

Word & Hope

From Generation to Generation

There is an African proverb that says, “If you educate someone, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (or nation).” This proverb comes to mind when we meet mother and daughter, Rosa and Dalila Alegria.

Rosa is a graduate of the Dominican Literacy Center. Her daughter, Dalila, is the Outreach Coordinator for S.P.A.R.K., an early childhood and family program in Aurora. Dalila believes her own success is due to the example her mother Rosa set through a lifetime of hard work and her emphasis on the value of education.

Rosa was born in Chimaltitan, Guadalajara, Mexico. After nine years of education, Rosa became a teacher in her village. She taught there for 18 years. At the age of 33, she immigrated to the United States. She soon began to study English at Waubensee Community College. However, raising a family and working as a machine operator at a manufacturing job left her little time to devote to English classes. She was unable to continue her studies.

In 1996, Rosa heard about the Dominican Literacy Center. After applying, Rosa was matched with a tutor, Sister June Volpe. Her life was forever changed. She completed her English studies and felt confident enough to go on to earn her GED certificate. She did not stop there. Rosa then began to take courses at Waubensee Community College. She attained the needed skills to get a job as a teaching assistant at Gates School in Aurora. There she assisted the teacher with first grade special education students.

Education has always been important to Rosa. Without the ability to read, write, or speak English, she states, “My life would have been without goals, without hope”. Rosa says, “I realized that I needed to set an example for my children. I realized that I could empower my own life, as well.”

Rosa’s children watched as her mother “woke up to life” after enrolling in the Dominican Literacy Center. Because of her mother’s example, Dalila realized that many opportunities were available to her if she devoted herself to her education. She saw an exciting future awaiting her. Dalila graduated from Rosary High School in Aurora. She went on to earn a degree in business from Northern Illinois University and then a M.B.A. from Aurora University. After working for a time in the hotel management field, she left to follow her passion - helping her community and serving the disenfranchised.



Dalila (l) and her mother, Rosa

When asked for three things to describe each other, Rosa says of her daughter, “She is loving and compassionate, responding to human needs, and always being of service.” Dalila describes her mother, “She is my role model, strong with inner strength, and amazingly loving.”

One of Dalila’s mentors is Laura Martinez. Laura is the president of the Advisory Board at the Dominican Literacy Center. Because of Laura’s influence, Dalila serves on the Board as well. Dalila sees her time on the Board as “coming full circle.” She says, “The Center empowers immigrant women. The help they receive here can improve their lives and the lives of their families.” The Center served one generation of the Alegria family and that in turn allowed the next generation to serve the Center.

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. ~ Benjamin Franklin

In Their Words

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center share the New Year's traditions of their native countries.

The celebration of the Lunar New Year, Seolnal, is Korea's national holiday. During Seolnal, Koreans traditionally wear Hanbok, the colorful national dress. In the morning everyone gathers in front of the ritual table, which holds writings to the ancestors, and family members bow to the ancestors' spirits. Then everyone eats the traditional food, Teokguk, rice cake soup. Next the younger generations take a deep bow, Sebae, to their elders. Lastly, family members visit their family grave, which is called Seongmyo.

~Yuri So

On New Year's Eve in Monterey, Mexico, I celebrate with my whole family—my brothers and sisters, parents, in-laws and children. We meet at my mother's house at about 8:00 pm in the evening. We do karaoke and eat tamales, beans, cabrito, buñuelos, and drink punch, coffee and chocolate. At midnight we all eat a grape at each sound of the chime for each hour. And then at the last chime we hug each other and wish "Happy New Year!"

~Yolanda Huerta

On New Year's Eve in Chiclayo, Peru, we meet at our mother's house to prepare food that we will eat after midnight. We will have turkey, many kinds of potatoes, salads, panetone, hot chocolate, beer and wine. Yellow decorations will fill the house. In the street will be scarecrow-like creatures called "Muneros" made from old stuffed clothing. At midnight fireworks will be shot off and the Muneros will be burned.

~Yolanda Estela

Sr. Kelly

Sister Kelly Moline, a novice with the Springfield Dominicans, spent six weeks at the Dominican Literacy Center this fall. A cradle Catholic, Sister Kelly was born in Minnesota, grew up in St. Louis and graduated from Missouri State University with a major in gerontology. In August 2009, Sister Kelly moved to Springfield, Illinois. There she accepted a position as Activities director at Concordia Village, a senior living community.

She became acquainted with members of the Springfield Dominican Sisters when she became involved with two Diocesan organizations, YAM, Young Adult Mass and Koinonia, a retreat program. She began to consider life as a Dominican Sister, and attended a "Come and See" at the Springfield Dominican motherhouse. She also attended a Cursillo weekend.

One year later she began a year of candidacy. She studied scripture, learned about the pillars of Dominican life and worked at St. John's Hospital as a hospice volunteer. In August 2014, Sister Kelly became a novice. She spent a year of deep discernment in St. Louis where she lived in a house with five sisters and took classes at the Aquinas Institute of Theology.

In August 2015, she began her apostolic year of mission. As part of that year, she spent time at the Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora, teaching the students and helping with citizenship classes.

After leaving the Center she went to Oglala, South Dakota. There she worked with native Americans on the Pine Ridge Reservation. In January, she will be off to Peru to work with the Peruvian Dominican Sisters, and then she will travel to Jackson, Mississippi to minister at a health care clinic for the homeless and at St. Dominic's Health System.

Sister Kelly feels that she is always learning from those that she serves. She believes that "the disciple learns from Jesus, not about Jesus." If she so discerns, she will make her first profession in August 2016.



Sr. Kelly (r) and her student Bertha.

Feliz Año Nuevo!

People of Mexican heritage celebrate New Year's Eve in a variety of traditional ways. Families gather together to share a meal, often including dried, salted codfish and *ponche* (hot fruit punch). Any bad experiences from the previous year are swept outside, and the area around the door sprinkled with lentils to bring prosperity. Those looking for love in the New Year wear red underwear. But if they're more interested in wealth, yellow is the color of choice. As the old year is counting down, people eat twelve grapes, making a wish with each one. At midnight, bells ring out in the cities and fireworks light up the sky.

Save the Date

The next tutor-training session for new tutors will take place on January 16, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This is an opportunity for new faces to join the team at the Dominican Literacy Center. Contact Alison Brzezinski at alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org or call her at (630) 898-4636 for more information and to register for the training.

As part of their 60th Anniversary celebration, Reuland Food Service of Aurora is donating \$5000 to a local charity. Please go to www.reulandfoodservice.com, click on Contest, and vote for the Dominican Literacy Center. Each e-mail address can vote once a day, December 1 -31, 2015.

What is your job?



Florentina Garcia works in the packing department of the Ashland Sausage Company in Carol Stream. Some of her co-workers speak Spanish while others speak Polish. The language they all have in common is English, so when Florentina asks a question pertaining to her job she often needs to use English. Florentina is working with her teacher to learn more phrases in English. Her goal is to learn to speak English well so she can secure a job working with computers.

Olga Reyes has worked as a beautician for 15 years. She cuts, colors and styles hair at Hair Cattery in Sugar Grove. She uses English at work because that is the language all of her customers speak. Olga has no problems communicating with them. With the exception of giving perms, which require a lot of time, Olga loves her job and would some day like to own her own salon.



As a cook at Portillo's Restaurant **Catalina Cuautle** prepares sandwiches for customers. Italian beef is her favorite sandwich to make because it is the easiest. Every job has its down side and for Catalina it's washing dishes. Classes at the Dominican Literacy Center are helping her communicate in English with her manager. Catalina loves helping others. When asked what would be her dream job she quickly responded, "Working in a nursing home."

Cristina Boyzo studied to be a secretary in Mexico. That was her job before coming to the United States. She currently works as manager of a McDonalds in Oswego where she needs to speak English with both the employees and the customers. Cristina's favorite part of her job is working with the customers. The most difficult part of being manager is closing the store at midnight. If it isn't done correctly there are problems opening the store the next morning. Cristina loves working and dreams of some day being a secretary again.



Maria Sosa likes everything about her job as a custodian for School District #308. Knowing English allows Maria to talk with the students, something she enjoys doing every day. Leaving work at 10:30 at night in the dark is the only part of her job that Maria doesn't like. Because she loves kids so much, Maria would one day like to be a kindergarten teacher.

Giving ice cream samples to children is the part of her job at El Guero **Carmen Lopez** likes best. She waits on customers buying ice cream and yogurt. Because she knows English, Carmen can help her co-workers and the cashier communicate with customers. Cutting up coconut for yogurt topping is the least favorite part of her job. Carmen taught business administration in Mexico and would love to have that same job here in the United States.



Maria Garcia can't think of anything she doesn't like about her job in housekeeping at Edward Hospital. She has worked there for 20 years and has learned a lot of English by talking with the patients. Maria loves to help people at the hospital whether they need directions or a wheelchair or a nurse. If she changed jobs Maria would want to stay at the hospital and maybe work at the front desk or in the lab as a phlebotomist.

Laura Gutierrez works at the deli in the food service center of a corporation. In addition to making tacos and enchiladas, she helps the cashier speak English with the customers. Most of the people are in a hurry so she doesn't get to spend a lot of time talking with them. Laura likes to change jobs often so she can learn different things. If she could have any job Laura would like to be an EMT or a beautician.



Teresa Zamora cuts and styles hair, gives facials and does make-up at the Divas Salon in Aurora. She doesn't color hair because she doesn't like that part of the job. Teresa needs to speak English with two of the regular customers. Teresa hopes to have her own salon some day and attract English-speaking customers.

Advisory Board

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

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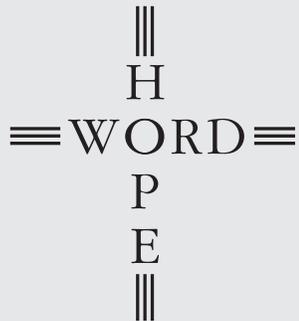
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The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the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