

# WH

## WORD & HOPE

### "A" is for Adaptation

The Covid 19 virus has turned our lives topsy-turvy for the past nine months, but there is one quality that has grown exponentially here at the Dominican Literacy Center, and that is our ability to adapt! Our tutors and students have made the best of a very difficult situation, ensuring that our students are still able to continue to learn to read, write and speak English in a variety of ways.

Over 60 student-tutor pairs continue to meet weekly at the Center, following new safety guidelines. 42 pairs are now having classes remotely, using online meeting programs like Zoom and phone apps. Another 62 pairs have taken a semester off and will decide whether to return in January, pending local Covid-19 positivity rates and vaccination news.

Our group activities—announcements, snack breaks, birthday parties, conversation groups—have been put on hold. Instead, we have temperature checks, hand washing and masking. The tutoring rooms are sanitized after every use. One of our tutors, Diane, tells us, "I don't have any concerns/issues related to coming into the center on a weekly basis. I feel that everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing, and things are going great, given the circumstances we are currently dealing with."



The switch to pairs working remotely has been quite remarkable. Our dedicated tutors took on the challenge of teaching themselves and their students how to use phone apps and virtual programs like FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom and Google Meet. Weekly announcements are sent via email, and materials are distributed using "Pick Up" and "Drop Off" bins on the front porch.

Our tutor, Jill, says, "I just wanted to let you know that things are going really well with our virtual sessions. I'm so grateful we're able to do it this way, and I even find some teaching benefits as pronunciation clarity is even more important over a screen!"

We have made a serious effort to stay in touch with those taking a break this semester, and we have received feedback from them, as well. Linda emailed us to say, "Thanks so much for keeping in touch! I'm so happy to hear that in-person tutoring sessions are going well. If anyone can provide a secure environment, it's the DLC!" Carmen says, "Thank you for taking the time to keep us informed. I miss the warmth of the Center, and my student Angelica's happy laugh."

All of us look forward to the day when we can be together again, but we are grateful that we have been able to adapt our learning community to today's needs. We are so thankful to have such amazing and determined women be part of our Center. We are truly blessed.



## Rosalina Magana

For many years, Rosalina Magana dreamed of becoming a U.S. citizen. She and her husband have been in the United States since 1999, and when Rosalina became eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship, she quickly enrolled in the Dominican Literacy Center citizenship classes. The most difficult thing, she found, was learning to read, write and speak English, so Rosalina also registered for ESL tutoring at the Center. Finally, Rosalina received a letter from USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services), scheduling her for her naturalization exam in Chicago. The date was for March, 2020.

Rosalina was ready for the test. She memorized the 100 questions about U.S. history and civics, she practiced reading and writing English for the dictated section of the test, and she practiced out loud each night the 7 pages of questions and answers that could be asked that day about the information on her 22-page application form. She was as confident as she could be. Then she received a second letter from USCIS. Her appointment in Chicago was canceled, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Federal Building was to remain closed until further notice.

Rosalina was determined to try to remember all that she had learned, so that she would be ready when the new appointment came. Then, in May, Rosalina and her husband began having headaches,



Rosalina voted for the first time!

fever and nausea. They were both bone-tired, and lost their sense of taste. They tested positive for Covid-19. Their four children were tested and they, too, were positive for the virus. The family quarantined for two weeks, and then were tested again. The results: still positive. After two more weeks of quarantine, everyone in the family finally tested negative. Rosalina's husband, Miguel, had been out of construction



Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP and Rosalina Magana

work for a month. To pay their bills, the family used their savings, and got help from a friend. Rosalina received Walmart cards from a Covid-19 grant that the Center had received for DLC students.

Finally, Rosalina received a letter in October, 2020, telling her to appear at the Federal Building in Chicago for her citizenship test. She passed the test, and on November 3, 2020, she registered to vote, and then voted in the presidential election on the same day.

Now Rosalina is a proud, secure and healthy American citizen. Someday, when the pandemic is over, she will go home to Mexico to visit her family, whom she hasn't seen for over 20 years. It has been a long journey for Rosalina, but she persisted, and is thankful that her hard work led to her new status as a United States citizen.

*Note: Curious what the current citizenship test looks like? Go to <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/questions-and-answers/100q.pdf>*

*A new test will begin on December 1, 2020.*

### Thank You!

**A big, heartfelt thank you to Jennifer Willman, from Montgomery, IL, who spent the summer sitting at her sewing machine, making face masks from cheerfully printed, breathable cotton fabric. As the students and tutors returned to class in September, they were offered these free, hand-made masks—in four days, all 185 masks were gone! Thank you, Jennifer, for this caring and protective gift to the women at our Center.**





## A New Way of Learning

When Maria Martinez, an ESL student, opened her book this year to learn English, she saw cartoon like drawings of people using typewriters, corded phones and outdated maps of the Soviet Union. When she opens her new book in September, 2021, she will see a whole new world, with bright photos of real people using the latest technology and engaging in life activities similar to her own.

This new ESL (English as a Second Language) curriculum called “Stand Out” will come to the Center through the generosity of the Aurora Women’s Empowerment (AWE) Foundation in Aurora, IL. Formerly the YWCA, the AWE Foundation’s mission is “to accelerate programs making an impact on women’s economic empowerment and racial justice.” Formed in 2018, the AWE Foundation’s first grant of \$20,000 was given to the Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora, in spring, 2020, to upgrade the curriculum and empower the women who will be using the program, starting in 2021.

The Dominican Literacy Center is deeply grateful to the Aurora Women’s Empowerment Foundation for their willingness to invest in the women who come to the Center to learn English. The partnership between the AWE Foundation and the Dominican Literacy Center will be a huge benefit to the women learning English, and to their families. Believing in and investing in our women will bear fruit in the Aurora area for many years.



For more information on “Stand Out”, go to [eltnl.com](http://eltnl.com) and click on “Search Products.”

## You Can Make A Difference!



You can make an impact while you shop for month-long Black Friday deals.

Simply shop at [smile.amazon.com/ch/36-4447531](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-4447531) and AmazonSmile will donate to Dominican Literacy Center Aurora, at no cost to you.

## Giving Tuesday

GivingTuesday, the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Beginning Tuesday, December 1 the Dominican Literacy Center will participate in GivingTuesday throughout December. You can go to our website to donate, [www.dominicanliteracycenter.org](http://www.dominicanliteracycenter.org) or give by check at Dominican Literacy Center, 260 Vermont Avenue, Aurora, IL 60505-3100. Your gift of kindness will enable us to continue to bring hope for a better future to the women of our community.



Alison Brzezinski, ESL Tutoring Coordinator



Some of the DLC essential workers.

## Advisory Board

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

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## The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...



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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)*