

# WH

## WORD & HOPE

### Pathway to the Future

Aurora native Ashley Heredia graduated from Aurora University in 2014, unsure of what she wanted to do with her English degree. She approached her professor/mentor, Dr. Sara Gerend, for guidance after deciding to take a “gap year” to explore her options. Gerend recommended Ashley consider tutoring at the Dominican Literacy Center, where she, too, had tutored. However, it took until 2017 for schedules to align and bring Ashley her first student, Elena, who then graduated in Spring 2019.



Ashley (r) with student, Blanca.

*‘Coming to the DLC impacts tutors’ lives, as well as students’...* Weekly sessions with Elena made Ashley reflect on her life, her growing business career, and, especially, how to best use the gifts God had given her. After identifying her weekly tutoring sessions as “the joy of my week,” Ashley spent time in introspection and prayer, and realized that a career change was in order. Ashley researched options and enrolled at Wheaton College Graduate School’s M.A. TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) & Intercultural Studies program last summer, leading to a current internship with World Relief in Adult Beginning English classes. She sees her life now as becoming “increasingly fruitful.”

Listening to Ashley enthusiastically describe teaching strategies and methodologies tailored for her type of students, it’s obvious she’s found her niche. Wheaton College’s Christian perspective and excellent academics suit Ashley. “I wanted to give as much as I could to my students, and I realized I am not as qualified as I wanted or needed to be,” Ashley explained. As a life-long learner, Ashley plans to continue her studies; her goal is to pursue excellence in education.

In addition to the technical aspects of teaching grammar, fluency, and comprehension, Ashley emphasizes the rapport built between teacher and student, a primary component of learning and a prominent feature of the DLC experience. Practicing positive reinforcement, constant affirmation, and confidence-boosting with her DLC student, Ashley gently corrects, normalizes mistakes, encourages students to seek out places to speak English despite discomfort, and helps to integrate new skills into everyday encounters.

Ashley Heredia *is* a teacher at heart. Her experience at the Dominican Literacy Center influenced and inspired her, as it has many of the tutors and students who have found blessings through its doors.

### You Too Can Make a Difference

Please participate in the mission of the DLC by using these opportunities to donate:

**Giving Tuesday donations** are gratefully accepted. Go to [www.dominicanliteracycenter.org](http://www.dominicanliteracycenter.org), click the Ways to Help tab and donate via PayPal.

**Amazon Smile** Combine your online Christmas shopping with supporting the DLC. Log in with [www.smile.amazon.org](http://www.smile.amazon.org) and select the Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora, IL as your chosen 501(c)(3) organization. 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to the DLC. Note: You only have to choose your charity once, but you need to log in with [www.smile.amazon.org](http://www.smile.amazon.org) each time.

**Yearly Donation envelope** enclosed with this issue.

We receive all donations with deep gratitude. All donations are tax exempt, according to the limits of the law

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others” — Mahatma Gandhi*

## In Their Words

### DLC students share holiday traditions.

On Christmas Day my brother brings tamales and pozole, a Mexican soup with corn and pork for the family. **Marielena**

First family tradition – going to church and then sharing a family Christmas dinner. Second family tradition – delivering family food basket to someone in need. **Catarina**

We celebrate Posada (The inn) for nine days before Christmas. Posada represents the nine days that Jesus and Mary searched for an inn. We take the Nativity figures to nine different homes and ask if Mary and Joseph can stay for the night. At eight homes they are turned away, but traditional foods are shared at each home. Jesus and Mary are welcomed at the ninth home and there is a huge celebration with a pinata and food. **Bertha**

On the Feast of the Three Kings in Puerto Rico we put grass and water near our beds to feed the camels. Children get gifts, including a live chicken to raise. **Kenia**

We celebrate the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. Homes are decorated and families spend time together. **Haley**

We celebrate a Mexican New Year's Eve with plenty of food, family, and friends. At midnight we drink wine made from grapes and eat twelve grapes, making a New Year's wish for each grape. **Miriam**

On New Year's Day I make Korean rice cake soup. We play a traditional card game. My kids wear traditional Korean clothing. We receive gifts of money in a lucky pouch. **Jyum**

## DLC Tutors Share Their Immigrant Stories

**N**ancy Dunn is a 3rd generation immigrant. Three of her grandparents came to this country from Poland; her dad's father was from Austria. They all settled in Chicago. Her mom's mom, her "babcia," worked cleaning offices in downtown Chicago. Her dad's dad, her grandpa or "dziadzio," took any odd job he could find including grave digging, working on the boats at Navy Pier and shoveling coal. Her dad was the youngest of five, and he lived pretty much as a street kid. He was a frequent visitor at Hull House, which was founded by Jane Addams in 1889 to provide support services to needy immigrant families. Her dad would go there to play in the gym, practice speaking English and "hang out." His fondest memory of the Hull House was the week-long camping trip to a Hull House property in Wisconsin.



**J**ane Kunka is a 2nd generation immigrant. Her mother emigrated from Mirashova, Czechoslovakia before WWII. The eldest child, she left her home at the age of 17 as a passenger in steerage and arrived on Ellis Island two weeks later on her 18th birthday. Her passage was paid by her uncle and aunt with the understanding that it would be repaid. Jane's mother cleaned houses and later, after she married, worked on factory assembly lines. The couple relocated to Marquette Park in Chicago. Supportive relatives in the U.S., as well as an immigrant neighborhood and their Eastern Orthodox Church eased their assimilation.

Two treasured keepsakes from her mom's journey are the original ship's passage "ticket" with repayment amounts noted in her hand on the reverse side, and the modest-sized suitcase which she brought with her.

**S**ue McArthur is a 4th generation immigrant. Her four grandparents came to the United States through Ellis Island. Her paternal great-grandfather was a farmer in his native Germany. He met his wife in New York City shortly after she arrived from Holland. They lived in a small New York community where others spoke German and Dutch and quickly learned to speak English. They moved to the Des Moines, IA, area where they purchased a parcel of land under the Homestead Act and raised a family.

Sue's maternal great-grandfather was also an Iowa farmer who was a coal miner in England. He met his wife while living in New York shortly after she arrived from Scotland. Together they moved to southern Iowa to farm the land and raised a family.



**R**honda Wooley is a third generation immigrant. Her grandparents on her father's side, came from Luxembourg. Luxembourg is a small European country, surrounded by Belgium, France and Germany. Because both of Rhonda's grandparents came from Luxembourg, this makes Rhonda's father 100% Luxembourg.

Her Luxembourg ancestors came to America by boat sometime between 1853-1855. Once they arrived, they continued west on a train until they reached Aurora. It was in Aurora that they settled and began family life. Rhonda's grandfather began to farm and the family joined the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church. Reflecting on how difficult the journey from Luxembourg to America must have been, it is easy to imagine the joy they felt when they joined a community already in place with many other Luxembourg families. In this Aurora community, they were able to speak their native language and practice their traditional customs while they shaped their new life in America.

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." — Eleanor Roosevelt*

## Celebrating 25 Years in a Big Way!

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary this past year was an inclusive and joyful experience that included an October fall festival, an atrium display at the Aurora Public Library, specially designed T-shirts, and a proclamation from the mayor of Aurora.

The anniversary year's wrap-up was participating in the City of Aurora Memorial Day parade. Students, tutors, staff, supporters and their families, many in their DLC T-shirts, were part of the parade. Good weather blessed us as we walked, waved and danced behind our DLC Banner and the 2019 Jeep containing our leadership team--and a bubble machine! DLC participants distributed DLC information along the way, and children watching the parade received free bubble wands. At the viewing stand, the parade announcer hailed our arrival and introduced the Dominican Literacy Center and Sister Kathleen Ryan, our founder, amid loud cheers and applause. Almost immediately after the parade ended, a huge rainstorm soaked Aurora, but the memories of this beautiful event and year of activities cannot be washed away.

The 25th Anniversary Activities Committee ended with a retreat conducted by Sister Ann Willits, OP, in recognition of a year of commitment and dedication to the Center's anniversary year. The discussions lifted the spirits of all who attended, and committee members received an amazing four CD collection entitled "Finding the Mystery in the Ordinary: A Guide for Women".

Thank you to all who made this 25th Anniversary year so unforgettable, with special thanks to St. Therese Parish and to all of the groups who generously shared their gifts and talents with us. Our hope is that the spirit of collaboration which permeated this special year will continue, blessing the Center into the future.



Sister Kathleen makes bubbles!



Jamie and Nadine get ready to lead the parade on Memorial Day



## Remembering Our Loved Ones

The DLC conversation class set up an altar (ofendra) in the dining room to celebrate Day of the Dead. As is the custom, students and tutors brought in a photo, offering of sweets, beverage or favorite remembrance to place on the altar. Please visit our website for more information on the Day of the Dead tradition.

## Striving for Newsletter Excellence

Help us continue to effectively communicate our mission here at the Dominican Literacy Center. Please go to our website, [www.dominicanliteracycenter.org](http://www.dominicanliteracycenter.org) and answer a one-question survey. We invite you to actively participate in our efforts to spread the "good news" of the Center and are grateful for your reflections.

### Advisory Board

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

- Vanessa Aguirre, President
- Dalila Alegria
- Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP
- Alison Brzezinski
- Erin Carlson
- Dianne Hurrell
- Mary Kelly
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- Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP
- Alison Brzezinski
- Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP
- Elisa Barocio
- Maria Dominguez
- Cathy Huffman
- Judi Paulson
- Nancy Dunn

- Contributors for this issue are Nancy Dunn, MaryEllen Heidgen, Marty Holzer, Pat Leatherwood, Kathy Letkewicz, Mary Meehan, Janice Smith



*We wish you all a holiday season of abundant blessings, peaceful moments and holy nights.*





Dominican Literacy Center  
260 Vermont Ave.  
Aurora, IL, 60505-3100

*Return Service Requested*

## 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](http://www.dominicanliteracycenter.org)*