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MCAE Presents Ruth E. Derfler Scholarship to ABE Program Graduate Selvin Socop Morales of Chelsea

BOSTON, MA – The Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) recently presented the Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship to Selvin Socop Morales of Chelsea, MA. Mr. Morales is an adult basic education program (ABE) graduate who completed a high school credential program and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes at the Intergenerational Literacy Program (ILP) in Chelsea, and is now enrolled at Bunker Hill Community College studying hospitality, with future plans to become a flight attendant.



MCAE Board President Roberta Soolman presented the scholarship to Selvin Socop Morales in a ceremony held via Zoom.

[Watch the award ceremony video here](#)

Mr. Morales arrived in the United States from Guatemala in 2019. In his personal statement, he shared that “When I was in my country, the economy was difficult. I was always struggling with finances because going to school there is expensive and there are no jobs for young people...When I came here it was hard. It is still very difficult for me because I have to learn and keep studying in a different language, which is something that is hard for everybody. Despite all of this I still believe in myself and I am still working hard to make my dreams come true and complete every goal I have.”

Mr. Morales joined the ILP just a week after arriving from Guatemala and, according to his program advisors, quickly evolved into a confident and dedicated young man who was eager to learn and

explore his possibilities. Within three months of enrolling in the program, he was able to pass his High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and earn his diploma. He reports “I am still practicing English in my college classes, and I am so proud of myself because I know my language is growing little by little.”

At the ILP, Mr. Morales quickly became a source of motivation for his peers. According to his program advisor, “His ability to positively influence peers also made him an instrumental member in the Learner Leadership Committee.” Another advisor shared that “His perseverance and commitment to get his diploma inspired his classmates, all recently-arrived out-of-school youth, to focus in class and not give up. Selvin believes that everyone deserves a better education... Here at the ILP, we admire and cherish Selvin’s path to education despite the challenges that he has encountered.”

The Ruth E. Derfler Memorial Scholarship was established by the MCAE Board of Directors in 2017 in Ms. Derfler’s memory to honor her decades of leadership and commitment to adult basic education. A former Director of High School Equivalency at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Past President of MCAE, Ms. Derfler was a beloved colleague and an advocate for countless adult basic education staff and students

for more than 40 years. Each year, the scholarship is presented to an adult student who has completed their studies at a Massachusetts ABE program and has been accepted by a college, community college, university, or technical training program. The award finalists are nominated by teachers and staff for having achieved academic success in their adult basic education programs, assuming leadership roles in their communities and classrooms, persisting in the face of challenges, and formulating clear goals for their future education plans. The award is funded through the generosity of individual donors.

Based in Boston, MCAE is a statewide membership organization dedicated to championing the right of all adults to acquire the 21st century literacy, English language, and numeracy skills that lead to economic prosperity, strong families, and vibrant communities. Since 1992, MCAE has advanced quality adult basic education in the Commonwealth through professional development opportunities, strategic communications, and sophisticated advocacy. Its annual NETWORK Conference is the largest gathering of its kind in New England and routinely attracts more than 500 adult education professionals from across the Massachusetts and beyond. For more about MCAE, visit www.mcae.net.

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