



San Francisco Welcome Back Center

IN THEIR OWN VOICES

Eugene, a young physician from Russia, was working as a security guard when he found the Welcome Back Center.

I am writing this letter because I want to express my appreciation and describe my experience related to Welcome Back Center. I came to America in 2001. It wasn't easy. I had planned to go back to Russia, but something unpredictable happened: I loved this country, loved the spirit of freedom, these amazing people. Even though my English was terrible, and I had no idea what I was going to do for a living, I decided to stay to see what would happen. I worked as a construction worker for \$5.00/hour. As limo driver, waiter, in security. I had many tough days. But then I met Welcome Back Center and it changed my life. The counselor provided all the information I needed to come back to health care, to begin working on getting my physician's license (passing the U.S. Medical Exams). Welcome Back's classes helped me understand American medical culture, U.S. health care philosophy, and so on. If you never had cultural shock in your life, you would never understand the person who did. Because it's really, really tough. That's where you can get stuck forever. That's where you really need help. And I was able to get it because the staff at the Welcome Back Center cared about me and didn't let me get stuck! The counselor played a crucial role: she's a bridge between cultures. She helped me to find a medical job as a pathology assistant at St. Mary's Hospital. I was promoted several times, working side by side with American physicians. Inspired, I studied at night and passed all the U.S. Medical Licensing exams in one year. Welcome Back made a difference in my life, and in the community. I had many interviews for residency and I just found out that I matched at U.C. Irvine in Anatomical and Clinical Pathology. Once again, thank you for your hearts, dedication, and kindness.

Alba, a psychologist from Mexico, had a house cleaning business, ("Casas Preciosas"), for the seven years she had been living in the San Francisco Bay Area. After attending an informational meeting for immigrant psychologists at Welcome Back Center, she had her transcripts evaluated, borrowed funds on her credit cards, and enrolled and completed an M.A. in Psychology. Now she is working as a counselor at a non-profit in Oakland that assists victims of domestic violence. *Welcome Back was my trampoline from cleaning houses into professional life. I have organized communities and houses, and now I organize the internal world of my clients. I am so glad to have got this job. I am working with 4 immigrant families with very similar stories to my own life story being in this country. So I'm able to help them with a very sensitive approach. Muchas Gracias. Gracias por estar siempre haciendo que mi auto estima no se caiga. (Thanks very much. Thanks for always making sure that my self-esteem never wavered.)*

Johnny, a pharmacist trained in Taiwan, was unemployed when he came to the Welcome Back Center.

"Just a note to thank you at the Welcome Back Center for all the information and helpful advice you provided me for the past several months. Owing to your instructions, I got my California

Pharmacy Technician License smoothly. In addition, you also give me a lot of information about finding new jobs. Sometimes you mailed me useful research about the pharmacy field. I was very touched by your efforts and your precious time spent on me. I deeply believe that with your advice and assistance, new immigrants can re-establish their careers in this country faster and easier. Today I just finished forensic drug testing (pre-employment) at Walgreens. Next week I will get their official offer letter. I will let you know the good news soon!"

[Papa Djibril was a nurse in his native Senegal. He was unemployed when he came to Welcome Back.](#)

"Dear Sir or Madam, I am a registered nurse from Senegal and I have been living in the U.S. since 9/9/03. The first time I came here-- I was so stressed, because it's a new country and everything is totally different from my little country. But luckily my wife found out about the Welcome Back Center on the internet, and I went there. All the staff was so nice. They explained all the documents I needed to apply for the California LVN Board and gave me a lot of advice. I remember the counselor there told me "You are in the right place at the right time." That broke through my stress and I started to get more confidence. With the Welcome Back counselors' help, I went to medical terminology classes and then enrolled in the LVN Refresher Course for immigrant nurses at City College of San Francisco. Now I passed my LVN Exam, and I work in the medical/surgical unit at Alta Bates Hospital in Oakland. I am preparing for the RN Exam. Your program is so important because it provides us (immigrant nurses) all the assistance to work as nurse in this country!"

[Fei, a multilingual \(Mandarin-Cantonese-English\) physician from China, was receiving public assistance. Her caseworker referred her to Welcome Back Center.](#)

"Thank you to the Welcome Back Center. Since I met my case manager, I have received invaluable orientation, counseling, and support in developing my career path plan. I have completed the Kaiser-Permanente School of Allied Health Sciences Basic and Advanced Phlebotomy Program, and I got a scholarship to study there from the place you recommended: the Jewish Vocational Service. Now I am working as a Medical Evaluation Assistant for the City and County of San Francisco Department of Public Health. I work at Laguna Honda Hospital; I am learning and getting familiar with the new rules. I am the only Chinese in the department, and sometimes they need me to do interpreter work too! I sincerely appreciate all your help. I send my thanks and blessings to Welcome Back!"

[Rami, a clinical lab technologist from Jordan, was parking cars in a garage when he heard about Welcome Back from an ESL teacher at City College.](#)

"When I first moved to this country I had no idea where to begin to accomplish the goals I had set for myself; then I met the Welcome Back Center, and my road to success began. The counselors there were able to guide me in the right direction to attain my goals in a timely matter that fit my work schedule. I can honestly say that I would not be in the current position I am in now if it had not been for the help I received from the Welcome Back Center. Not only did I learn that I could achieve the humble goals I set for myself, but I was able to go beyond my goals by enrolling in San Francisco State University's Clinical Lab Science program to advance my education. I am currently employed in the clinical laboratory of one of the top 100 hospitals in the nation: Sutter General in Sacramento. I credit my current success and my current position to the help I received at Welcome Back Center."