

## Reflecting on Teaching Senior English

By Ruichen Feng

As a member of the Capital Youth Outreach Club (CYOC), I began volunteering in May to teach English to senior Chinese learners—many of whom had little prior experience with either English or online learning. What began as a weekly commitment soon became a deeply meaningful journey that reshaped my understanding of communication, empathy, and the true spirit of education.

For many of the students, the challenge was twofold: learning a new language while also navigating unfamiliar technology. Tasks that seem simple—joining an online class, unmuting, or switching audio settings—often took multiple explanations and lots of patience. I learned to slow down, break things into smaller steps, and above all, remain calm and encouraging. Without video or facial cues, all interaction relied on voice, which made clear pronunciation, pacing, and repetition even more critical.

The students' enthusiasm was what kept me going. They weren't looking to master grammar—they wanted to use English in real life: to describe the weather, shop at a store, or communicate at the airport. This practical, goal-oriented mindset shaped how I teach lessons. Each session became focused on real-world scenarios, using repetition and role play to build confidence and familiarity. We didn't just learn words—we practiced using them to connect, to ask, to respond, and to be understood.

What struck me most was the students' persistence. Some joined from quiet rooms, others from noisy

cars or busy homes. Regardless of background or setting, they showed up—ready to learn, to struggle, and to try again. Their commitment was humbling. Many were older adults who had never used Zoom before, yet they were not deterred. I could feel their desire to grow, to communicate with the world around them, and to stay connected across generations and cultures.

This experience taught me that teaching is not just about transferring knowledge—it's about building trust, meeting people where they are, and growing together. I've gained a deeper appreciation for the barriers older adults face, especially when isolated by language or technology. It reminded me how important inclusive, accessible education is—especially for those who are often left behind.

While the process wasn't always smooth, it proved something powerful: learning has no age limit. With patience, encouragement, and a willingness to meet challenges together, transformation is always possible—not just for the students, but for the teacher as well.

### My Volunteer Work at 2025 CACHS English Club Program

By: Edward Ye

I volunteered with the CYOC over the last 12 weeks in the CACHS 2025 English Club program, by teaching the elderly English every Monday evening. During my first lesson though, I found myself quite anxious; I was very shy, and my Chinese was not proficient at all! I

needed extra help from my parents to read and translate Chinese words for me throughout the first few lessons. Despite my shortcomings, the seniors were kind, patient, and always able to understand my broken Chinese—some seniors had studied ahead of time and could also comprehend my English speech. They were earnest about studying English, and I noticed that some even took notes. I was amazed at how dedicated they were at studying English, choosing to sacrifice their leisure time. Over the next 40 minutes I read English texts with them, assisted them with pronunciations and vocabulary, and at the end of class, I could tell that their speaking had considerably improved.

Throughout the following weeks, I became more comfortable with teaching. My reliance on help from my parents decreased, and I spoke up more. Yet, I wasn't the only person who grew. Each week, the seniors and I went over a new topic, covering a variety of words in topics like personal health, finance, and traveling as well as other aspects of daily life. Every class, we learned grammar and phrases, but we also learned cultures as well. I am convinced that the seniors had made great improvement. This is what has made teaching them so worthwhile and fulfilling. Their diligence helped me to realize that progress goes hand in hand with perseverance, that little steps can add up to great things. As my teaching sessions came to an end, I was left with a great impression that learning is something that happens throughout a

lifetime, not just in a childhood.

Participating in this program deepened my understanding of what it means to serve our community. It was a rewarding experience, and I'm committed to continuing the volunteer work to make our community better.

### An Teaching Experience

By: George Wang

Over the past 14 weeks, I've had the privilege of volunteering every Monday evening for the Happy Seniors English Club, an online English-learning program hosted by the Chinese American Community Health Services (CACHS) and supported by volunteers from CYOC (Chinese Youth of the Capital). Funded by the Montgomery County Government, this program is designed specifically to support Chinese seniors (age 60 and above) in improving their English, adapting to American life, and building stronger connections with their grandchildren born in the U.S.

At first, I didn't really know how to teach. I spoke too fast, often used words that were unfamiliar to the seniors, and overall struggled to break down phrases into digestible parts. But as the weeks went on, I gradually developed patience, learned how to communicate more clearly and effectively. I eventually learned how to pace my lessons, and which points to emphasize. I would often repeat concepts or go over key points multiple times until the grandparents felt confident. Seeing them make progress, even step by step, was incredibly meaningful.

The class topics were practical and directly related to these seniors' everyday life. We covered how to schedule a doctor's appointment, understand and use health insurance, shop for groceries, ask for assistance in a pharmacy, and even how to understand basic financial support options. These topics helped seniors grow their vocabulary, challenge their pronunciation skills, and most of all help them make their everyday lives better.

Working together with other CYOC volunteers was also a wonderful part of this experience. We supported each other in planning and leading the sessions, and together we created a fun, respectful, and encouraging environment for the seniors. Beyond teaching, we helped troubleshoot technical issues and supported them in the class WeChat groups where they could review material and ask follow-up questions.

What touched me most was the seniors' dedication. They were so eager to learn—not just for themselves, but also to better connect with their families. Many of them told us they wanted to be able to talk more with their grandchildren or understand conversations during family outings.

Volunteering in this program has taught me how powerful language can be in bringing people closer together. I'm truly grateful to CACHS for organizing this meaningful program, and to CYOC for giving me the chance to contribute and grow alongside such inspiring elders.

## 青春与年华相伴，最长情的陪伴——记华府青年在大华府社区健康服务中心的系列老年活动

作者: Jennifer Zhang

大华府的6月，阳光灿烂，碧空如洗，万物生机勃勃。我们华府青年(Capital Youth Outreach Club, CYOC)倾情参与的、由大华府社区健康服务中心(Chinese American Community Health Services, CACHS)组织的两个系列老年活动项目完美收官！作为一个长期致力于公益性社区健康服务的非营利性社区组织，大华府社区健康服务中心在老年活动项目的组织和策划方面拥有非常丰富的经验。今年，健康服务中心组织的两个大型的系列老年活动，老有所乐和英语俱乐部，都是从1月份开始，历时半年，一直持续到6月份。作为大华府社区健康服务中心的长期友好合作伙伴，华府青年今年继续参与这两个大的社区公益服务项目，在大家的共同努力下，这两个系列活动进展顺利，圆满结束！

这两个活动启动于寒风凛冽的1月，结束在烈日炎炎的6月，从冬天到夏天，整整6个月的时间，青春洋溢的华府青年小义工们积极参与了每一次的活动，不管是线下的老有所乐，还是线上的英语俱乐部，他们都始终如一、认真对待、爱心满满，和爷爷奶奶们一起渡过了无数温馨欢乐的时光。据不完全统计，我们陪伴近百位白发苍苍的爷爷奶奶们一起参加了72次活动，在每一个健康教育讲座中、在每一堂英语课上，我们的表现也赢得了爷爷奶奶们无数次的夸赞，得到了健康中心团队的表扬和肯定。作为华府青年在这两个项目上的小leader，我为我的队友们的出色表现感到无比骄傲！同时，我们也从爷爷奶奶们身上学到了很多，虽然韶华已逝，爷爷奶奶们的表现却充满了满满的正能量，我们常常被他



们的积极乐观、睿智从容和认真好学深深打动！

老有所乐是一个完美融合了健康讲座和娱乐健身的线下活动，每周六下午的2点到5点在老年活动中心举办。华府青年的小义工一般都是初中生和高中生，周末的日程安排一般会很紧张，但是我和我的队友们还是克服了种种困难，提前在下午1:30到达活动现场，和健康中心的成年义工们一起布置活动现场，然后再帮着老人们打卡签到。我们小义工基本上都是第一次参加老年人的项目，发现大部分来参加活动的老人家年纪都很大了，他们有的腿脚不便，有的听力不行，大部分老人的视力也很弱，从而导致我们之前认为很简单的事情，比如签到、填写表格等简单的事情也变得复杂起来，所以，我们要在很多方面用心且尽心地帮助他们。比如签到的时候，我们说话声音得大一些，有时候还得重复几次，并在他们需要的时候要及时搀扶，使得他们能顺利就座。在接下来一个小时的医学讲座期

间，老人们在听讲座，我们则跟着健康中心的成人义工在厨房里面给他们准备下午茶，包括清洗水果、把盘子摆在餐车上、把水果和点心分发到每一个盘子里面。健康中心的成人义工非常有经验，他们很喜欢我们的加入，耐心地带领我们做每一件事情，仔细地叮嘱我们各种注意事项，包括全程佩戴口罩、仔细擦干水果等等，确保给老人们准备的饮食卫生安全。因为参加活动的老人有40位之多，准备工作很琐碎费时，一般我们的下午茶准备好了，讲座也结束了。紧接着我们就开始发放意见反馈表，并帮助有需要的老人完成反馈表。回收反馈表之后，我们就开始给老人们分发下午茶，等他们用完后回收餐盘和杯子等。等最后一个小时的娱乐健身活动结束后，老人们陆续离开，我们帮着归置桌椅、整理好现场后再离开。整个活动至少需要4个小时，工作量也比较大，可是每一位的小义工都非常认真地完成每一次活动，表现棒棒哒！



英语俱乐部是一个深受大华府地区老人们喜爱的线上日常英语授课活动，每周一、周三的晚上7点到8点开课一个小时。因为周一和周三学校都有课，课后还要完成作业和复习，所以对小义工们而言，能准时地在每周一和周三的晚上7点上线就是一个比较大的挑战！但是我的小伙伴们都非常认真敬业，做到提前上线、准时开课，连续半年，始终如一！我一般会在周末转发英语课件到群里面，大家会提前下载和准备。因为上课的老人有30多位，英语水平的差别也比较大，所以他们被分配到了初级、中级和高级三个班。我们华府青年小义工的英语水平真是没得说，他们是被随机分班的，可是不管哪个班的英语课件，他们都能信手拈来、游刃有余！此外，在课上不仅需要讲英语，还需要小义工能熟练地用中文和各位老人家随时交流，所以我的小伙伴们们的中文也都非常棒，被爷爷奶奶们交口称赞！在一个小时的授课时间里面，有40分钟是我们小义工带着爷

奶们预习或者复习。老人们的发音一般都不准，所以，哪怕是一个简单的单词，也需要带着他们反复练习，一遍又一遍，非常枯燥，但是大家都耐心地陪着他们，直到他们有进步。学习本身就是一件很辛苦的事情，一个小时的英语课对这些年逾古稀的老人们来说更是一个巨大的挑战。他们说了一辈子中文，突然要改变发音习惯开始说英语真的是太不容易了，其中的辛苦，陪了他们半年的小义工们最有体会！虽然教的艰难、学的辛苦，可是在大家的坚持和不懈努力下，我们的英语俱乐部活动也顺利完成！

这两个系列老年活动的成功举办，离不开活动背后的诸多人的努力和付出，他们是真正的幕后英雄！在这里，我们要郑重感谢大华府社区健康服务中心的董事长冯宁平博士和他领导下各位资深义工王一宁教授、张书岭博士、雷晓春女士、廖伟博士、强力教授、徐砺新博士、刘巧女士、潘玮女士、苏雅琴女士、吴敦富先生和岳春梅博士对活动的精心策划和组织，给我们搭建了非常好的实践和展示的平台！感谢我们华府青年的advisor团队全体成员，特别是陈涛教授和吕萍博士对我们无私的支持和贴心的关爱，你们永远是我们最坚实的后盾！最后感谢我们的爸爸妈妈们给予我们的风雨无阻的陪伴！

爷爷奶奶们背后的人生故事和丰富的生活经历就像他们脸上的皱纹一样深刻，6个月的时间，一次次的活动，他们感恩我们的陪伴，我们也从他们身上也学习到了许多。韶华虽逝，但它们却堆积出了年华。我们的华府青年小义工的青春和爷爷奶奶们的年华相伴，这是最长情的陪伴！