

The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the neighborhood setting. The Dominican Literacy Center believes in empowerment through education, and in the dignity of each individual person.

The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...

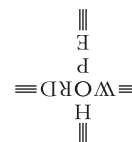


- free 90-minute weekly individual tutoring sessions for women in reading, writing and speaking English as a second language.
- customized curriculum of English-only instruction appropriate to each student's level.
- sessions that run from September through May, with day and evening formats.
- the opportunity for a student to remain in the program for three years, usually working with the same tutor during the entire time.
- conversation classes open to current students and "graduates".
- citizenship classes for both men and women.

The Center is located in east Aurora at 260 Vermont Ave., on the #521 Pace bus route. For more information, call 630-898-4636, M-F, 9 am – 4 pm.

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Word & Hope

Steps toward success



Maribel in her home

As directors and tutors at the Center, Sister Ann and Sister Kathleen are used to seeing their students when they are out in the community. At the spring 2009 Waubensee Community College ESL graduation, they had a surprise encounter with their friend and former student Maribel Molina. Maribel was one of the graduation speakers. Imagine their delight when Maribel told the audience about the education and the sustaining relationships she found at the Center. She even referred to the Sisters as "her angels."

In Mexico, Maribel attended college and studied special education. She married young and came to the United States with her husband, dreaming of opening her own school for special needs children.

"My mother thought that I

was too young to marry and leave Mexico and she was right about that." Even though her unhappy marriage ended in divorce, Maribel received custody of her young daughter, also named Maribel.

Because of her marital difficulties Maribel sought counseling. It was through her counselor that she was introduced to the Dominican Literacy Center. Sister Ann and Sister Kathleen immediately bonded with Maribel and a strong and lasting friendship was born. The Sisters helped Maribel and her young daughter in countless ways.

Maribel worked to support herself and her daughter. Her first job was in the housekeeping department at the Marshall Field store. She struggled through the interview process, petrified that she would not be hired if it was discovered that the only English response she knew was "Oh yeah." Sometimes she would cry as she cleaned rest rooms, thinking of her past lofty ambitions. "When I was scrubbing toilets, I cried because I thought of my mother and how hard she had worked to help me make something of myself."

Maribel found the support and the strength she needed at the Center to develop her English skills and to improve her life. She made time for her classes at the Center, studying hard until her English skills improved and she was hired as a teacher's assistant at Aurora's Gates School.

Life was always difficult. One

night, upon her return from work, a man wielding a knife confronted Maribel. She escaped unharmed but later discovered that this man had been stalking her.

The incident deepened her determination to provide a better and more secure life for her daughter. She renewed her commitment to studying English and obtained a job as a stocker at Cardinal Health. Undaunted by challenge and eager for advancement, she learned how to drive a forklift. Promotions and more responsibilities came her way. Today she is in charge of more than 20 workers, and Cardinal's Best Employee Program twice recognized her.

It was a happy day when Maribel was able to purchase her own condo. Decorating is her passion and she has created a beautiful home. "My theme is the sea ... I've painted the living room a seafoam green, and then the kitchen will be a soft tan like a beach, whenever I find some time to paint."

"Little" Maribel has become a lovely, strong woman and is employed by the Aurora YMCA, where she is in charge of the before and after school program. In the fall, she will continue her studies of psychology and criminology at Northern Illinois University.

Maribel and her daughter are an inspiring success story. They are a testimony to the compassionate support and education that the Dominican Literacy Center provides for all its students.

"No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others.

The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude.

~ Alfred North Whitehead

In their words

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center do a fair amount of writing as part of their curriculum. Enjoy this story about Mother's Day.

"We celebrate El Dia de las Madres, always on May 10th. Everything starts by 1:00am. At this time, a young group meets downtown with guitarras, and we go walking around the streets singing "Las Mananitas" to all the Moms.

"At 5:30am, everyone goes back to their own house to celebrate with their Mom and family. This day, bakers are very busy because almost everyone buys fresh cake to eat for breakfast with their Mom. Also, at that time you can hear Mariachis around in some houses.

"At lunchtime, all families meet in the house and give gifts to their Mom. We sing, dance and laugh a lot. By 5:00pm, we go to the church for a special Mass for the all Moms. At the end, they receive a pair of roses. After, we go outdoors and some younger people prepare special plays and songs to celebrate all the Moms in the village. It is done by 10:00pm and we are happy after celebrating a very special day called Mother's Day!"

~ Lulu Soto



After *bello*, the most likely greeting one hears at the Dominican Literacy Center is *bola*. But, don't be surprised if you also hear *bonjour* (Creole), *sveiki* (Lithuanian) or *ni hao* (Chinese). Although 90 percent of the students at the Center come from Mexico, the remainder represents diverse cultures that enrich the learning community. This year, students at the Center hail from ten different countries—one of which is Haiti.

Nicole Alexandre is from Artibonite, Haiti, which is about two hours away from Port-au-Prince. After her marriage in 2000, she and her husband came to the United States to study and find good jobs. They lived in Florida, Massachusetts and Maryland before moving to Illinois.

Nicole is an excellent student. At the Center, she is improving her English skills to obtain a job as a nurse. Nicole says she wants to work *in* the community, *for* the community and *with* the community.

She is grateful to her tutor, Sr. Rose Marie Lorentzen, B.V.M. "It is a very good thing to have a personal teacher," says Nicole. "I feel so comfortable with my teacher and there are no other students to laugh at me while I am learning English." Nicole's family was affected by January's devastating earthquake; she appreciates continued prayers and concern for her native country. The diversity at the Center helps put a human face on the world beyond our borders.

Save the date

Tutor training for this fall is at the Center from 6 to 8:30 p.m. August 24, 26, 31 and September 2, 2010. Please plan to attend all sessions. To register or for more information, contact Sister Ann at 630-898-4636 or annclennon@sbcglobal.net.

Every lesson counts

The time a student spends at the Center is limited to three school years, so every lesson counts. Sometimes, however, it is necessary for tutors to have extended absences. In September 2009, the Center implemented a substitute tutor program to cover these situations. Former tutors were invited to serve as substitute tutors. This helps students continue with their studies uninterrupted.

For former tutor Mollie Millen the substitute program was perfect. She says, "It allows me to be involved in the program and interact with the students and staff even though I can't commit to full-time teaching."

Sister Jane Ann, coordinator of the program, prepares the substitutes with arranged lesson plans. Being experienced tutors, they are familiar with the mission and philosophy of the Center and are fully trained.

This program adds an important element to the education of the Center's students. The substitutes believe in the program and are happy to make a difference in the students' lives, even if it is temporary.

What's cooking?

The *Feast of Friends 2* cookbook is still available at the Dominican Literacy Center. For \$15, it contains favorite recipes from the tutors and students. There is even a bilingual section. Below is a sample of the great food from the cookbook. To purchase a cookbook, contact the Center at 630-898-4636 or domlitctr@sbcglobal.net.

Corn and Black Bean Salsa

Lynn Fleming

2 (14 ½ oz.) cans diced tomatoes, one with chilis, drained
1 red onion, diced
1 can black beans, drained
1 can white shoepeg corn, drained
½ bunch of cilantro, chopped

Juice from a fresh lime
1 large or 2 small jalapeño peppers, chopped
2 tsp ground cumin
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients and refrigerate, preferably overnight. Serve with tortilla chips.

Some things are meant to be



Jean Clementz (r) and her student Marielena.

Last year, the Religious Education coordinator at St. Joseph Parish in Aurora noticed that a number of students in the program had parents who could not communicate well in English. At the same time, a group of men from Myanmar were desperately trying to participate in parish activities at St. Joseph's, but were frustrated by their minimal English skills. Spurred on by these two situations, the Stewardship Committee at the parish investigated the possibility of initiating a literacy ministry in the parish.

Jean Clementz, a member of the committee as well as the parish nurse, thought of the Dominican Literacy Center. She knew of its impressive work with immigrant women in the Fox Valley area, and contacted the Center to get some

advice. Hoping to glean some ideas about literacy education, she and another member of the Stewardship Committee decided to attend the tutor training offered by the Center in August 2009.

Jean felt a strong connection during this training and was inspired to become a tutor at the Center, where she has been tutoring for the past year. "I came to see what it was all about, and everything just fell into place," Jean recalls. "St. Joseph Parish's mission statement speaks of being a visible sign of Christ's presence in ministry and service, which meshed with that of the Center," she said.

The St. Joseph Parish Literacy Program is ready to launch in September 2010. With the Center as a model, one-on-one tutoring will be offered on Wednesday evenings, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Up to five students and tutors can be accommodated in St. Joseph's parish space. Jean will act as facilitator of this program, which has three bilingual directors: Maria Velazquez, Ana Velazquez and Doris Cole. "We are so grateful to the Center," said Jean. "The Sisters have been wonderful and so supportive. They will train our tutors and evaluate students for our program."

The St. Joseph Parish Literacy Program is available to all parishioners of St. Joseph's, men and women alike. To find out more about this program, please contact one of the directors at 630-844-3780 x400.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides guidance and support for the many initiatives of the Dominican Literacy Center.

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