

Learning English, Thanks to The Guild

Felisberte Silva enjoyed learning words that described jobs and family. Her daughter, Ruthe Rodrigues, was happy to learn "how to greet people." These two women, who immigrated from Cape Verde to Brockton, sat in a crowded classroom on a recent evening at the MultiCultural Banking Center of HarborOne Bank in downtown Brockton.

They are enrolled in the basic class of English for Speakers of Other Languages and hope they are taking a step toward employment. Felisberte, who has been in the United States for four years, lost her job a year and a half ago when her employer went out of business. Ruthe, who came from Cape Verde last September "to be reunited with family," is not currently working either.

As their patient and enthusiastic teacher, Angela Leite, translated, the two women told of their aspirations in a new country. Felisberte has been job-hunting but, as Angela said, "At most of the places she looks for work, you need to have the language, at least what we call Survival English."



*Felisberte Silva (left) and her daughter Ruthe Rodrigues (right),
with their teacher Angela Leite.*

Felisberte and Ruthe are clients of the Charity Guild food pantry and are the first recipients of scholarships from a fund The Guild set up with proceeds of the Women Who Care event last December. At the suggestion of vice-chairwoman Nancy Gustafson, the Guild set aside \$1,000 to pay the tuition of clients to learn English in programs like the one at HarborOne or at Crescent Credit Union. The Guild pays the \$100 tuition for Felisberte and Ruthe in the 10-week course, which meets two evenings a week.

"We feel we are effective in getting food to people who require assistance," said Michael Molyneux, The Guild's executive director. "But we want to expand our services to address other basic needs. Education is one of the best investments you can make. That also applies to our nutrition class, which starts June 2. It helps people create meals that are not only nutritious but also economical."

The scholarships for the English class seem like money well spent. On a damp evening, Legion Parkway was quiet but students filled the halls of the MultiCultural Banking Center, where the course offerings include citizenship and financial literacy. Felisberte and Ruthe's classroom had a map of the world on a side wall and an American flag up front. Two dozen students packed the room and looked at learning aids printed in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Angela drilled the students in who, what, when and where, with questions like "When is your birthday?" She reminded them that in this country, you put the month first, then the date. After recess would be a lesson in writing checks.

Down the hall, her husband, Daniel Leite, was teaching a more advanced class, comparing your mother's sister with a little creature that likes sugar: "If someone says, 'My aunt,' I don't think they are talking about the insect." Daniel, who is pastor of a Church of the Nazarene in Taunton, was born in Cape Verde and migrated here via Brazil, where his wife is from. "These students come with the desire to learn," he said. "I can relate. Twenty-four years ago I was in the same place." He went on to teach kindergarten through 12th grade and in a seminary. But working with these students, he says, is special.

Many Miles and Smiles

The Charity Guild Harvest Gala is now going to be on Friday, Nov. 21. Theresa Bulman had to untangle some curtains from a balky hanger before she could sit down and talk about her job as a Charity Guild thrift shop volunteer. She was back just a few days from six months in Florida and, she explained, "They left all the curtains for me." Curtains are one of Theresa's specialties in the thrift shop. As are pants.

Every time she drives to The Guild, Theresa puts 50 more miles on her Nissan Altima. She lives in Scituate, a 45-minute drive – and a world away – from the center of Brockton. "I could stay closer to home, but I like doing this because I feel much more needed in a place like Brockton. Scituate is well endowed with capable volunteers who can take care of things there. I wish more of them would come over here."

Theresa, who has lived in Scituate for 40 years, is the mother of 6 children and has 18 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Pat Conway, a former president of The Charity Guild, is an old friend. Theresa's son Michael is married to Carol Conway Bulman, the daughter of Pat and the late Jack Conway, the realtor and philanthropist. In-laws don't always get along, but such was not the case here. In 2008 Theresa and Pat were on a service trip to Peru with Barbara and Tony Cerce, when Barbara suggested that Theresa try volunteering at The Guild.

Theresa grew up in Jamaica Plain in Boston, trained as a nurse, was director of ambulatory nursing at Carney Hospital

in Dorchester and taught at Cape Cod Community College. Fortunately she has not had to use any of her nursing skills at The Guild. On a typical day, she says, "I go through whatever comes in, whatever they need."



Theresa Bulman at work in the thrift shop.

"Theresa has a lot of energy," said General Manager Lynne Stent. "We'll all be tired and she'll be going strong." Added Nancy Roberts, a manager: "Theresa is very helpful to customers, dependable and dedicated. And she has a great sense of humor."

Theresa is undaunted by the seemingly endless bags of donations. And her co-workers in the thrift shop make the job a pleasure. "To see the people here is a delight," she said. "They are fun to be with."

And there is another advantage to working in Brockton, she said: "The gas is a lot less expensive." — MICHAEL MOLYNEUX

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Name: Theresa Bulman
Age: 78
Hometown: Scituate, MA
Time With the Guild: Six years
Volunteer Days: Tuesday, Thursday

Save the Date!

The Charity Guild Harvest Gala is now going to be on Friday, **Nov. 21**. We will feature a star-studded cast in "**The Charity Guild Holiday Cabaret**" to be held at the Shaw's Center.

