

Word & Hope

New school year off to a busy start



Maryann Hale, Sr. Ann Clennon, Christine Callan and Caitlin Hale get acquainted during the August tutor training.

Thirty five! Yes, 35 new tutors started at the Dominican Literacy Center this fall.

Sr. Ann Clennon, coordinator of the tutoring program at the Center, is very excited about the additional tutors. "We were delighted that 35 new volunteers came forward to take the tutoring classes in August. It was wonderful to welcome these smiling faces and generous personalities. Thanks to them an additional 35 students were able to begin their studies in September."

The Center emphasizes the goal of expanding English communication skills. Language for the students needs to be authentic and relevant. For four days in August, the volunteers learned how to use their own special gifts to prepare lessons that focus on their student's goals.

For three years, Patty Hurt had been telling her friend Carol Johnston what a wonderful

experience it was to volunteer at the Center. This year Carol was inspired to help. Carol says, "Once I started lessons with my student, I knew I had made a decision that would be a positive part of my life. Everyone is working toward a common goal, and tutors and students are welcomed with a quiet atmosphere of giving and love for others."

Shirley Frasca heard about the Center through her church bulletin. Shirley is impressed with her student, Edith. "Even with a full time job, Edith comes to class prepared to work very hard. I would like to see Edith have the skills to write about her family and life."

Caitlin Hale and her mother Maryann also came to the Center via an item in their church bulletin. Caitlin says, "The biggest challenge is that the language barrier can make it difficult to communicate certain ideas, but so far we have made it work. I think this program is incredible. I look forward to Monday evenings and getting to spend time with my student."

An article in the Rockford Diocesan newspaper inspired Marcia Krivus to volunteer. She states, "Empowering another woman through better English speaking skills, to become a better advocate for herself and her family,

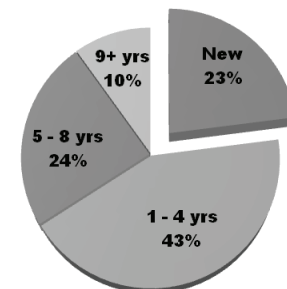
is very gratifying. The ripple effect within her home, at work, and as a member of the community can benefit everyone."

Barb and Carolyn Nothnagel, another mother and daughter pair, heard about the Center through a family friend. Carolyn says, "We'd been looking to do some service together and decided that it was a good fit. We're both having a great time. It is amazing how appreciative and sweet our students are."

With the addition of the new tutors, the number of dedicated volunteers at the Center is up to 130. Sister Ann says, "Because of our generous new and returning tutors, we began this year with 60 new students and 91 returning students--all eager to study English."

With ages ranging from 21 to over 80 years old, the volunteers come from as far south as Orland Park and as far north as Sheridan. Eighty-five percent of the Center's tutors return for another year of tutoring. Sometimes it's hard to tell who is helping whom!

Tutor retention at the Center



A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

~ Henry B. Adams

In their words

Students at the Center do a fair amount of writing as part of their curriculum. Enjoy these excerpts from their work.

I have a dog named Blondie. She loves to go outside, and takes me for a walk every morning. Blondie has a lot of hair, and it is all over the house! Blondie moves her tail when she sees me. She likes to eat peaches and carrots.

~ Olga Serrano

My name is Martha. I am a housewife. I have two children. Miguel is my older son. He has seven years. When Miguel was born, he had a problem with his nutrition. He is a special boy. Sometimes it is difficult for me because I don't know what to do and I feel hopeless.

But I'm very happy because he is a gift of God. Miguel is an intelligent and loving boy.

My second son is Uriel. He has two years. Uriel is the opposite of Miguel. He is very naughty, but intelligent, too. Uriel was born very well, thanks to God.

I am a very happy woman because my children are very special for me and my husband.

~ Martha Rivera

Paulson joins staff



Judi Paulson and her student, Irma Rojo take a break from class.

Although Judi Paulson has been a tutor at the Dominican Literacy Center for seven years, last year she added a new dimension to her work when she became a member of the Center's staff.

Fourteen months ago, funded by a grant from the Dunham Fund, the Center hired Judi to interview prospective students. She meets aspiring students, finds out about their backgrounds and determines their personal learning level. The results of her interviews become part of the students' files and determine which workbooks and other resources their tutors should use.

Because she speaks fluent Spanish, Judi is more than qualified for her new position. She puts the women at ease during their introduction to the Center. Judi has a BA in Spanish from the University of Illinois at Chicago and spent a year studying in Madrid, Spain. After graduating, she was

the assistant to the director of Casa Central, a welfare agency that helped to relocate Cubans who had fled from their country.

After a timeout to raise a son and a daughter, Judi earned her teaching certification at Northern Illinois University. For eleven years, she taught high school Spanish in the Glenbard and Downers Grove school systems.

Judi and her husband Jerry are now retired and have five grandchildren. The Paulsons live in the Stonebridge subdivision in Aurora. Three years ago, Judi and two friends founded the Dominican Literacy Center's Stonebridge Program when they began a literacy program for the employees of Stonebridge.

In addition to her new registration duties, Judi tutors two students, one at the Center and one at the Stonebridge Program. Judi has registered more than 120 students during her fourteen months on the job. She says her favorite part of her new venture is meeting so many vibrant, ambitious, beautiful women and listening to their moving stories.

Save the date

The next tutor training will take place on Saturday, January 16, 2010 from 9 AM - 3 PM. No Spanish skills needed. Call Sr. Ann at 630-898-4636 to register or for more information.

Something's cooking...

Whether you hail from the cornfields of Illinois or a picturesque village in Mexico – or even if you come from a large city like Chicago or Guadalajara – some meals remind you of home. At the Dominican Literacy Center, the sharing of language extends to the universal language of food. A new cookbook, "Feast of Friends 2," is coming! It is the combined effort of tutors and students to share recipes for some of their time-tested favorite dishes.

The new cookbook presents a bevy of new recipes – everything from appetizers and beverages through entrées and desserts. Also included are some Spanish/bilingual recipes. Available around Thanksgiving, the cookbooks cost \$15. Contact the Center at (630)898-4636 for more information.

Dunham Learning Rooms dedicated

With a careful snip of their beribboned scissors, honored guests Ryan Maley, Chairman of the Dunham Fund Board and Robert Vaughan, Executive Director of the Dunham Fund, dedicated the Dunham Learning Rooms on October 14. There was barely enough room in the Center's basement hallway to hold all the guests. Attending were Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner and his wife, DLC Advisory Board member, Marilyn; Eric Burgos, Assistant Chief of Staff to State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia; several DLC Advisory Board members; the DLC staff; and student/tutor pairs who took a break from using the four new rooms to participate in the celebration.

In remarks to the attendees, Sr. Kathleen Ryan, OP, recognized former DLC Advisory Board member Al Kent, who initially proposed applying for the grant from the Dunham Fund. She also praised current board member Jim Hopp, who oversaw every step of the renovation. A plaque mounted on the wall recognizes the generous donation from the Fund. As a token of appreciation, the



Sr. Ann Clennon presents a gift to Bob Vaughan, Dunham Fund Executive Director.

Center presented a beautiful clock featuring a photograph of a student/tutor pair to Robert Vaughan.

The Dunham Fund Grant provided the renovation funds to transform underutilized storage space in the lower level of the Center into four fully equipped learning rooms. Maria Avila, a student at the Center remarked, "The new rooms are a blessing from God. So beautiful!"

There is lodging here. Welcome. *Aquí hay posada. Bienvenidos.*



The Las Posadas poster at the Center reminds Diana Chavez, Sagario Ramirez and Cristina Solana of their holiday traditions.

During the Nativity, Mary and Joseph searched for a place to stay on their difficult journey to Bethlehem. Beginning on December 16, many Hispanic communities celebrate Las Posadas, a reenactment of this famous trip.

Celebrated the nine nights prior to Christmas, Las Posadas, meaning "place of lodging," begins each night at dusk. Children carrying lighted candles, followed by adults and musicians, set out on a procession.

Many of the children are dressed as angels, while others carry figures of Mary and Joseph.

They travel to a different house in the village or neighborhood each night in search of lodging. When they arrive at the designated home, the children knock on the door while singing or reciting a poem, begging entry. The doors open, prayers are said and the posada party begins! Each posada party is full of music, fireworks, food, piñatas and treats for everyone. The largest and most festive party is celebrated on the ninth and final night, which is Christmas Eve. Graciela Magaña, a student at the Center, describes the atmosphere of Las Posadas as "very, very happy.

People are singing and saying poems and having fun being together."

Las Posadas began in 16th century Mexico as a novena and eventually moved from the church into the homes of community members. The tradition is alive in the United States with celebrations in many Hispanic communities. The holiday celebration continues in Aurora at St. Nicholas Church.

Advisory Board

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

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

The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...

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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.

***The Center is located in east Aurora at 260 Vermont Ave., on the #521 Pace bus route.
For more information, call 630-898-4636, M-F, 9 am – 4 pm.***

Return Service Requested

Dominican Literacy Center
260 Vermont Ave.
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