



Video: Changing Lives 2022

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Gemini Walter, student, Mount Wachusett Community College: I grew up in a really unstable home environment. I grew up, like, below poverty level. And school, education just wasn't important. I dropped out of high school. I had no real formal education or goals or ambition to even go to school. So that's why I came back as a nontraditional student later on in life to try to put the pieces of my life back together.

Kimberly Kayser, ABE Transitions Coordinator, Mount Wachusett Community College: I've known Gemini for probably six years. He started out as a student in our ABE classroom many years ago, and earning his HiSET-- actually, at that time, he was earning his GED-- was a challenge for him, it wasn't easy for him. It took him many years to earn his high school equivalency.

Kayser: Everybody has obstacles. He's had his fair share plus some. And the fact that he's been able to overcome those and make some real positive steps to change the direction of his life, and to change what he wants to do and how he wants to give back to the community, I think is really inspiring.

Hongfang Lee, Patient Care Technician, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center: Before I came to Boston, I was a nurse in China. I came in 2008 with my son. I realized I need to learn more English in order to get a better education and reach my long-term goal. I want to go to college. So I decide to take ESOL class at AACA.

Richard Goldberg, Director of Education, Asian American Civic Association: Hongfang is a wonderful success story. She started at a lower level of English here, and worked her way up through the highest levels, finished our highest level, and then went on to JVS's Certified Nursing Assistant Training Program, which is a fine program. And they helped her find a job in her field, and she has since advanced in that job, getting a little bit closer to the nursing job she had in her home country, and she's going to be a fine employee.

Martha Escobar, Student, Berkshire Community College: I decided to come to America, looking for better job opportunities. When I live in Colombia, the economic situation was very difficult. It was very hard to find a good job. All my life before, I started English classes, was very difficult. I didn't have a voice. Right now, I'm very happy because my English is getting stronger. I have the possibility to find a better job. I had the opportunity to help my daughter with her homework.

Kelly Jourdain, Director of Adult Learning Program, Berkshire Community College: For as long as I've known Martha, she's wanted to be a psychologist. And this semester, she's taking her first Intro to Psychology. When I talk to her in the hallways about it, she just lights up. She loves it. Martha has this quiet, reserved, but this determination. And I think Martha quietly does it as an example to show Daisy, her daughter, that hard work and determination and patience gets you there.



Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, Adult Education State Director, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: These success stories demonstrate what happens in more than 100 adult education programs across Massachusetts, where adults are improving their reading, writing, and math skills, getting high school equivalency credentials, and learning English.

Stevens-Carter: This takes place in neighborhoods, schools, community colleges, workplaces, correctional institutions, online, and in integrated education and training programs. Nearly 20,000 adults a year build skills that can help them progress along career pathways, earn family-sustaining wages, and more fully engage in their children's learning.

Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Most people know that the department's mission is to ensure that all of our students in grades K to 12 are prepared for success by the time they leave high school. Many people don't realize that we have a similar aspiration for the more than one million Massachusetts adults who lack a high school diploma or who need to learn English to succeed in the workforce.

Riley: Individuals without a high school diploma earn nearly 20% less than a high school graduate, and 35% less than those with an associate's degree. Adult education is a core part of the work that we do here at the Department.

Walter: Five years from now, hopefully I have a good job, doing some type of social work. I'm not sure what type, but working with kids and changing lives. Hopefully I have some money in the bank, and I'll be able to travel. Transitions has really changed my life. It helped me become from a GED student to a full-time college student.

Goldberg: There are thousands of successful people who've gone through the programs in the state, and certainly in this agency, over the last 24 years that I've been connected with it. So we know that there are a lot of good stories to tell. We should tell them.

Li: Many people may think learning is for the young, but one is never too old to learn.

Jourdain: I see, as I'm walking down Great Barrington, a little town, I look up and I see Martha's sign, Counselor Psychologist, hanging on the sill. And I look in and there's Martha beaming, because she's probably sitting down having an advising session and helping someone else.

Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner for Educational Options, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Adult education presents an extraordinary opportunity to improve the quality of life for individuals like Gemini, Hongfang, and Martha.



Chuang: Contact the Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline if you think adult education can help you or someone you know. We also invite you to contact the Hotline if you'd like to volunteer or support a program near you. Thank you.

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