

Word & Hope

A Story of Empowerment

Learning to speak English is not only a good idea for someone living in America, but it can also be profitable. That is what DLC student, Maria Aguila, believes. Maria is a Mary Kay Cosmetics consultant and area manager. One of her goals as a Mary Kay consultant, is to build an English speaking clientele.

Maria and her tutor, Pat Leatherwood, decided that one of their activities for the year would be a Mary Kay party at Pat's home, presented by Maria and attended by some of Pat's English-speaking friends. Pat also invited several bilingual friends from her church who could assist with any translation issues Maria might have during her presentation.

Prior to the party, Pat and Maria practiced a script and Maria was able to deliver it perfectly, including some non-scripted information as well. They discussed expectations of English-speaking women in America regarding in-home product parties, and how these might differ culturally from other Mary Kay parties she may have had. Pat explained that it is customary to have some sort of an ice breaker or game, light refreshments and free product samples at the party. Maria incorporated these ideas into her planning.

One week before the Mary Kay party, Maria had an accident and broke her foot. A less determined and committed individual might have asked to cancel or reschedule the event. Not Maria! She understands



Left to right, front, Pat Leatherwood, Anne Heckel, Maria Aguila, second row, Rosemarie Montanez, Helen Cravens, Dalia Vargas, Rosalie Thompson, Clarice Johnston

how difficult it is to fit an event into the busy schedules of women and she did not want to take a chance on losing this opportunity. Maria asked her daughter to bring her to Pat's house and to assist her as needed. The presentation went forward as planned. What a wonderful example of determination and commitment for Maria's daughter!

The day of the party, Maria introduced herself and her daughter and shared her vision for how the afternoon would unfold. As an independent beauty consultant, she provided advice on tips, trends and skin care as well as a variety of products for all to try. A good knowledge of her products was important, but for this audience, the ability to explain everything in English was the bigger challenge. Not only did Maria need to know the correct words to use, but she also needed to hold the interest of the group.

It was a delightful afternoon and Maria successfully met her goal as an ESL Mary Kay independent beauty consultant with her first English-speaking party. She made sales at the meeting and has expanded her business with this additional clientele base. We wish Maria continued success!



Left to right, Pat Leatherwood, Rosalie Thompson, Clarice Johnston

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." -Franklin D. Roosevelt

In Their Words

DLC students were asked to share how learning English is making their family better.

Now I can make doctors' appointments and playdates for my children without help. – **Yuri**

I can ask questions when we face cultural differences or language limitations. – **Kay**

I am teaching my family English, too. My son and husband are speaking more English. I even speak English to the dog. – **Antonia**

I can go to field trips and volunteer. When I see my children's happy faces, I know they are proud of me. – **Martha**

I understand my kids when they speak English. I have more confidence. – **Luz**

I can talk to my mother's doctor and my children's teachers. – **Rosa**

My boss noticed me speaking more English and soon I will start a job that will allow me to be home at night with my son. – **Sara**

I can read mail to my parents who don't speak English and talk with my daughter's boyfriend who doesn't speak Spanish. – **Blanca**

We can feel proud because little by little we are able to make ourselves understood. – **Haydee**

When my children show me packets from school, I know when they don't do their homework and I ask why. – **Lidia**

I can understand the conversations of my kids. They can no longer talk in ways I do not approve of. – **Hortencia**

Gift of Diversity

Seventeen Korean women are currently studying English at The Dominican Literacy Center. Many of these students moved to the United States from South Korea in recent years because their husbands are in graduate school or their spouses' companies have relocated them to the Chicago area.

Many of the women started studying English in grade school in Korea, and others began learning English more recently. All of the women find the language and culture of the United States a difficult adjustment. Having conversations in English is very challenging, one student admits, because in English, unlike in Korean, "one word can have multiple meanings." Speaking English is a skill they want to improve upon to enhance their communication with others.

Although the students miss their families, friends, and food back home, some students say they like driving here better because traffic is much less congested. As mothers, many of the students also deeply appreciate the diverse communities around Aurora. They feel their children benefit from their school experiences with friends of different cultures.

All of the Korean women find the Dominican Literacy Center a cozy, friendly place to learn English, and they are grateful for the opportunity to study with "nice teachers" and an "organized staff." They believe the center fosters a sense of belonging, teaches important life skills, and encourages them to want to give back to their communities.

The Korean students at the Dominican Literacy Center would like Americans to know that South Korea has a distinct culture from China and is a very developed country both politically and economically. Although Koreans are culturally "shy and polite," they are eager to improve their command of English and to feel more at home in the United States.



Korean students in the photograph: Yuri So, Hyojoung Kwan, Yeonjin Cho, Heesuk Lee, Hunjung Cho, and Sunghye Goo

Thank You and Welcome!



Amy Miller

After almost ten years, Amy Miller has decided to retire as editor of Word and Hope. All of us who are part of the Center wish to extend our deepest appreciation to Amy for her long service and dedication. Amy had worked as a tutor for many years before taking on the role as editor, and she also helped train tutors and students on the computer system. She said it has been a blessing to have had writers who regularly came up with ideas to make the newsletter a success. Amy leaves with happy memories of working with the sisters who she says have a "way of making a person feel loved and respected."

Nancy Dunn, her successor and a second year tutor at the Center, will continue Amy's excellent work while looking for new ways to tell the Center's story. She looks forward to collaborating with Sister Kathleen and the staff in realigning the DLC's media methods. We look forward to Nancy's leadership, as we continue our mission of helping women to read, write, and speak English.



Nancy Dunn

We are currently registering new tutors for training on August 15, 17, 22, and 24. These are four consecutive Tuesday and Thursday evening sessions running from 6PM to 8:30PM. If you are interested in tutoring next fall, please contact Alison Brzezinski at www.alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org or call 630-898-4636 to register for the training.

Civics 101

The Dominican Literacy Center citizenship classes have always been well attended, and the pass rate for the citizenship students has always exceeded 95%. But since the beginning of 2017, the number of students has more than doubled—64 people attended the first evening class on February 6, 2017! And this has happened in spite of the sometimes prohibitive cost of \$725.00 to submit an application form for citizenship.

It is often said that many of us who were born in the United States could not pass the citizenship test. To test this hypothesis, see if you can answer these questions, taken from the 100 questions* which must be learned to become a U.S. citizen:

1. How many voting members are in the House of Representatives?
2. What powers belong to the federal government? To the state government?
3. There are four amendments to the Constitution regarding voting. Name one of them.
4. What are two freedoms reserved for everyone living in the United States?
5. When was the Constitution written?
6. Who wrote “The Federalist Papers”?

*Find answers at www.uscis.gov

The interest in and need for citizenship classes led the DLC staff to prepare U.S. civics information for the women in the Center’s ESL tutoring program. Using information from various sources, including the National Immigration Law Center and the USCIS—United States Citizenship and Immigration Services—students and tutors learned about the freedoms that are guaranteed to everyone living in the United States by the U.S. Constitution, especially in the first ten amendments. For students, this was new and important information, and for tutors, an opportunity to relearn facts that had been studied in elementary and high school.

We will continue to look for educational opportunities that support the efforts of our immigrant population as they strive to improve their lives and their ability to contribute to the United States, their families and the community.

Grant Funding Then and Now

Sr. Kathleen spent the better part of 1993 applying for grants on her IBM Selectric Typewriter. After long hours in downtown Chicago at the Donors Forum, poring through books listing potential donor organizations, she’d manually type and mail each grant application. At the end of the first year, her long hours paid off in securing \$20,000 in grant funding to operate the DLC.

The internet has vastly improved that process. Today, very few funders even accept paper applications. The entire process has moved online and that helps organizations like the DLC to better target and research potential donors. Online searches can be filtered to deliver key word results that match the core interests of the DLC such as “women”, “immigration” and “literacy.”

The key criteria Sr. Kathleen uses to decide which grants to apply for is the alignment of the grantor’s mission and the mission of the Dominican Literacy Center. Donor websites can be a treasure trove of information to help identify good partners. In addition to outlining their specific requirements in the application instructions, grantors may provide a list of organizations that they have supported in the past. The list helps Sr. Kathleen further determine if the DLC could be a fit for the donor organization.

Grant funding makes up about fifty percent of the Center’s budget. Although the process has become easier, Sr. Kathleen still devotes about half of her time to applying, processing and securing grants. In addition to the financial support, partnering with grantors introduces the Center to companies and individuals that can promote the mission of the DLC.

The Dominican Literacy Center is grateful to these funders who regularly and generously support the mission of the Center: The Alfred Bersted Foundation, the Dollar General Foundation, The Chicago Tribune/McCormick Fund, the Dunham Fund, the IL Secretary of State Literacy Office, The Dunham Fund and the Westerman Foundation.

If you know of a donor organization whose mission matches the purpose of the Dominican Literacy Center, please contact Sr. Kathleen at the Center.

Advisory Board

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

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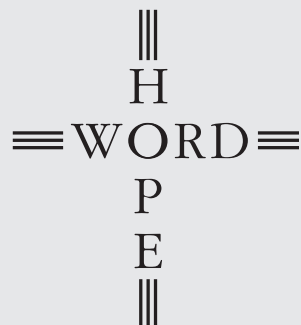




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The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the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