

# 25 Years Of Service

1993 – 2018

## City of Aurora Recognizes the Dominican Literacy Center



left to right, Dalila Alegria, Alison Brzezinski, Sr. Jane Ann Beckman, OP, Aurora Mayor Richard C. Irvin, Alderman Robert O'Connor, Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP, Alderman Scheketa Hart-Burns.

On Tuesday, April 9th, 2019, the city of Aurora recognized the Dominican Literacy Center's twenty-five years of service to the community in a Proclamation Presentation at City Hall. After the city council meeting's call to order, the pledge of allegiance, and a prayer by Sr. Kathleen Ryan, DLC's Administrator, Alderman-at-Large Robert O'Connor recognized the Dominican Literacy Center for "a fourth of a century of service." He began by mentioning that he first found out about the organization five years ago at the twenty-year proclamation. As a result, he started volunteering at the center through mentoring and teaching citizenship classes. O'Connor expressed his appreciation for the "absolutely rewarding" experience and urged others with free time to step forward.

He then acknowledged the great work the Dominican Literacy Center's small staff and over 200 volunteers have accomplished in helping 3,000 plus immigrant women learn English and become informed U.S. citizens. He also mentioned how this "trailblazing work" has been recognized at local, state, and federal levels.

After welcoming the center's staff to the front of the room, O'Connor, Mayor Richard C. Irvin, and Seventh Ward Alderman Scheketa Hart-Burns congratulated and thanked members with hugs and bouquets of cheerful, bright yellow roses. In turn Sr. Kathleen thanked the council,

mayor, aldermen, and volunteers, and board chair Dalila Alegria spoke about the organization's life-changing impact.

Dalila conveyed how many years ago her own mother was a student at the center and became more confident in performing everyday tasks such as communicating with her children's teachers, making doctor's appointments, and going to the bank. Dalila's story serves as a testament to the way the Dominican Literacy Center's women-centered instruction of English has truly transformed Aurora and will continue to empower families and children in the local community for many years to come.



## In Her Own Words



left to right - Haydee Martinez and Judy Lofstrom

**M**y name is Haydee and I have had the privilege to study English at the Dominican Literacy Center, a place blessed by God.

I came to DLC for the first time in October of 2016, just three months after my sister, Nancy and I decided to leave behind our lives in Mexico. We wanted to start a new adventure in this great nation.

I remember how afraid I was! I barely understood anything, not only the language, but also the customs and traditions in the United States.

It is amazing how fast the time goes. The DLC has been my second home for two and a half years. My experience throughout this time has been amazing. Since my first day, I could appreciate the kind hearts from the great ladies who give their invaluable time to women like me that migrate to the United States. We often feel fear of not being able to communicate with people. The feeling of not having an identity in a new country can be frightening.

The Dominican Literacy Center is giving me an integral education. The teaching is not only from a text book, but the wonderful tutors also help us to learn about everyday life and the American culture.

I'm so proud and grateful to say my life has changed. Now, I'm able to have a conversation in another language without fear.

I know I still have many things to learn! My teacher always encourages me to have confidence and high hopes. She always uses this phrase, "Bloom where you are planted." So as well as other women at the DLC, I'm trying to blossom and make a better future for myself.

## In A Tutor's Own Words

**D**uring a recent tutoring session, I spoke with Haley, my student from Vietnam, about her recent marriage, the return to her homeland and her exciting side trip to Thailand.

It was enlightening for me to understand that Haley's family had observed many Vietnamese traditions. Two years ago, at the time of her and fiancé Andy's engagement, friends and relatives came into her hometown and decorated the family's home. Ceremonial dress was worn (Haley's sister's ensemble, a beautiful red outfit, was a beloved hand-me-down from a cousin's marriage).



Marty Holzer

The importance of these formal rituals wasn't overlooked by US Immigration, when Andy, a native-born citizen, helped Haley prove that their relationship was both long-standing and legitimate. Photos from the engagement and family's celebration were part of their processing Haley's green card.

The wedding ceremony was held at the family home in Vietnam where Haley's relatives manage a fish hatchery. The reception was at an urban location and was much like a reception here in the States; music, decorations, food and toasts to the newlyweds.

A keepsake from the wedding were professional photographs taken of Haley and Andy that involved multiple "costume changes" and hair style variations. The stunning photo shoot was projected during the reception and given as albums to the couple and their families.



Haley Nguyen

*"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." - St. Catherine of Siena*



## Dining for the Dominican Literacy Center

On April 11th, 2019, the Patio Restaurant in Aurora hosted a fundraiser for the Dominican Literacy Center. From 3-9 p.m. hungry supporters entered the café's lobby and were met with a brightly-lit menu of mouth-watering food choices from burgers, sandwiches, and barbeque to salads, drinks, and desserts. After ordering with the cashier and flashing a Dominican Literacy Center fundraising flyer, customers were given a number and asked to find a seat in the spacious dining room. They chose a spot in either the warm wood-trimmed green booths, the elevated pub-style seating, or the white tables and chairs. Or if they just wanted a quick drink or something to satisfy a sweet-tooth, they might have grabbed a chair at the dimly-lit dessert bar.

After no more than ten minutes, servers delivered their food and the patrons happily dug in. Under the lanterns of the central dining area, in the light-filled glass atrium, and next to the cozy fireplace, supporters savored their meals and sipped their drinks while chatting with family and friends. No matter what they ordered, when they arrived, or how long they stayed, all of the customers knew that along with their visit that day, they were helping to give to a wonderful cause. With the proceeds of 15% of its sales over six hours, the Patio Restaurant fundraiser helped to support the continued work of the Dominican Literacy Center. Thank you to all who participated!

## 25 "Candles" For the 25th Year-Update

Twenty-one women came forward, offering their time and talents to become tutors as a result of our 25th anniversary committee outreach to parishes and the article in our Fall newsletter. 21 "candles" not quite 25 but oh so close!

We asked two of our new tutors to share some thoughts on the DLC and their call to serve.

Sue Doyle recently relocated back to Chicago. "It was my hope that when I relocated, I would be able to continue teaching literacy in some capacity."

Maureen Brink saw ads in the Our Lady of Mercy parish bulletin and was inspired "to try something different in my life."

Both women are quite impressed with the commitment of their students to improve their English and to set some remarkable goals despite working full time and raising a family. Maureen also commented on how well organized the program is. Here is a bit of information on that very subject!

Students are evaluated for their English skills and begin their instruction at a level suitable for their abilities. Aspiring tutors are given comprehensive training on the curriculum, including technology, additional resources and the support of a wonderfully talented and gifted staff. Morning and evening classes are offered during the week.

As we wrap up our 25th year of service, we invite you to join our family of committed tutors and students. Please share the "good news" of the Dominican Literacy Center with your local schools, church groups, book clubs and family. Help us find our 25 "candles" to begin our next 25 years! As we go to print we have 35 registered students waiting for a teacher and 59 students on a registration wait list. The need is great!

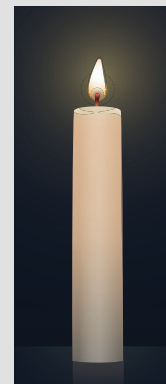
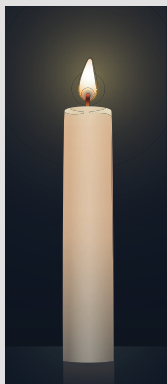
Save the date:

**We are currently registering new tutors for training on August 13, 15, 20, and 22. These are four required evening sessions running from 6:00PM to 8:30PM on consecutive Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

**All sessions are held at the Center.**

Please contact Alison Brzezinski at 630-898-4636, or [alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org](mailto:alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org)

The first week of classes for the 2019-2020 school year begins on Thursday, September 5



### Advisory Board

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

Dalila Alegria, Chair

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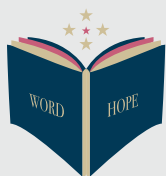


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## The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...



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