

# Word & Hope

## Growing Diversity at the Center

When the Dominican Literacy Center first opened its doors 21 years ago, all of the students were Spanish-speaking and 95% of them were from Mexico. Now the mission of the Center extends to women from all parts of the world. As its reputation spread, women came to learn English from South America, Central America, Vietnam, the Ukraine, West Africa, Pakistan, China, Russia, Lithuania, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Currently, students come from places as diverse as Egypt, Poland, China and South Korea.

Students like Kay Han from Korea face unique challenges as they work their way through the program. Both Kay and her husband have degrees in computer science. They moved to the United States when his company wanted him to pursue his education at IIT. While her husband attends school, Kay devotes her time to caring for their two sons and learning English. The programs she first attended in Naperville emphasized speaking. Kay wanted to learn to write correctly as well. She finds that the one-to-one tutoring format at the Center helps her to learn in spite of her shy personality.

A Korean friend introduced her to the Center where she met her tutor, Gina Scowins. Gina was particularly well-suited to assist Kay, as she had been an elementary-school teacher and had worked at the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago where she dealt with foreign visitors. In addition to speaking and writing, Gina has helped introduce Kay to the cultural aspects of living in the United States, explaining the significance of holidays such as Easter and providing information on local history. Kay claims Gina is "a treasure for me."



Kay and Gina

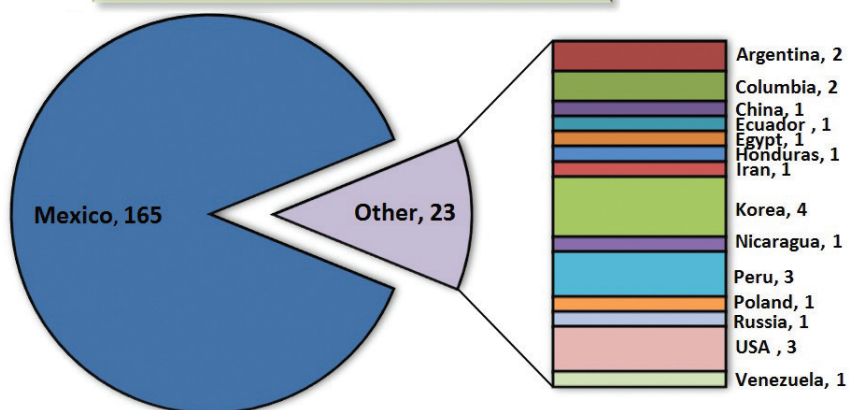
To some extent, Kay envies the Hispanic students at the Center. When they don't understand something, there are always other Spanish speakers they can turn to for help. Although there are three other Korean students, they are not at the Center at the same time. Kay and Gina have to figure things out on their own.

In comparing American culture to Korean, Kay says that in America she can ask questions without being afraid of seeming "weird," something that would be frowned upon in Korea. She encourages her sons to ask at least one question a day when they are in school. Kay credits Korea with having a more liberal policy when it comes to health care. In Korea, taxes pay for the majority of medical bills and getting an x-ray costs only about three dollars.

Kay and her husband plan to remain in America permanently. She hopes to get a professional job when she becomes eligible for a green card. Until then, she intends to continue working with Gina and the Dominican Literacy Center to become fluent in English and comfortable with living in the United States as a full participant in its way of life.

As a student at the Center, Kay joins a community of women who are brought together, despite their different cultural backgrounds, by the desire to learn to read, write and speak English. The Dominican Literacy Center is honored to provide these opportunities to all the women who come seeking them.

### Diversity by number of students



*Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries.  
Without them, humanity cannot survive. ~ The Dalai Lama*

## In Their Words

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center share their favorite foods.

My favorite traditional food is mole. I use a special clay pot called a "cazucla". I cook almonds, chocolate, sesame seeds, cloves, walnuts, cinnamon, onions, garlic, with pieces of bread (bolillo) and tortillas for 30 minutes and then mix in a blender. I cook 5 kinds of peppers in hot water and chicken broth with a small spoon of lard. I know it is ready by the smell and everyone says, "You made mole"!!

~ Irais Perez

I love tamales because it is a tradition in my family. My Mother made delicious tamales for my 10 brothers and sisters in Mexico. We ate them at Christmas and every celebration.

~ Nancy Padilla

In Monterrey, Mexico, I like to eat cabrito (chivo) which is a young goat. It is cooked outside. Usually a big family comes. The men cook the goat. It is served with tortillas, guacamole, salsa, and black beans cooked in tomatoes, onions, pig's feet and sausage. It is very delicious!

~ Yolanda Huerta

My favorite traditional Mexican food is chileatole. It is very delicious. Some of the ingredients are pork, zucchini, milk blended with goajillo peppers and corn, goat cheese and guajillo, which is a flower (squash blossoms) used by many people in Mexico. My Mother taught me to make this delicious dish when I was 12 years old.

~ Yazmin Rodriguez

My favorite food from Mexico is pozole. I make it for special occasions such as Christmas and birthdays. It's made with beef, maiz, red pepper, onions and garlic. My daughters love pozole!

~ Patricia Gonzalez

## A Community Grounded in Trust and Respect

"If a group is a true learning community, then everyone in the group learns, and, in a sense, everyone teaches," says Sr. Kathleen Ryan. The obvious "learners" at the Dominican Literacy Center community are the women who come to learn to read, write and speak English. However, if you ask any of the volunteer tutors, they will tell you that they are learning as well.

There are many ways these groups learn from one another. Some are formal, such as the initial training sessions and in-service days for tutors, the actual tutor/student meetings each week, pre-session weekly announcements, Conversation Classes and the various instructional and evaluation tools implemented by tutors and staff. Sometimes the most valuable learning is informal: chatting during breaks over coffee; exchanging the week's events before, during and after class; and at the celebrations at Christmas and year's end.

While the students concentrate on learning English, they are teaching the staff and the tutors about their home culture and their struggles; not only in coming to this country, but also their ongoing challenge of raising their families while working and studying. By example, students remind tutors of the values first generation immigrants bring with them and the isolation they sometimes experience. Tutors and students share adult experiences such as shopping, dealing with illness and doctors, parenting and taking care of parents.

Why does this learning community work so well? It is because the Center's mission is grounded in building community first. As "Servant Leadership" author John Greenleaf states, "Where community doesn't exist, trust, respect and ethical behavior are difficult for the young to learn and the old to maintain." The Dominican Literacy Center is a diverse and accepting learning community where trust and respect foster the supportive relationships necessary for successful teaching and learning by all involved.



Thursday morning conversation class students with tutors, Sue Howe, top row, and Alison Brzezinski, middle row.

## Save the dates!

### New Tutor Training

Fall tutoring sessions at the Center will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, August 18, 20, 25 and 27 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. To register for the training, contact Alison Brzezinski at 630-898-4636 or via email at [alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org](mailto:alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org).

### Fay's Barbeque

On Thursday, October 1, 2015, **FAY'S BARBEQUE** from Waterman, IL will bring their outdoor grills and fill the air with the mouthwatering aroma of barbequed pork chops and chicken. From 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., complete barbeque dinners will be served: drive-through or eat outside. If you live in the area, please plan to come out and support this fund-raiser for the Center.

## New Advisory Board Chair

After serving on the Advisory Board of the Dominican Literacy Center for four years, Laura Martinez has been appointed Chair. According to Sr. Kathleen Ryan, the Advisory Board Chair sets the agenda, leads the meeting and follows up on the work of the committees. "More importantly," she says, "the Chair sets the tone for the Board; if the Chair is enthusiastic, committed to the mission of the Center and careful to be inclusive of all members, then the women at the Center benefit greatly." The Advisory Board meets three times a year. Leading the meetings requires energy, attentiveness and good listening and communicating skills.



Laura has these skills in abundance. She developed many of these skills as the Supervisor of Language Access to Healthcare at Presence Mercy Medical Center. This year, Laura's primary goal as DLC Advisory Board Chair is to increase communication with the students, making them aware of the Board and its support. To that end, she sends out monthly "Literacy Lines" in both Spanish and English, which are distributed to students, tutors, staff and the Advisory Board. Laura also wants to educate Board members on the issue of immigration. To that end, in January, she invited Susan Bachmeier from World Relief to speak to the Board about the current immigration situation. Laura also wants everyone to be connected with each other, and with community resources and events.

Laura has been married to Jose for 23 years and they have three sons: Aidan, Nathaniel, and AJ. When asked about her favorite thing at the Center, Laura says, "Everything! I love the mission and the confidence and empowerment the women feel once they learn English." Laura feels blessed and thanks God for giving her the opportunity to serve as Chair.

## Longtime Tutor

Jean Bogan has been a faithful tutor at the Dominican Literacy Center since 1996. She came to the Center after reading an article in her church bulletin. Feeling that it was the right time in her life to start a new venture, she plunged right in and has tutored at the Center since then.

Teaching pre-school at a Montessori school for 10 years and ESL work in the Literacy Volunteers of America program helped prepared Jean for being a tutor. She has continued tutoring despite a 40 minute drive to the Center.

Meeting the needs of the individual student is the basis of Jean's lesson plans.



Yaquelin Solis (L) and tutor Jean Bogan.

She employs many teaching methods and is always open to exploring something new. Jean uses newspapers to teach verb tenses and finds the picture dictionary provided in each tutoring room to be beneficial in teaching related words and phrases. Jean encourages her students to take home a book from the Center library to read to their children. During a lesson, students sometimes write a paragraph which Jean dictates, followed by a discussion of the written content. Jean recommends the English Yes! textbook as a great teaching tool for higher level students.

Five of Jean's students have completed three years of study and have graduated from the program. Jean continues to enjoy teaching at the Center, and has always found her students to be appreciative and grateful. She has seen her students grow in confidence because of the nurturing atmosphere at the Center. It is a place where both students and tutors are valued and encouraged. In Jean's words, "I consider it a privilege to be part of such a worthwhile program."

### Advisory Board

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

Laura Martinez, Chair

Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP

Alison Brzezinski

Vanessa Aguirre

Dalila Alegria

Al Benson

David Cox

Mary Kennedy

Jean McKee

Ginny Maloney

Alfred Morales

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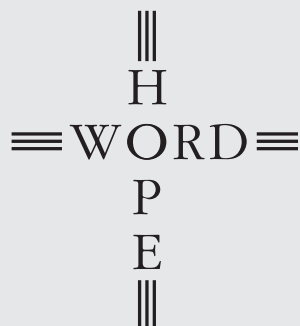




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*The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the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

## 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.*

***For more information, call 630-898-4636, M-F 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
or see our website at [www.dominicanliteracycenter.org](http://www.dominicanliteracycenter.org)***