

Word & Hope

Summer Learning



Martha Jarboe (l)
and Patty Hurt (r).

When the subject of summer vacation comes up, most people hit the pool, the park or the road. Not so this past summer for a group of students and teachers organized by Patty Hurt. They hit the books!

A summer with no children at home and a golfing husband had Dominican Literacy Center tutor Patty Hurt wondering how she could use her teaching background to help the community. Patty, a teacher with Lisle School District 202 for over thirty years and a tutor at the Center for two years, found inspiration from her own DLC student, Maria Perez.

During the spring, Maria expressed a concern for her son whose report card was not up to par. Patty knew how her summer would be spent! She would use her experience to tutor the children of the DLC students.

Patty asked a retired teacher, Carol Johnston and fellow Lisle teacher, Kathleen McTighe to help teach the summer program. A flyer was handed out at the Center's adult classes and the children were selected on a first come, first served basis.

Before the program began, Martha Jarboe called Patty to offer her help in translating. Martha, who was born in Cuba and came to the U.S. as a small child, tutors at the Center. She was a godsend. Even though she hadn't been formally trained in education, she is a born teacher.

With the additional assistance from Martha's daughter, Katie, 18, and Patty's daughter, Amanda, 26, the eight week program started in mid June with seven children from the Aurora community in grades one through six.

The children were tutored in a phonetic approach to word analysis, reading comprehension, appreciation of literature, and math skills. Groups met twice a week for an hour and a half at the downtown branch of the Aurora Public Library.

The children were asked to have a library card and come ready to learn. "Just seeing those who had never had a card before checking out books and joining the summer reading program at the library was a joy!" said Patty.

The main goal of the program was to advance the children's

education, but as the summer went on the volunteers realized that maintaining the children's skills was a more attainable goal. The volunteers worked on building the children's confidence in their skills. Self assurance was a natural outcome of their small group work.

Carol said, "What a wonderful experience, to see these children pick up a book for pleasure, and to be able to listen to them discuss the book for its emotion and intrigue. The relaxed atmosphere allowed so much give and take between student and teacher."

The program was a success! At the end of the summer, the gratitude of the children and their parents was the biggest reward

"...joining the summer reading program at the library was a joy..."

of all. While reflecting on the mission and history of the DLC, Patty realized that not only can the women of the Center be "empowered to improve their lives and the lives of their families", but their children can be given this power as well. When children are treated and taught with respect and dignity, they grow to understand the joys of people helping people.

"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

--G.K. Chesterton

Crazy English

One of the glories of English is its astonishing number of synonyms. "Something is not just big, it is large, immense, vast, capacious, bulky, massive, whopping, humongous.... No other language has so many words all saying the same thing," observes Bill Bryson in *The Mother Tongue: English & How It Got That Way*.

Perhaps because of this, English also has a crazy affection for redundancy – beck and call, first and foremost, rack and ruin, pots and pans On the flip side, it displays an annoying (to foreigners) tendency to load up a single word with a multiplicity of meanings. For example, Bryson writes, "We can talk about fine arts, fine gold, a fine edge, feeling fine, fine hair, and a court fine and mean quite separate things."

An additional source of puzzlement to the English language learner can be the ability of English to make new words by fusing compounds. This isn't unique to English, but English "does it more neatly than most other languages," says Bryson, and can also make the elements reversible, "so that we can distinguish between houseboat and boathouse, basketwork and workbasket, casebook and bookcase. Other languages lack this facility."

These are just a few of the challenges encountered on the way to English fluency, idiosyncrasies that native speakers seldom even think about!

Conversation Class



On a crisp October morning, the Center's main room quickly fills as students arrive for Conversation Class. Some of the women laugh as Sr. Ann Clennon greets them - others smile apprehensively. It is the first Conversation Class for the 2008-09 school year and those who have not attended before are not sure what to expect.

There are over two dozen women attending today and they include students who have just started classes at the Center as well as those in their second and third

years of study. Using handouts, the students practice introducing themselves, asking each other questions and giving responses.

Advanced students use more complex answers and happily help the beginning students. It's a tight squeeze as everyone walks around the room trying to speak in English to as many people as possible. Soon everyone is laughing and the self-consciousness of trying to use unfamiliar words in an unfamiliar way disappears.

For most of the women who attend classes at the Center, the ability to speak English comfortably is a top priority. They want to feel confident that when they speak they will be understood.

Sr. Ann and Sr. Kathleen Ryan take turns teaching Conversation Class on Tuesdays from 7:00-8:30 p.m. and on Thursdays from 9:30-11:00 a.m. Class is open to both current and former students, and students are welcome to attend as few or as many classes as their schedules allow.

Conversation Class provides students the opportunity to practice their newly acquired English skills in a safe, supportive environment. They expand their vocabularies, find out just how "crazy" English can be and learn about American culture. They see that they are not alone in their struggles and that there are always others who are willing to help. In the process they build a learning community.

By the Numbers

187 Students enrolled at the Center **30** Students waiting for tutors
123 Tutors working with these students **52** Students waiting to register

846 Students helped over the last 15 years
400+ Tutors volunteering over the last 15 years
Interested in becoming a tutor? Call 630-898-4636

Literacy's Best Friend

One of adult literacy's best friends is the Illinois State Library Literacy Office. This office, under the direction of Secretary of State Jesse White, supports and helps to fund adult literacy projects in libraries, volunteer tutoring organizations, and community colleges. The Dominican Literacy Center has applied for and received funding from the State Literacy Office since 1996; this year, we will receive \$45,000, which is 20% of our budget. We are grateful for their funding and for their support!

Welcome on "Board"!

The Advisory Board welcomed three new members to its ranks this year. Newest Board members Jim Godo, Dr. Denise Hatcher and Virginia Arnold bring abundant energy and enthusiasm.

"My wife and I believe it's important to introduce our two daughters to the need for service, and my membership on the Advisory Board gives us that chance," Jim says. "I'm thrilled to serve on the Dominican Literacy Center Advisory Board." Director of Marketing at North Central College, Jim brings his talents in communications and computer design to the Center. He has already made his mark with the design and creation of the Center's new marketing brochure.

Denise is a professor of Spanish at Aurora University. She also advises and

consults with various committees at the University. Denise is touched by what she sees at the Center and echoes Jim's sentiments. "It's an honor to work with the Dominican Literacy Center," she says. Denise is an avid runner who has completed several marathons, including the Chicago Marathon.

Virginia, Director of Stewarding at Hollywood Casino, lends special perspective as an immigrant woman and brings her expertise from within this hard-working community. "When I came to the United States, I was 20 years old. I wish there had been a literacy center for me then. I so admire the work they do to help educate ... and empower women."

Welcome Jim, Denise and Virginia!

It's all about the students



For enthusiastic tutor Barbara Breen, the Center is all about the students. "The spotlight should always be on the student and her particular needs and goals," Barbara says.

Barbara and student Maria Esparza have worked together for two years. Barbara describes Maria as the hardest worker she's ever known, a wife and mom who works full time and juggles a busy lifestyle on top of being a most conscientious student. Maria's twin goals are to improve her English communication skills and her computer skills to enhance her job qualifications. She's already received one promotion.

Barbara also tutors a second student and would consider adding more. A true "people-person," Barbara is a nurse and has a master's degree in social work. She worked at the University of Chicago medical school where she developed and directed a standardized patient program, which was a part of the medical student curriculum.

Her favorite part of tutoring is getting to know her students. Saying goodbye to them after three years is another thing altogether. Regretfully, Barbara and Maria's time together will end this year. But they are happy and satisfied with Maria's progress and will always retain a personal bond of friendship.

Advisory Board

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

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"Word & Hope" is a twice-yearly newsletter of the Dominican Literacy Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located at 260 Vermont Ave., Aurora, Illinois, 60505-3100. Call 630-898-4636 or visit domlitctr@sbcglobal.net. Founded in 1993, the Center is open to all women who desire to learn to read, write and speak English.

The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...

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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.



- 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.***

Return Service Requested

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