

Word & Hope

Learning Opportunities

In addition to helping women learn English, the Dominican Literacy Center also provides other opportunities for women to acclimate to our culture such as conversation and citizenship classes.

An optional supplement, conversation classes give all levels of the Center's students a platform to practice the English they are learning. Classes are held on Wednesday evenings and Thursday mornings from September to May. They are open to all current students and those who have graduated from the program.

Another mission of the Center is to assist women and men become U.S. citizens. Those preparing for the naturalization test must read, write and speak English. Staff members provide a 12-week session in a group setting that explains the U.S. government and gives the students an opportunity to learn and practice the citizenship questions. Volunteers work individually with those who are scheduled to take their naturalization test. It is helpful for the women who do not speak English to take classes at the Center prior to the application process.

In addition to these programs, this spring, a community outreach program by The Private Bank was offered for the students. In 2011, the Center received an invitation from The Private Bank. After hearing about the Center's mission to assist women, The Private Bank offered a banking education program. This year, arrangements were made for an informative banking program called "Money Matters" to be presented

to the students at the Center. Consisting of three sessions, it was presented by Wandy Irizarry, a Community Banking and Assistant Bank Manager at The Private Bank.

The Private Bank is a full service bank that also supports local community events and outreach programs. Fluent in English and Spanish, Wandy Irizarry finds the banking industry a perfect



Ms. Irizarry and the Finance class.

opportunity to use her skills. "Everyone needs to know good banking," states Irizarry. She helps clients achieve their financial goals by matching bank products that fit their short and long term needs.

"Money Matters", a FDIC financial education program, was presented in Spanish on Thursday mornings at the Center over three sessions. The students who attended, now understand the concept of credit, how to improve their credit scores and how to sign for a loan. They also learned the different options for saving money in a bank, the difference between credit and debit cards and how to save for their children's education. After each presentation, Irizarry generously stayed to answer all the student questions.

Because the banking information was presented in Spanish, students with all levels of English proficiency learned about banking in the United States. Consuelo, Yaquelin and Alicia, participants in the third session, agreed that they now understand more about the services offer by banks. They were grateful for the opportunity to ask questions in a comfortable environment. They also hope the program continues to benefit more women.

The "Money Matters" program will be offered during the evening in the fall. Wandy Irizarry hopes more students can take advantage of this valuable program offered at the Center.



Wandy Irizarry presents the Money Matters Program

In Their Words

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center share their summer plans.

Just before summer begins I am going to Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. It's one year since my mother died. It is the tradition that after one year we make a novena of rosaries at the church and then hear Mass. On the last day of the novena we go to the cemetery. At the cemetery we put flowers on the grave and put in a metal cross to replace the wooden one. After the cemetery we invite people to my mother's house for food and drink. When people are finished eating, I will thank them for coming and participating.

~Maria Salgado

This summer is very exciting for me because my sister [is coming] with her son. They're coming on June 15 and will stay for two weeks. My sister was only two years old when I left Ecuador and is 22 years old now. Her son Isaac is three. We're planning to go to the Museum of Science and Industry and Brookfield Zoo. Isaac wants to see a giraffe.

~Lilia Paz

This summer I plan to go camping with my family and friends, Crystal and Salo. We camp in Dixon, Illinois. My son Alan likes to play with their children. We all go fishing, but the men like it best. We don't eat the fish. We throw them back. I live on a small farm in Elburn. We have different breeds of chickens that give us eggs. We plant tomatoes, chili peppers, and sweet corn.

I also grow flowers around my house and the chicken house. I will also continue to work at my job. It will be a busy summer for me.

~Ciry Mijares

Goals Attained

Three years ago Maria Espinosa came to the Dominican Literacy Center with one main goal. She wanted to learn English to overcome her fear of not being able to express to doctors how she felt. A diabetic since she was twenty-three, Maria often found herself in the emergency room needing to understand how to take insulin shots and manage her condition.

After being welcomed by the Center, she diligently studied English by attending weekly conversation classes and working with two different tutors. According to Maria, her most recent tutor, Charlotte, was a complete godsend. A former nurse, Charlotte helped Maria speak, read, and write in a second language and answered her questions about hospitals. They became good friends.

As Maria continued her studies, she added the goals of getting a better job, helping her children with homework, and volunteering in Aurora. She now reads more in English, speaks with her three grandchildren in both Spanish and English, and volunteers with Family Focus. There she works with parents and their children.

Reflecting on her journey, Maria recalls that the first time she came to the Center, Sister Ann Clennon told her, "Don't worry. When you graduate you are going to be confident using English." Maria exclaims, "It's true!"

After graduation Maria wants to use her bilingual skills to help other Spanish speakers who are nervous about communicating in a medical environment. In fact, Maria's idea to become a health care interpreter came to her recently when she assisted a non-English speaker to set up an appointment and to ask about a prescription. Maria remembers that incident well, saying "The woman was so appreciative."

Maria is thankful for her time in the close-knit environment of the Center. She leaves it with a newfound passion for volunteering in her local community. Maria explains with tears of gratitude in her eyes, "At the Center, I learned more than English. I learned how to care about myself and take care of other people."



Dedication



Donna preparing for conversation class

To say that Donna Metzler has a strong dedication to the Dominican Literacy Center would be an understatement. Not only has Donna been affiliated with the Center for 19 years, but each Wednesday afternoon finds her driving to Aurora from her home in Chicago.

Donna became a tutor 19 years ago after reading about the Center in the church bulletin at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Naperville. After 16 years of tutoring students, Donna began leading the Wednesday evening conversation class. The current class includes 10 students, 5 who regularly attend and 5 who come when their schedules permit.

Donna enjoys working with the group and is meticulous about preparing for her class. She organizes a detailed lesson plan that includes vocabulary, verb tense, pronouns and sentence structure. She also likes to use English on a Roll, the grammar game cube device. Her students have a standing assignment to listen to the news each week. They may listen or watch in English or Spanish, but when they come to class they are asked to relate one thing that they have learned from news broadcasts. This discussion is always in English.

There are many success stories in Donna's group. One member went on to an important position as a translator at an Aurora parish where the priest spoke very little English. Another translated for patients at a medical clinic. Others were proud to be able to interview for a job in English.

Donna is an attorney and practiced law in Aurora for 10 years. She served for 25 years on the board of Dorothy Stang School, a Chicago Bilingual High School for Adults. She is also a Chicago Legal Advocacy Volunteer.

Thank you, Donna, for your service and all that you continue to bring to the Dominican Literacy Center.

Save the Date

Spread the word ... the next tutor-training for new tutors will be on August 16, 18, 23 and 25 from 6-8:30 pm. Please plan to attend all four sessions. Contact Alison Brzezinski at alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org or call her at (630) 898-4636 for more information and to register for the training.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
 No hands but yours,
 No feet but yours
 Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion
 Is to look out to the earth,
 Yours are the feet which He is to go about doing good
 And yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now

~ St. Teresa of Avila

The tutors at the DLC give abundantly and receive in kind. Weekly informal comments and casual conversations among our tutors about their experiences gave inspiration to a more formal gathering of the insights, wisdom and gratitude of the tutors. In sharing their reflections, we hope to bring to light the depth and breadth of the positive impact this program has on our tutors, their family and friends.



Connie Rosenthal, a tutor since September 2015, enjoys working one-on-one with her student. She sees the direct impact tutoring has on her student's life and gets as much out of a session as her students. "I have learned that we are the same despite our language differences. I am much more empathetic towards people who don't speak English."

In her second year of tutoring, **Mary Buettner**, remembers being surprised at how many women the Center serves and yet still has a waiting list. She is also impressed by the organization and dedication of the Sisters who run the program and the additional opportunities offered to the students. Mary's current student took home one of the children's books available at the Center and wrote it all out in English and then translated it to Spanish to share with her children.



In the past 5 years, **Erin McNulty**, has tutored three women with different life circumstances. "Through them and others at the Center, I am reminded of the great value women bring to the world and the tremendous responsibilities we all carry on our shoulders." Erin feels that the Center gives women the tools and opportunity they need to express themselves, advance their lives and the lives of their children. "For me," she says, "tutoring feels a little like an addiction. I seek out ways to be a better teacher in the many areas of my life. The greatest lesson I have learned is patience; I never know what is going on in someone's life, so be kind."

"Tutoring is a blessing for me," exclaims **Mary Ann Wagner**. Mary Ann has tutored on Wednesday for ten years and has had three students each year. "I enjoy my time with each woman. They teach me so much. Wednesday is the highlight of my week!" Mary Ann sees English as tricky, irregular and challenging. She has great admiration for her students who juggle family, work, transportation, personal health and family problems and yet still are dedicated to and focused on learning English. "I have been in education all of my life. The Center is the most supportive, organized and positive teaching and learning environment I have experienced."



"I have learned from listening to my students about how hard it is to navigate in the United States where English is not your primary language, and where most of your friends, family, and co-workers do not speak English," says **Karen Christensen**. Karen has been a tutor at the Center for 10 years and sees her students and the other women putting great effort into learning English. "Tutoring has made me pay greater attention to the issues of immigration reform. I think a great deal about my own grandparents who emigrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s and faced similar obstacles. I feel that by tutoring, I am honoring my own ancestors' struggle and accomplishments."

Amazon Smile

Sign up at <http://www.smile.amazon.com> and choose the Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora as your Charity of choice. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to the Center.

And the Winner is...

The Dominican Literacy Center! With 8171 votes, the Center won the Ruelands Anniversary Contest. The \$5000 check was awarded to the Center.

Advisory Board

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

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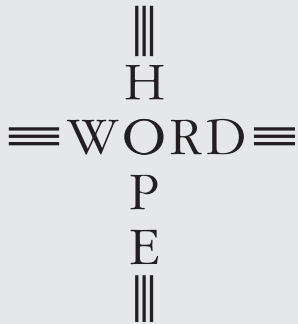
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The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the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