

Maria Torres
2020 DCLC Student Champion of Adult Literacy



Maria Torres is originally from the Dominican Republic. She is a licensed dentist in her country and has practiced dentistry in the Dominican Republic and Spain.

Maria enrolled with the Delaware County Literacy Council (DCLC) in November 2016 as an English as a Second Language (ESL) student. She wanted to improve her ability to speak and understand English. Also, Maria realized that better English skills would allow her to be successful in her job search. Specifically, when Maria applied to work in a local dentist office, she was told her English was not good enough to do the job. Maria knew she needed to take the brave step of asking for help, so she contacted the Literacy Council with the goal of improving her English skills.

Once enrolled with DCLC, Maria was matched with Volunteer Tutor James Stein. After working with James on her English for two years, Maria applied to a dental office, and this time she landed the job! She is now a full-time dental assistant in the office of Mindy Benjamini, DMD, a dental practice in Narberth PA.

COVID-19 did not impede Maria's progress or motivation. She continues to meet with her tutor James via video conferences. When her workplace shut down during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, she even expressed gratitude that she had more time to do her ESL homework!

When her workplace reopened, Maria was very involved in implementing COVID-19 protocols to keep the staff and patients at the dental practice safe, including a special patient shield developed by Dr. Benjamini.

Through all of these changes, Maria did not give up on her dream. Instead, she worked hard to reach her goals. As James says, "Her persistence and patience paid off!" Maria continues to study with James and has recently placed out of ESL and is now a basic literacy student. She continues to improve her skills so she can get the most out of her life here in the U.S. We congratulate Maria on being the 2020 Student Champion of Adult Literacy!