

Conversation is the Key



When Qingya Fan arrived here from Guangzhou in February 2009, she never imagined that she would be able to practice her nursing profession in the U.S. Like many other professionals from China, she had learned how to read and write English, but had little practice in speaking or listening. She had been a nurse in China for 12 years, but here she had an H4 visa, which did not allow her to work.

“I felt sad, lonely and helpless when I first arrived. I had few friends. My first goal was to improve my English. I felt so frustrated because I could not speak, or understand spoken English. I was afraid to make phone calls, especially receiving calls. It was so tough in the first few months after I got here. Every day seemed a month for me. It turned to better when I found a place I could go to practice my English.”

“I went to the Robbins Library in Arlington, and found the English At Large conversation group. I attended the conversation group and practiced my speaking and listening. It was very helpful for all of us! I learned a lot about culture, customs and lifestyles in the U.S. Later, I was able to apply for an English tutor. It was my dream that I can learn English one-to-one. Everything went so perfectly for me. I met my wonderful tutor—Julie Sussman.”

Once she had her tutor Qingya didn't let up. She got her driver's license in April 2010, and with Julie's support she passed the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign

Language) in May, and became a Certified Nursing Assistant in November. By this time she had her green card and she got a part-time job working with a quadriplegic, but continued to meet with Julie every week. She passed the Registered Nurse test and got her professional nursing license in April 2011. She hopes to have a nursing job soon.

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Julie describes Qingya as “hardworking and smart, a self-directed learner. She studies hard and takes advantage of all available resources to reach her goals. She is also a wonderful human being.”

“My tutor is giving me a lot of help and support. She helps me to deal with all kinds of things around me, including preparing tests, interviews and adjusting to life in the USA. From my living to studying, in every stage, no matter what happens my tutor is the first person with whom I always want to share.”