

Tidings

Spring 2016 Newsletter of the Durango Adult Education Center



Durango Adult Education Center
A Caring Learning Community

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Contributing to Our Community

What would you do if your spouse's employer relocated you both thousands of miles away to a foreign country where you did not speak the language? How would you help your kids with their school work? How might you re-establish your career in this strange new world if your college degree could not be accepted by any potential employers because it was not in a language they could read?

These obstacles (and many more) were already piled on Aichatou Balde's plate before she moved to Durango in July 2015 with her husband and three kids.

Previously, her husband's employer had relocated the family from Guinea in West Africa to Houston, Texas, only to move them again to Colorado.

Most people would call it quits when confronted with so many overwhelming setbacks. Not Aicha!

"I am the oldest of five children in my family," Aicha explains. "My mom counted on me to set the example. I cooked for my siblings and helped them with their homework. I have always been responsible."

That streak of responsibility kicked in when the "life advisor" provided by her husband's employer suggested Aicha get in touch with the Durango Adult Education Center—a pivotal and critical turning point for Aicha and her family.

First, the DAEC provided Aicha with the ESL classes she needed to speak fluent English. A fluent speaker of three other languages, Aicha was a savvy language student! She then participated in our BOOST Program.

According to Claire Sheridan, the Career Advisor who runs BOOST, the program is designed to provide skills training, career mentorship, resume writing, and a host of other services all geared to help people obtain rewarding, living-wage careers. BOOST secured a work-study job at the Durango Adult Education Center where Aicha could refine her English, improve her computer skills, and reinvigorate her prior training as a professional in the human resources field.

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Aicha Balde working at DAEC



Aicha with her children

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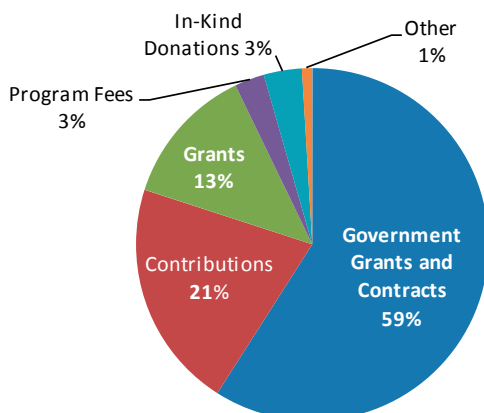
OUR BELIEFS

We believe that:

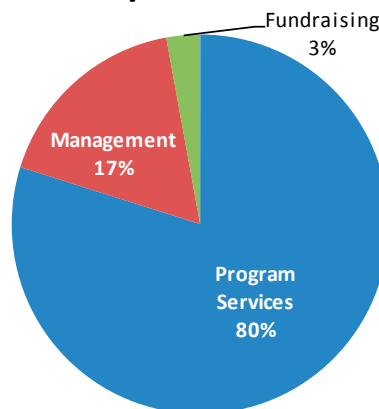
- All people have inherent worth.
- A sense of belonging is a building block for a stronger community.
- All people have the potential to create positive change.
- Education empowers the individual to achieve positive character attributes, social and economic mobility, and self sufficiency.
- Literacy and cultural competency are essential to thrive in this interconnected world.
- Family and culture impact the development of each individual.
- The right of every person to have and make choices is basic to freedom.
- Each individual has unique learning capabilities.
- The entire community benefits from an educated populace.
- A top priority of humanity is to create a better, more compassionate world.

Financial Highlight

2015 Revenues: \$746,758



2015 Expense: \$710,923



GED Test Question - Science

To balance the equation:
 $2\text{Fe} + 3\text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$

What should the 2Fe be changed to?

A. Fe B. 3Fe C. 4Fe D. 5Fe

GED Answer

C. 4Fe

The 2Fe needs to be changed to 4Fe to balance the equation on the right side.

Director's Note

I recently attended my first group run. Of the 50 or so athletes, about half set off for an epic trek around Horse Gulch, while the rest of us headed for the rim around Fort Lewis College. To reach our designated path, we first had to surmount the Nature Trail, a steep switchback!

The vertical jog was arduous. My heart thudded and my legs turned to mud, but I thoroughly enjoyed the workout! Along the way, I was repeatedly struck by the similar challenges Durango Adult Education Center students face when they embark on continuing and completing their education. At first, the task seems daunting. The end goal looks out of reach, like the top of the Nature Trail. But with hard work, repeated practice, plenty of support and encouragement tied to the ability to see improvement, the student arrives at the desired destination!

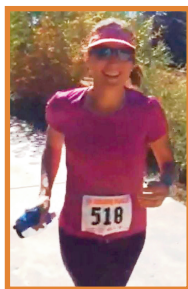
Along the way, the caring staff, teachers, and volunteer tutors at DAEC provide the support and encouragement students need, whether they are acquiring fresh technological skills, learning English as a second language, earning a GED, or working towards economic self-sufficiency. Daily meals, evening childcare, scholarships, extensive support, and career advisement through the BOOST program are just a few of the ways DAEC supports a diverse community of learners.

Following the 2014 changes to the GED Test, national and local test results plummeted. DAEC responded with a radically altered and ambitious curriculum. Since then, our students have surpassed the state and national graduation rates! Now, education centers across Colorado are looking to copy our recipe for success. In the months to come, I'll be leading tours of our facility and delivering talks on our best practices. Thank goodness I took up running!

Be sure to see all of our GED students successfully reach the finish line at our Spring Graduation Ceremony, May 25.

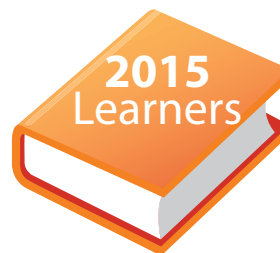
With appreciation,

Teresa Malone
Executive Director



Teresa completing her first half marathon!

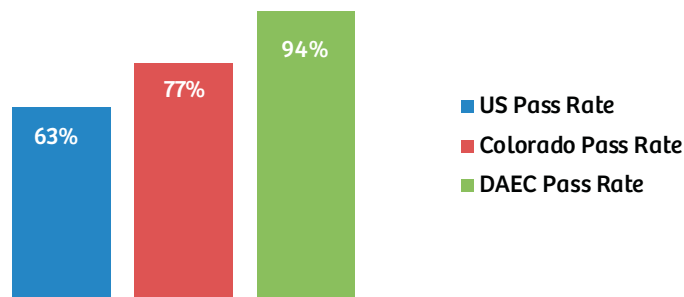
Who We Serve



- 73 students from other countries learned English
- 14 different countries were represented by our ESL students
- 204 hours of childcare were provided for our students
- 25 individuals were served in first 4 months of BOOST Program
- 153 students studied for their GED
- 503 tests were administered at our Pearson Vue Testing Center
- 869 volunteer hours donated to helping our students succeed

Overall GED Pass Rate

June 2015 - current



Contributing to our Community *continued*

Most exciting of all, BOOST was instrumental in helping Aicha get her college transcripts from Senegal translated so that they could be accepted as equivalent to a bachelor's degree in the U.S.

Sheridan points out that this momentous shift will not only enable Aicha to better provide for her family, but also to leave her low-wage job at a local grocery store to start a career in the human resources field and make a more meaningful and impactful contribution to Durango's community.

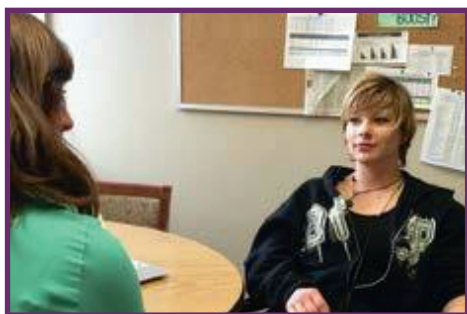
"Aicha is simply amazing," says Sheridan. "She is kind, welcoming, intelligent, and so determined!" Sheridan notes that her greatest asset may be her empathy for others. "I believe that characteristic is going to take her far in the human resources field."

For her own part, Aicha sees the next phase of her partnership with the DAEC as a chance to land her dream job—which is one that will test her skills, inspire her creativity, and grant her the time to do what she loves most of all: spend time with her family!

Program Updates

BOOST Program

Building Opportunities and Occupations for Self-Sufficient Transitions is exactly what we've been doing in the BOOST program. Since its launch in mid-2015, we have helped more than 60 individuals and families with immediate barriers and big picture strategies leading to economic self-sufficiency.



*Shanna Fellows, BOOST participant,
single mother & GED student*

Here are some ways we've helped:

- **Career exploration:** Placed three people in job shadow opportunities to gain firsthand experience in a chosen career field; employed two moms in work study positions to gain job skills and earn money while completing their education; and refined countless resumes for job seekers.
- **College transition:** Enrolled two graduates at Southwest Colorado Community College and one at Fort Lewis College with a defined career pathway in mind; coordinated two college tours; and assisted with student budgets.
- **Foreign degree translation:** Facilitated official translation of foreign degrees for US equivalents for two ESL learners.
- **Housing stability:** Prevented two youth and one single mom from becoming homeless; and enrolled a single mom, still working on her GED, into a local Transitional Housing program.

English as a Second Language

Due to increasing community need, we are expanding our ESL program yet again. This time we're providing English instruction in Cortez at the library. Beginning last month, we've already enrolled 13 learners eager to improve their English literacy with our three fabulous volunteers who were all former teachers. As soon as we train more volunteers, we can start helping the additional ESL learners on the waiting list!

The 2nd Annual Spanish Library Night held in partnership with the Durango Public Library took place on April 21. Over 40 attendees learned about the basic literacy activities and books available in English and Spanish for the non-native speaker. The event provided an opportunity for our students to tour the library and sign up for cards to access all the free programs and services at the Library.

We continue to provide support for our community members seeking their Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification. For over 10 years, we have assisted those looking to teach English abroad by allowing them to get their 20 hours of required classroom observation time throughout the school year. We provide an opportunity to get a hands-on experience of teaching an English class through class planning and instruction under the guide of our experienced ESL teacher.



*ESL students & their children at
Spanish Library Night*

High School Equivalency -GED



Our high rates of success and compassionate staff continue to draw learners of all ages and backgrounds into our program. About a dozen have earned a GED this spring and will be participating in our bi-annual graduation ceremony this month.

For the second year, we will be offering a summer intensive class. The immersion math program will be offered June 6 - 30 for 4 days/week from 10 - 2:30 pm with a daily lunch provided for students. As with last year's summer intensive, we intend to achieve another phenomenal GED passing rate.

*Dylan Kuhn, 2016 GED graduate who scored
a 98% on his social studies GED test.*

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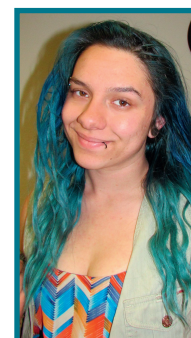
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Continued...

Donor Highlight



Rose Misseri
2016 Donor &
2015 GED Graduate

"The people that work for DAEC are some of the most dedicated, caring, capable, selfless, and all around great people I've ever had the chance to know. They are the ultimate educators. They believe in people who often have already given up on themselves, and empower them in ways that must have taken years to learn. Not just the teaching staff either. Everyone I came in contact with in my time as a student had a certain vibrancy and ambition about them."

The DAEC improved my life exponentially, along with hundreds of other people's lives. Why wouldn't I want to give back to them?"

I am eager to help the Durango Adult Education Center!

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
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The Durango Adult Education Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Thank you very much for your support!

Upcoming Events

May 25

GED Graduation
Durango Public Library - 6 pm

June 6 - 30

GED Math Intensive Program

August 22 - 25

Fall Registration

August 29

Fall Classes Begin

DAEC Mission Statement

The mission of the Durango Adult Education Center, a caring learning community, is to fill educational gaps by equipping adults, children and families with the skills and knowledge necessary for 21st century careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.

Why I Volunteer

My name is Maggie Bowes and I have been volunteering at DAEC for about 2 years since I "retired" from teaching there. I worked as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for 12 years at DAEC and before that I was an elementary teacher for the Durango School District.

I now volunteer to work one-on-one with ESL students who need additional assistance. Through DAEC, I have had the unique opportunity to meet people from all over the world and each of these individuals has expanded my view of their cultures. All of the students in the ESL program have rich lives which they are willing to share once we start working together. I often feel that they have taught me more than I have taught them.

The Durango Adult Education Center is a wonderful organization which is meeting the needs of many different people. I believe education is the best thing we can do for individuals of all ages, all walks of life and all nationalities. I am glad to still be involved with DAEC and the students.

*-Maggie Bowes
ESL Volunteer*



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