Two Neighbors Link clients, Maria and Barbara, spoke at Old Oaks Garden Club in Purchase, New York. "We tell people off the help wanted sign. It's a mixed message. Sometimes you have to make your own justice," said Barbara. "This is America now," said Barbara. "We have American businesses that are knowingly soliciting and then hiring undocumented workers. That's the reality of the 11.5 million, Alicia noted. And with 11.5 million on a path to citizenship, there's also the question of "Who will they vote for?"

Alicia calls "the most contentious and desperate where you live that you are willing to send your 6, 7, 8 year-old to school! … the work you do is meaningful and inspiring to all of us." It was so rewarding working with the Friends of Neighbors Link on the topic of "Women, the Immigrant Experience, and the Media." Barbara in Senior Vice President at AMC News, responsible for hiring and development of stars and-off-air talent worldwide.

She was joined by Alicia Menendez, anchor of "Alicia Menendez Tonight" on Fusion, a news, pop culture, and satire TV and digital network launched in 2013 by ABC Disney and Entertainment. "There's a need for immigration reform," said Barbara. "We have American businesses that are increasingly relying and thereby hiring undocumented workers. That's the reality of who is putting people across the border.

The speaker agreed that there is a need to portray immigration with the skills to accept immigrants, and Neighbors Link efforts towards healthy integration, Barbara said. "That ban on to you refers to you and it's meaningful and inspiring to all of us.

Barbara and Alicia spoke at Old Oak Country Club in Purchase, New York, before a group of close about 200 attendees. Two Neighbors Link clients, Maria Espin and Guadalupe Acosta, showed how valuable the organization's programs have been to their assimilation to their new home.

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Volunteers Enrich our Community: One Opportunity at a Time

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) Through our partnership with WCC, Neighbors Link learners attend ESL classes at the center. Offerings for beginners and advanced learners.

• Monday–Friday 9 AM–12 PM
• Monday and Wednesday 7–9:30 PM (Registration required, Free $25 with Free childcare)
• Saturday 9:30 AM–3 PM (Registration required, Free $25)

ESL CONVERSATION AND TUTORING Newcomers can practice their English, conversation and one-on-one tutoring. (No registration required, Free)

• Monday 1–3 PM
• Tuesday 1–3 PM and 7–8:30 PM
• Wednesday 1–3 PM
• Thursday 1–3 PM and 7–8:30 PM

ROSETTA STONE ENGLISH CLASS Learn and practice English using the Rosetta Stone English language computer program. (No registration is required, Free)

• Call for dates

“Volunteers are the heart of any non-profit,” said Susan Arthur, Neighbors Link’s new Volunteer Manager. Joining our organization after fifteen years with the American Red Cross, she notes, “How their impact for each other and joy of working and volunteering cannot be more apparent.”

Hundreds of community volunteers, from young teens to seniors, contribute to the success of dozens of Neighbors Link programs. Managing the volunteer intake program at Neighbors Link is very rewarding for Susan. “I have the pleasure of interviewing and placing a high caliber of volunteers—really amazing people.” She attributes the strong pool of volunteers to the organization’s reputation and its results. “We’re getting a wave of previous clients who are willing to volunteer their time to help new clients. That’s the heart of Neighbors Link, success story every story you could ever hope for.”

Examples of this evolution from client to volunteer include Family Covey’s “graduates” whose children are now in the local elementary school. Pipeline Scholars who have become tuition students, and others who are sharing their job and life skills with new immigrants. “By a day outside, with clients using Neighbors Link services and their giving back,” notes Susan. “Neighbors Link continues to welcome new volunteers with special skills and backgrounds to help shape its roster of programs and services. EM’s special interest sites people to serve as role models, and those who have unique skills. "Wherever you’re an artist, athlete, Lego master or a gourmet in the kitchen, you can share your tools for success and offer encouragement.”

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Susan Arthur, Neighbors Link Volunteer Manager

CAUSE CONSCIOUS

Samantha Regen (above and below, right), a senior at the Westfield High School, received the Agnes Hassell Youth Leadership Award for her dedication in the Neighbors Link High School Volunteer ESL (English as a Second Language) Tutoring program. She has been a dedicated volunteer at Neighbors Link since seventh grade.

About tutoring at Neighbors Link, Samantha says, “For the last three years I've been doing Tuesday nights, where we all come together to improve our English skills and build connections with different people in our community.”

FEEDING FRIENDS

To honor the memory of Marc Silver, The Silver Family has fundraised and donated $13,000 to Neighbors Link through the "Marc Silver Feed Your Neighbor" campaign. With the goal of eliminating hunger in our community, the fund provides breakfast to elementary children in the Summer Links program, awarding a "nutrition bridge" to those youngsters who qualify for free meals during the school year. The fund also provides family-friendly meals and grocery store gift cards to families in crisis.

TEAM SPIRIT

The Mary Weiss Volunteer Spirit Award was presented to Nancy and Steve Mendelsohn. Nancy and Steve have been active volunteers for many years across programs at Neighbors Link and will have dedicated 150 hours in the Thursday Evening ESL & A.Tutors Program since 2010. About the Thursday evening program, Steve says, "It is not really about the English. It’s the link but the program is much greater. Forming bonds, being a resource to assist with questions, making learners comfortable with people outside their community, building trust". Nancy adds, "It’s what we really do. It is the best hour and a half of the week and I look forward to it every time.”

Adult Volunteer Awards for their passionate volunteer work with the Parents as Teachers program and the Thursday ESL (English as a Second Language) (Conservation Class they run together. With Joseph’s background in teaching and Nancy’s knowledge of Spanish, they have worked to create a comfortable environment that affects ESL learners. Joseph was the driving force behind Mount Kiscoopoly, a game they use to teach new words and phrases in a fun and intriguing way. About Neighbors Link, Joseph says, "It is a place of belonging, a place of relationships.”

"Helping the men and women of the immigrant community has put a very human face on a situation that is not an issue but a collection of very personal stories and experiences," Nancy remarked. "I hope I have made a small difference in the lives of the people I have met at Neighbors Link, because I can truly say they have made a huge difference in mine.”

Nancy Bauer and Joëtse Hoornman won the Neighbors Link Outstanding Adult Volunteer Awards for their passionate volunteer work with the Parents as Teachers program and the Thursday ESL (English as a Second Language) (Conservation Class they run together. With Joseph’s background in teaching and Nancy’s knowledge of Spanish, they have worked to create a comfortable environment that affects ESL learners. Joseph was the driving force behind Mount Kiscoopoly, a game they use to teach new words and phrases in a fun and intriguing way. About Neighbors Link, Joseph says, “It is a place of belonging, a place of relationships.”

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