friends of
PORTLAND ADULT EDUCATION
partnerships • awareness • resources



Friends of Portland Adult Education

2024

Fall Newsletter

From the FPAE Board President:

Over the past two years, Friends of Portland Adult Education has collaborated closely with PAE to tackle the financial challenges posed by the end of COVID-era emergency funding. Recognizing the impact of this so-called "funding cliff," FPAE took proactive steps to build reserves, positioning us to support the school through this financial transition. Thanks to this foresight, we can continue to deliver high-quality programming and instruction that has become a hallmark of PAE.

Starting this year and extending into Fiscal Year 2025, FPAE will draw on its reserves, intentionally spending more than we raise to bridge the funding gap and sustain essential programs. This strategy ensures that students continue to receive the support they need to achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals. Our key areas of focus include:

- **Workforce and Career Services**: With support from Bank of America, FPAE invests in workforce training programs that open doors to careers in high-demand fields, including healthcare, solar installation, and banking. These programs equip students with practical skills and provide pathways to sustainable careers.

- **Teacher Innovation Projects:** We believe in empowering educators to dream big and think creatively about ways to enhance student learning. We continue to encourage teachers to explore new instructional methods, materials, or technologies that enrich the student experience.

- **Staff Development**: FPAE supports professional development opportunities, enabling staff to attend conferences, gain insights into best practices, and connect with their peers. This investment equips PAE staff with new knowledge and skills that directly benefit students.

These targeted investments, along with initiatives to enhance marketing and communications, are possible thanks to the ongoing support of you, our loyal Friends. Together, we are building a brighter future for all PAE students.



Sincerely,
Rob Wood,
FPAE Board President

Portland Adult Education: more than meets the eye

By Dr. Abbie Yamamoto, PAE Executive Director

Portland Adult Education has many faces. Some think that we primarily (and almost exclusively) teach English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). Others think it's an adult school where our primary job is to help people complete their high school degrees. There is also some awareness that we provide workforce training programs. Some know the secret that if they are an internationally-trained professional (ITP) they can go to NMRC and get their credentials translated and evaluated, receive advice on their transition plans, and leverage their training and skills for the new environment they find themselves in. Yet others know of the community-based enrichment programs where they can learn Italian, painting, yoga, photography, and more.

So what is PAE? What do we exactly do? The truth is, we do it all, and that is what creates our unique class offerings. The diversity of class offerings at various levels, and aimed at different goals—immediate employment vs. further education, for instance—offers surprising cross-pollination and innovation that are a result of the serendipitous meetings of minds in the eclectic place that is PAE.

We now have a math class offered in the context of the workforce department called, "Foundational Math Skills for Professional Careers" developed and co-taught by the Math/Science department chair, **Carol Hager**, and Workforce department chair, **Barbara Mascareñas.** This was developed in response to the observation that some of our graduates with the mathematical knowledge and abilities were struggling to translate that knowledge into their workplaces. This made sense to me: I still do all my mental math in Japanese. That must be the same for others who also learned math and a whole numerical system in another language.



Students practice filling out bank forms in PAE's new workforce class, Foundational Math Skills for Professional Careers.

The math/science department has seen immense growth with over 100 students enrolled at the beginning of fall. The workforce department has also seen big changes: For one, the classes are now 12-weeks long so that their schedule is in line with the rest of the school. This helps stabilize student schedules, and makes it easier for them to join workforce classes and academic classes (including ESOL) simultaneously.

The sheer scale of PAE, with a total of about 3,000 people registered in our classes a year, across the three domains of Academics, Career Services, and Enrichment is immense. In fact, we are the largest school in the largest public school district in the state. Our annual budget has increased from $3.5 million to $5.2 million in the past 5 years. Finding enough classroom space (and parking space), hiring people to teach and support the operations, and securing financial resources to support all of these activities remains a constant challenge. FPAE's support has made many of these crucially responsive moves possible and I am deeply grateful for the ongoing collaboration and support.



Dr. Abbie Yamamoto
Executive Director
Portland Adult Education

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

To view PAE's latest Course Catalog, scan the QR code with your phone's camera app.



FPAE brings teachers' ideas to life

By Maryann Boyle Murray, FPAE Board Member

FPAE donors help us fund many important projects for PAE initiatives; generally, the programs would not be covered by the budget allocated by Portland Public Schools. Most of the ideas making the greatest impact on PAE student-learning are those brought to us by the people who know the needs of students, the facilities, and the school best: our staff and teachers.

We continue to be amazed by our instructors' dedication and creativity, demonstrated by how they work to inspire their students to learn. Teachers' requests for funding include projects that nurture students' minds, bodies, spirit, and environment.









A visit to Wolfe's Neck Center – complete with a hands-on agricultural tour and a hayride – was the perfect destination for PAE's Outing Club.

Here are some examples of the support FPAE was able to provide over the past year:

- ESOL teachers **Dwight Sholes** and **Barbara Fiore** submitted a proposal to host multilingual students on a field trip to Wolfe's Neck Center in Freeport. Over 40 people participated, including 15 kids and 6 volunteers. At the Center, the group enjoyed an educational presentation, a seaside hike, and a picnic lunch with a lovely view of the farm. For many, this was their first time experiencing the beauty of Maine outside of the city center of Portland. The program was so successful we're working to make the "Outing Club" an ongoing offering at PAE.
-

- Workforce instructor **Geneva Meserve** alerted us to the need for her CNA students to have better equipment on which to learn and hone their skills. We provided the funds for a new Hoyer lift, a mechanical device designed to help caregivers safely lift and transfer individuals with limited mobility. We also secured new stethoscopes and other essential medical supplies for the classroom.

- ESOL Regional Learning Opportunities Specialist, **Haley Bizimana**, who coordinates PAE's ESOL Summer Program, was concerned about her students trying to concentrate in hot classrooms. Three air conditioning units were purchased and installed just in time for this past summer's beastly heatwave!

- Members of PAE's **Beautification Committee** wanted every nook and cranny of the PAE school building to be bright and welcoming – even the basement! Their requests funded a spectacular mural in a large common space, artwork for the walls, and plants that add more pops of life and color.

- Sometimes, the smallest grants can have the greatest impact. **Elisabeth Lualdi**, PAE's former Learning Lab Assistant, requested funds to show her lab volunteers how much she appreciates their help. For less than $100, the group went bowling, had a pizza party, visited the Portland Head Light, and stopped for ice cream. A small price for their critical help!

Sedrina Rodrigues is a shining example of hard work and determination. She earned her High School Diploma in just one year at PAE. On top of that, she completed our rigorous Teller Training Program, preparing her for a career in the U.S. banking world. Today, Sedrina is thriving at **Norway Savings Bank**. She was recently featured in an employee spotlight, recognizing her remarkable journey and the positive impact she brings to her role. We're thrilled to share Sedrina's story here, as her path is one of resilience, hard work, and a deep commitment to personal and professional growth. Congratulations, Sedrina, on all that you continue to accomplish!



Sedrina Rodrigues

From Angola to Maine: Norway Savings Bank's Sedrina Rodrigues personifying perseverance

By Dave Guthro, Communications and Marketing Officer, Norway Savings Bank

"It has been, and continues to be, quite a journey."

Perseverance. *Webster's Dictionary* lists its meaning as "persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success." That must be the dictionary **Sedrina Manuela Sambo Rodrigues** used.

Sedrina is a Customer Relations Representative at **Norway Savings Bank's** South Portland branch where she is known for her friendly demeanor and tireless work ethic. She is quick to smile and always happy to have the opportunity to help. Her affability makes customers feel right at home, but less than four years ago, flourishing in Maine seemed more like a dream, out of reach and over 7,000 miles away.

"I'm originally from Angola. I was born into a wonderful family and enjoyed a very nurturing childhood. I'm the second of five children and we all remain very close," she said. "In Angola, I studied petroleum engineering for one year while at the **Jean Piaget de Benguela**, but decided my interests are more in the business field."

In August of 2021, Sedrina began to pursue that passion, making the decision to leave her West African home.

"I first landed in Houston where I have family living," she said. "While in Texas, I attended an English school by the name of Bilingual Education Institute. There, I learned how to properly use the English language."

After hearing about many helpful programs and initiatives available in Maine, Sedrina and her sister, Sevrine, relocated and began to work on furthering their education and possibilities.

"I'm a strong believer in education and opportunities," said Sedrina.

She quickly took advantage of both, earning a high school diploma in a single year and excelling in her studies at **Portland Adult Education** and **Southern Maine Community College.** It was during her time at PAE that she became involved in the school's Teller Training Program.

"The Teller Training Program allowed me to take a deeper dive into having a better understanding of what teller responsibilities are and how to accurately manage the position," Sedrina said. "**Norway Savings Bank** was one of the partners involved with the Teller Training Program and I was fortunate enough to be able to make a great connection."

For over a year, Sedrina has been successfully connecting with customers and team members alike as a valued member of NSB.

"Sedrina has been so successful since she arrived at NSB. She's working towards a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration while still working a full schedule at the South Portland branch," said **Kyle Hodgkins**, Market Manager & Retail Lender VP at NSB. "Her determination and focus are awe-inspiring."

Her life experience has made a difference for customers in need as well.

"Currently, I speak five languages (Portuguese, French, English, Kikongo, Lingala) and I'm focusing on improving my Spanish now for my sixth language," said Sedrina. "I have been called upon several

times within the bank to translate between employees and foreign speaking customers in my own branch as well as others. I've also opened accounts for foreign speaking customers with a lot of success."

A lot of success is a phrase that barely scratches the surface of the astounding accomplishments Sedrina has notched in these last three years.

"She's amazing. NSB is thrilled when individuals take proactive steps to train and learn more about the banking industry and then utilize that education and experience to grow their careers here," said **Jason Fitzgerald**, Market & Indirect Relationship Manager RVP at NSB. "Sedrina is one of several examples of this approach that we're fortunate to have succeeding on a daily basis at the bank. Her personal story and commitment are inspiring, and she is someone we're certainly rooting for and proud to call a team member."

"I enjoy working at **Norway Savings Bank** and have made many great friendships along the way," said Sedrina. "My co-workers are the best! I plan to continue my career here at the bank and continue to learn and grow."

Perseverance. The persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success continues from a woman who could have helped Noah Webster define the word.

Seeing clearly: the Jane Cleaves Vision Fund in action

By Sharon Lacey, FPAE Board Member

FPAE does not stand alone in its support of Portland Adult Education. Community members donate financially, their time, and their expertise. With this assistance, FPAE is able to provide our students with the tools to help them succeed academically, and professionally. One example of this help is FPAE's ongoing relationship with the **Yarmouth Lions Club** and their annual donation through the **Jane Cleaves Vision Fund**.

The **Jane Cleaves Vision Fund** provides the funds for a supply of reading glasses that students can ask for in the PAE office. It will also cover the cost of a student's prescription glasses. One difficulty is that many of PAE's students do not have eye care coverage and cannot pay for an eye exam to get that prescription.

This past school year, FPAE has received help from two local businesses, who offered their time to give free vision screenings to our students. In February, **Dr. Michelle Higgins O.D.** from **Insight EyeCare** in Yarmouth, along with office support from **Rich Young**, opened their office on a Saturday to see eight PAE students. Some of those students needed prescription glasses, some eye drops, and some just needed reading glasses with basic magnification.



Cristina Pedro received a free eye exam and new eye glasses.

Students have also received vision screenings from **Eye Care & Eye Wear Center of Maine** in Westbrook. Both **Dr. Eric Roush, O.D.** and **Dr. Jennifer Haverkamp, O.D.** donated appointments monthly during the school year, since April 2024. With coordination and scheduling done by their office manager, **Becky Cavalero**, we have been able to help another six students improve their studies with clearer vision. We are happy to have a continuing relationship with them this fall; two students have been seen in October.

A new program is coming in January. A mobile vision clinic, through **20/20 Onsite** has been organized by **Andrea Weisman Summers**, Executive Director at the **Foundation for Portland Public Schools**. FPAE board members, **Sharon Lacey** and **Valerie DeVuyst**, have met with Andrea and 20/20 Onsite representatives to plan for the 'vision van' and learn what is needed to bring it to PAE. With successful fundraising efforts, Andrea has made these screenings a reality across the Portland Public Schools district.

The power of pictures: crafting e-books for everyone

By Liana Wolk and Rochelle Yanike Hale, PAE ESOL Teachers

What happens when PAE ESOL teachers **Virginie Akimana**, **Martha Winn**, **Liana Wolk**, and **Rochelle Yanike Hale** collaborate with professional photographer **Molly Haley**? Easy to read, beautifully photographed e-books are created specifically for PAE's lower-level ESOL students. Surprisingly, easy to read books for adults are difficult to find. The PAE e-book stories are highly relevant to students' lives, focused on life in Portland and Maine, and include photographs featuring PAE students – and a teacher.

This project began organically among teachers in the Beginner ESOL level, modeling books after the series of adult literacy texts from Bow Valley College in Canada. **Sally Regan**, a beloved ESOL Literacy teacher at PAE, left some money for FPAE in her bequest upon her death in 2021, and that money was earmarked for these special publications. Preview our e-books below, and scan the QR codes to access the full versions!



Ruth Takes the Bus
describes Ruth's journey to school. It includes language about schedules, time, and transportation.



Victor Needs Boots
is about the dilemma of someone who lives in Maine in the winter, but needs appropriate footwear. This is a common problem for new immigrants in Portland, and the book includes language about weather and clothing.



Visiting a Friend
tells the story of a friend visiting from out of town, chronicling a week of activities. It has language specific to places in the Portland area, days of the week, and common verbs.

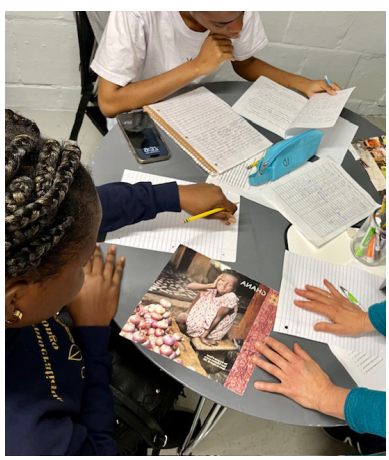
This past July, Virginie and Rochelle presented the PAE e-books to participants at the **Maine Department of Education's Summer Multilingual Learners Institute** at Sugarloaf. Participants from various Adult Education programs in the state were excited about the prospect of making their own books for their programs, including creating e-books for beginner Math students, using them for student onboarding and having parents make bilingual e-books for their children.

Writing Center returns for year five!

By Rochelle Yanike Hale, PAE ESOL Teacher

The Writing Center – a program proudly sponsored by FPAE – opened for its 5th year on September 15, 2024. We're happy to report that 55 students visited the first two weeks, and 20 of those students returned for a second or even a third visit before the end of the month.

In addition to offering one-on-one coaching, 11 PAE teachers staff the center, which is now open for 14 drop-in hours Monday through Friday. Thank you to FPAE and donors, for helping more PAE students express themselves through writing – a challenging benchmark at each language level!



ESOL students host state & local issues forum

By Adam MacDonald, PAE Communications Coordinator

Just days before election day, ESOL students at PAE hosted a State and Local Issues Forum at Rines Auditorium in the Portland Public Library. This timely event provided an opportunity for these multilingual learners to engage with state and local leaders on pressing issues such as housing, immigration, gun violence, and transportation.

75 PAE students ranging in age from 20 to 86, and originating from countries across the globe—including Somalia, Guinea, Turkey, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Congo Brazzaville— participated.

In preparation for the forum, students prepared questions on issues they researched in their ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. This event was part of a larger initiative to educate PAE students about U.S. government structures, the importance of civic participation, and key issues affecting their local communities.



Students took center stage at the forum, asking community leaders about a wide range of issues.

Participating panelists included: **Sarah Lawrence** (District Representative, U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree's Office); **Deqa Dhalac**, (State Representative, South Portland); **Claude Rwaganje**, City Councilor, Westbrook); and **Sarah Lentz**, Chair, Portland Board of Public Education.

"This fall, students in our advanced ESOL and Language Arts classes have not only worked hard to improve their English writing and speaking skills. They've also been challenged to think critically about the world around them," said PAE teacher **Shoshana Hoose**, who developed the curriculum. "This forum was an incredible opportunity for our students to have thoughtful discussions with community leaders about the issues that matter to them most."

The forum demonstrated PAE's commitment to fostering civic engagement and inclusivity among its diverse learners. Thank you to **Friends of Portland Adult Education** for making it possible!



Thank you to our panelists (from left): Sarah Lawrence, Claude Rwaganje, Deqa Dhalac, and Sarah Lentz.

FPAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Robert Wood, Chair
North Yarmouth, ME

Anja Hanson, Vice Chair
Portland, ME

Margaret Curran, Treasurer
Falmouth, ME

Moey Burchenal, Secretary
South Portland, ME

Todd Beacham
Cumberland, ME

Deb Breiting
Portland, ME

Valerie DeVuyst
Windham, ME

Latré Sibi Lawson Owanda Field
Freeport, ME

Meghann Gorden
North Yarmouth, ME

Sharon Lacey
Portland, ME

Maryann Boyle Murray
Ocean Park, ME

Kathleen Stokes
Portland, ME

Abbie Yamamoto, ex officio
Portland, ME

friends of PORTLAND ADULT EDUCATION



Donations are always welcome

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
- **Donate a gift of stock.** Contact Rob Wood at friendsofpae@gmail.com

Stay connected

You can now find PAE 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!

Friends of Portland Adult Education
P.O. Box 3185
Portland, ME 04104

friends of PORTLAND ADULT EDUCATION