



Spring 2026
American River College

4700 College Oak Drive
Sacramento, CA 95841
(916) 484-8011

The Parrot



ISSUE #208
SPRING 2026

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



From ESL Student to Instructional Assistant: The Amazing Story of Hind Hanna

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Last week I sat down with Hind Hanna, who was recently hired as a permanent Instructional Assistant at the ESL Center at American River *Continue on page 18*

Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!
See page 2 for details.

Loving Music: Art is a Blessing and a Curse

BY MARIIA KOVZIK, ESL 325



Music united two young people, but how long can their love live? After hearing his song on the radio, Maria's trajectory of life changes. This time she's falling in love not with the boy, but with the idea of revenge.

Continue on page 21

Inside This Issue

Overcoming Difficulties

Page 4

Hobby Corner

Page 15

The Power of Inspiration

Page 7

The Parrot's Celebration

Page 23

Odes to Everything

Page 12

Parrot Alumni Squawk

Page 20

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, receive a gift from *The Parrot*

Sochi Is Not Siberia!

BY OLESIA BARANOVA, ESL 315

CAUSE/EFFECT ESSAY

The Austrian writer Hermann Broch once said: "Those who live by the sea can hardly form a single thought of which the sea would not be part." Usually when people think of Russia, they imagine the cold winters of Siberia, ushanka hat, and rainy Saint Petersburg. But there is another side of the country with evergreen plants, palms, the sunny beaches and the majestic mountains of Sochi. This city on the Black Sea has become one of the most famous Russian tourist destinations. Every year thousands of visitors from the whole country come to enjoy the beautiful nature, warm sea and the famous place where the 2014 Winter Olympics took place. However, the popularity of Sochi has brought both benefits and challenges. Mass tourism affects the economy, environment and the daily life of local people.

One positive effect of the mass tourism on Sochi is its influence on the economy. Many local businesses depend on tourism. Local people rely on it as a main source of income, getting most of their yearly earnings during three summer months. Many jobs in the sphere of hospitality, transportation, stores, restaurants and tour

services are in high demand. Tourists spend a lot of money that gives businesses an opportunity to grow. Also, the 2014 Winter Olympic influenced the city gradually. The roads, the airport, and many other services got improved, which makes it even more attractive for the tourists.

However, mass tourism hurts the environment badly. The beaches get overcrowded during the peak season, which leads to pollution of both the sea and the beaches. City services such as garbage and road services cannot manage the volume of work. Also, the animals suffer



from the mass tourism too. More and more forests are being cut down to build new constructions and hotels for tourists. That was the natural habitat of the animals before. This makes them get scared and move further from people. The other big problem is human influence on the weather as people often prevent rain, so more and more tourists come during the season. This influences the climate badly, makes trees and grass dry out which could lead to fires, shallowing of rivers and other problems.

Tourism also influences the daily life of local people. On the one hand, the city becomes very entertaining with lots of events and places to visit. But on the other hand, with growing popularity it becomes more and more expensive to live for locals, especially retired people

who cannot work anymore. The prices for housing, utilities, and food go up. Another problem caused by tourism is the constant traffic jams on the roads. It takes much more time to get to work for locals during summer months. The buses arrive late, which causes inconveniences.

In conclusion, mass tourism has both positive and

negative effects on Sochi. It improves the city's economy, makes it modern and popular, but it also creates environmental problems and influences the life of the local people, bringing them challenges they would never have. To keep Sochi attractive for both tourists and residents, it is important to find the balance between welcoming visitors and protecting local traditions and keeping prices affordable for the residents as well.

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

BY NATALIA ZABABURINA, ESL 55

PROBLEM/SOLUTION ESSAY



people are always asking questions because they want to understand how things work and why events happen. As a result, this active way of thinking makes it possible for them to look for solutions instead of giving up. In addition, curiosity motivates people to search for answers in books, conversations, and personal experiences.

Life is never simple, and every person meets different problems during their life. Some difficulties are small, while others seem impossible to overcome. Helen Keller's story "The Most Important Day" shows us that Helen's life was difficult and full of sad moments because she was blind and deaf. However, she had strong characteristics that changed her mind and life in the future. People can overcome their problems more easily if they have strong characteristics such as curiosity, patience, and hope.

To begin with, curiosity is one of the most important characteristics that helps people solve problems. First of all, curious

It also encourages them to learn new things every day, which expands their knowledge and skills. For example, Helen Keller was curious to learn new words and how to read and write, even though she could not see or hear. She never accepted her limitations as the end of her journey. Instead, she used her curiosity to explore the world of language with the help of her teacher, Anne Sullivan. Therefore, people whose strong characteristic is curiosity often become famous inventors or create something new that many people later use. Indeed, curiosity often leads to discoveries, creativity, and innovative solutions that can change a person's life completely.

Another important characteristic is patience, a quality that allows people to keep working even when results are slow. When faced with challenges, patience helps people finish what they start and motivates them not to give up. For instance, many challenges in life cannot be solved quickly, so people must wait and continue trying. Moreover, patience helps people stay calm during long and difficult processes instead of becoming frustrated. As a consequence, it teaches them that success often comes step by step, not all at once. Patience also gives people the determination to finish what they start, no matter how many obstacles they meet along the way. It shows that steady progress is often more valuable than quick results. In addition, patient people can inspire others because they demonstrate persistence and self-control. In summary, patience is one of the most important characteristics a person needs to overcome difficulties and never give up.

Finally, hope is a very powerful characteristic that helps people go through hard times and overcome difficulties. In particular, hope makes people believe that the future can be better than the present, which gives them the strength to keep moving forward. Even when they fail, hope tells them that another chance will

come. Additionally, hope gives people courage to take risks and not be afraid of mistakes. For example, hope in God makes my life filled with meaning, and it always helps me to find a solution and direction during hard times. Also, hope is important because it provides motivation when results are uncertain. Moreover, Helen Keller's hope kept her working hard even when progress seemed slow, and it inspired others with disabilities to believe in themselves. Indeed, a person with hope in their heart is more likely to find solutions, keep trying, and eventually overcome difficulties.

In conclusion, each person has their own strengths that help them overcome difficulties. In the life of Helen Keller, we see how her curiosity and love of learning gave her the chance to discover the world of words. Her strong qualities change the lives of many people with disabilities. In my opinion, curiosity, patience, and hope are some of the most important personal characteristics that help people go through challenges and reach their goals. But whatever characteristics you may have to achieve your goals and overcome difficulties, never give up and always remember that God loves you and wants to make you happy.

BAD HABITS

BY SERHII SAVCHUK, ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

Every person has good or bad habits. Of course, having bad habits is not good, but some people have them. I want to describe some examples of bad habits that have negative effects on people.

First, in my opinion, smoking is one of the worst habits that people have. This habit is bad because people become addicted. When people smoke, they slowly harm their bodies. The lungs are destroyed, blood pressure rises, and the person feels bad. Also, smoking is harmful to others. Smoke from others is bad for people's health. Another disadvantage of smoking is that it is very expensive. You spend a lot of money when you smoke. As for me, people should try to stop this habit. For example, I smoked for many years, but now I don't smoke, and I feel much better. In conclusion, smoking is a very bad habit for people's health.

Next, the second bad habit is using smartphones too much. Now phones are more than just a way to communicate. You can watch videos, use social networks, and find new friends. Of course, this progress is very good, but people spend too much time on their phones. This is a problem, es-

pecially for children. My kids also use smartphones, but I'm trying to limit their time on the phones. I think they should play outside instead of using their phones. For example, we can play ball games or have a picnic in the park. Today, with modern technology, it is impossible to stop children from using phones completely, but parents should try to interest them in other activities. Indeed, using the phone too much can hurt people's lives.

Last of all, another bad habit is driving too fast. First of all, it's dangerous. If you drive faster than the speed limit, you put yourself and others in danger. Secondly, there are extra costs. You can get a ticket for speeding. Thirdly, excessive speeding can lead to accidents. It's dangerous and can harm your life. Also, after an accident, you have to pay extra money for car repairs. Some people understand this, but others don't. Therefore, you should stop this habit for your safety.

In conclusion, smoking, using smartphones too much, and driving too fast are really bad habits for people. I think people should stop doing those things.



THE POWER OF INSPIRATION

BY TETIANA SINKO, ESL 47

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

Some people find inspiration in their family and close friends. I am lucky because I have a loving family, including my parents, my husband, my sister, and my relatives. I love them very much, and they support me in my life. However, at this stage of my life, I feel inspired by something different. Sometimes, we need examples from outside our personal life to grow and change.

These examples can help us become stronger and more confident. They can also help us believe in our dreams. In my life, Waris Dirie, Vera Wang, and the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* inspire me in different ways.



Waris Dirie is an inspiring person because she experienced a very painful and difficult tradition in her children. This experience changed her life forever. Many people in her culture accepted this tradition, but she decided to think differently. She was very brave to question these beliefs. She left her home and started a new life in another country. It was not easy for her, and she had many challenges. Later, she became a successful model. However, her most important work was helping other women. She spoke openly about her past, even when many people criticized her.

She changed her mindset and chose her own path. Her story teaches me that we can change our lives, even if it is very difficult. Indeed, I find a lot of inspiration in the life of Waris Dirie.

Vera Wang inspires me because she started her own business later in life. She worked for many years in the fashion industry before creating

her brand. She did not become successful very young. She started her bridal business at the age of forty. This is very important for me because it shows that it is never too late to start something new. She followed her dream and created beautiful wedding dresses. Today, her brand

is famous all over the world. Many brides choose her dresses for their special day. She changed the idea of wedding fashion. She showed that success comes from experience and hard work. Her story gives me confidence in my own path. In sum, Vera Wang's life inspires me to continue working and believing in my goals.

The movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* is also very inspiring to me. It tells the story of a man who has many problems in his life. He does not have money, and he struggles to take care of his son. Sometimes, he even has no place to sleep, How-

ever, he does not give up. He continues to work hard every day. He believes in himself and his future. Step by step, he changes his life, and in the end, he becomes successful. This movie shows that hard work and persistence are very important. It also shows the importance of family and love. When I feel tired or stressed, I remember this story. It gives me motivation to keep going. Therefore, this movie inspires me to be strong and never stop.

In conclusion, Waris Dirie, Vera Wang, and the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* inspire me in

different ways and help me become stronger, more confident, and more determined in my life. I think inspiration is very important in life. It helps us grow and move forward. Everyone should find something that inspires them. When we have inspiration, we can achieve great things.

TIPS FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS IN SACRAMENTO

BY M. FAHIM AZIZI, ESL 37

ADVICE
PARAGRAPH



If you want to start a life as a new immigrant in Sacramento, you should follow these steps. First, you should learn English as a soon as possible. Take English classes at a school or college. Try to speak English with your friends, classmates, or coworkers. To achieve this goal, you need to be patient and study regularly. Do not give up if it feels difficult. Second, control your budget. Make a simple plan for your income and expenses. Don't spend your money on unnecessary things like a new car, brand clothes, or expensive furniture. Save your money for important needs. Third, find a good job. You should look for better job opportunities. To find a job, you can use websites like LinkedIn or visit local stores such as Walmart or Winco and ask if they are hiring. When you find a job, work hard and try to improve your skill. If you follow these steps, you can build a stable life in the USA. However, it is not easy at the beginning. You will face some problems, but that is normal. You can also try different strategies that work best for you and improve with your knowledge and experience.

MY INSPIRATIONS

BY FRESHTA A. HASHIMI, ESL 47

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

Everyone has a role model in their life to inspire and succeed. Having a role model and inspiration give us strength and hope. My biggest inspirations are Ranulph Fiennes, Malala Yousafzai, and my mother.

First, Ranulph Fiennes is an amazing person, and he really inspired me. I learned from him how to be determined in my life. He faced a lot of problems and difficulties during her expeditions, but he never gave up. He thought about others. He raised money for charity. He was a brave person. He got sick and hurt, but he continues to try. He worked hard to reach his goals. He is a good example of courage. Indeed, Fiennes life teaches me how to be determined in difficult situation of life.

Another person who inspire me is Malala Yousofzai. She stood up for girl's education. She faced serious threats but didn't give up. She worked for girl's education and equality. She is a brave woman. Her life and her activities inspire every woman to be brave. Her achievements changed her from a village girl to a brave woman who won the Nobel Prize. She was the youngest Nobel Prize winner in history. She was shot by the Taliban in her school bus, but she continued her activities. In sum, Malala Inspires me how to stand against injustice and fight for gender

equality.

The most important and the biggest inspiration of my life is my mother. She is a very strong woman. She continues to work and take care of every member of the family. Even she is tired, she works hard. She always puts her family before herself. She thought me the importance of honesty and

kindness. She always encourages me to do my best. She was a school principal. She managed her official and private life in the best way. Indeed, my mother is my role model in every step of my life.

In conclusion, Fiennes, Malala, and my mother inspire me in different ways and show me the way forward.



Watch [this video](#) to learn more about the explorer Ranulph Fiennes!

Watch Malala's brand new [TED Talk!](#)

POWERFUL FORCES

BY SAIF ALTOBLANY, ESL 47

LITERARY ANALYSIS



In many stories, characters are usually people, but sometimes objects, animals, and places can feel just as important. These elements may not speak, but they can strongly influence events and emotions. They help shape the story and create powerful moments. In *I Survived the Great Molasses Flood*, several non-human elements play important roles. This essay will explain how the molasses tank, Rosie the horse, and the city of Boston act like characters and influence the story in meaningful ways.

First, the molasses tank acts like a silent and dangerous force in the story. At the beginning, it does not seem harmful at all. There was a small leak, and children would take molasses for free and enjoy it. In addition, they believed it was something fun and safe. However, over time, the leak became worse and strange sounds came from inside the tank. These sounds were like bubbling and rumbling. Because of this, there were warning signs, but no one paid attention. As a result, the danger continued to grow. Suddenly, the tank exploded and caused a terrible disaster. In conclusion, the molasses tank shows how something quiet can become extremely dangerous.

Second, Rosie the horse represents comfort and emotional support in the story. She is not just an animal, but an important part of Carmen's life. For example, Rosie loves molasses, even more than Tony, which gives her a unique personality. In addition, Carmen cares deeply about her and feels a strong connection. Moreover, Rosie reminds Carmen of peaceful life before the disaster. Because of this, she becomes a symbol of hope. Even during difficult moments, thinking about Rosie gives Carmen strength. As a result, Rosie brings light into a dark situation. In conclusion, Rosie represents simple happiness and emotional strength.

Last of all, the city of Boston feels like a living character in the story. At the beginning, it is full of life, people, and normal daily activity. The streets are busy and everything feels safe. However, after the disaster, the city changes completely. Buildings are damaged and streets are covered in molasses. In addition, chaos spreads everywhere. Because of this, Boston becomes a place of fear and destruction. Moreover, the environment affects the people deeply. As a result, Boston plays a major role in shaping the story. In conclusion, the city shows how quickly life can change.

In conclusion, the molasses tank, Rosie, and Boston are not human characters, but they act like powerful forces in the story. Each one influences events and emotions in a different way. They help the reader understand danger, hope, and change. In my opinion, these elements are just as important as real characters because they shape the entire story. Without them, the story would lose its meaning and impact. These elements prove that even non-human forces can have the greatest influence.

OPINION ESSAY

GOOD TIME TO THANK

BY TAMARA PIVTORAK, ESL 47

THE GRATEFUL GULL

Gratitude is a really important human trait. It makes people happy if they can see good things. Truly, there are many things which I value. I have lived in Sacramento almost six years, and today I want to give thanks for my best friend Yana, my wonderful home, and my reliable car because all of these are very important to me here in America.

When I first came to America, I was shocked, confused, and scared, so I needed someone who can support me. And it was Yana. She was very patient to me because everything scared me. Yana tried to explain why there are many forms and how to fill them. She even went with me to medical appointments several times. Yana was my personal interpreter in many important places. I am extremely thankful for her understanding and kindness. Even though today I can do many things myself, I enjoy spending time with Yana because she is always cheerful and positive. We have the same values and belong to the same church. So, I feel deep gratitude to God that I have a wonderful friend Yana, and wish to thank Yana for supporting me all the time from the depth of my heart.

I am also really lucky that I have a home. It is a very important thing for me because I can feel safe

and calm. My home isn't big, but it's comfortable and cozy. There is a bright living room, convenient kitchen, warm bedroom, and nice bathroom. I am blessed that my apartment is affordable for me. It doesn't cost much money. I'm extremely lucky that my home is near two parks. So, I often go to the park to walk. But the best gift for me is my neighbors who are nice and friendly. Indeed, I am immensely thankful for my cozy and beautiful home.



Finally, I want to give thanks for my Toyota Prius car. Everyone knows that a car is an extremely necessary thing for people who live in Sacramento. My car is cheap but reliable. I am lucky that I know how to drive. So, I can go to many places myself. Earlier, I went to work. Now, I go shopping, to my appointments, and to college. Sometimes, I drive to Lake Natoma or Sly Park.

I am really lucky that I didn't have a problem with my car. Definitely, I feel deep gratitude for having such a reliable and comfortable Toyota car.

Indeed, I feel immense gratitude for living here in America, and for having a wonderful friend, a cozy home, and a comfortable car. I want always to be thankful to our God for blessing me.

FROM SPRING 2026 ESL 350 STUDENTS:

ODE POEMS

Ode to Soccer Ball by Ahmed Ahmed

O magical sphere, hold my hands
Dance with me and play with me

You're stitched with care
And have no fear

Every kick and every pass
Flying freely above the grass

At the park or at the beach
You will always be within reach

Accompanying me and all my friends
Spreading joy that never ends

You're the language that everyone needs
To travel the world and meet the leads

You bring us together and don't discriminate
Policies and borders you eliminate

We were taught to attract and not chase
But chasing you is a different case

Win or lose, you've always been
A loyal partner who's never mean

O soccer ball, you're all I need
A teacher, a friend and even a lead



Ode to My Coffee by Nissy

Oh my dear companion

Because of you

My mornings are filled with strength and
boldness

Your sweetness beats honey

In the morning, you have the ability to
wake me up

You get me ready for a wonderful day

At bed time you put me to sleep in a snap

What would I be without you in my life?

Your heat warms my whole body

Served cold you are so refreshing

Yet you manage to still warm my soul

You are the most wanted of all guests

My roasted, bold and hot coffee



**Ode Poem
by Ismael Romero**

Tall figures, rising above the crowd, you carry quiet presence that's hard to ignore. Like trees stretching toward the sky, you turn ordinary spaces into something more noticeable, more defined, simply by standing there always noticed, always glanced at.

There's a long step with your long stride, a natural rhythm that makes movement look painful. Whether it's reaching what others can't or seeing just a reaching for tall things at grocery stores, you bring a different perspective both literally and figuratively.

But beyond height, it's the way you stand in the world that matters. Tall not just in body, but in presence, in confidence, in the way you hold yourself steady. When everything else feels small your tallness will pick you back

**Ode to Truth
by Dmytro Moskvyn**

Truth, you are quiet but strong, you stay even when people are wrong. You can hide, but you do not pretend, you will come back again and again. Sometimes you hurt, sometimes you forfeit, like a cold and honest wind of faith. People may run, people may lie, but you are there, you never die. You are not easy, you are not soft, but you help us to grow and think deeply enough, Without you, the world feels fake, like a dream. I may fear you sometimes, but I know you will always be right. You break the dark, you keep us alive, you will help us survive.



**My Lovely Red Bull
by Wahid Haidari**

Cold can in my hand,
A spark before the day,
You wake up my mind
And chase my sleep away.



Sweet and lively taste,
With a rush I can feel,
You fill me with energy
And sharpen my will.

Late nights and long work,
When I'm feeling slow,
One sip of you
And I'm ready to go.

Oh Red Bull, so strong,
You help me push through,
A boost when I need it,
I count on you.

Your fizz dances on my tongue,
Like fireworks in my brain,
Ideas start to sparkle,
And focus floods my vein.

Emails fly faster,
Homework disappears,
Even my tired thoughts
Are replaced with cheers.

You turn yawns to laughter,
And sluggishness to speed,
You give me superpowers
Right when I need them indeed!

You are with me in happiness,
In sadness, in my travels,
In my work, at home, in my car,
Everywhere I go, I can't be without you.

Oh Red Bull, my hero,
My sparkling, fizzy friend,
With every sip you give me wings
That carry me to the end.



**Poem of My Bed
by Nataliia Kostiuk**

Is it possible to sleep enough?
The morning will always divide us.
Blankets, pillows, sheets-
these words like magic,
appear in my mind during the day
when fatigue tries to fight me.

My bed is a world of dreams and rest.
how sweet are your embraces
Wrap me like soft clouds
and recharge me for the next day.

My brain lacks peace.
My body is like a phoenix.
I have my wonderful 8 hours
To reboot my mindset for new success.

My "king" is a lullaby of sweet dreams.
How nice it is to feel you close.
But again- the alarm,
the sound of the end,
Turns into my reality.

But somewhere inside me
a quiet hope remains
that tonight, once more,
I will return to you again.



**Ode to My Bed
by Salma Smith**

I think of you during the day,
and I know you will be waiting for me
After a long day.
I come to you when I am sick and
tired,
and you hug me like a teddy bear.
You are loyal to me like my dearest
friend.
You keep me warm on the coldest
nights.
When I feel the cotton of your blankets,
it feels like a mother hugging her little baby
for the very first time.
You smell like a hundred fields of flowers.
When I first saw you I knew I was in trou-
ble.
With you I leave my worries behind,
and finally,
I can rest my mind.

**Ode to My Camera
by Emmanuel Madrid**

O faithful camera, keeper of light,
You rest in quiet, patient and still,
Yet in your glass a thousand moments
Wait for your gentle, watchful will.

You do not speak, yet you remember,
You do not breathe, yet you hold life
still,

You gather laughter, sunsets, shadows,
And shape the world by human skill.

Your body cool beneath my fingers,
Your buttons smooth, your edges clean,
Your lens a shining, thoughtful window
To all the beauty I have seen.

You hear the soft and certain clicking,
A tiny sound, precise and bright,
Like proof that time can be collected,
Like memory captured out of sight.

You smell of leather, metal, effort,
Of travel bags and busy days,
Of places visited in wonder,
Of dusty roads and golden haze.

Though taste is not your truest lan-
guage,
You leave a sweetness in my mind,
The flavor of a perfect moment,
A joy too rare and good to bind.

O camera, maker of remembrance,
You turn the fleeting into art,
And every image that you capture
Develops gently in my heart.

I praise your grace, your quiet purpose,
Your power to help my eyes be more;
For through your lens the world grows
larger

Than I had ever known before.



**Ode to the Starry Night
by Erika Madrid**

The sun sets upon its dusk.
The warm colors of the twilight an-
nounce your arrival,
the cool air reflecting your essence.
It is in your coming
that all the earth begins to glow,
where houses glow with colored lights,
and streets bear witness
to the romance born between two souls
in love.

Oh, beloved starry night!
How beautiful is your gaze,
in the twinkling of the stars
that follows the moon's flirting dance.

Oh, beloved starry night!
You, who caress my skin
with the breeze of your freshness,
and light my eyes
with the glow of your moon.

You, who hear my secrets
and do not judge me,
and remind me of the one
who loves my soul.

Oh, beloved starry night!
You, who bring hope
to the lonely heart.

You, who remind me that even when I
feel alone,
at the sight of you
all my fears and solitude are gone.
For in witnessing the dazzling splendor
of your beauty
and the brilliance of the firmament,
I can feel how immense His love is
and how great His heart must be



**Ode to Kabul
by Nilla Miakhail**



O Kabul, city of mountains and memory,
You rise between the hills like a quiet dream.
Your snowy peaks shine under the morning sun,
And your streets carry stories that never end.
I see your crowded markets full of color and life,
Bright fruits, woven carpets, and faces full of hope.
Dust dances in the golden light of evening,
And every corner holds a piece of history.
I hear your voice in the call to prayer,
Echoing softly across the city sky.
The laughter of children fills your narrow streets,
While cars and voices blend into your daily song.
I smell the warm bread baking in small shops,
The rich spices floating through the air.
Sweet tea rises with gentle steam,
Bringing comfort to every home.
I taste your sweetness in every meal,
In rice, in fruit, in cups of tea shared together.
Your flavors tell stories of family and tradition,
Simple, yet full of love.
I feel your cold winters and warm summer sun,
Your rough roads and gentle winds.
Even in hardship, you stand strong and proud,
A city that never loses its soul.
O Kabul, you are more than a place,
You are strength, beauty, and memory combined.
Through every sound, scent, and sight,
You live forever in the hearts of your people

**Ode to Mirror
by Mariam Mostafa**

Mirror,
you are my silent watcher
on my wall,
my trusted friend,
you always tell the truth
even when I don't want it!
You copy every move,
every smile,
every bad outfit day.
Sometimes you're kind,
sometimes not so much.
You show me
who I am
before the world does.
But still,
I come back to you
every morning,
So hoping
today
you'll be nicer,
truthful mirror.



MY FAVORITE HOBBY

BY YUE MING, ESL 47

HOBBY CORNER

What is a hobby? A hobby is something people enjoy doing in their free time. Hobbies can make life colorful and enjoyable. Cycling and planting flowers are my hobbies.

First, riding a bicycle is one of my hobbies. I learned to ride a bicycle when I was a little girl. It didn't take me too long to learn to ride a bike. I stepped on the pedal hard. The wheels carried me speeding along the roads and fields. The wind blew by my ear. It made me feel like a joyful butterfly. I still enjoy riding my bike because when I ride it, I feel relaxed. Riding a bicycle can exercise the body and enhance perseverance. Every time I climb uphill, I feel exhausted and want to give up, but I persist until the end. It teaches me that in life, there are many things I want to give up, but as long as I keep going, I will succeed. Indeed, I really enjoy cycling.

Next, I love to be planting flowers. I have flowers in my front yard and plants in the house. I remember when I was young, there was an osmanthus tree in my mother's yard. In October, it will

bloom with tiny golden yellow flowers. The smell is sweet and rich. Even from far away you still smell the fragrance of flowers. Flowers make life beautiful. The flowers in my front yard make me busy. I give them water and fertilizer. Flowers can make life more beautiful. The flowers in my front yard make me busy.

I give them water and fertilizer. Flowers bloom in different seasons. Sometimes, when I take care of plants in the front yard, neighbors who pass by will compliment my flowers. It makes me feel happy. Indeed, planting flowers beautifies my life.

In conclusion, cycling and planting flowers make my life healthy and wonderful. I enjoy this simple life. Hobbies can be expensive or inexpensive, but either way, they can enrich our lives.





**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!

Fall 2025



Student Health & Wellness Center
 Located Between Student Center and Community Rooms

Learn More About Your LOS RIOS STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

available to currently enrolled students!

**Try it Out
Talk it Out**

Our vision is to **empower** students with the knowledge, skills and resources to support their **physical and mental wellness**, so they may **achieve** their educational and life goals.



Peer Support: Safe, **anonymous, peer-to-peer** platform 24/7, ability to filter to find their global community



Therapy and Advocacy: Meet with a Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) therapist or advocate, **in person or virtually.**



Online Therapy: Talk to an online licensed therapist during the day, **evenings, and weekends.**



Gender Health Center: Free therapy services (in-person or virtual) for those who identify as **SGL/2SLGBTQIA+ or questioning.**

FREE Mental Health Services

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT WORKS BEST FOR YOU?

	Los Rios SHWC	BetterMynd
In-person appointments	✓	✗
Available during traditional hours	✓	✓
Available during evenings and weekends	✗	✓
Remote appointments (Zoom)	✓	✓
Walk-in / emergency visits	✓	✗
Ability to select therapist based on demographics, identities, lived experiences, and specialties	✓	✓

If therapy isn't the right choice for you, maybe peer support is. Access 24/7 online peer support through **Togetherall.**

FREE Physical Health Services

- Health and illness assessments
- First aid for minor injuries and illness
- Over-the-counter medications
- Narcan and fentanyl testing strips
- Pregnancy testing
- Sexual health concerns/education
- Covid self-tests
- Condoms (male and female) and lubricant
- Flu A/B testing
- Flu vaccine
- Strep throat testing
- TB risk assessments
- Health requirements for academic programs
- Immunizations/titers*
- TB skin test*

*Low Cost



For more information and to make an appointment, scan here!

Pick up your **FREE Party Safe Toolkits** at your Student Health and Wellness Center!

- Narcan
 - Fentanyl Test Strip
 - Drink Cover
 - Drink Spike Test Strip
- *Currently enrolled students



Hind Hanna: From ESL Student to Instructional Assistant

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

INTERVIEW

Continued from page 1



College. Once upon a time... just like many students walking into the ESL Center for the first time, she was uncertain, quiet, and figuring things out one word at a time. And what she shared is the kind of story ESL students need to hear. When I asked Hind about her journey, she smiled in that calm, confident way that makes you feel like everything will be okay even if your grammar isn't.

She began: "I am from Iraq. I started as an ESL student here. One of my professors told me one day, 'You will be here, in this position.' At that time, I didn't really believe it." But something shifted. Hind kept pushing herself, reading more, practicing more, not running away from the discomfort of learning English. "I told myself it's OK to keep challenging myself to understand more. My mom

was a principal. I was teaching in Baghdad." Hind comes from a family where education is part of identity. Even after moving from Iraq to Syria, then eventually to the U.S., she stayed connected to education. But ESL gave this connection a deeper meaning. "It's hard when you don't understand, when you can't answer a phone call, or make a dental appointment, or understand a joke." Anyone who's been there knows exactly what she means.

Within a year, she became a master tutor.

By 2015, she was a temporary Instructional Assistant.

And in 2026, when a permanent position opened, she got it.

When I asked what excites her most, her answer wasn't about grammar or vocabulary. It was about fear. "As a refugee like them, I know exactly how they suffer... especially speaking. There is fear." And that's where she focuses. "I help them feel more secure, more confident... to accept the language." Hind doesn't just teach English. She helps students become different people who can speak, participate, and build a life. Then she said something that honestly deserves to be printed on every ESL classroom wall: "If I can do it, that means anyone can."

I asked her what makes the ESL Center special, expecting something polite. "Equity. Everyone gets what they need." Not equal time. Not equal treatment. The right support. "You feel like you are part of a big family... not excluded."

I asked what she hopes students say about her after a semester. "That I treat them fairly, that I help them trust themselves, that they can be successful."

I had heard that Hind was a proud mom and grandma, so I asked, "Would you mind sharing a little about

your family?" This part took a turn and honestly, it was the best one. "I am a mother and a proud grandmother. I didn't believe when people said you love your grandchildren more than your children." Then she paused and smiled. "But yes... it's true." She now has two grandkids and described that love as something completely different. "Maybe you see your child again... like small... I don't know. But it's different." She loves them the most. Besides that, she has a full life. "I can cook very well," she said, laughing. "I do gardening, and I love to travel when I can."



"You are a native Arabic speaker and have studied English for a long time. Can you share a funny experience you had while learning English?" I asked. She shared this: One funny experience I had while learning English was when I first tried to use the word "chips." In my country, "chips" means French fries, so I went to a restaurant and confidently ordered "chips." The waiter brought me a bag of potato chips instead! I was so confused at first, and everyone at the table started laughing. That's when I learned that in American English, "chips" and "fries" are completely different. It was a little embarrassing, but also a moment I will never forget!



Students can learn about life balance from Hind. She shared this: "I think being confident and believing in myself, strong faith, valuing contributions and supporting

others make me successful in my personal life as a mother of two children who are successful engineers, and in taking care of my mother who is above 90 and being a grandmother of two sweet kids. Working at ARC allows me to share my passion to support ESL students."

Looking ahead, Hind has professional and personal goals. "I want to improve my instructional skills, my technical skills, and use AI to help students learn easier." Hind is not just a success story. She's a mirror. She started exactly where many ESL students are right now: confused, quiet, unsure. And now? She's guiding others along that same path. "America is a country of opportunity. If I can do it, anyone can." That's not motivation. That's evidence. The ESL Center isn't just a place to learn English. It's a place where people rebuild confidence, identity, and direction. And Hind? She's proof that the student sitting

in the corner today could be leading the room tomorrow.

Flying Far! Where Are They Now?

ALUMNI UPDATE

"It's a pleasure to reconnect with the *Parrot* community. Being part of *The Parrot* was a meaningful step in my journey as an English learner and immigrant. It gave me a voice, built my confidence, and created a space where I could learn, share ideas, and grow alongside others.

More than a publication, *The Parrot* was a community that encouraged creativity, teamwork, and curiosity. The experience of working on articles and seeing them published helped strengthen my communication skills and prepared me for future challenges.

Today, I work as a registered nurse after earning my Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The skills I developed at *The Parrot*—especially communication and cultural understanding—continue to shape my daily work with patients and colleagues.

I'm grateful to be part of the *Parrot* alumni community and wish everyone continued success and a wonderful celebration."

— **Alex Grynishyn, former *Parrot* Staff Writer**



"Hello everyone, I am happy to be invited to *The Parrot's* 20th anniversary party. My name is Asma Alqdah and I am originally from Jordan. I really enjoyed working with *The Parrot ESL Newsletter* at American River College. I felt like I was part of the student community and was able to make a difference.

Under Professor Hoggan's supervision and guidance, we worked closely as a team, and that spirit of collaboration made the experience especially meaningful to me. One of my main responsibilities was editing students' articles and preparing them for publication. At first, I thought of it simply as correcting grammar and improving structure, but over time I realized it went much deeper than that. Each article reflected a student's story, ideas, or effort to express themselves. Because of that, I began to see my role not just as an editor, but as someone helping students share their voices with others. I also enjoyed contributing in creative ways by adding photos, activities, and recipes from different countries. These additions helped make the newsletter more engaging and relevant to a diverse student community. Seeing everything come together was always rewarding and made me proud to be part of a project that brings students' voices and cultures into one shared space. The most memorable part of this experience was seeing the final publication released at the end of each month.

During that time, I enrolled in the ESL program and the Internet Marketing Certificate at American River College, building on my background as I already hold a bachelor's degree in computer science from Jordan. That stage of my journey was both challenging and meaningful, as I worked hard to grow and improve my skills to start a career in the US. Currently, I am pursuing a teaching credential with the goal of becoming a mathematics teacher in the near future.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Professor Hoggan, who has consistently been a source of support and encouragement as both an English teacher and the leader of the *Parrot* newsletter. I also extend my thanks to the entire team for their support and wish everyone continued success."

— **Asma Alqdah, former *Parrot* Staff Writer**

LOVING MUSIC

BY *MARIA KOVZIK, ESL 325*

LEAD ARTICLE

Continued from page 1

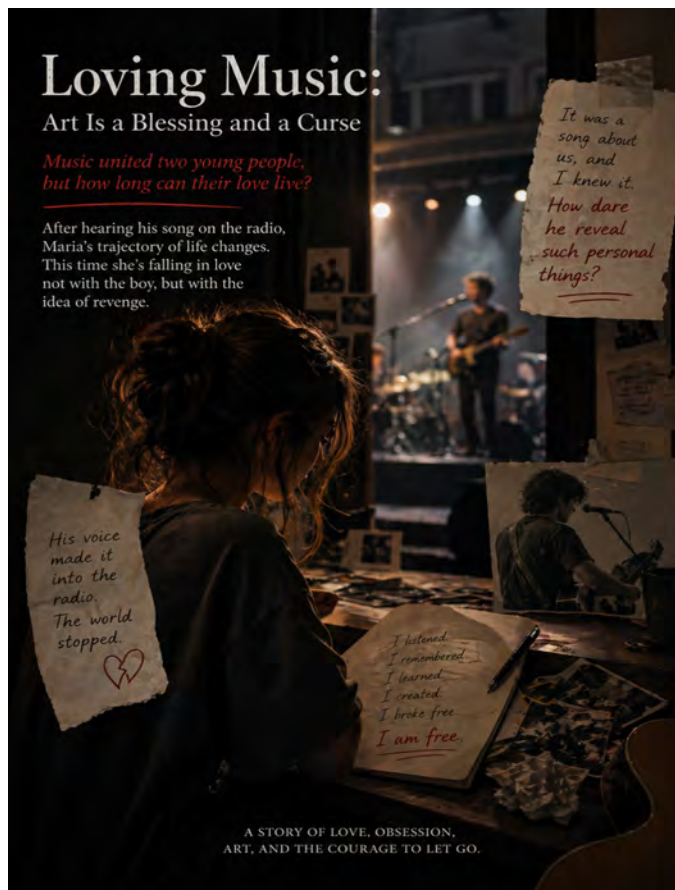
My first love changed everything for me, including my passion for art. We knew each other for a long time. I often hung out with his sister. I knew that he was playing guitar, so I asked him for a few lessons. In 2019, we became really good friends, and “the lessons” were more of an excuse to meet up. We exchanged ideas and also wrote poetry and musical arrangements. It was our magical time that we both loved. One day he confessed his feelings through a song. He sent an mp3 and asked for my opinion. I couldn’t believe that he wrote it for me. It was my first and painful love. We started dating. Our feelings were romantic, dreamy, and sometimes stormy - lots of chemistry without anything substantial that would give hope for a bright future besides a mutual love for art. We broke up. I was too young at that time, Covid made things even harder, and there were many other reasons.

Years flew by, but it seemed like he was always in the back of my mind. I started listening to a lot of music to soothe myself. I thought of it as the light that would make a path on this foggy road. After

some time, I got better. I even dated other people, but I felt guilty afterwards. I started enjoying life more and convinced myself that I was finally over him. But this hell didn’t end. After three years since the breakup, he spoke to me again. When I was shopping at the mall, I heard his voice over the speakers. I felt paralyzed. A wave of anxiety flew over me. The world seemed to stop. I got dizzy staring at one of the speakers as the flashbacks crept into my mind. His song made it into the radio. It was a song about us, and I knew it. How dare he reveal such personal things? The shock quickly grew into anger and ferocity. I hated him and his stupid music at that moment.

I enrolled in an art school. I needed to do something creative that would not be music. I thought it would help me, but my mental state only got worse. Everything I drew was filled with the shade of sorrow. My colors were melancholy and hopeless. I found the beauty in this gloomy tone. I related to many other artists, and realized

they were as depressed as me. I found this comforting and had a reason to justify self-destructive behavior. I learned something new about myself. I used to dig and dig into my soul to find answers, but I never found them. I thought that I knew why. There was an unresolved problem — an open window —



letting a cold wind seep through the crack.

He published lots of songs. And like the biggest fan, I listened and analyzed every line from every song. I felt like a crazy stalker. I wondered if he got a new girlfriend. I wasn't sure if the songs he kept writing were for me or for someone else. After my curiosity got the better of me, I finally texted him, "Hi."

I thought that he wouldn't reply because he's too "famous" now. But he did, and we started talking again. I got happier. My dream was to be a musician too, so I dropped out of art school and bought the equipment and instruments. He helped me a lot to understand how to make a "hit" song. I could not believe that it was really happening. Life felt hopeful again. I sent him tons of demos, where I communicated all of the unspoken feelings and truths that were buried deep down. It was my form of therapy. I tried to be better. It turned from a hobby into an obsession. I didn't go outside. I barely talked. Music was my faith and religion. I hoped to be as success-

ful as him. No... I wanted to exceed him.

The flames of revenge burned inside me, no matter how hard I tried to extinguish them. I was craving the sweet taste of victory, success that would shine upon me. I didn't feel love; I felt envy. He was still my friend, but we had different intentions. He wanted to feel less lonely; I was chasing illusions. The art I created didn't have to be so painful and draining to make. I had the wrong reasons.

I have sold my instruments and cut ties with that guy. The truth was told and the chains that were holding me tight broke. "I am free," I said to myself. I appreciate the journey that each artist goes through. For now, I decided to only listen to other stories.

The Parrot's 20th Anniversary Celebration

EVENT

Thank you sincerely for joining us in celebrating *The Parrot ESL Newsletter*! We were thrilled by the incredible turnout, which exceeded our expectations. We hope you thoroughly enjoyed the snacks, refreshments, raffles, and prizes, and that the event was both memorable and enjoyable for you. We truly appreciate your support and participation!

-The Parrot Team



Delicious cake made by Prof. Margaret Travis!

THE PARROT



GUIDED PATHWAYS
MILESTONE CERTIFICATES

Health
Sciences



BE BILINGUAL

ECE

CIS

USE YOUR LANGUAGES!

coming soon:
Admin of
Justice

Requirements:

- Take additional language classes in advanced ESL
- Pass the intro classes in your field
- Complete the certificate application
- Finish the remaining courses for your AA or Certificate.

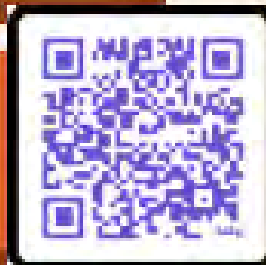


Culinary
Arts

Bus Tec



Scan this QR code
for more info:



Attention ARC
Students and
Employees

Unlock your **FREE 3-year LinkedIn Learning membership** using the QR code below - courtesy of Professor Heidi Bennett.

What's in it for you?

- Earn badges & certifications in tools like **Microsoft Office** and **Adobe** - display them proudly on your **LinkedIn profile**
- Learn at your own pace and boost your skills in **programming, generative AI, marketing, design, and more** - in over 35 languages!
- **No limits** - take as many courses as you'd like.



- Scan the QR code above to unlock your free membership to LinkedIn Learning



- Scan the QR code above to register for free courses and discover tips and tricks on making your profile stand out!

Questions?

Stop by **EL Centro** in the Unite Center for more info

**Have a tooth problem?
Need help?
No dental insurance?**

Here are some resources:

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.



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, Sayed Edres Sadiqi, Asila Sadiqi, and Sofia Kovalko.

Faculty Advisors: Patrick Hoggan and David Evans

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>