



Celebrating 25 Years

1993 – 2018

25th Anniversary Celebration: Food, Fun and Friendship!

The weather on Sunday October 14, 2018 may have been cool and cloudy at the Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora, but it did not discourage over 400 tutors, students, friends, donors and staff to gather happily on the grounds of the Center to celebrate 25 years of empowering the immigrant community through education. The 25th Anniversary Committee (3 staff members, 4 Advisory Board members, 8 tutors) which met monthly since April, did an unbelievable job of planning and organizing this celebration.



Back row, left to right, Sheila Reidy, Dalila Alegria, Erin Carlson, Pat Leatherwood, Judi Paulson, Jean McKee.

Front row, left to right: Sue Stanciu, Eileen Hoesly, Marty Holzer, Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP, Alison Brzezinski, Janice Smith, Nadine Stadel, Nancy Dunn

Upon arrival, guests were directed to a sign-in table and given name tags. Nearby, a tasty buffet was set up in an area with picnic tables and overhead heaters making dining and enjoying the entertainment very comfortable! Food choices included tacos, pizza and a buffet table of salads, Mexican fare, a grand assortment of 25th anniversary cakes, and the welcome addition of hot (or cold) cider.

Aurora Alderman Juany Garza spoke in Spanish and English about the great value and importance of learning to read, write and speak English.

United States Congressman William Foster (IL-11th) was present and spoke about the constructive and beneficial services that the Dominican Literacy Center has provided for 25 years, and presented Sister Kathleen with a certificate of official recognition for the Center that will be entered into the United States Congressional record.



Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP and Congressman Bill Foster

Many old friends attended. Everyone was thrilled to see Sister Ann Clennon, OP. Sister Ann was director of the ESL tutoring program at the Center for many years, and was loved and remembered by all for her unwavering sense of humor and unbelievable dedication.



Aurora Alderman Juany Garza and student Juana Martinez.

Perhaps the best moments of the celebration were the happy reunions and interactions among tutors, students and staff who met old friends and made new ones as they strolled the grounds.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed. It is the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

In Their Words

During the DLC's 25th anniversary celebration, many students took advantage of the opportunity to write in the memory book. They expressed their thanks, not just for learning English, but also for creating friendship and community. Here are some of their comments.

"The first day I was here, I knew nothing. The sisters were so kind to me and made me believe in myself. Thanks! Love!"

– **Francia Yarshen**

"I learned to speak English here, but most of all I learned not to be afraid to speak up."

– **Juanita Rodruquez**

"I only want say this place is my second house. Everyone is like my family."

– **Sendy Vasquez**

"Thank you for all you do for us. This huge program changes the lives of all of us in many ways."

– **Lupe Chavez**

"I feel very loved because my tutor now is my friend."

– **Liliana Alvarez**

"I'm so happy to take a class. Thanks so much. I'm proud my school. I really need to learn English. Love and bless."

– **Luz Duarte**

"Congratulations, Dominican Literacy Center. I hope you continue for a long time. The work is very important in our community. Thank you Sister Jane, Sister Kathleen, and team. I love you."

– **Carmen Lopez**

25+ Years of Memories



Those words on the banner over the Memory Tent at the DLC Reunion Celebration on October 14, 2018, enticed people to come in and share some of those memories with each other. And they came. And they remembered. And they shared. With memories spurred on by an assortment of posters displaying photos and quotations spanning three decades, guests recalled past laughter, tears, hopeful dreams, challenges, and successes. A continuous loop of DLC photos played overhead displaying faces – some long since graduated and some who have completed their earthly journey and are lovingly remembered.

Many paused there enthusiastically, relating stories to each other, some funny, some sad, many inspiring. Others flipped through Sr. Jane's personal scrapbook that she has lovingly kept of all her students over the years, or read and reflected on Sr. Ann Willits' early narrative of the Center's beginnings. At times loud laughter erupted, and more than once the phrase, "Oh, I have to show this to . . ." was heard, as that person went off in search of the one who just must see and share a particular photo, message, or article posted.

To commemorate the event and give special tribute to the program and all the individuals that comprise or have comprised it, guests were invited to leave a message, either written or recorded. They were also encouraged to personalize a fabric leaf to be stitched to the tree on the colorful memory quilt, displayed in the tent awaiting its leaves. The quilt was designed and completed by current tutor and former board member Jean McKee, an expert quilter.

Celebration Entertainment Brings Much Joy!

In spite of the blustery, cold day the Spanish Choir from Saint Therese Church, led by director Ric del Toro, provided the warmth and spirit needed to get the Dominican Literacy Center's 25th Anniversary Celebration off to a good start. The choir, accompanied by four classical guitarists, performed some familiar, traditional Mexican songs like Cielito Lindo and contemporary pop songs such as Blue Spanish Eyes. The choir's enthusiastic performance had some folks softly singing and humming along.



The entertainment continued with dancers from Janet Kruse's school "Dance With Janet" performing several line dances. DLC tutor, Pat Leatherwood is a member of the group.

The Simply Destinee Dance Troup, of more than twenty youngsters of various ages, kept the party going with their energized, athletic routines. The dance troupe is dedicated to helping its members develop positive attitudes about themselves, their families and the Aurora community by expressing themselves in dance. The group was founded by Liza Oliva in memory of her daughter Destinee, as a way to promote suicide awareness.



In addition to the dancers and singers, Nick Mate, a well-known Chicagoland performer worked his magic with balloons for the young crowd, and Lucy Silva shared her extraordinary face-painting skills to the delight of the young attendees!



Celebrate our 25th Anniversary with us!

We offer you the opportunity to support the continuing efforts of the staff and volunteers of the Center, and ensure another 25 years of *Word & Hope* for the community through education. Please use the enclosed envelope for your donation. Your gift will make a difference as we continue our mission, and we are profoundly grateful for your support.

There will be church presentations, as well as displays at various community locations, where the history of the Center is told through pictures and print, as well as staff and tutors available to chat.

As the Dominican Literacy Center closes its 25th year of empowering our community, the culminating event will take place on Monday, May 27, 2019. The Dominican Literacy Center will participate in the City of Aurora's Memorial Day Parade. All current and past students, tutors, volunteers, supporters, and board members are encouraged to join us and participate wearing their DLC t-shirts, if possible. More details will follow as the event nears.

Please check our website, <https://dominicanliteracycenter.org>, under *News & Events*, for information on future Dominican Literacy Center 25th anniversary activities.

25 "Candles" For the 25th Year

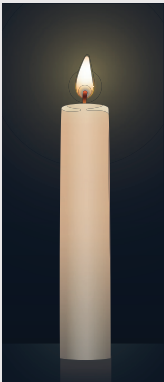
Wouldn't it be wonderful if 25 candles of light (new tutors) would come forward to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Dominican Literacy Center? The need is great! Forty-one students have been tested, registered and are waiting for a tutor and another thirty-two women are waiting to register.

The ESL program for women offers a great opportunity for the students, and it is fulfilling for the tutors as well. We asked several of our current tutors to share their thoughts with us.....

Marlene Byron retired after teaching an Early Childhood Special Education ELL class. Several of the parents were immigrants learning the language with their children. Marlene commented, "I wish I had known earlier about this program. I would have referred those parents to the Center."

Gabriela Garcia, a recent college graduate, is a new tutor this year, as is Diane Opperman, who works full time and tutors in the evening. Both of these women spoke about their desire to give back to the community. As Diane said, "I would highly recommend to anyone who wants to share some of their time to give tutoring at the DLC a try. I am all for empowering women, and what better way than educating them?"

Please help us find our 25 "candles" in honor of our 25th year and reduce the number of women on our wait list! Share information about the Dominican Literacy Center with your local schools, church groups, book clubs and friends and family during the holidays!

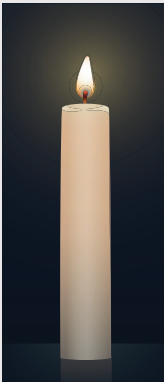


The next tutor training is scheduled for:

Saturday January 12th and Saturday January 26th, 2019
from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Both sessions are required

Please contact Alison Brzezinski at
 630-898-4636, or alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org

*After completing training, new tutors
 will begin tutoring in February 2019.*



*May God bless you and let this Christmas season
 bring comfort and joy to you and your family.*

Advisory Board

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

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 Vanessa Aquirre
 Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP
 Al Benson
 Alison Brzezinski
 Erin Carlson
 Mary Kelly
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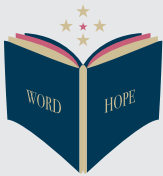


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The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...



DOMINICAN
LITERACY CENTER

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.



- 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*