

From Cairo to Siletz: A Teacher's Journey to Oregon

By Diane Rodriguez

How does someone get from the bustling metropolis of Cairo, Egypt, to the small town of Siletz?

She becomes involved with the Teachers of Critical Languages Program, which recruits and places English as a Foreign Language teachers from China, Jordan and Egypt in American secondary schools, where they teach their native language and culture.

This program is administered by American Councils for International Education, a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the U.S. Department of State.

Abir Hassan is from Egypt and is teaching Arabic language and culture to students at Siletz Valley School and Siletz Valley Early College Academy.

She is one of five teachers placed in the western United States this year by the TCLP program. Two are in Utah, with one each in Arizona and New Mexico. The remainder are in the Mid-West, on the East Coast or in the South.

Hassan says Arabic is harder to learn than other languages in part because its letters change shape depending on where they are in the word and because it goes from right to left. But, she adds, her students in Siletz are doing well.

"They've learned the foundation, which is an impressive start," she said of the students to whom she has taught the Arabic words for various occupations, foods, times, family and directions. "If they hear someone speaking Arabic, they can interpret what he is saying. I don't give them an easy way (to remember what words mean). I encourage them to guess at the English meaning."

Hassan is from the city of Shobra Elkheima near Cairo and has a bachelor's

of arts degree in English language and literature from Ain Shames University in Cairo. She has taught English at Shobra El Khama Sanaweeya el Banat Secondary School for Girls since 1994.

She's also a member of the Ministry of Education, where she works to improve the teaching of English as a foreign language.

Hassan is the oldest of six, with two sisters and three brothers, plus four nieces. She's engaged to marry Hatim Ateya in July 2010. Ateya has applied to get his Ph.D. degree in business administration and economics from an American university in 2011, so the couple may be spending more time in the United States.

Hassan says being here is a challenge for her because of the students' unfamiliarity with other cultures. She's pleased that she can bring Arabic culture, including things like song and dance, into their classroom.

Abir Hassan runs through Arabic language drills with students in her ninth-grade class. She teaches Arabic language, culture and history to children in several grades.

"I want them to think globally more. Broadening their horizon is very important," she said. "This is a good opportunity for them to learn about culture in Arabic countries."

They'll learn so much, she said, that they're preparing to perform a play in Arabic in the talent show the school holds at the end of the school year.

While working toward that end, Hassan also will encourage parents and students to continue to learn more about other communities and cultures – and to value education more.

"Education gives them more chances in life. Doors open if you know more languages (and cultures)," she said. "Their education needs more motivation. It can make their lives plentiful. Kids need more motivation for education because education is their future."



Abir Hassan reviews the sounds of the letters in the Arabic alphabet.



Photos by Diane Rodriguez

Resolutions, con't from previous page

- debt problem with all the breaks the Obama administration has been giving. A number of reputable companies can help you tackle this but make sure to do your research before picking a company to help you. It's worth consulting with three companies and asking what they can do for you before making a decision. Also, be careful about divulging all your personal information such as Social Security numbers and bank accounts prior to doing your research. Although there are fees associated with the services, companies build their reputations based on saving you many more dollars than they cost you.
8. Learn Something New – A little creativity goes a long way. The Newport Recreation Center always has new and inexpensive classes and learning seminars. Stop by and look at the flyers – everything from tango dancing, Pilates, painting classes or craft classes. Whether you are looking for a way to express yourself creatively or expand your knowledge of a subject, the Internet is an easy way to find a way to channel into the best way to learn something new. The library has several computers you can use and the friendly staff can help anyone feeling shy on their computers skills.
 9. Help Others – You don't have to have a lot of money to help others. There are plenty of ways to get involved locally. For people without much, it's often the small things that help the most. Most local food shares, animal shelters and schools work with volunteers. The Oregon Coast Aquarium trains volunteers as does the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport.
 10. Get Organized – Several websites can help you target the cluttered and disorganized areas of your life and make suggestions on how to stay more organized. Most of them mention getting rid of things you don't need (may also go along with No. 9), cleaning out what you do have and making some kind of list in order to get through things that need to be done. Whether it's a new organizer for you, a phone that beeps when you have appointments or plans to freeze a week's worth of food on the weekend, try not to forget to enjoy life around you while you pencil in every activity you are involved in. <http://organizedhome.com/>

2010 Standing Committee Applications Due

Deadline for consideration for committees is Jan. 29, 2010

Any Tribal member interested in serving on a committee for a two-year term must fill out the following form and return it to the address below prior to Jan. 29, 2010.

Please mail or fax your application to Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Attn: Executive Secretary to Tribal Council, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549; fax: 541-444-8325.

Name: _____ Roll No: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
 Telephone: Day () _____ Evening () _____

Choose the first, second and third choice of committees you are requesting by numbering your preference 1, 2, 3 in the space provided. **If you only want to be considered for one committee, please indicate this by inserting the number 1.**

____ Education Committee (3) ____ Housing Committee (3)
 ____ Natural Resources Committee (3) ____ Pow-Wow Committee (no limit)
 ____ Health Committee (3) ____ Budget Committee (1)
 ____ Cultural Heritage Committee (3)

Tribal Council will review applications and approve appointments at the Regular Tribal Council meeting in February 2010. If you have any questions, please call Tribal Council's executive secretary, Tami Miner, at 800-922-1399, ext. 1203, or 541-444-8203.