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American River College

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The Parrot



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Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multicultural, international students, Californians, and, well, anybody really...



GIVE UP? NO WAY! AREZO MANSURI

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

"If we want something and we put all our efforts and energy toward getting it, no matter what our gender, religion, ethnicity, origin, and location, there is no doubt that we can achieve it."

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Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!
See page 4 for details.

A LABOR OF LOVE: CREATING MY PERSIAN ALPHABET BOOK

BADRIA BEHGAM

For years, I've carried the dream of writing a children's book—one that would reflect both the beauty of language and the joy of learning. That dream started to take shape when I began working on a Persian alphabet book for children. The inspiration came from my experience as a mother and educator, and from noticing how import- *Continue on page 18*



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FUNNY STORIES LEARNING ENGLISH

The Parrot is happy to share the following true stories from ESL students who responded to last month's invitation to share a funny story about learning English. They will each receive a small back pack and some cool ARC swag! Thanks to each of them for sharing their stories, and enjoy a laugh or two or three!

A LUCKY STROKE

This happened a few weeks after we moved into a new apartment. After some time, a neighbor came to say hello. She told me she was sorry that she couldn't come earlier and spend more time with us because her husband had had a stroke. I didn't know the word *stroke*, so I didn't understand what she was saying. I just smiled and said, "Oh, okay, nice., nice."

Later, when I went home, I started thinking about her words. I checked the meaning of *stroke* and then I felt very uncomfortable. At our next meeting, the first thing I did was to ask how her husband was doing. Luckily, he was doing well.

–Oksana Ushatova

NOTHING IS FREE!

Oh, this English language! So many funny situations happen to people who come to or move to an English-speaking country. For example, once I was ordering at McDonald's and said, "Potato free," and the cashier answered, "There is nothing free, ma'am." But I kept insisting, "No, I need free!" I insisted on "free" because in Russia "French fries" are called *kartoshka fri*, and "fri" sounds just like "free" in English.

And another silly situation happened with the word "free". I knew that "free" means "not occupied," so when we were trying to rent an apartment, we walked into a leasing office and asked, "Do you have a free apartment?" The manager looked at us with wide eyes, not understanding what we wanted. At that time, I didn't know the word "available."

–Elena Komissarova

THREE DOLLARS IN COINS

This happened at a parking lot in downtown Sacramento. When we were leaving, the parking attendant said, "Three dollars." My husband wanted to pay with a card, but I had many coins. I don't really like carrying coins. I said, "Wait, wait, I will pay. I have coins." When I took the coins from my pocket to count them, I realized to my surprise that the coins here (in the U.S.) had no numbers! I didn't know the coins' values.

When the attendant saw the situation, he said, "Oh, if you don't have money, you can go." I could see that this whole situation was making my husband feel very uncomfortable. By the way, he was the driver. So, I answered, "No, no, we have money, but you don't have one, two, three." I didn't know how to explain that I didn't see any numbers, and it was the first time I had seen money like this.

In the end, I counted the coins by guessing and gave him the coins. He smiled and said, "It's \$2, but it's okay, you can go." My husband was so embarrassed, but I think I was doing okay!

–Oksana Ushatova

MY FUNNY MISTAKE

When I came to the U.S., I knew only a few English words. Once I needed to buy 5 envelopes with stamps. I found necessary words in the dictionary and tried to remember them, but while my sister was taking me to the post office I forgot the word *envelope* a little bit. So I asked the postman: "I would like to buy 5 develops with stamps." The postwoman was nice, and she smiled and asked: "Maybe you want 5 envelopes with stamps?" I thanked her for understanding, but it was funny.

–Tamara Pivtorak

FUNNY STORIES LEARNING ENGLISH

THE STRANGER IN MY CAR

A while ago I went to the pharmacy to pick up my medicine. My husband was waiting for me in the car. After picking it up, I went to the car, opened the car door, and sat down while I was putting on my seat belt. I said "Drive," but when I looked over, I didn't see my husband! I saw a stranger wearing the same shirt as my husband was wearing. I was shocked and embarrassed and realized I was in the wrong car even though it looked like the same car as mine. As I said, "Sorry, sorry!" the stranger started laughing, and I left the car right away and made my way to my car while laughing.

–Faideh Barakat

DOING OR GOING

This is my second semester in college. I remember this moment in studying a language in college. The question, "How are you doing?" was very incomprehensible to me. I used to think that this meant, "What are you doing?" and I needed to describe what I was doing. A similar question also confused me when people asked, "How is it going?" To me, the word "going" has always been associated with the meaning of going somewhere, so I thought I should tell them where I was going! I confused the meanings of "doing" and "going" for a long time. Because the questions were confusing, I didn't feel confident about using them, so I just asked the short question, "How are you?" Now it's funny to me, but then I was sure that this word had only one meaning.

–Natalia Shymyk

Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!

The Parrot wants to hear from **YOU**—students, staff, faculty, and administrators!

Tell us about a funny or memorable moment you've had while learning or teaching English.

Send your story to TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu.



As a BIG thank-you, the first 10 people will receive a bag full of ARC swag, complete with:

a stylish lunch bag
a portable speaker
sunglasses
campus goodies

Courtesy of the ARC Unite Center. Don't miss your chance to share a laugh and grab some cool gifts!



How to sign up for ESL Assessment

1. Scan the QR code below with your phone, or click on English as a Second Language (ESL) Assessment if you are on a computer.
2. Read all the information, and then scroll to the bottom of the page to choose if you want an in-person or an online ESL Assessment session.
3. After you choose in-person or online, sign up using your student ID number and birth date.

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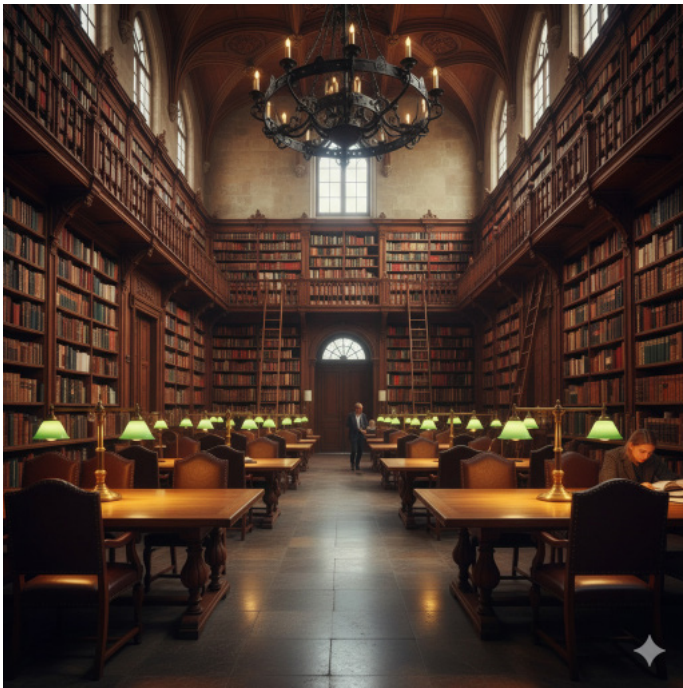
THREE SPECIAL PLACES FROM MY CHILDHOOD

BY MARIANA SARCHUK, ESL 47

NARRATIVE ESSAY

What reminds you of your childhood? Childhood is a time filled with unforgettable memories and magical places, and the family home is another place that leaves a lasting mark on our hearts. These special locations shape our imagination, values and sense of wonder. They became quiet witnesses to our growth and adventures. For me, a few such places stood out as truly meaningful during my childhood. Such places are the school library, grandmother's garden, the forest and the river.

The first special place from my childhood was the school library. It was a quiet, cozy room filled with shelves of books. The smell of books gives me intrigue. Old books seemed to whisper secrets. I loved spending my free time there, exploring different



worlds through reading. The librarian was always kind and helped me find books that matched my interests. I could spend hours there without noticing the time. Here, I could find the information I need-

ed. The library was also a place where you could connect during various events and find like-minded people. For example, the library hosted meetings with writers. I loved books that transported me to distant worlds. The library was the very place from my childhood where I learned to dream.

The second place from my childhood was my grandmother's garden. It was the place where I spent most of my childhood. I spent hours chasing butterflies. Climbing trees and playing hide and seek were also exiting activities for me. My grandmother used to tell me about the flowers and how to take care of them. It taught me to love nature. Since then, I have had a special love for flowers. The berries that grew in my grandmother's garden were the most delicious. I specially loved the cherries. In addition, I wore them instead of earrings. Lying on the green grass and watching the clouds in the sky was another game I remember fondly from the garden. That garden taught me patience, care, and the quiet beauty of nature.

The third place was the forest. The forest held a special place in my heart. I lived near the forest, so I spent a large part of my childhood there. I loved walking along the path between the trees. I loved the birds singing somewhere above. I was drawn to the forest by its fresh, clear air. It felt nature. It was easy to breathe there, thoughts became clearer, and all worries seemed to recede into the background. I collected pinecones and leaves there. In addition, the forest felt magical to me because it was a place where I could listen to the silences. The forest was a place where I could escape from everything and just be myself.

Another special place from my childhood was the river near our village. In summer, my friends and



would spend whole days there. Swimming in the cool water on a hot day was wonderful. We enjoyed catching tiny fish with our hands. At times, we just lay on the riverbank and sunbathed. On weekends my parents and I would sometimes go to the river. These were the moments I remembered the most. For example, when my dad taught me how to swim. The river was a place of fun and freedom. It holds some of my happiest childhood memories.

In conclusion, the school library, my grandmother's garden, the forest, and the river were more than just spots on a map. They were a part of my growing up. Though time has passed, they remain alive in my heart, reminding me of the simple joys and magic of childhood.

MY ADVENTURE

BY OLESIA TURBA, ESL 37

NARRATIVE ESSAY

One time I went on an adventure. I had an adventure to the state of Florida. It was my first time in Florida.

My adventure started April of 2025 when the weather was warm. We had two flights. The first flight was from Sacramento to Las Vegas, and the second flight was from Las Vegas to Miami. My adventure was to my uncle's house.

My family and I visited my uncle Nick, his wife Galina, and my cousin Matthew. We stayed near the city Miami. It's called Center Beach because my uncle lives in there. It was an awesome adventure.

We were on the beach every day for one week, and we used sunscreen, but our skin felt bad after being in the sun too long. We swam every day. We used a paddle board. I helped my aunt Galina in the kitchen and looked after cousin Matthew. My uncle has two cats, and one of them is friendly. The other

is not friendly, but we fed them.

This was my best adventure in Florida. It was my first time in Florida and on the Atlantic Ocean. I met aunt Galina and my cousin Matthew. Everything was great.

Jack and Annie also had a big adventure. They had a trip back in the Revolutionary War time and they helped George Washington.

Since San Francisco and Miami are in different time zones, when I arrived there I lost three hours and when I returned I gained back the lost hours. I had a big adventure "going to the future" and "back to the past" too. It was a good time. We had a very good time. I look forward to my next adventure there.

MY WEDDING RING

BY KALBINUR TURSUNJAN, ESL 350

POETRY

Oh little golden circle,
You once sparkled with promise.
A silent vow, sitting quietly on my hand,
You told the world, "I am his."

You were smooth like his sweet lies,
Soft in weight, but heavy in meaning.
You danced in the light,
Like hope shining in my eyes.

But now, you feel cold,
Like the night he left me crying.
You shine no more,
Only shadows sit inside your gold.

I wore you with pride,
But now you burn my skin.
You used to mean forever,
Now you only mean goodbye.

You saw everything—
The smiles, the kisses, the betrayal.
You stayed quiet when I screamed.
You stayed round, when my heart broke in pieces.

Oh ring, you were just a thing,
But you held a dream.
Now I place you in a box,
And leave you with my past.

A PARK

BY ZINAIDA KARASTAOIAN, ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

Many people like to have parties in parks. A park is a good place to have a party because it has big, open spaces, fun activities, and low cost.

First, having a party in a park is a big space. Whether it's a birthday party or a picnic, parks can accommodate large groups without people feeling crowded. Children can run, play games, and enjoy the playground. Adults can walk around, sit, and talk or play sports. Some parks have picnic tables and benches for eating and resting. Others have shelters or gazebos that give shade or protection from the sun. There are places where you can set up decorations, food tables, and even games like soccer or tag. You don't need to worry about noise bothering neighbors. Everyone can enjoy themselves without feeling cramped. Indeed, having more space makes the party more comfortable for everyone.

Another reason parks are good for parties is that there are many fun things to do. Most parks have playgrounds with swings and slides for kids. Some have basketball courts, soccer fields. Families can bring balls, frisbees, or jump ropes

for fun games. You can plan a treasure hunt or relay race. Parks also have walking paths for people who like to take quiet strolls. Some parks have small lakes or ponds where you can watch ducks or go fishing. Nature walks and bug hunts can be fun for kids too. My kids like hunting spiders. With so many options, no one will be bored. In addition, a park gives many chances for fun activities during the party.



The last reason to have parties in a park is to save money. Many parks are free or very cheap to use. You do not need to rent a room or pay for decorations if you use nature. Trees, flowers, and grass already make the place look nice. You can bring your own food and drinks from home. This is cheaper than buying food from a restaurant. Some parks have grills for cooking or picnic tables for eating. You can plan games and bring music with a speaker. You need to check in if the parks have rules. In summary, with a

little planning you can have a great party without spending too much money.

In conclusion, a park is a wonderful place to have a party. It is big, fun, and low cost. If you want to enjoy nature, have fun, and save money, I recommend to choose the park.

ALONE IN THE FOREST: A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET

BY MARYNA RYKOVA, ESL 47

NARRATIVE ESSAY

Do you remember your most terrifying experience? I think it's impossible to forget, so I remember it very well and all my feelings on the day it happened to me. It happened one beautiful sunny day in a forest in Ukraine. That day was the scariest day of my life.



First of all, on a spring Saturday morning, my family and I went for a walk in the forest. The day was sunny, warm and clear. The forest greeted us with spring coolness. Nature was waking up from winter sleep, birdsong could be heard all around, and people's voices could be heard everywhere. The air smelled like offspring, and flowers bloomed all around, filling the air with an incredible aroma. Walking through the forest, I enjoyed the beauty around me and tried to take as many beautiful photos as possible. In one moment of this walk, I looked around and realized that I was completely alone. Therefore, I assumed I was lost. I instantly felt very scared, terrified, and I did not know what to do next.

Next, dinner approached really fast, and I was still alone. I walked through the forest and called out

to my family, but in response I only heard my own echo. There was no one around, no phone service, so the fear started to scare me even more. Hunger also reminded me of itself with strange sounds from my stomach. The little water I had left and a few nuts I had picked up from the trees helped me to feel a little better. I walked through the forest for several hours, but apart from a rabbit and a hedgehog, I did not meet anyone else. It was getting dark, and I realized that in a little while I would have to look for a place to spend the night, but it scared me very much. Therefore, I made an unexpected decision for myself. After finding a tree that was more or less accessible to me, I climbed it. And to my surprise, I saw that a connection had appeared on my phone. I was able to call my family.

Finally, it was almost night outside, but our already long walk could not end. However, after a while we finally found each other at the place where our walk began. I ran into their arms, crying from both fear and relief. At that moment, I realized how lucky I was to have such a caring and loving family. We were tired, but extremely happy and relieved to meet again. The forest felt silent, and nothing could be heard around except the chirping of grasshoppers and the hooting of an owl that had probably just woken up. It was getting cold, and we realized it was finally time to go. I am very grateful to my family for not leaving me in danger and waiting until they found me. Exhausted and excited, we finally returned home.

In conclusion, this day was truly a scary experience for me. But it taught me to be more careful and attentive in unfamiliar places and taught me to appreciate my family even more. Furthermore, I most definitely do not want to relive this day ever again in my life.

GOOD PLACES TO HAVE A PICNIC

BY MYKOLA HRYTSIVTA, ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

I like picnics on the weekends. They are fun and relaxing. You can enjoy nature and spend time with family or friends. I have a few favorite places where I love to go for a picnic. My top four are the lake, the park, the forest, and the beach. Each place is special in its own way. When I go there, I feel happy and calm. I enjoy the fresh air and beautiful nature. Picnics are a great way to relax. Let me tell you more about these places.

First, the lake is a peaceful place. I like to sit near the water and enjoy the view. Sometimes I go fishing with my family. The sound of the water makes me feel quiet and relaxed. The lake always has a cool breeze. The water looks pretty when the sun shines on it. Ducks and birds are fun to watch there. I like to eat my food while listening to nature. For example, I like to bring fruit, sandwiches, and lemonade to enjoy with my family. In addition, I sometimes bring a book to read or a ball to play games after lunch. Indeed, it is a perfect place to sit and eat.



Second, the park is another great place for a picnic. There is a lot of space to play games and run around. Kids can play on the playground. The park is safe and clean. I like to go with my friends or family. We play games like tag or soccer. Some people ride bikes or scooters. You can also eat on

picnic tables. It is fun to have lunch and talk outside. For example, we sometimes have a small birthday party or bring a radio to play music. In addition, the park has trees that give nice shade when it is hot. In conclusion, the park is a friendly and fun place for everyone.

Third, the forest is also a good picnic place. There are many tall trees and fresh air. It is quiet and peaceful. Birds sing, and I like to listen. I often walk on the trail before I eat. I see flowers, squirrels, and sometimes deer. The forest makes me feel close to nature. I sit on a rock or a log and eat lunch. It is cool and shady there. For example, I like to take pictures of flowers and bugs with my phone. In addition, I sometimes bring a blanket to lie down and relax under the trees. A forest picnic is very relaxing.

Finally, the beach is a fun and beautiful place for a picnic. There is sand, and the sound of waves. I like to walk along the shore and look for shells. Sometimes, I fly a kite or build sandcastles with my friends. The beach has a lot of open space, and the wind feels fresh. We put a big towel or mat on the sand and eat our food there. For example, we bring cold drinks, chips, fruit, and sometimes grilled meat. The beach is also a good place to take photos because the view is amazing. After eating, I like to swim or play games like volleyball. In addition, we sometimes stay to watch the sunset. It feels peaceful and happy to spend time there. I think the beach is one of the most fun picnic spots, especially in the summer.

In conclusion, I think picnics are a great way to spend time with family or friends. I like the park, the lake, the forest, and the beach. Each place has something special. I enjoy time outside and feel happy when I go on a picnic with friends and family on the weekends.

SO AN ODE TO LOVE'S LOST WORTH

BY LEENA SHAYAAN, ESL 350

POETRY

Love, what was once such a hoarded treasure-prize,
Now brightens the loss and proves a burn within.
Where freely given, with never worded plea,
Doyen, your value sinks, fading memory.

Chase, longings; these have fueled the fire,
The heart, all the while with wild desire,
While access is as clear as summer breezes
Steal the very essence from verdant trees.

And the kiss, fleeting dream of fever's height,
And drowning senses when nothing is as it seems,
Moment lost, brain fried at such heat,
All true meaning crumbles at our feet.

O, love, your dignity and grace reclaim,
Demand the right of your true place.
Only then, by right of honest might,
You will stand as a beacon blazing bright.

OPINION ESSAY

THANKSGIVING DAY

BY LILIA SHEPET, ESL 47



We remember and thank all our lives those who did good to us. There are several places that I am grateful for my life. I am very thankful for many things: my home, my garden, and learning English.

First of all, I am grateful that I have my own home. Home is a place you want to return. It's cozy and warm. My house is not very big. It has only two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen, but my most favorite place is the terrace. The terrace is my comfort and relaxation zone. For example, when you get out of bed in the morning, go out to the terrace, look at the sea, the sunrise, and beautiful sky, then you feel charged with the energy of the day. We often spend time here with family and friends. My house is located in a beautiful place in Spain in the city of Torrevieja near the sea. There is a park behind the house. The house by the sea was my dream, and it was true. My house has everything I need. Indeed, I am grateful for having a home. I feel comfortable and cozy in it.



Second, I am grateful that I have a favorite place. It is my garden. My garden is my pride. My back garden is my place of solitude. I like to spend time there thinking about something, enjoying the silence

and the singing of birds. When it is spring, all the trees begin to come to life, their blossoming causes delight. Then, in early summer, peonies and roses bloom. For instance, I have all the colors of peonies. I love them very much. I like the fact that the garden is constantly changing because some flowers fade and often bloom in their place. In the evening there is a special magic in the garden. I always love watching a new plant appear. Indeed, I am very grateful for the opportunity to see the beauty of nature in my garden.

Last of all, I feel especially grateful for the opportunity to study at ARC. Here I can write, read, think, and learn English. It develops my memory and increases my intellectual level. And also, make decisions faster, the ability to clearly express your thoughts. I always wanted to learn English. When I came to America, I had this opportunity. With admission to ARC, my dream began to come true. I try to study English hard. I have always liked it. Learning is always interesting. For example, many lectures are held in a game format. Games provide language practice in various skills speaking, writing, listening, and reading. I have wonderful teachers. I am grateful for their work and patience. The classes are very interesting and related. I learn a lot of interesting things from my teachers. I write and read a lot. This knowledge significantly improves my level of English. Indeed, I am very grateful to my teacher for the interesting, exciting lectures. I am interested in everything, and I want to continue learning English for professional growth.

In conclusion, all this is a dear memory that warms the soul and will never be forgotten. My home, my garden, and my learning English are an integral part of my life, and I am grateful for this.

SOCIAL MEDIA: DOU YIN

BY CRYSTAL XU, ESL 37

OPINION ESSAY

Maybe a lot of people in the U.S. don't know what Dou Yin is. It's a popular social media site in my country, and it's similar to Tiktok. Dou Yin is my favorite social media site. And I use it every day. There are two reasons why Dou Yin is important for my life.



First, Dou Yin helps me keep in touch with my friends. We watch funny videos and share the videos with each other. I spent more than one hour on Dou Yin exchanging messages with my friends. Even if we are in different countries, we still love each other and care about each other's daily lives. Regarding the news, we talk about the governments of China and America. Even if my country has other social media sites like WeChat or QQ, which are more simple for family or business workers to communicate and use for atten-

tion, they don't have interesting videos we can share like on Dou Yin. As a result, I only love Dou Yin.

Second, DouYin has all information I want to search. In my daily life, if I want to learn something new first, I will use DouYin. For example, if I want to improve my English skill, I will search videos on DouYin and get a lot of tips on how to spell the English words. Some DouYin bloggers often post English videos or start live broadcasts, they always subtitle videos and explain what the sentences mean to help me understand this sentence. The clips help me improve my English skill. Sometimes I also use Dou Yin to learn how to cook my hometown food, like hot pot or cola chicken wings. Every time I cook, I always get good comments from people. Many people get a better understanding of my country's culture through my food.

Social media DouYin helps me get better learning to improve my English and also helps me communicate with my friends or family. Lastly, DouYin also allows me to better understand the world and always pay attention to the news. If we use social media sites carefully, we can learn more things to improve our life.

OPINION ESSAY

THE MAGIC OF SWIMMING

BY AHMAD SHEKIB SALAMZAI, ESL 47

Have you ever felt the joy of moving through water, weightless and free? Swimming is more than just a fun activity; it's my favorite hobby, and it brings me happiness in many ways. Whether I'm swimming through a pool or enjoying the waves at the beach, swimming helps me stay healthy, fit, relax my mind, and let me spend time with others.

The first reason I love swimming is that it keeps me strong and fit. It works my entire body, helping me build muscles and improve my endurance. Unlike running or other sports, swimming is gentle on my joints, so I never feel too sore after a session. For example, when I swim regularly, I notice that I have better vigor and feel more energized throughout the day. Because of this, I see swimming as the perfect way to stay active without putting too much strain on my body.

Another reason and great thing about swimming is how peaceful it is. The moment I dive into the water, the rest of the world fades away. The soft sounds of splashing and the feeling of moving smoothly through water help me relax. For instance, when I feel stressed or overwhelmed, a good swim clears my mind and helps me focus. Unlike other forms of exercise, it's not just about working out; it's also about finding calm and balance.

Lastly, swimming is a social activity that brings people together. I enjoy swimming with my friends, racing each other, or simply playing games in the water. It's also fun to take lessons or join a swim club where I can meet new people. For example, group swimming sessions allow me to learn new techniques and challenge myself while enjoying the company of others. Because of this, swimming has given me many great memories and friendships.

In conclusion, swimming is my favorite hobby because it keeps me healthy, helps me relax, and creates opportunities to connect with others. Every time I dive into the water, I feel refreshed, strong, and happy. It's more than just a sport; it's a passion that makes my life better.

OPINION ESSAY

MY BIG RISK

BY OLHA TSVIETROVA, ESL 37

Every day, many people take different risks. Some of them are small, and some are big. One big risk in my life is moving to the USA.

I moved to the USA on November 15, 2022. Before this, I lived with my family in Ukraine. Ukraine is a beautiful country. We had a good life there, but the date February 24, 2022, changed our lives. On that day, a war started. My husband and I needed to decide what to do. We wanted to give a better life to our kids. At that moment, we had two kids, and I was pregnant with another child. America opened its doors for Ukrainians, so we decided to move to the USA. We didn't have a family here, and we didn't know English. My husband's friend from the USA wanted to help us. He filled a form for us. This form was approved. After that, we packed our suitcases.

First, we moved to Romania because it's the only place to fly. Then we had a long trip with

three different transfers (planes) to the USA. When we moved here, we had many problems with language, rent, and work. Every day was hard for us, but we fixed our problems step by step. We met many good people who helped us. I learned about Jessica Nabongo from *Pathways Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking Foundations*. She was the first Black woman who visited every country, 195 countries total, in the world. In her advice for someone thinking of travelling the world, she said that most people really want to help you. I agree with her words. Americans are friendly people. I like to live in this country. I think I took the right risk.

Moving to another country was a big risk for me, but I know why I did it. Taking a risk sometimes is really hard, but it can open opportunities and help us to achieve our goals. Take a risk and never give up if your goal is helping people to have a better life.



**Would you like to
contribute to *The Parrot*?**

If you want to share your work, art, opinion, or anything else with *The Parrot*, please email us at:

TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu

We would be happy to hear from you and will try to respond ASAP.

The Parrot welcomes all ESL student matters!



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A LABOR OF LOVE

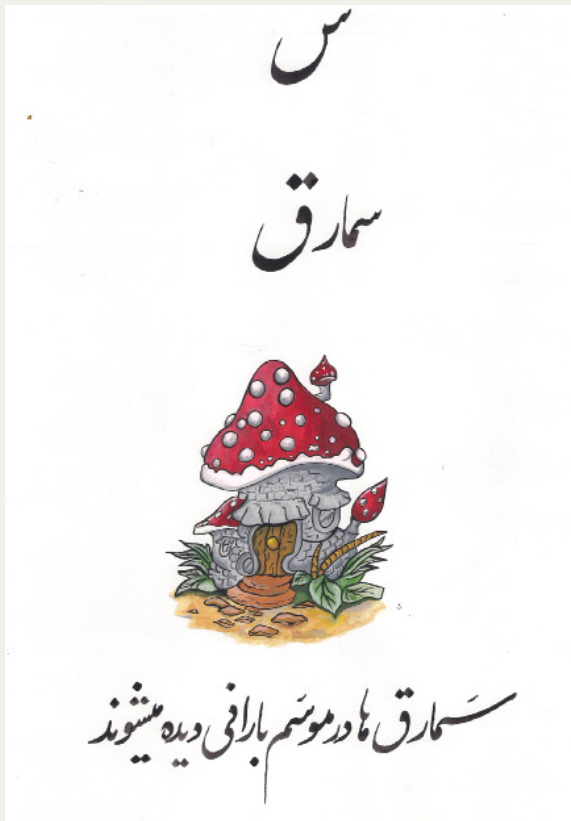
BADRIA BEHGAM

Continued from page 1

ant it is for children--especially those growing up away from their heritage--to stay connected to their roots through language.

When I set out to write a children's book, I knew I wanted it to be something meaningful--something that would connect children with their heritage and language. That's how my Persian alphabet book was born.

The idea came from my desire to help young children, especially those growing up outside of Afghanistan, learn the Persian alphabet in a fun and



engaging way. Language is deeply tied to identity, and I wanted to create a playful, colorful bridge to the Persian culture through letters, sounds, and simple words.

Writing the book was both exciting and challenging. I had to carefully choose the right words for each letter--words that would be easy for children to understand yet still meaningful and culturally rich. Finding the balance between educational content and joyful storytelling was the biggest challenge.

The visual aspect of the book was also very important. When I wrote the book, I was completing my BA in graphic design in Kabul University of Kabul, Afghanistan. I used the art I made in the program to illustrate the book. Since children are often drawn first to images, I worked closely with my drawing instructors to ensure that the artwork was bright, inviting, and reflective of Persian culture. Every image was thoughtfully designed to help reinforce the letter and word, while sparking curiosity and wonder. Illustrating the book with vibrant, playful images added another layer of creativity.

Although the book has not yet been published, working on it has already been rich with fulfilling experiences. One of the most challenging parts has been selecting words for each letter. I had to consider not just the linguistic aspects, but also the emotional connection those words might create for children and their families. I wanted each word to be simple enough for young readers, yet full of meaning. For example, I chose a mushroom house for this Persian alphabet book because it makes learning fun and magical for children. The mushroom house connects to the child's imagination--it looks like a tiny home from a fairy tale. When children see it, they become curious and excited. This helps them remember the letter more easily. A mushroom also teaches children that the natural world can be full of surprises--even something as small as a mushroom can become a cozy, creative place in their minds. But I want to publish this book to make families want to read it with their kids while reminding them

BOOKSTART

of their own childhood. This book can connect generations with their language identity.

I created this book over the course of 4 to 6 months. Each letter took me about 2 to 3 days to complete. First, I chose an image for each letter based on a word that starts with that letter, making sure the pictures were appropriate and engaging for children. Then, I drew each illustration with pencil and carefully added



colors, layer by layer. Sometimes, if I didn't like the outcome of a drawing or if it did not match the way I had imagined it, I completely changed the image and drew something else. Once I was satisfied with all the illustrations, I then wrote appropriate sentences to match each image.

Creating this book has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. I hope it continues to bring joy, learning, and cultural pride to many young readers for years to come.

Throughout this journey, I've received encouraging feedback from friends, parents, and fellow educators. Many have shared that they have been looking for a resource like this--a fun and meaningful way to introduce the Persian alphabet to their children. That kind of support has fueled my motivation.

At its heart, this book is about more than letters. It is about giving children the tools to stay connected to their culture, to recognize the beauty of their

language, and to feel proud of where they come from. In a world where cultural identity can sometimes feel distant or diluted, I believe books like this one can help bring it closer--page by page, word by word.

I look forward to completing and publishing the book soon, so it can begin its journey into the hands of families who will love and use it. My hope is that it will not only teach the alphabet, but also plant seeds of curiosity, connection, and cultural pride in every child who reads it.

About the Author

Badria Behgam is a mother and educator passionate about storytelling, culture, and childhood development. She is currently writing her first children's book--a Persian alphabet book created to nurture language learning and cultural identity. In her spare time, she enjoys crafting, nature walks, and making learning joyful for young minds.



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GIVE UP? NO WAY!

AREZO MANSURI

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Continued from page 1

INTERVIEW

Miss Arezo Mansuri, thank you very much for taking the time to have an interview with *The Parrot* ESL Newsletter. Can you tell us a little about yourself and what inspired you to return to school?

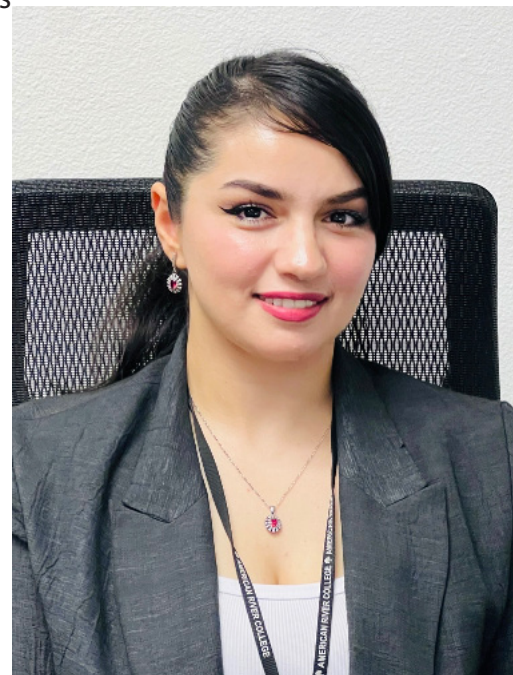
First of all, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to have this interview. Thank you for your time and dedication to interviewing different people at ARC to share different perspectives with ARC students.

It is about 4 years since I immigrated to the United States. I have two kids; my baby girl is 8 years old and my baby boy is 4 years old. I am a single mom who has all the responsibility of life over my shoulders. This is my second year at American River College. The biggest inspiration that pushed me to enroll in college and start my educational journey was getting the opportunity to further my education here in the USA. Being a mom and having two kids, I wouldn't have this opportunity in Afghanistan to go to college and further my education. This was something I have wanted to do for a long time, and I think it is the only way to help assure a better future for myself and my kids.

Thank you so much for sharing all that. Now, can you tell me what some of the biggest obstacles were that you faced when trying to enroll at ARC?

Generally speaking, as a second-language speaker and a person who was not familiar with the US system of education, I have faced so many obstacles. One of the biggest issues was the language barrier. I wasn't able to communicate my problems to seek solutions. I learned that it is okay that I am struggling to communicate and the first step to address my language barriers would be to go to college and start some ESL classes to learn the language and also to enroll in a major that I am passionate about.

Then, I went for it and the next obstacle I faced was feeling so lost and not having any clue where to start the whole process of enrollment. Learning the process caused me to lose a semester time. Now that two years have passed, I can find my way around the college whenever I need help. I see that this is a general obstacle for so many immigrant students. Mostly they don't know when it is the time to enroll, from where to start and from where to seek help, and this lack of information costs them to lose time as well.



Thank you, Arezo. That really is one of the biggest challenges for the immigrant students. Now, I want to know, were there any moments when you felt like giving up? If so, what helped you push through?

It is obvious that all humans are not always at the same mood or strength. I also had moments when I felt disappointed and weak and wanted to give up on my dream of furthering my education. It was too hard to manage being a single mom, having two

kids and dealing with all the obstacles to start my education. There were days that I didn't even want to get out of my bedroom. I just wanted to ignore all those obstacles and headaches. Then, as a single mom and the head of my household, I noticed that little problems like reading my mail or getting an appointment with a counselor at ARC were a huge problem for me. So, I looked at my kids and that pushed me and gave me strength and inspiration, that no matter what, I have to do this. I thought that even if I don't want to do this for myself, I have to do it for my kids. So, I decided to go through all the obstacles and enroll myself in college. Thankfully, I can easily handle all those problems now.

Did you find any campus resources or people



Arezo Mansuri with Lisa Cardoza, President of ARC

at ARC that helped make the transition smoother?

Yes, absolutely. Enrolling at the college was not the end of story. Even after enrollment, I had some problems locating resources that are available to students at ARC. So, I browsed different departments at American River College and learned about so many resources that are available for the stu-

dents in different departments. Each department has its own benefits and all are trying to help students achieve their educational goals. Although there are so many resources that are available at ARC that I can't name all of them, I want to name a few such as the CalWORKs department providing priority registration for the eligible students. Parent-to-Parent is another program under the CalWORKs Department where I am also working as Peer Mentor. It is a great program designed to help student-parents (students who are also parents) to achieve their education goals, despite all the other life responsibilities they have, by having a mentor available for them to help them whenever they need help. Another department that I want to mention is the Beaver Cares department where I am also working part-time. There is a food pantry and Beaver Cares is also providing some basic-needs assistance like diapers, food items, transportation assistance, and book assistance. Another department is the Counseling Department that personally helped me to identify my educational goal and align my education journey to that path.

You mentioned that you're working in two departments, Beaver Bites and CalWORKs, while also being a student and a mom. How do you manage all of that?

The interesting part is that I never felt that I would be that capable until I separated from my husband. I think this is not only about me, but it can also be applicable to any other person as well. When we face a moment where there is no one else to rely on, no one to step in and save us, we are left only with ourselves, in that very moment, we discover our true strength and what we are really capable of. I believe we all have strengths and capabilities, and we should discover it and learn how to use it.

Being in that situation taught me to learn more about my strengths and capabilities. My kids were the source of hope and energy to me, and when I realized my strength, it helped me to fight all the problems I faced and manage all my responsibilities, and thankfully I am now at a comfortable pace to manage my work responsibilities, assignments at the college as a student, and manage my home

responsibilities in the best possible way.

Thank you. How do your roles at Beaver Bites and CalWORKs connect with your experience as a student?

I think working at Beaver Bites and CalWORKs is making me ready for my future career at higher positions even if I get a job outside of ARC. Working in these two departments also helped me as a student to learn so many things about the college and its resources. It is also a great help that I am working in the same location where I am a student, so I save up on trips too. It saves time to come from a class to my work which is only few steps away. So, working at ARC as student help has had so many advantages for me. Having no commute to work saves gas and time. It is very convenient to go to work after my class or vice versa and learn so many things about the resources available at ARC for the students.

Outstanding, Now, tell me, with such a packed schedule, do you have any hobbies or things you do just for yourself?

I know that I have a very packed and tight schedule. However, I told myself that no matter how busy life gets, I have to take out some time for myself to fuel up my body and soul to get energy to continue my journey. So, to help manage life stress and strengthen my body and soul, I go to the gym and keep myself active. I also have a schedule with my kids to dance at home at least two to three sessions a week. It helps to make stronger bonds with my kids and at the same time keep them active. I also love to take my kids out to the beach or lakes. We all love spending time at the shore; it is so relaxing and has been so helpful to us.

Great, even though you mentioned your phys-

ical hobbies, what do you do to recharge or take care of your mental and emotional well-being?

I have some free time when I drop my kids at their dad's home two days a week. So, in those free times, usually I socialize with my friends and coworkers. Spending time with my friends really helps me get peace mentally and spiritually, and it has been so effective to change my mood. The other thing that I love to do is eat healthy. I know that it has a direct effect on my body, so I am mindful of what to eat and when to eat to keep up with my health and recharge myself.

Great. What advice would you give to other student parents or anyone who feels like it's "too late" to go back to school?

There is a very famous proverb, "Where there is a will, there is a way." But we neglect to take it seriously. However, when we want something and decide to get it, then we work for it so hard; I really believe in these words. I believe that if we want something and we put all the efforts and energy toward getting it, no matter what our gender, religion, ethnicity, origin, and location, there is no doubt that we can achieve it. Therefore, I want to add that if you want to further your education and you are

fully determined and ready to work for it, nothing can stop you. It doesn't matter if you are new here in the USA, or you have language barriers, or you don't know how to navigate the education system here. If you are determined and you want to do it, you will find your way, as I did.

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If you are determined and you want to do it, you will find your way, as I did.

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Thank you for your encouraging words of advice. Please share with us, what are your goals moving forward, whether at ARC or beyond?

First of all, I want to say that this is my personal interest that I love to further my education and I re-

ally enjoy learning everyday a new thing. The more I learn, the more I realize that I don't know anything because there is no end to the ocean of science and you can't learn everything. So, the more you learn, you get to an understanding that it is not enough and I still know nothing. Furthermore, besides my interest to further my education, my goal is to complete the two associate degrees that I am working on currently: Sign Language and Psychology. Then I want to transfer to university and get my bachelor's degree and become a social worker in the future. My long-term goal would be to get my master's degree in this field to be able to get a job in a governmental organization or open up a non-governmental organization to help women and kids who suffer from domestic violence or are homeless.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts. As our last question, if there is anything that you want to share with us that we didn't cover in this inter-

view today and you think it is important to share with our *Parrot* readers, feel free to share.

I just want to share what I learned with anyone who is immigrating to the USA. When I came to the USA, I had so many stresses and was feeling so lost at first. The only thing that you would need at that time would be giving yourself time to adjust. If you give yourself time and put in all the efforts you can, be sure that you will get to whatever you want in a very short time.

Arezo Mansuri, thank you so much for the time and the valuable information you have provided during this interview. I wish all the very best for your short-term and long-term life goals.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to have an interview with you.

KICHIRY HERATI: A TASTE OF HOME

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

PARROT FODDER



One of my favorite Afghan dishes is *Kichiry Herati*. I love to cook it, and of course, I love to eat it. Almost everyone from Herat cherishes this dish because it carries not only a unique taste but also a special place in our culture and memory.

Kichiry Herati is made from rice and mung beans cooked together with spices until they blend into a soft, flavorful harmony. What makes it even more special is how the recipe changes with the seasons. In summer, families often prepare it with fresh meat, while in the cold winter months, it is traditionally cooked with dry meat (*gosht-e khoshk/landi*).

The dry meat adds a deeper flavor and makes the dish especially famous in Herat.

But the real joy of *Kichiry Herati* is found in the table it creates. This dish is rarely served alone. It is accompanied by fresh side dishes such as spinach or fried eggplant, a hearty qorma with meat or beans, and a simple yet refreshing local salad made from tomato, onion, cucumber, cilantro, mint, and parsley. And no Herati meal is complete without *doogh* a cool yogurt drink mixed with cucumber and fresh mint, which balances the richness of the food.

For me, *Kichiry Herati* is more than just a dish; it is a reminder of home, of gatherings with family, of warmth in winter and lightness in summer. It is a unique part of Herat's cooking tradition that continues to bring people together around the table with love and laughter.



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BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

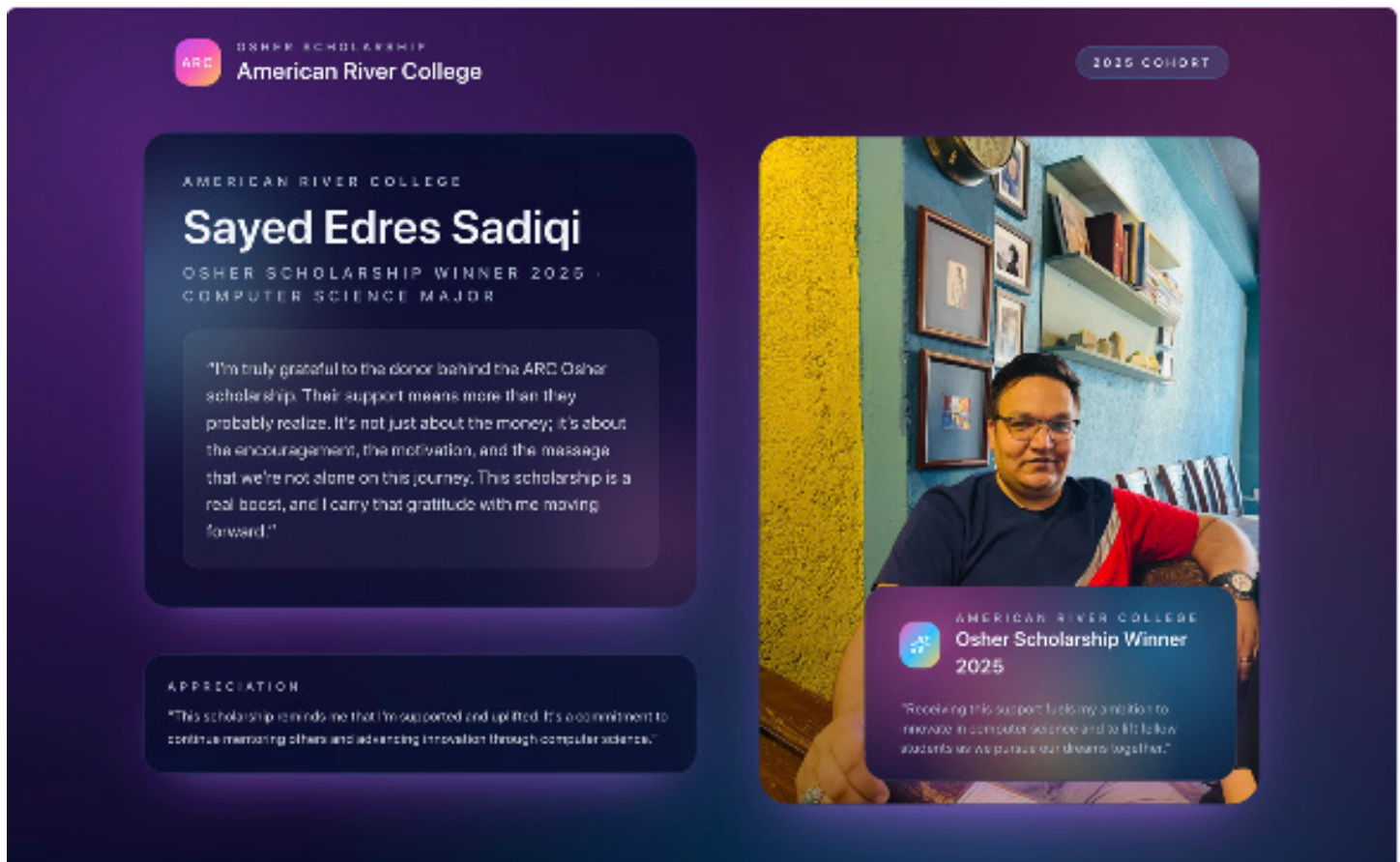


Photo designed by Builder.io

Gratitude in a Time of Growth: What This Scholarship Means to Me

When I found out I had received the scholarship, the first thing I felt was pure happiness. In that moment, nothing else mattered, just the joy and excitement of being recognized and supported. It's one of those moments that remind you why you keep pushing forward, even when life gets busy and overwhelming.

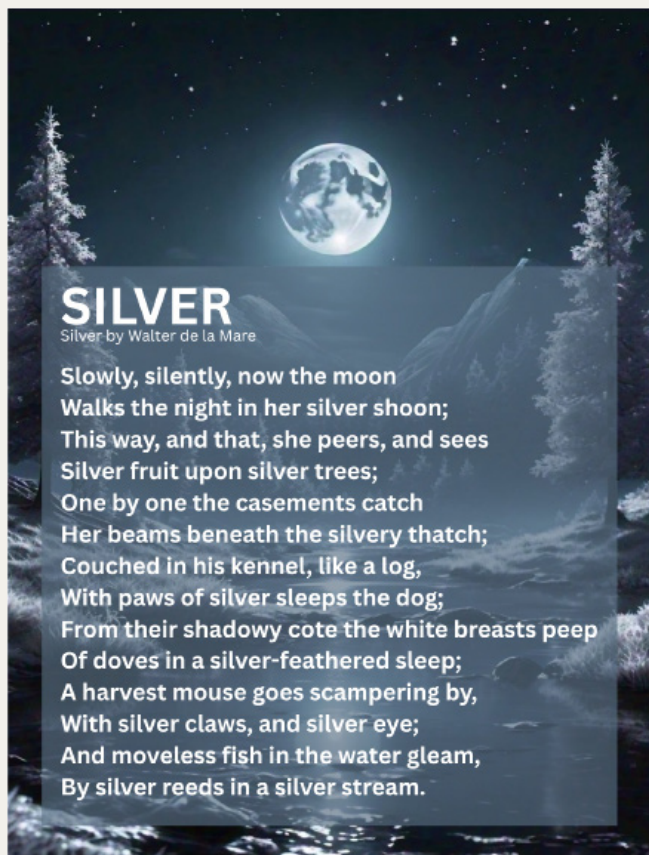
As a student, a parent, and a full-time employee, balancing everything isn't easy. So, receiving this scholarship felt like more than just financial help. It felt like someone out there believes in me and

wants to see me succeed. The amount I received will allow me to invest in IT (Internet Technology) certifications that can help me grow in my field, open doors for better opportunities, and move closer to my long-term career goals.

I'm truly grateful to the donor behind the ARC Osher scholarship (Bernard Osher Foundation). In many ways, they are like wings, lifting students like me during challenging times. Their support means more than they probably realize. It's not just about the money; it's about encouragement, motivation, and the message that we're not alone on this journey. This scholarship is a real boost, and I carry that gratitude with me moving forward.

THE MOON'S WALK AND THE POET'S DRUM: WALTER DE LA MARE'S "SILVER"

BY ESL PROFESSOR DAVID EVANS



There's nothing like the October moon. As the days grow shorter and the nights longer, the moon seems to glow more radiantly now than it does at any other time of year. Walter de la Mare (1873–1956)—a British poet, novelist, and ghost-story author—celebrates the moon in his poem "Silver." An atmospheric piece, it presents a still life, or *near* still life, of a silver-hued, ethereal moonlit landscape. If you listen closely to the poem, you can hear a drum beat within it, beating out a trancelike dance, or nocturnal march,

in rapt appreciative tribute.

There is but one real actor in the poem—the moon itself, personified in the feminine. She "walks the night," her territory, "in her silver shoon" (*shoon* being an archaic plural form of *shoe*), peering (looking keenly) and seeing the silvery effects of her curiosity on the land below: silver-hued thatched roofs and window casements, a silver-pawed dog, silver-feathered doves, a silver-clawed harvest mouse, silver-hued reeds (water plants), and a silver-hued stream. Without even counting the title or the adjective *silvery* (in line 6), the word *silver* is repeated nine times!

Relax and let yourself be soothed by the dreamy, almost metaphysical, atmosphere of the poem. All the world, save the scampering harvest mouse, rests as the moon takes her night walk. The landscape would appear to be the moon's entranced captive. Nearly all the verbs related to what the moon shines upon denote non-agentive actions: the casements *catch* the moon's beams, the dog *sleeps*, the bird breasts *peep* (emerge, protrude), and the fish *gleam*. Stillness pervades the poem, even as the moon walks and the poem drums hypnotically on.

Rhythmically, the poem is at once extremely interesting and satisfying. Although the meter of the poem can be identified as iambic tetrameter, this is an idealization, since only two of the poem's lines consist of four two-syllable units ("feet") where an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed one: "with PAWS / of SIL / ver SLEEPS / the DOG" (line 8) and "with SIL / ver CLAWS / and SIL / ver EYE" (line 12). The other lines contain initial truncation (acephaly) or addition (anacrusis) and one three-syllable foot. Now, consider lines 9 and 10:

**From their shadowy coat the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep.**

Line 9 has an extra unstressed syllable in the first foot (anacrusis), followed immediately by a three-syllable foot. The remaining two feet of the line are normal iambs, except that *breasts* is a heavy unstressed syllable. Line 10 is straightforwardly iambic, though it, too, has a three-syllable substitution in the second foot. Letting *o* stand for an unstressed syllable, *s* for a stressed one, *O* for a heavy unstressed syllable, and / for foot divisions, we may represent the lines as follows:

ooS / ooS / oS / OS
oS / ooS / oS / oS



But those are not the groupings we actually hear. We do not hear: “from their SHA . . . dowy COAT . . . the WHITE . . . breasts PEEP . . . of DOVES . . . in a SIL . . . ver FEA . . . thered SLEEP.” Rather, we hear: “from their SHAdowy COAT . . . the

WHITE . . . breasts . . . PEEP . . . of DOVES . . . in a SILver . . . FEAtthered . . . SLEEP.” Using an additional symbol, *l*, for a light stressed syllable, we can write the actual prosodic phrasing like this:

oolooS oS O S
oS ooSo So S

Thus, the poem affords many instances wherein poetic rhythm and meter can be clearly distinguished even as the two coexist. Both scansions above are accurate, the first one giving us the metrical distribution, the second the actual rhythmic phrasing. And in every case except the final couplet, no line is identical in its rhythmic phrasing, even the above-mentioned lines of “perfect” iambic tetrameter. But below are the mirroring lines of the final couplet:

And moveless fish in the water gleam,

Metrically: *oS / oS / ooS / oS*
Rhythmically: *oSo S ooSo S*

By silver reeds in a silver stream.

Metrically: *oS / oS / ooS / oS*
Rhythmically: *oSo S ooSo S*

Prosodically speaking, Walter de la Mare was a master drummer, and his moon-inspired cadence in “Silver,” properly heard, almost makes one want to get up and march in metronomical lockstep with her slivery majesty, treading the nighttime sky.

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CHASING THE SUPERMOON IN FOLSOM

BY MANNY, PARROT STAFF WRITER

EXPLORE CALIFORNIA



There are moments in life that remind us just how small we are, and yet, how connected we can feel to everything around us. That's what happened the night I went chasing the supermoon in Folsom.

The idea came to me a few days before, when I saw the forecast for a rare, clear night. I had been craving a little adventure — something that could pull me out of my thoughts and back into the present. So I packed my camera, checked my gear twice, and drove out just before sunset. The road stretched ahead, glowing with the last light of day. It felt like I was driving toward something sacred, something waiting patiently beyond the horizon.

When I arrived, the world was painted in soft hues — lavender skies fading into gold, and the warm air holding that stillness that only happens right before night takes over. I wandered for a bit, scanning the open fields, looking for a subject that could balance the immensity of what was about to rise. And then I saw it: an old, twisted tree standing alone in the distance. Its branches reached out like ancient arms, gnarled and graceful, as if it had been waiting centuries for this exact moment. I knew instantly that was my frame.

I set up my tripod, adjusted the settings, and waited. The air was so quiet that I could hear my

own heartbeat — and then, there it was.

The moon began to lift above the horizon — massive, golden, and impossibly alive. It felt less like watching a celestial event and more like witnessing the earth exhale. The light spilled gently across the landscape, turning every blade of grass and every ridge in the tree bark into poetry. The moon didn't just rise; it emerged, as though the land itself was offering it up to the sky.

Behind the lens, I felt that rare kind of presence — the kind that silences the mind completely. Every small detail mattered: the faint hum of distant crickets, the cooling air brushing my skin, the slight tremor of excitement in my fingers as I pressed the shutter. Time slowed, and for a few minutes, there was nothing but the earth, the tree, and that radiant orb in perfect alignment.

Capturing that image felt like capturing stillness itself. Photography has always been my way of grounding — of freezing emotion into something visible — and that night reminded me why I fell in

love with it in the first place. The supermoon wasn't just beautiful; it was a mirror. It reflected every quiet part of me that still longs for wonder, for connection, for the reminder that there's still magic left in the world if you're willing to go looking for it.

As I packed up and stood there one last time before leaving, I glanced at the tree again. Its silhouette against the glowing moon looked almost human — weary but proud, weathered but unbroken. I couldn't help but feel that in some way, it symbolized endurance — the way we stand tall through every season, waiting for our own moments to shine again.

Driving back under that luminous sky, I realized the best part of chasing light isn't just capturing it — it's feeling it. It's the reminder that we're part of something vast and cyclical, where every ending gives rise to another beginning. That night in Folsom wasn't just a photographic adventure; it was a quiet conversation between me and the universe — and for once, I didn't need any words at all.

DAY OF HOPE

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

SPOTLIGHT

A Campus Gathering of Healing, Care, and Community

On Wednesday, September 24, the Student Health & Wellness Center hosted the Day of Hope event at American River College. The event, held in honor of Suicide Awareness Month, filled the Student Center and surrounding areas with activities, resources, and voices of care and remembrance.

When I entered the UNITE Center, I introduced myself as a staff writer for *The Parrot*, ARC's ESL newsletter. Sharing a few words

about the newsletter in the introduction phase of the event, I felt a sense of pride in representing our publication in a space dedicated to healing and connection.

Soon after, I joined a table with two ARC students and UNITE Center members. We exchanged introductions before diving into the activity that brought us together, crafting bead bracelets to honor our loved ones. I made a bracelet for my son, Artin, carefully stringing each bead as a symbol of love and remembrance. Around the room, some participants chose to draw and create posters instead, preparing signs to carry during the

Walk of Hope later that day.

Afterward, I walked over to the cafeteria, where CareFest was in full swing. The large resource fair included numerous tables representing ARC departments, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations all working in health and wellness, particularly mental health.

I had the opportunity to talk with representatives and learn about their programs. Many ARC departments were present, along with community organizations such as:

- Gender Health
- Mental Illness Awareness advocates
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Sacramento County outreach programs
- Lao Family Community Development
- River City Food Bank
- CAL Voice
- Capital Star Community Services
- Sacramento LGBT Community Center
- Sacramento Public Library
- Community Health Works
- Planned Parenthood
- WEAVE
- Women Veterans Program
- VA Northern California Healthcare System
- Student Health & Wellness Center of ARC and many more.

Each conversation highlighted the resources available to students and reminded me of the importance of connecting people with the support they need.

President Lisa Cardoza offered opening remarks, welcoming students, faculty, and staff. Following her, other speakers shared powerful reflections on healing. They emphasized the importance of standing together, raising our voices, and supporting

one another through connection and remembrance.



The event culminated with the Walk of Hope around campus. Starting in front of the Bookstore Quad, participants carried signs they had crafted earlier, colorful posters and words of encouragement that spread messages of solidarity to everyone passing by. Walking side by side, I felt the collective strength of our campus community.

Before the event concluded, organizers invited participants to contribute to the Why We Walk Memorial Wall. This wall will display photos of loved ones lost to suicide, giving our community a space for remembrance and healing.

For me, the Day of Hope was not only about honoring Suicide Awareness Month but also about witnessing how deeply our campus cares for its students. I left the event feeling both uplifted and reminded of the power of community. Through remembrance, healing, and connection, ARC continues to foster a campus where care and hope thrive.

Have a tooth problem?

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WellSpace Health: 916-737-5555

One Community Health: 916-443-3299

Refugee Health Clinic: 916-874-9227

Elica Health Centers: 855-354-2242

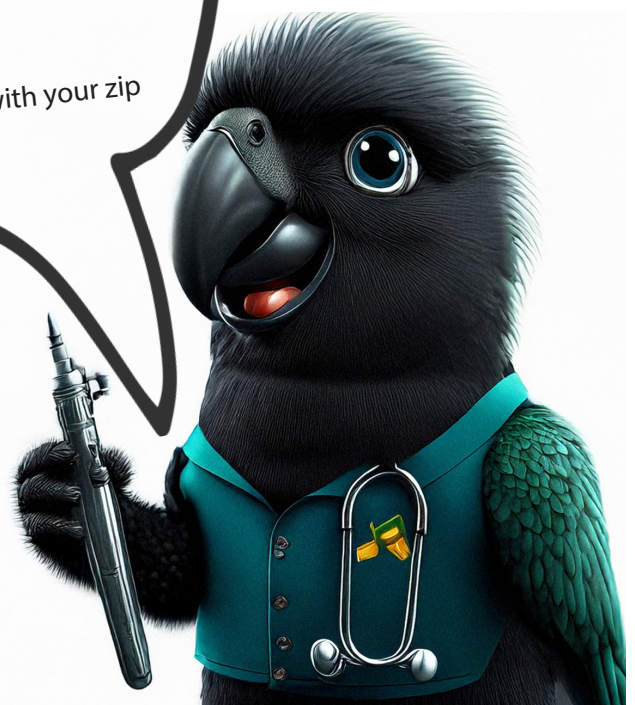
California Northstate University: 916-686-8914 (Dentistry School)

Sacramento District Dental Society: 916-446-1211

Emergency Dental Sacramento: 916-318-0911 (open on week-ends and accepts walk-ins).

Some of these places may require a fee. Call for information about cost.

You can also look on <https://cityhub.findhelp.com/> with your zip code.





English Conversation Group

● ● ● *Fridays 5:00-6:00 | North Natomas library*

Want to practice speaking English? Join our friendly group!

All languages and levels welcome. No registration. Meet new people and share experiences. This is not a class; it's more a social group for practicing.

Check "Events" for **more locations and times** at www.saclibrary.org.

Topics:

- Everyday life & things to do
- American culture
- News, pop culture
- Other...You help decide!

Groups are led by a trained facilitator. We hope to see you there!

A DOG'S WAY HOME

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

MOVIE REVIEW



When I sat down to watch *A Dog's Way Home*, directed by Charles Martin Smith, I thought I was simply watching a movie about a dog's adventure. But within minutes, I realized I was watching something much deeper: a story that mirrored my own life, my own loss, and

my own love for a dog who once meant the world to me. Bella, the brave and loyal dog in the film, embarks on a 400-mile journey to find her way back to her human, Lucas. As she faces mountains, wild animals, hunger, loneliness, and countless dangers, one thing never changes: her loyalty. Watching Bella's determination to find her way home, I couldn't help but think of my own dog, Siya, back in Afghanistan.

Siya, whose name means *Black*, was my own Bella, and was more than just a pet. He was part of my family, my companion, my comfort. When the Republic government in Afghanistan collapsed and the Taliban took over, my family had to leave the country immediately. Some of my relatives had worked with the American government, while others had worked with the Afghan government, and it was no longer safe for us to stay. In the rush of our escape, we had to leave behind almost everything: our belongings, our home, and heartbreakingly, our beloved Siya.

A friend promised to take care of him, but a few months later, I received devastating news: Siya had passed away. My friend said that Siya could not tolerate my absence. Since the day I left, he was not the same; he was sad, restless, and broken. Eventually, he gave up. Hearing that news felt like living through the collapse of Afghanistan all over again. Within one year, I lost not just my country, not just my belongings, but the dog who loved me with everything he had. I hate war, because it robs us of the things we hold most dear.

So, when I watched Bella survive coyotes, cross rivers, and even befriend a cougar cub she names Big Kitten, I didn't just see fiction. I saw Siya in every step Bella took. Like Bella, Siya would have done anything to stay by my side. Dogs love us so completely, so purely, that distance and danger mean nothing to them. Bella's reunion with Lucas at the end of the movie was bittersweet for me. I cried not only because Bella made it home, but because Siya never got that chance. Still, watching Bella reminded me that love like that never really dies. Siya may not have survived, but the bond we had lives forever in me.

A Dog's Way Home is more than a movie about a dog's adventure. For me, it was a reminder of the power of loyalty, the pain of separation, and the beauty of love that never gives up. Bella's story made me remember my own beloved Siya, and while it broke my heart all over again, it also made me grateful—grateful that I once had a dog who loved me so deeply, even to his last breath. This is not just a film for dog lovers, it's a story for anyone who has ever lost something precious because of war, distance, or circumstance. Watching Bella's journey gave me hope that love always finds its way back to us, even if only in memory.

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION HOMEBASE

HOURS

- ✓ Monday–Thursday
8–5pm
- ✓ Friday 8–4:30pm

SERVICES

- ✓ Workshops & Orientation
- ✓ Support Resources & Referrals
- ✓ Counseling Appointments
- ✓ Snacks, Study Space, Lounge Area, Fun Events

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- ASL-English Interpreting
- Communication
- Deaf Culture and American Sign Language Studies
- English
- English as a Second Language
- Journalism
- World Languages

Located in the Portable Village Room 613B

Contact Us

(916) 484-8974

Askhb-lac@arc.losrios.edu

JAZZ VS. GNAWA

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

MUSIC REVIEW

Music That Tells a Story

When I listen to music, I don't just hear sounds, I hear *stories*. Some songs talk about love, some cry about life, and others just make you dance until your feet scream, "Stop, please!"

A long time ago, I discovered two kinds of music that changed the way I listen: Jazz from the United States and *Gnawa* music from Morocco.



Louis Armstrong

At first, I thought, "These two sound nothing alike!" But the more I listened, the more I realized they were like *old friends* who speak different languages but understand each other perfectly.

Jazz, with its trumpets, saxophones, and swinging rhythms, feels like a city talking to you, noisy, free, and full of surprises. It's the sound of New Orleans streets where musicians like Louis Armstrong could make a trumpet laugh, cry, and sing, all in one song! Jazz musicians never play the same song twice in the same way, and I love that. It's like life, always

improvising.

Then there's *Gnawa* music, from my own country, Morocco. It's ancient, spiritual, and hypnotic, a rhythm that feels like a heartbeat. When I first saw a *Maâlem* (*Gnawa* master) play the *guembri*, a three-stringed bass instrument, I felt the floor shake and my soul move. The music doesn't just entertain you; it connects you to something bigger. It's part prayer, part party!



Maâlem Mahmoud Guinia

Sometimes I imagine a jazz band and a *Gnawa* group on the same stage. Louis Armstrong blows his trumpet, and Maâlem Mahmoud Guinia answers with his *guembri*. The drums and clapping mix with the trumpet and piano, and suddenly, you can't tell where Africa ends and America begins. Everyone's smiling, dancing, and shouting, "Yeah, that's the groove!"

Both Jazz and *Gnawa* tell stories, not with words, but with *feeling*. Jazz tells you to express yourself, to improvise, to be free. *Gnawa* tells you to remember your roots, to heal, and to connect with others.

And me? I just stand there, caught between two worlds, smiling like a kid who discovered that his two favorite songs can actually dance together.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



Help for Refugee Children



Starting Point is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting newly arrived refugee children in the greater Sacramento area. The

organization strives to give them a warm welcome by providing basic necessities and programs as they begin their new lives in the U.S. They do things like meet refugee families with children at the airport, give them welcome baskets, and provide basic ESL and computer lessons, and they have even started a very popular soccer team for the kids. Visit the website and click on [REQUEST HELP](#).

Starting Point is directed by Vickee Moy, a professor of English as a Second Language in Sacramento. She launched Starting Point in June 2017 after being deeply touched by her refugee students' stories about their lives in their native countries and about their new lives in the U.S. Starting Point is one way she hopes to honor and remember their incredible stories and beautiful

lessons about perseverance, strength, hope, and humanity.

As a child of immigrants, Vickee feels a connection with new arrivals and is passionate about helping them begin successful lives in their new country. Along with her husband and three sons, she is excited to reach out to this growing community of newcomers.

<https://www.startingpointworld.com>

Want to help?

There are several ways that you can help Starting Point to help children. You can put together a welcome basket, assemble a backpack with supplies, help buy shoes, assist with lessons and program development for SPARK (Summer Program for Arts, Recreation and Knowledge), or even coach and support a soccer team!

Donations to Starting Point are tax deductible. Please visit the [Starting Point Volunteer](#) Page for more information.

OUT OF THE CAGE

PARENT TO PARENT PROGRAM AT ARC

Being a student and parent brings unique challenges that only another parent truly understands.

At American River College, a special resource called Parent to Parent (P2P), in partnership with the Mentor Collective, enhances the students' experience by connecting CalWORKs students with a mentor from within the program. Students are paired with someone invested in their success--a person ready to listen, inspire, help navigate challenges, and recognize opportunities.

Additionally, P2P mentors serve as a critical part of a student's success team by serving as a proxy for your dedicated counselors and the CalWORKs program. Mentor Collective's online platform provides training and resources for students' mentors and makes it easy for mentors and mentees to connect.

To enroll in P2P, scan the QR code or call: **(916) 484-8059**



Mentee Registration



Staff Writers: Tuyet Le, Emmanuel Madrid, Mohammed El mrani, Sayed Edres Sadiqi, Asila Sadiqi, and Sofia Kovalko.

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Please let us know what we can do to improve *The Parrot*. We appreciate any and all feedback you are willing to give us. Contact us at TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu. To see previous issues of *The Parrot*, go to <https://arc.losrios.edu/academics/the-parrot-newsletter>