

# The Citizen

Durham Region's Diversity-Focused Newsletter

ISSUE 3

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## 2010 "Black History Month Mix n' Mingle"

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa was the venue of the 2010 "Black History Month Mix n' Mingle", hosted by the Diversity Office of Durham College and UOIT in collaboration with the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, the Multicultural Council of Durham, the Women's Centre and the Caribbean and African Students Association. An estimated 300



African Carvings, Whitby, Ontario

participants attending the evening enjoyed food and drinks catered by the Studio Restaurant, with entertainment provided by solo pianist Joy Lapps, alongside the five member jazz band who had everyone rocking or tapping their feet to the rhythms of steel pan music.

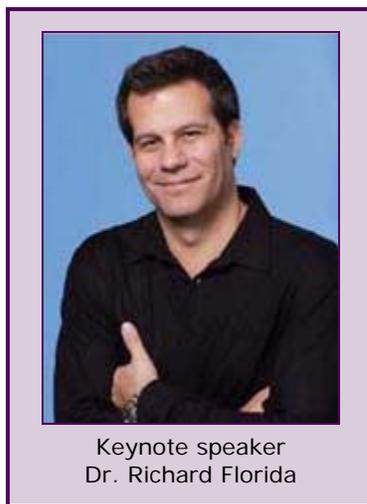
Allison Hector-Alexander,  
Diversity Officer from

Con't on page 9

## The Art of Transition

The Regional Municipality of Durham hosted the Art of Transition on Nov. 12, 2009. The Art of Transition explored Durham Region's creative communities and strategies on how to evolve the local economy by leveraging creative talents and taking into account the Region's existing resources and labour force. Keynote speaker Dr. Richard Florida often praised Durham Region for its vibrant community and potential to revitalize its economy.

This edition of "The Citizen" is full of helpful information with a special focus on some of the individuals, services and businesses in Durham Region that have found ways to ensure that new residents of the region have opportunities to use the talents and skills they bring to



Keynote speaker  
Dr. Richard Florida

Durham, contributing to the revitalization of the economy, as discussed by Dr. Florida.

*(adapted from Transitions Vol. 1 Jan. 2010)*

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## Business and newcomers—working together

Chris Eyes and John Tak are small business owners who operate Dentak Laboratory, located in Ajax, Ontario. As Chris explains, "Dentak designs and manufactures fixed and removable dental prosthesis and orthodontic appliances for dentists."

In January 2008, Sang Gyu Lee, a new employee, joined Dentak as a dental technician. He was recruited by Dentak after the company's exhaustive search failed to locate a suitable local candidate.

Sang Gyu immigrated to Canada from Korea and began working at Dentak Laboratory. He spoke very little English. The adjustment to living and

**"OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM WAS COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH."**

working in Canada has been very difficult.

Upon starting work at Dentak, the biggest

challenge for Sang Gyu was communicating with his boss and colleagues. As Chris states, "Sang Gyu is a hard worker and a dedicated employee, with exceptional 'technical skills'. Our biggest problem was communicating in English."

This challenge was met through English@Work—a pilot program offered through the Durham District School Board designed to assist employed newcomers to Durham Region with English language skills. Customized classes are designed to meet the needs of the employee, the employer and the worksite. The program provides basic communication strategies. Additionally, the program helps employers understand that effective communication is sometimes impeded by differences in cultural communication styles, social norms and expectations. It's win/win.

Sang Gyu and Dentak Laboratory have been participating in the English@Work program, since September 2009. The program has provided Sang Gyu with the confidence and skills to ask questions when he doesn't understand something at work. It has also helped Chris and John increase their understanding on how to communicate more effectively with Sang Gyu. For Sang Gyu, Chris, John and the company, the on-site classes have been very helpful.

To quote Chris, "I feel [English@Work](#) is an important program. I have first-hand experience with

communication difficulties in the workplace with people new to this country. This program offers employers ideas on improving communication, as well as teaching ESL. These combined efforts, as well as concentrating on employer needs, improve my confidence that instructions are more clearly understood. This helps the employee feel like a more connected and valued member of our team."

And, what does Sang Gyu think about the English@Work program? He says, "It's great. It really helps me."

*Valerie Mason  
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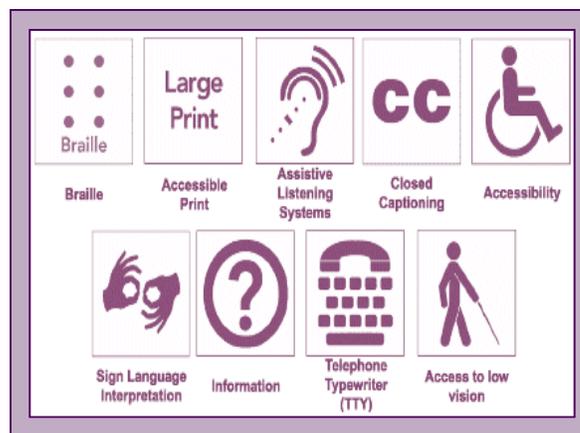
Left to right: Sang Gyu Lee, and Chris Eyes

Information on English@Work contact Valerie Mason at 289-314-6509 or at [v.mason.ewp@gmail.com](mailto:v.mason.ewp@gmail.com).

## Accessibility Expo—Breaking Down Barriers

Mark your calendars for this exciting event that will be held on June 17 at Durham College Recreation & Wellness Centre. The Accessibility Expo will provide information to our community on the benefits and importance of accessibility, as well as educating people on the new law in Ontario for people with disabilities—“Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act” 2005 (AODA). Local municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees and The Regional Municipality of Durham Economic Development and Tourism Department have partnered to bring this informative and exciting event to the entire community.

As part of this new law, businesses that provide goods and services to the public will need to comply with AODA’s Customer Service Standard by January 2012. To ensure the needed awareness of compliance requirements, The Regional Municipality of Durham Economic Development and Tourism will be hosting a breakfast for local businesses. An overview of the legislation will be provided, as well as highlighting the benefits of accessible business within communities, and how best to provide service to people with disabilities.



Local vendors will be displaying their accessibility products throughout the day and evening. In addition, agencies specializing in disability-related supports and services will also have opportunity to reach out to their community.

The Accessibility Expo will be a valuable day to the entire community and help us achieve a more inclusive and accessible Durham Region. Come join us!

June 17—Durham College Recreation & Wellness Centre  
For more information, contact Tracey Tyner-Cavanagh at 905-668-4113 ext. 2009

## Getting ready to make the most of post secondary

In the last eight years, students from around the world, including China, Saudi Arabia, Congo, Thailand, Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, Columbia, Panama, Bulgaria, Turkey and Indonesia, have benefitted from a program called English for Academic Purposes (EAP) offered at Durham College. Making the move to a post-secondary institute can be daunting under the best of circumstances. For students whose second language is English, the move to post secondary can lead to frustration.

Durham College offers a **pre**-post secondary program designed to address some of the transition challenges before starting a post secondary program. The EAP Program is an intensive academic ESL program, which provides language training to both domestic and international second language students. The program is designed to help students achieve their academic and career ambitions by providing them with the language skills essential for success.

This program is divided into

several levels, which focus on building effective reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. In addition to academic skills, the EAP Program introduces students to the Canadian college system by providing opportunities for students to attend college lectures and gain awareness of college issues, such as plagiarism. For more information about the program and personalized assessment test, please contact Sarah Edwards by email at [sarah.edwards@durhamcollege.ca](mailto:sarah.edwards@durhamcollege.ca) or by telephone at 905-721-2000, ext. 2355.

## Newcomers to Ontario—get assistance with job search

Job searches are difficult under the best of circumstances. Searching for a job in a new country, in a second language, is that much harder. The Unemployed Help Centre of Pickering and Oshawa in one of many services in Durham Region that helps newcomers overcome employment barriers.

The Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre helps newcomers become employment ready. There is never a charge for any of the programs, staff are friendly and knowledgeable. Many of the staff are newcomers themselves and understand the needs of the newcomer searching for employment.



Receptionist, Angie Papas

Job Search Workshop for non-Canadian Citizens is a three-day program that covers all areas of job search. Working one-on-one, staff assist with writing a résumé and cover letter. The résumé and cover letter are typed and kept on file. The newcomer learns what Canadian employers are looking for and how and where to look for employment.

Occasional child-care services for children over 18 months of age can be arranged. Previous participants have stated that 'no newcomer should miss these workshops'. There are job developers on staff that have directly placed 350 people a year into employment. There is a job bank with hundreds of job postings updated daily, as well as free access to computers, photocopiers, telephones and other resources for job search.

The Unemployed Help Centre has two locations, one in Oshawa (905-579-1821) and one in Pickering (905-420-3008).

### My experience working on the Regional community immigration portal project

I'd like to share my experience of working with a wonderful group of people. I was asked to represent the Town of Ajax on the Region's Community Immigration portal project back in July 2009. Since that time, I've had an opportunity to assist the "Life in Durham" content development group. It was great to rub elbows with staff from other municipalities and agencies, working together to make it easier for newcomers in the region to settle down and call Durham their home. The nice thing about the portal is that it caters to



David Forget, Manager  
Quality Services and Special  
Projects

those new to Canada but is also very beneficial to those who are new to the area. I had my horizons broadened and learned a great deal from the process. I authored the

"Four Seasons" portion of the portal. It was fun and interesting doing the research, while trying to keep foremost in my mind the kinds of information a newcomer might be looking for and what would be most useful to them about our climate.

Kudos to Hilary Schudt and her team for co-ordinating everything to ensure the project is a success. I look forward to the launch later in March.

*David Forget, Manager  
Quality Service and Special Projects  
Town of Ajax*

## Durham College assists internationally trained immigrants

Finding work in their chosen field is a well-documented challenge faced by many newcomers to Canada. There are a variety of services that can help. Durham College provides a free, one-on-one advisor service designed to improve educational, training and employment pathways for internationally trained immigrants (ITI). This provincially funded program is called CIITE, "Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment", and is showing some promising results.

Since the spring of 2009, the service has assisted almost

100 immigrants with personalized action plans, resources and followup. The service focuses on assisting ITI's with academic options, credential assessment, potential employment opportunities, language and professional skill enhancement, and referrals to community resources and services—all identified as critical components in integrating immigrants successfully to employment in Canada. Healthy employment outcomes are the goal, lessening the time spent in survival jobs.

The success of the service is

growing, resulting in improved employment outcomes for ITIs. This edition details the story of Dr. Daniyal Rehman, a true success story. This service is offered as a community outreach service, therefore no affiliation with the college is necessary. If you know someone who would benefit from this service, call Susan Domokos at 905-438-1041, or email her at [itiadvisor@durhamcollege.ca](mailto:itiadvisor@durhamcollege.ca).

*Susan Domokos,  
Advisor to Internationally  
Trained Immigrants  
Durham College*

## Internationally trained doctor committed to saving lives

Daniyal Rehman is an internationally trained doctor from Pakistan who will be able to work as a paramedic and start saving lives in a matter of a few months. He has successfully transferred his medical credits to the paramedic program at Durham College. Because of this, he did not have to take a two-year, full-time college program, repeating what he already learned in Pakistan.

Daniyal immigrated to Canada four years ago with his wife, who is also a physician. Daniyal realized that it could take years to pass the exams and get the training necessary to be recognized as a physician in Canada. Expecting their first child, he did what many immigrants do, took a survival job, and considered new career opportunities.

After exploring other options, he approached Susan Domokos, an internationally trained immigrant advisor at Durham College.

Together with the Associate Dean of Health & Community Services, and the Ministry of Health, they created an academic plan that met the ministry requirements and allowed Daniyal to apply his prior learning. This process took time and determination. According to Susan Domokos, "We just somehow didn't want to take no for an answer, while respecting the system and the fact that it works to ensure the safety of all". Daniyal is satisfied with the outcome, "Medicine is me. I can't think about doing anything else".



*Adapted from the article by  
Ani Yildirim at CIITE.ca  
Photo by Anis Yildirim*

## Durham Region Employment Network (DREN) creates network opportunities

The Durham Region Employment Network (DREN) is an effective network of 65 member organizations representing employment, education, training, community supports, libraries, businesses, and others all having the common goal of employment for people with barriers.

DREN endeavors to lead the development of equal access to employment resources by enriching community partnerships. This role is fulfilled by creating networking opportunities and sharing information on the vast array of employment programs and services available in Durham. Valuable information is distributed through the DREN network, office and website, which includes an active job board. Other DREN projects and initiatives include:

### **Community Access Program (CAP):**

Through funding from Industry Canada, DREN co-ordinates a network of 44 computer sites throughout Durham that offer high-speed internet and on-site support to residents for free. The program objective is to "bridge the digital divide" by providing resources to those who have limited or no access to computers. From November to March, free computer classes are also offered. Last year over 700 seats were filled through this program. CAP Youth Interns are also available for one-on-one support or small group training at various locations.

**EmployABILITY Awards Gala:** This event celebrates successes in employment for people with disabilities and recognizes those helping to remove barriers to employment. At the 2009 gala, twelve employees were honoured as nominees, along with their employers and employment agencies. The three EmployABILITY winners are featured in a video available on the DREN website. Other awards were presented for innovation, volunteer citizenship and for achievements in accessibility by the Region of Durham. Plans are underway for the 2010 program.

**Accessibility:** DREN provides online information and resources that assist people with disabilities such as the Abilities Guide—which summarizes support services available—as well as the newly established DisAbility

Doorway that provides a brief description and links to a wide variety of services in Durham.

DREN is doing its part to help make Ontario accessible by delivering informational sessions on the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* legislation to business organizations in 2010. DREN also offers training and support regarding compliance with the standard. For more information on DREN's programs and services, call 905-720-1777 or visit [www.dren.org](http://www.dren.org)

*Carol Edwards  
Executive Director*



CAP Youth Interns—left to right: Jenny Corbett, Julie Downes and David Morrison



Gala Event Coordinator, Judy Kerr



## English at Work – A Partnership that Works

In April 2009, Durham Region's Human Resources Department introduced an onsite "English At Work" Program that is available to all staff across the organization. This very successful program is offered through the Durham District School Board's Continuing Education division, and is designed to develop verbal and written communication skills for people whose first language is not English. The primary focus is on improving fluency, enhancing pronunciation and understanding and developing presentation skills.

**"THE ENGLISH  
AT WORK IS AN  
EXCELLENT  
EXAMPLE OF  
PARTNERSHIP  
THAT WORKS"**

The Region's four-thousand-plus employees are a highly educated, experienced and diverse work group. By offering this 10-week program, the Region is actively responding to the needs of staff, whose first language is not English, to give them increased confidence to more fully participate in meetings, make presentations and more effectively interact with customers and clients.

Employee response has been very positive, and the results are beginning to show. A recent participant enthusiastically commented that, "I had a very good relationship with all my clients/users before attending this program, but I think I am more confident now." The program, running again in February 2010, is now seeing some staff go through for a second time, even though there is a commitment of their own time (at lunch) to work through the program.

Denise O'Brien, Manager, Organization & Staff Development says, "We are very pleased to be able to offer this very worthwhile program in Durham. The timing is right because the work environment is diverse, and we need to support the learning of staff, so they can continue to provide "service excellence for our community". The "English at Work" Program is an excellent example of a partnership that works".



Denise O'Brien, Manager,  
Organization & Staff Development,  
The Regional Municipality of Durham

## Contributing to "The Citizen" newsletter

You hold in your hands the third edition of "The Citizen", Durham's diversity newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to connect the service provider community, inform new residents of what programs and services are available in the Durham community and generally raise the level of awareness about diversity and immigration.

The creation of this newsletter was a direct response from the consultations that took place in 2008 and 2009, where the community clearly stated they want more, better and co-coordinated access to information. To date, feedback has been tremendous and overwhelmingly positive. "The Citizen" welcomes contributions from all related sectors. To contribute, please contact:

[diversitynewsletter@duhram.ca](mailto:diversitynewsletter@duhram.ca)

To participate in the Town of Ajax's conversation about Inclusion, log on to  
[www.townofajax.com](http://www.townofajax.com) between Feb. 22 and March 10.

## Mix n' Mingle

(con't from front cover)

Durham College, UOIT and Trent University in Oshawa

**"THIS EVENT PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY TO REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY INCLUSION AND PLURALISM ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY"**

welcomed attendees reminding them of the contributions Blacks have made, and continue to make, in Canadian society. In the words of the diversity

officer, "This event provides the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to diversity inclusion and pluralism on campus and in the community".

His Worship Mayor John Gray of Oshawa, acknowledged City of Oshawa councillors—John Henry, John Neal and Robert Lutczyk. The Mayor in his remarks recounted the progress Canada and Oshawa

have made towards achieving a welcoming society, where people of all backgrounds can feel welcome. He called on all present to put down acts of racism, thereby ensuring that our society, and the city of Oshawa, is the most tolerant and understanding. Don Lovisa, President of Durham College drew rousing laughter as he shared his moment of reflection on his recent vacation in Barbados,

brought on by the sounds of steel pan as he entered the gallery. He went on to thank everyone in attendance highlighting the work of the Diversity Office, along with the partners for putting on the event. He reassured the audience of the importance of diversity to Durham College and the UOIT campus.

Other attractions included: Afro-centric art displays by Cultural Expressions Art Gallery of Ajax, and African Carvings of Whitby, who displayed stunning works of art and carvings. Sharon Cross treated the audience to a story entitled "What if there were no Black People".

*Oliver Forbes,  
Community Development  
Council of Durham*



Performer at the Mix n' Mingle

## Quotes of the month

This being Black History Month, I would like to ask people to celebrate the similarities and not focus on the differences between people of colour and not of colour.

~ Lynn Swann

We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers. Our abundance has brought us neither peace of mind nor serenity of spirit.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.



## In the words of newcomers.....



My name is Agnes Gruszecka and I came to Canada in 1997 from Poland. My professional training is in architecture—urban design. Upon arrival, I spoke Polish, German and Italian but no English whatsoever. I had two small children with me, a one year old and a three year old. My husband had already rented an apartment for us, but unfortunately he had to leave for the United States on business soon after I arrived.

At that time, the only words that I knew were a few computer commands, like 'window', 'open', and 'exit', and of course the regular 'hi', 'bye', 'sorry' and 'thank you'. Not enough for a mother that needed to take care of two kids in a foreign country. My husband's business trip was stretching to almost a month and I was desperate. I needed to learn English fast because even a simple

trip to the grocery store was a disaster waiting to happen. When my husband returned, he invited over a friend and his wife. We got to talking and I eventually shared my problems with her, only to discover that she was enrolled in a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) class. They even had a daycare centre at the facility. That was great news and I signed up at the school the following Monday morning.

At the beginning, I went to Level 1 and was moved to Level 2 after only a few classes. That was a scary and challenging task, because the very first few days I sat there, having no idea what my teacher was saying. Every day she asked me, "Do you understand?" I just shook my head no, and yet she told me, "Don't worry, you will." She was right. Two weeks later I could understand almost everything. It was an amazing transformation. I continued learning through all the levels that were available, but I still wanted more. It was tough, but essential, as it was preparing us for future job interviews, résumé and cover letter writing and perhaps most important, placing us in a work environment for a company as a co-op student.

The first company I was placed with wasn't exactly what I

expected and I ended up going back to school. My next placement was "The Sernas Group", an engineering company that employed many fields of work and a place where I felt that I could fit in. I wanted to be part of it. At first, I worked in the engineering section, as a junior CAD drafter. My skills allowed me to prove that I had what the company needed and I was hired after my co-op period ended. The people were very friendly and understanding, helping me with any problem, whether it was computer or language based. That alone has always made me think twice of leaving such a friendly environment.

Since that time, I have worked for a variety of departments within the company. Five years ago, I finally settled in the Planning Department. I prepare draft plans of subdivisions and entire neighbourhood plans. I get great satisfaction in knowing what I am designing will be built in our everyday cities. This is the position I was looking for from the very beginning. Now I am a senior design technician. Maybe it's not for everyone, but it suits me well. I am grateful to the Oshawa LINC School for teaching me the necessary language skills I needed to obtain and enjoy this job.

Agnes Gruszecka

### Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council (Interim)

We look forward to hearing your stories and feedback. If you would like to subscribe or **contribute** to the "The Citizen" Newsletter, please contact :

Email: [diversitynewsletter@durham.ca](mailto:diversitynewsletter@durham.ca)

Website: (portal pending)

Blog: (coming soon)

Facebook: (coming soon)

