

Success Spotlight: Yoko Kai

Yoko Kai was a practicing physician in Japan when she moved to Indiana to follow her husband and his new job opportunity.

With her command of the English language sorely lacking, Kai enrolled in Indy Reads' English Language Learners class to help her acclimate to American culture and ultimately enter the workforce here.

Indy Reads is an adult education provider for the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) whose mission is to help improve lives by building literacy, English language, and job-readiness skills.

Kai found the not-for-profit through a Google search and is glad she did.

"Before moving to the United States, I was not confident about my language skills," she said. "But now I feel much more comfortable and express myself in public or with friends."

Kai said she was in a class with two others, both of whose native language was Spanish, and always felt welcome during her sessions.

"I have never felt any bad emotion or struggle during class time," she said. "They always help us and organize each class for each day based on our individual skills of English, so I really recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their English skills or who wants to learn American culture."

Christina Proulx is director of program at Indy Reads and said its focus is the 18 and up population.

"One in six Hoosiers in Indiana reads below a fifth-grade level right now, so even when filling out a job application or writing a resume, they're already at a disadvantage," Proulx said. "The sooner that we can improve their English skills, or their reading and language skills, the better chance they have at being a competitive candidate and getting a better job to improve the quality of life for their families."

To learn more about Indy Reads, visit www.indyreads.org.