

WH

WORD & HOPE

Our New Normal

Friday, March 13, 2020 was a typical Friday at the Dominican Literacy Center. Tutors and students streamed in, listened to the weekly announcements, and went to their tutoring rooms for 1 ½ hours of learning and practicing English. It was the 14th such gathering of the week, and when the last group left, all of the women planned to meet again the next Friday, and then enjoy spring break the following week. But that plan didn't happen.

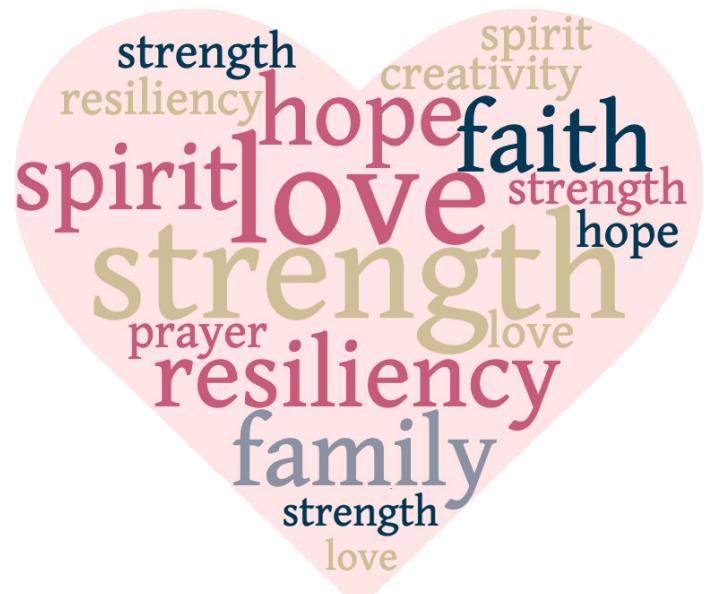
Instead, the Covid-19 virus entered our world and a new word, "pandemic", touched our lives and changed us forever. On Monday, March 16th, we realized that all of the schools and many of the workplaces were closing, and that we, too, had to close our doors. We imagined that we would be back in a week or two, when things were under control.

However, we soon came to the realization that things were not going to be under control any time soon. And so, our tutors and students began to exercise their gifts of creativity and resilience, and began to study English a different way. Some students practiced on the app, "Duolingo"; other students began to practice with their tutors via phone, text, Zoom, Google Meet or "What's App." Women with limited English began to realize that they would need to help their children with their online school sessions, or at least be sure that their older children were attending online class and doing homework.

Just as in the rest of the United States, the teaching and supporting of their children at home did not happen in a vacuum. The pandemic brought job insecurity and lack of money for rent and food. The Covid-19 virus hit the immigrant community in Aurora hard; women who worked in restaurants or cleaning houses were furloughed or their jobs evaporated. Many immigrant women and men are "essential workers." They work in factories making IV tubing and medical equipment. They work long shifts making masks and booties. They work in meat packing centers. Like all essential workers, our women worried about bringing the virus home to their families, as well as making enough money to feed the family and pay the rent.

We reached out to our women by phone, and many expressed feelings of stress and sorrow. But they also told of how the pandemic has brought the families closer together. Women who used to work second and third shift jobs now get to see their children every day. "I can teach my children how to do things" and "We eat our meals together now" were common phrases that we heard. Some students are contacting their families online, others pray the rosary with them on Facebook Live. Some women are bringing food pantry groceries to their neighbors.

Our students walk in the footsteps of past immigrants who have faced daunting challenges in their new country: finding work, providing food and shelter for their families, learning a new language, but their values of family and faith in God are serving them well during this world crisis. Hopefully, in September, our "new normal" will include students and tutors returning to studying English together, masked and socially-distanced, but still determined to continue to learn and to teach.



"What is becoming a new normal is that people are exercising more patience, becoming more creative in problem-solving, increasing resiliency skills and honoring the all-important relationships that we may have taken for granted before." – Diana Spencer

We invite you to support the women at the Dominican Literacy Center as they continue to learn English, by becoming a Sponsor-a-Student Donor:



260 Vermont Street • Aurora, IL 60505
www.dominicanliteracycenter.org
domlitctr@sbcglobal.net
630.898.4636

May 1, 2020

Dear

All of us have been deeply impacted on many levels by the Covid-19 pandemic. We join with you in hoping and praying that soon this difficult time will end, and we offer our prayers for all who are suffering and have lost loved ones.

Here at the Dominican Literacy Center, we are preparing for a new year of ESL instruction in September. Many of the women who come to our Center to learn to read, write and speak English are now doing essential work for our country. They are cleaning hospitals and nursing homes, assembling and packing medical supplies for hospitals, and bagging groceries. Many are mothers who are helping their children with online schoolwork. Our student, Neri, pictured below, is grateful that she can now help her seven-year-old daughter with her lessons. Through her hard work and study with her tutor, Neri will soon graduate, able to read, write and speak English--and now she is a U.S. citizen.

We want to be ready in September, 2020, to reach 200+ more women, helping them to read, write and speak English. To do this, we need books and learning materials, and for this we are asking for your help. We invite you to help us empower more women and families to learn English and become productive and empowered mothers, employees, and community members. Keeping Neri's story in mind, will you please consider donating:

- \$100 to cover the cost of books and learning materials for one student for one year
- \$1,000 to cover the full cost of one tutor-student pair, all expenses included
- Any donation will help more women and their families learn English!

Donations may be made by mail or online, going to www.dominicanliteracycenter.org to the **Ways to Help** tab, and clicking on the **Donate via Mighty Cause button**. Your donation is tax-exempt, and now, through the recent CARES Act, many of the limitations on deducting charitable donations have been lifted for the year 2020.

Thank you in advance for any donation you can make; your gift will have an immediate impact on the lives of women and their families.

Gratefully,

Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP
Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP, Administrator

Sr. Jane A. Beckman, OP
Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP, Citizenship Program

Alison Brzezinski
Alison Brzezinski, Tutoring Coordinator



Nery and Bonnie study English together every week

Important CARES Act Information

For the entire year of 2020, the limitation on how much of your charitable donations you can deduct against your income tax has been lifted. Previously it was a maximum of 60% for cash donations and 50% for non-cash donations. These limitations have been removed in the CARES Act for federal income tax purposes. In addition, anyone who donates up to \$300, whether they itemize or not, can deduct that against any other income donations for 2020.

Invest in These Women, Invest in the Future



Advisory Board

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

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Contributors for this issue are

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Nancy Dunn

“Word & Hope” is a twice-yearly newsletter of the Dominican Literacy Center, a 501c (3) nonprofit organization.

Tentative Reopening Plans for September 2020

Students and tutors will be returning to the Center for tutoring in September, 2020. In order for everyone who comes to the Center to be safe and secure, in accordance with IDPH (Illinois Department of Public Health) guidelines, the DLC staff has worked on a plan that will offer maximum health safeguards.

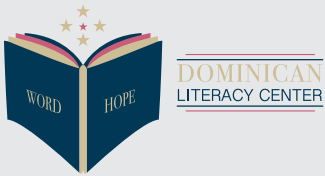
Everyone in the building will wear masks, and extra masks and gloves will be available. All group gatherings, such as morning announcements and group breaks, will be eliminated. Social distancing will be practiced. Hand sanitizer will be available to all, in every room. All tutoring rooms have been sanitized, and each room will be sanitized before it is used by another pair. Tutors and students will be encouraged to bring their own pens and pencils. All kitchen cups and spoons are disposable after one use. It is our hope that these simple but important practices will allow our students and tutors to learn together in a safe and secure environment.



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*