

## FIRN CLIENT STORIES

### Adult LEAP

**An Inspiration to All.** Before arriving in the U.S. in 2004, “Ping” had worked in the accounting field in China. However, her move to the U.S. with her husband and daughter made Ping feel confused and isolated. Not knowing how to speak English on even a basic level, she was confused about how to relate to her daughter’s teachers at the elementary school and lacked the confidence to navigate the American social/cultural systems. Ping soon joined a Chinese church, made some friends and, through these connections, found FIRN. Ping enrolled in Adult LEAP and, by working with her tutor one-on-one every Tuesday evening, Ping developed sufficient English language skills to be able to matriculate at Howard Community College where she is working toward her AA in accounting and hopes to find a job. In 2007, Ping was a speaker at the Howard County Literacy Fair and an honored guest speaker at FIRN’s 5<sup>th</sup> Annual American Success Awards banquet, inspiring the 280+ guests (including government and elected officials, the County Executive, funders, Chamber of Commerce, school system personnel, and others) with her story and FIRN’s role in helping her to find happiness in a new land.

**A Well-earned Promotion.** “Rosa” is from Guatemala. Enrolling in Adult LEAP in Spring 2007, her goal has been to improve her English sufficiently to be promoted to supervisor in her housekeeping job at an area hotel. In November 2007, Rosa received her promotion.

**New Presentation Skills.** “Lee” has been enrolled in the Adult LEAP since Fall 2006. He was an Engineer in Korea but in the U.S. he is a draftsman, unable to fully function as an Engineer because his employer requires that the engineers in his firm make presentations. Each week, Lee has met with his Adult LEAP tutor to practice presentation skills. In December 2007, he made his first presentation to his colleagues during a staff meeting.

**Driver’s Licenses and New Opportunities.** “Mohsin” and “Saeed” are from Bangladesh and have been with the Adult LEAP program since 2006. At times, they have worked 3-4 part time jobs at the Columbia Mall or spent a huge part of their salaries commuting by taxi to and from Arundel Mills Mall. For the Fall 2007 term of Adult LEAP, their objective was to work exclusively toward getting a drivers license. Their Adult LEAP tutors worked with them to understand the vocabulary on the drivers test, learning the rules for the oral and driving test as well as road courtesies and customs. Both men were elated to receive their driver’s licenses in November 2007.

**Good Neighbors and New Friends.** “Lilly” is from Korea and is home all day while her husband works and her children are in school. She enrolled in Adult LEAP because of her yearning to converse with her neighbors. FIRN matched her with a tutor from her community, and she has been able enjoy conversation and culture with her new tutor friend.

**Continuing Education.** “Lois” is from Honduras. When first assessed for Adult LEAP in Fall 2007, she scored in the Adult Basic Education range. After working diligently with her Adult LEAP tutor, her exit assessment in December 2007 indicated that she had advanced to a Pre-GED level. She plans to enroll in the GED program at HCC in Summer 2008 when she can adjust her work schedule. In the meantime, she and her Adult LEAP tutor continue to meet and her progress continues.

**Making Important Life Choices.** In Fall 2007, when it became open enrollment time for health insurance at “Carlos’s” job, he was given six providers and many options to consider. Carlos speaks intermediate English and had been working with his Adult LEAP tutor since 2006. He brought the materials to class and for several sessions worked with his tutors worked to understand the materials so that he could make an informed decision.

## **Club LEAP**

**A Child’s Transition.** “Ling”, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade participant in FIRN’s Club LEAP after-school program had recently arrived from Korea and spoke only a small amount of English. She rarely spoke or smiled. FIRN’s volunteer tutors noticed that Ling had a lot of “cat stuff”- on the front of her notebook, on her shoes, a cat shaped eraser, etc., and decided to do a series of activities with a cat theme. Immediately, Ling brightened up, began enjoying activities and spoke much more – especially when telling them about the cat she had had in Korea. Soon, Ling began playing “Uno” with the other students and was smiling and laughing. A week or so later, soon after they had finished the “cat activities”, Ling surprised the tutors by sharing a story she had written in English and illustrated about a little lost cat. They were delighted and even more pleased when they saw that she had used many of the vocabulary words they had practiced during the Club LEAP activities.