  
Executive Director  
dchiles@providencephilly.org

Julie McIntyre,  
Development Director  
jmcintyre@providencephilly.org

Maura Bernt,  
Youth Director  
mbernt@providencephilly.org

Peggy Doherty, SHCJ,  
ESL Director  
pdoherty@providencephilly.org

## *Save the Date!*

### **Providence Center Open House**

Sunday, April 15, 2018, 2:00-4:00 PM  
Thursday, April 19, 2018, 4:30-6:30 PM  
2557 North 5th St., Philadelphia

Please join Providence Center and our children and youth for fun, fellowship, and a chance to tour our new home! We've begun to fill our new space with life, joy, and opportunity, and we want you to be a part of it! There will be displays of student work, refreshments, and opportunities to learn more about Providence Center's commitment to being "a love full of action." ♦



Look for your invitation in March.  
Visit our website for more information: [www.ProvidencePhilly.org](http://www.ProvidencePhilly.org).

**You've opened your hearts to us.  
We are excited to open our home to you!**

## Meet our Adult Students

Each year, about 300 curious, engaged adult students from around the world come to Providence Center to participate in our four levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The reasons why these students enroll are as varied as the countries from which they have emigrated.

We spoke with the women in Sister Margaret's Level 3 ESL class to find out what motivates them to learn and study. We also uncovered interesting stories about how learning English affects their daily lives.

### Elena

Elena is from the Dominican Republic, and she took her first Providence Center ESL class last autumn. She made up her mind to improve her English skills after a difficult interaction at the car repair shop.

Elena explains, "The cashier said 'If you don't speak English, I'm not going to help you.' He was discriminating. I didn't sleep many nights because I kept thinking too much about how he did not respect me. That made me think I had to keep going to work towards my goal. That made me say, 'I have to do something for my English, to get better.'"

Elena describes how Providence Center's ESL classes have changed her life. She says, "For me, it's getting very much better because I am involved in the community. I can go to different places to enjoy those places with my family. Before I didn't feel confident...My son always says to his teacher and his friends, 'My mother now, she speaks English!'"



**Above:** The Level 3 Adult ESL Class, from left to right, includes Elena, Sindy, Amarilis, Kiara, Kaira, and Fatoma, and their teacher, Sister Margaret. Here they celebrate their English-learning achievements at the end-of-semester party!

### Fatoma

Fatoma moved to Philadelphia from Guinea four years ago. She has worked her way through all four levels of the ESL classes, but English is not Fatoma's second language. She already speaks French, Arabic, regional language from Guinea, and additional African languages!

Fatoma uses her English skills in many parts of her life. She says, "One of my sisters is ten, and one is twelve. They live with me. Sometimes I help my baby sister do homework, do math, and use the dictionary." Fatoma also practices her English at work. "My auntie, she owns a beauty shop, and I do hair. Sometimes I go to the shop, and when somebody comes, I speak English to practice."

**Right:** Fatoma celebrates the completion of her Level 3 ESL Class with her teacher, Sister Margaret.

**Below:** Amarilis prepares to take her new English skills out into the community as a parent and an advocate.



### Amarilis

Amarilis is from the Dominican Republic. She is motivated to learn English because of her commitment to providing the best life for her children, including her son, who has many special health needs. Since she began taking ESL classes at Providence Center, Amarilis has increased her confidence with asking questions and advocating for her son's care at the doctor's office.

She says, "It's better for me. I now can speak with different doctors. Every time there was a translator, it was difficult. She would say different words than the doctor. Now, everyone says, 'Your English is better!' I say, 'I try. I try!'"

Sister Margaret notices Amarilis's newfound confidence too. "One of the biggest reasons that Amarilis is here is because everything is negotiating with doctors. She has to be very vigilant because there have been mistakes and problems with medication and appointments. But we have the perfect job for her when she feels confident enough—patient advocate!" ♦





## Power Program Clubs: Expanding Our Horizons



**Crafts and Games Club**

Jada, Ethan, and Amad (above) “build” snowmen on one of our first wintry days of the season.



**Art Club with Vee**

With the help of Lead Teacher Vee and Teen Leader Lee, Providence Center’s fashionistas (above) design t-shirts with inspiring messages.



By now, you’ve heard about our move to our new building. It’s bright and spacious—five times the size of our old home! **But a new space is just the beginning, thanks to your support.**

Each afternoon, nearly 50 children in our Power Program fill the new Providence Center with curiosity and creativity. They explore their interests and passions through clubs led by our teachers and our community partners, such as Artwell and Kensington Soccer Club.



Bryan (left) loves to play soccer with Gladysbel. Bryan says that Coach Kyle has helped him to improve his dribbling and also to be a good sport.



**Soccer with Kensington Soccer Club**

Our middle schoolers, Ibrahim (center) and Ayana and Kevin (right), use Soccer Club as a much-needed outlet after a long day of studying.



**Mask-Making with Artwell**

Skylar prepares Sasiyah’s face (left) for plaster casting.

Zalayshia places her trust in Samaiyah (center), her mask-making partner.

Elisabeth (right) shows off her finished masterpiece, a mask of her face that expresses her identity.

## You Can Make a Difference!

Thank you for joining us as we continue to fill Providence Center’s new building with vibrancy, hope, and opportunities for Fairhill’s children and families. **With your support:**

- children explore their passions while learning to work as a team,
- teens become role models and leaders with the vision and skills to transform their community, and
- adults gain the confidence and skills to build better lives for themselves and their families.

\*Sign up online to become a **monthly donor**.

\***Consider a bequest** to Providence Center.

\*Ask your employer to **match your gift**.

\***Invite us** to come and speak, or **visit us**.

Donate online with your credit card: [providencephilly.org/donate](http://providencephilly.org/donate).

# Volunteer with Us!

Volunteer on your own or bring your family, co-workers, or parish!



*Faithful weekly volunteer Lilly and Elian read together during the Power Program after school.*

There are many ways you can make a difference!



*Volunteers from St. Joe's University get to know our students at the Fall Fair.*

- \* We need **reading buddies and tutors** to work with the inspiring students in the Power Program after school.
- \* We always love **volunteers to help us with local park clean-ups and game supervision at our community fairs** and other special events!
- \* Let us know **if you have a trade or skill you'd like to contribute**, such as computer maintenance, carpentry, plumbing, etc.
- \* You can also volunteer to **help us collect school supplies or raise funds** for our programs. Contact us for ideas!

To volunteer, contact: [info@providencephilly.org](mailto:info@providencephilly.org)

## Help Us Spread the Word!

Invite us to speak at your parish or community group!  
If you would like to arrange a presentation, contact David Chiles: [dchiles@providencephilly.org](mailto:dchiles@providencephilly.org)



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2557 North 5th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19133

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