

Word & Hope

A Harvest of Service: The Dominican Literacy Center Celebrates 20 Years!



Volunteers, left to right, Pat, Jill, Maria and Linda set out the items for distribution.

Knowing your roots is important, but so is celebrating and giving thanks for the fruits of your labor. This academic year, the Center is celebrating the riches of its harvest—its 20th anniversary—in

the way they know best, by serving others. Last year, Sr. Kathleen, Sr. Ann, and Sr. Jane Ann, the sisters who run the Center, approached the Advisory Board with this idea, and together the DLC staff and Advisory Board created a series of service activities designed to commemorate the anniversary. The Year of Service includes activities large and small that, in a fun way, build community among students, tutors, staff, and friends of the Center. The Year of Service is also an opportunity to spread the good news of the Center to the greater Fox Valley area.

The inaugural event was the arrival of the Mobile Food Pantry on September 26, 2013. This refrigerated truck brings not only canned and packaged goods, but frozen meat and fresh produce as well. Volunteers from the Center helped distribute 10,000 pounds of food from the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry on a beautiful fall afternoon in the parking lot of St. Therese Church and School. Invitations were extended to families in need from the Center, from St. Therese Church and School and from the surrounding neighborhood.

The next significant service event will be a packing party at the *Feed My Starving Children* location in Aurora. Students, tutors, staff, and friends of the Center and their families are invited to hand-pack meals

specifically formulated for malnourished children that are then shipped to countries around the world. Openings for 180 volunteers are available on January 25, 2014 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Contact the Center if you are interested in helping.

The concluding major event in the Year of Service will be an organized walk in the community for students, tutors, friends, and their families to celebrate International Women's Day on Saturday, March 8, 2014. Thousands of events are held around the world in commemoration of this day to inspire women and celebrate achievements. The Center will be part of this global web of rich and diverse local activity that connects women from all around the world.

The Year of Service has afforded the Center the opportunity to share the story of its bountiful harvest with the public. Events have been reported on by local media. The Aurora City Council even bestowed a proclamation upon the Center, recognizing its tremendous impact on the community. Since its founding twenty years ago, about 2,500 students have improved their English skills at the Center and 1,000 students have prepared for citizenship. Congratulations to the Dominican Literacy Center and Happy Anniversary!



Families eagerly await the opening of the Mobile Food Pantry.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

In Their Words...

For students at the Dominican Literacy Center, writing is part of their curriculum. Rosa reflects on how she arrived at the Center.

I decided to learn English because I wanted to be independent in life and not dependent on someone to help me speak the language.

I was in a foundation called "Fabela Families Foundation" that helped families and that's where they started to give me the idea of learning the language. Also, the principal of a school told me to attend these English classes.

The registration was at my local Catholic Church called St. Therese. They told me to register and the waiting list was a very long wait to get into a class, but they told me it was worth it. I felt nervous and at the same time confident. I would learn this language.

My teacher's name is Sister Myra Lambert. She has a lot and an abundant amount of patience for me and I highly admire her for her actions. My first class I entered with a lot of fear. My teacher only spoke to me in English and I could only speak Spanish. I did not know a good amount of English so it was hard for me to understand.

My family tells me that they are very proud of me and that I have the power to learn this language. They also help me when I don't understand a word.

~ Rosa Martinez



Ana Petric, public relations intern working at the Center.

New Face – Fresh Ideas!

There is a new face at the Center this fall. Ana Petric, a senior at Aurora University, is a public relations intern working at the Center. She started her internship in early September and will continue until December. At that time she graduates with a major in communications with a focus on public relations and media relations.

Ana learned about the internship from Heidi Schlumpf, her communications professor. She was eager to use her public relations skills to publicize the Dominican Literacy Center and its place in the community.

Ana has jumped in with both feet and has already accomplished several key tasks. She has redesigned the Center web-site (www.dominicanliteracycenter.org) adding many photos and making the site more interactive. Ana has also created a Facebook page for the Center, and is presently designing press releases and flyers for the *Feed My Starving Children* project in January and the Woman's Day Walk in the spring. She is also working on a multi-media power point presentation, which will be presented in Springfield at the Dominican Sisters yearly meeting in June, 2014.

Ana feels especially comfortable at the Center. In 1998, at the age of 10, she and her family came to the United States as war refugees from Serbia. She has experienced living in a new country, and is familiar with being an ESL student. Ana fondly remembers a special teacher who helped her in many ways. She knows what a significant difference an excellent ESL teacher and mentor can make in a student's life.

Save the Date

New tutor training is at the Center on Saturday, January 18, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be additional observation time later at the Center. To register or for more information, call or email Sr. Ann at 630-898-4636 or annclennon@sbcglobal.net.

Let There Be Light

Good classroom lighting is important for our students' learning environment. Energy efficient, cost-effective lighting is critical for the Center's budget. Thanks to the efforts of Martha Carney, we now have brighter tutoring rooms while saving money.

Martha, a tutor at the Center for three years, owns *Outsourced Innovation*, a research firm that helps customers realize the benefits of LED lighting. She saw how poor lighting at the Center made learning to read and write another language more difficult.

Martha consulted with the directors at the Center. They gave her their full support. She was asked to balance the needs for better tutoring room lighting and to maintain the feel of a welcoming, home-based learning environment.

Motivated by classroom light levels that were below standard for an educational environment, Martha wrote and obtained a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation which provided partial funding. She and her team began nine months of work: selecting the LED fixtures and obtaining other incentives offered by Commonwealth Edison. Project Green and Outsourced Innovation donated and installed new lights and completed a final audit to show kilowatt savings.

In August 2013, *Project Green* installed new products in all 18 tutoring rooms and 3 outdoor security LED lights. Nine rooms have new LED fixtures and nine have upgraded fluorescent lights. The LED fixtures provide crisp, higher-quality lighting without glare so that the classrooms are still welcoming. By illuminating a larger area outdoors, the new LED lights offer a more secure environment surrounding the building. They provide maintenance and utility savings that can be used for the real job here at the Center....teaching English..

Thank you, Martha, for a job very well done. For you trivia buffs, ask Martha how many outlets are in the Center and how long it took to count sockets for the audits!



Determination Pays Off



Blanca and Sr. Kathleen twenty years later.

As Blanca Aguilera looks back, it's hard to believe that twenty years have gone by since she added studying English to her very busy life. Even though her days were filled with caring for her three small children and her evenings with work, Blanca thought English would help her family.

Blanca began studying English at Centro Cristo Rey on the east side of Aurora with Sister Kathleen Ryan. They quickly developed a bond of respect and affection. To this day Sister Kathleen and Blanca remember those formative years of what became the Dominican Literacy Center.

After graduating from the Center, Blanca went on to Waubensee Community College, where she earned her GED. In the evenings, she worked in the housekeeping department at Dreyer Medical Clinic. In several years, Blanca became team leader, and then night supervisor for several clinic sites. Studying English provided Blanca with the verbal and written communications necessary for her success on the job.

Blanca also took courses at Waubensee Community College in computer literacy. Realizing that most of the students at the Center did not understand computers, Blanca approached Sister Kathleen, offering to teach a class. It was her way of sharing with others what she had learned, and giving back to those who had helped her.

Learning English was challenging for Blanca, but she was encouraged by her children, who really wanted their Mom to learn the language. Her husband, Eusebio, was proud of her determination.

Blanca's children are grown now. All three, Diana, Ricardo and Rocio, went to college and earned a degree in their chosen fields. They are all living on their own and attribute their desire for a college education to Blanca's example.

Twenty years ago, Blanca decided to learn English to help make a better life in the United States for herself and her family. Like most parents, she and her husband wanted their children to succeed in life and accomplish more than they themselves did. Blanca's struggle and determination to learn English inspired her family and those around her. The lives that her children are now leading show that her determination paid off.

Mark your calendars ...

In celebration of its 20th Anniversary the Dominican Literacy Center will join with the *Feed My Starving Children* organization in Aurora to hand pack meals that are designed to assist malnourished children around the world. Two groups of 90 volunteers each are needed to staff this event. Children must be at least five years old to attend.

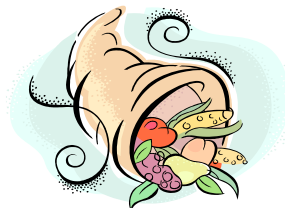
Join Us

Saturday, January 25, 2014
from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and/or from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

To register, go to www.fmssc.org or www.dominicanliteracycenter.org

Focus on Funders

At this time of thanksgiving, we are grateful for all of our funders. This issue we especially thank the Illinois Secretary of State Literacy Office for its continued support of our mission.



Advisory Board

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

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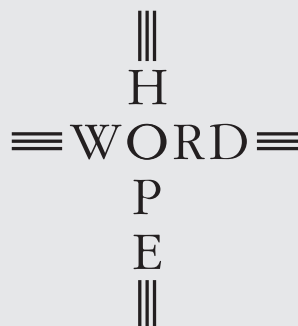
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The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the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