Holiday Fund: Upward Scholars offers ‘life-changing’ educational help

By Michael Trushel

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By giving struggling adult students the chance to master English and gain the knowledge they need to earn a living wage and support their families, Upward Scholars offers adults a second chance to achieve their goals.

Adult ESL classes were the springboard to a new job for Isabel Guerra, who had not completed high school when she sought help at Upward Scholars. She ultimately completed freshman-level college English. She then started taking paralegal classes with a goal of obtaining her paralegal certificate.

Guerra earned her living cleaning other people’s houses. Now, she’s an administrative assistant.

“Upward Scholars made my new job possible,” Isabel says. “I’m happy to help others get the same opportunity to contribute to our society in meaningful ways.”

Guerra is one of 158 members of the Upward Scholars program who have a personal story of transformation and persistence in the struggle to learn English.

The nonprofit that provides immigration-related services to residents from low-income families has been providing ESL and GED preparation classes since 1984. The programs are designed to help not only the students personally but also their families and the local community.

“Elevate themselves, their families, and communities,” said Upward Scholars founder and executive director of the local United Way.

“For us, it is about the human experience,” said Trushel. “We believe in the power of education to make a difference.”

The Upward Scholars organization offers two programs: ESL and GED preparation. The ESL program is a four-year program that provides opportunities for students to master English and gain the knowledge they need to earn a living wage and support their families.

To receive ESL classes, students must be over the age of 18, must be able to support themselves financially, and must be able to commit to attending classes for at least 20 hours per week.

The GED preparation program offers students the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. Students must be over the age of 18, must be able to support themselves financially, and must be able to commit to attending classes for at least 20 hours per week.

Last year, Upward Scholars served over 200 students, with 80% receiving English language instruction that would otherwise be available. Upward Scholars offers “life-changing” educational help.

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