

Word & Hope

Go Make a Difference

The bright eyes and smiling faces of the children tell the story. Diego, Gabriela, Luisa and Brittany have each selected a brand-new book to be read to them while their mothers attend weekly conversation class at the Dominican Literacy Center. Later the books are checked out by their moms for home use. The bilingual books help the families retain their native language while expanding their English. They also provide the moms with books that enhance confidence, encourage literacy and enrich their children's development. As Sister Kathleen Ryan says, "Teach a mother, teach a family."

Received in the fall of 2008, these books double the Center's previous library of children's bilingual books. The adult library will also be enhanced with a large order to be placed this summer. New picture dictionaries will replace the well thumbed ones currently in each tutoring room. A set of biographies of famous women, written with simpler vocabulary, has been selected as well. The Center staff is looking forward to this enriching expansion of reading material!

How is all this happening? It's due to the generosity of Altrusa International Inc of Fox Valley. Each year on Make A Difference Day (the last Saturday of October) Altrusa clubs all over the world

participate in a Literacy Project. The club chose the Center for its 2008 project and, with input from Sr. Kathleen, selected \$500 worth of bilingual children's books. Additionally, Lynda McCann, chair of the local club service committee, wrote a grant proposal to the Altrusa International Foundation to purchase more books. From this grant Altrusa donated, an additional \$1000 to enhance the adult library.

Altrusa International is a community service organization that espouses volunteerism and service. Founded in Nashville, Tenn., in 1917, it was the first service club for business and professional women. Currently there are 373 clubs with over members 10,000 internationally. Local clubs, however, are the backbone of the organization. As stated on altrusa.com, "Despite issues of international concern, Altrusa is, first and foremost, a community based, grassroots organization that seeks to solve the problems in our back yards."

The Fox Valley Club, formed in 1950, currently has 24 members from Aurora, Montgomery, Big Rock, Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles, Sugar Grove and Wheaton. These



energetic, committed women meet monthly for dinner, a business meeting and program. They hold two major fundraisers each year—a style show in the fall and an auction in the spring.

From their efforts, they make monetary gifts to a wide range of organizations in the

"Altrusa International is a community service organization that espouses volunteerism and service."

area. Supporters of the Center since 2001, their contributions demonstrate the vision of Altrusa in action in the Fox Valley. This group exhibits the ideal stated by Mamie L. Bass, a major participant in the early development of Altrusa. Inspired by Thoreau, she put it best, "It is not enough to be good, Altrusans must be good for something."

"Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."

~Marian Wright Edelman

In Their Words

Students at the Center do a fair amount of writing as part of their curriculum. Enjoy these excerpts from their work.

“In Mexico, December 12 is the day we celebrate the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the Basilica. The Basilica is a cathedral in Mexico [City]. It is the second most visited cathedral after the Vatican. People from all over the world visit the Basilica.”

~Dora Munoz

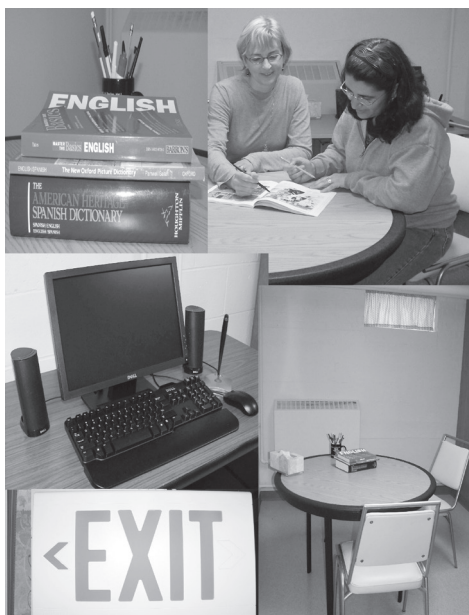
“The town I was born in is a beautiful city. A few miles away, there are woods and mountains. It is a tourist attraction. There are different places to swim. The water from the pools was born from the earth, and it is special because the pools have sulfur. A lot of people come because they think it has medical healing and they will be cured.”

~Maria Castro,
Michoacán, Mexico

“When I started in the Center, I felt nervous and excited at the same time. In the center I found good persons who helped me and a good teacher named Joanne Callahan. After three years I feel more comfortable. When somebody speaks English, I can stand and speak with them. The best thing is I can communicate with my kids in English.”

~Olivia Heredia

Four New Classrooms Await



Basements in older buildings are usually functional but dark and musty places. Not so in the case of the newly renovated basement at the Dominican Literacy Center! Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Dunham Fund, four attractive basement classrooms are awaiting a new group of tutors and students.

One of the largest private foundations in Aurora, the Dunham Fund was established in 1996 as a philanthropic outlet for John C. Dunham. He was chairman of the board of the Aurora-based Equipto Company, founded in 1907 by his father, Thomas Dunham. The Fund honors the legacy of John C. Dunham through scholarships and grant-making programs that celebrate enterprise, education, community development, innovation and collaboration in the Aurora area.

The recently completed Center renovation has been on the wish list for some time. As the number of registered students grew, it became obvious that more usable tutoring space was needed. The Advisory Board looked to the basement and its underutilized space. With the Dunham

grant, the renovation project moved from wish list to reality.

Work on the basement was organized by Jim Hopp, a member of the Center Advisory Board and the Director of Property Operations for Hollywood Casino. Jim met with Center staff members to discuss their ideas for the remodeling job. Acting as the job foreman, he planned the project, hired the contractors and supervised the work.

The Dunham Fund grant, the planning and the physical work all came together to culminate in a beautiful and much-needed addition to the Center. With an additional \$10,000 from the Fund, the four brightly lit, freshly painted, carpeted classrooms were furnished with tables, desks and computers. The safety of the space was not overlooked. The basement has a fully wired smoke alarm system, prominent exit signs and a new security door. Sr. Jane Ann added a special accent by stitching up curtains for the many small windows.

John Dunham's dream in establishing the Fund was to make “the world a more comfortable, safer place” and to be an agent for positive change. Thanks to the Fund, that goal was realized at the Center.

All that's needed now are some newly trained tutors, who are eager to start teaching English to their students.

Save the dates

The next tutor training is from 6 - 8:30 p.m. August 18, 20, 25, and 27.
No Spanish skills needed. Plan to attend all sessions.
For more information or to register, call Sr. Ann at 630-898-4636.

Thank you Ground Pros

In April of each year, Itasca-based commercial landscaping company Ground Pros, Inc adopts a not-for-profit organization as its summer project. During the remainder of the year, the landscaping crew raises money by pooling proceeds from employee raffles and a portion of their tips. Managers also donate proceeds from a raffle they conduct at the company's annual Holiday party in December.

In 2008, Ground Pros chose the Dominican Literacy Center as the recipient of its gift. Human Resources Manager, Leticia Filecia, recommended the Center because her mother Cecilia Rosas was a student at the Center for three years. Ground Pros presented Sr. Ann Clennon with \$2500 at the 2008 Holiday party.

Learning Together

For Donna Metzler, a volunteer at the Center, the best part of tutoring is “getting to know the women and what wonderful people they are.” She enjoys the opportunity to meet people and to learn things about other cultures.

Donna began tutoring 13 years ago after a chance meeting with Sr. Kathleen. Donna says Sr. Kathleen looked so familiar to her that she thought she knew her. They struck up a conversation and although they had never met, they did have much in common. Sr. Kathleen described her work at the Center and Donna thought it was wonderful. Donna said, “I told her to let me know if I could ever help and the very next morning I got a call.”

Donna and her current student, Beatriz Orrala, have worked together for a year. Beatriz enjoys the Center because the “Sisters and teachers are friendly and comfortable.”



Beatriz describes Donna as a “beautiful person” and a “big person who gives her time to me.” It is clear that both women cherish their friendship and their experience of learning together.

Donna’s advice to new tutors “Come and enjoy! I know it sounds like a cliché but you really do get more than you give.”

Kiwanis Honor Center Directors



On May 6, Srs. Kathleen Ryan, Ann Clennon and Jane Ann Beckman - co-directors of the Dominican Literacy Center, accepted the Aurora Kiwanis Club’s 35th annual Service to God and Fellowman Award at a banquet at the Stonebridge Country Club. The prestigious award, established in 1975, honors those who make consistent spiritual and charitable contributions to the Aurora area. Barrett Hickerson, Kiwanis president, gave a plaque to the three women (pictured above). Mistress of ceremonies Arlene Hawks presented the Kiwanis Club’s donation of \$1,000 to the Center.

The banquet was attended by members

of the Kiwanis Club, and friends and family of the three Dominican sisters. Following dinner, Center Advisory Board members Jim Hopp and Amy Manion offered moving tributes to the honorees. The three women were then introduced by their close friend Sr. Ann Willits. After “roasting” the trio, Sr. Ann became serious as she lauded their accomplishments. “At the heart of ministry is relationship,” she proclaimed. “Their idea of relationship - of having women learn by working closely together one-on-one with other women - is what makes the program at the Center so special and so successful.”

In her acceptance speech, Sr. Kathleen recounted the Center’s long association with the Kiwanis Club. It was the first civic organization she appealed to when she started the Center 15 years ago. Kiwanis, a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time, responded with enthusiastic support. Later, Club members transformed an unused space in the Center into a safe, functional playroom for students’ children. All three women expressed their gratitude to the Kiwanis organization, to their families, and to all those who support the Center.

Advisory Board

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

- Beth O’Connor
President
- Virginia Arnold
- Jane Ann Beckman, OP
- Diane Beukelman
- Ann Clennon, OP
- Carmen Cordogan
- Jim Godo
- Denise Hatcher, Ed.D.
- Jim Hopp
- Amy Manion
- Jacquie May
- Jim Rudnicki
- Kathleen Ryan, OP
- Peggy Wiora
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- Jane Ann Beckman, OP
- Ann Clennon, OP
- Kathleen Ryan, OP
- Elisa Barocio
- Maria Domínguez
- Judy Paulson
- Amy Miller
- Mary Claire Uselding

“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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