

LITERACY CENTER

PROMOTING RESEARCH & STUDY OF LITERACY & LANGUAGE

THE EDWARD STEVENS CENTER
FOR THE STUDY AND
DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY
AND LANGUAGE



Sahro Ibrahim

Columbus Literacy Council

For Sahro Ibrahim it's been a long and arduous journey from Mogadishu to Columbus. Born in Somalia in 1980, Sahro lived there with her mother, father, five sisters, and a brother. Everything changed in 1991 when the war broke out in Somalia. "I saw dead people in the street," Sahro remarked. "In January, 1991, with the help of some neighbors, my family and I walked to Kenya." Sahro's journey to a new and very different life had begun.

Sahro's next stop on her journey was Nairobi. In 1996 Sahro met her future husband. They married in Kenya in 1998 after he had returned from a trip to the United States. A few years later in 2002, Sahro embarked on another journey to a totally foreign land. With her husband, she settled in Minneapolis.

In Minneapolis as a young adult, Sahro entered her junior year in high school where she was mainstreamed with only one hour a day of ESOL. After a year in high school, feeling totally overwhelmed and afraid she wouldn't make it through her senior year and graduation, Sahro dropped out of school. Sahro explains matter-of-factly, "I ran away." Under such circumstances it's not hard to understand that Sahro could readily forget her mother's advice.

The next leg of Sahro's journey brought her to Columbus, Ohio in 2005, to Columbus Literacy Council's door in the fall of 2007, and into my high intermediate level ESOL classroom. For six months Sahro came to class every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning and worked very hard, but her eyes were always cast down and she never contributed to the classroom discussions nor volunteered to write on the board. As her teacher, I talked to her quietly in class and encouraged her to participate, but she wasn't ready. She needed more time. And in the spring Sahro literally bloomed. She started speaking up in class, talking with her classmates, participating enthusiastically in small group, and even kidding with other classmates.

A couple weeks ago, Sahro proudly told me about the response of her young son's daycare personnel. Sahro said, "Last year the school got me an interpreter. Everywhere I go [last year] I need an interpreter." However, this year when she attended her son's teacher conference, the teacher commented "How did you learn English so fast?!" And when Sahro filled out this year's day care application for her son, the day care manager too was very surprised with Sahro's ability to communicate in English.

When asked about her dream for the future Sahro always says she wants to become a nurse. "I'm trying still. One day I get." And about Columbus Literacy Council, Sahro says simply, "I love this class and my teacher."

*"I love
this class
and I
love my
teacher!"*

Student Success • April 2009



