



**ROSALIE RENDU
C E N T E R**

Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted
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Fall 2012

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Greetings from the RRC

Dear Friends,

Summer has come and gone and we are in full swing with our fall sessions. During the summer, our ESL classes focused on conversation and reading. With six mothers getting ready to send their first child off to college, there was a lot to talk about. Fidelia, being the only mother having a child in college, gave full assurance that all would be well. Separation anxiety was also present with three of our mothers whose last child left the nest to attend Kindergarten. I tried to allay their fears, reminding them that they would have more time to study English!

Our children tend to go to school close to home, UCLA being the furthest university. UC Merced and Sonoma State also seem like worlds away for our families. All incoming reports are good. About eight to ten young adults are also waiting to see if they have gotten accepted for the Dream Act. Excitement is high for our students.

The Homework Club attendees also had a fun summer with reading and activities. The attendance was good, probably because they knew they would be taken out for pizza and a movie if they came regularly. Ivan and our two wonderful volunteers Lynn and Perry kept things moving along this summer, as I was unable to be with them this year.

We are also happy to welcome Dick, a volunteer, back to the Conversation Club and Kathy and Jane are new volunteers working with the children and adults, respectively. We love our volunteers and value each of them!

Getting new shoes for school was a welcome gift causing mothers and children to smile and walk with lighter steps. We now have great new folding chairs, thanks to Girl Scout Troop # 259 lead by Mary Chacon. Now when you come to our Cinco de Mayo celebration and Ice Cream Social you won't have to stand, but can rest and relax in our nice comfortable chairs. Without wonderful friends such as you, none of our activities would be possible. Each of you is a special friend and I feel blessed to have you working in the RRC garden helping our special people to break the cycle of poverty.

May each of you and your families have a blessed and happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Sister Trinitas Hernandez, D.C., Executive Director



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Daughters of Charity Ministry Services Corporation

Building the Self Esteem of Mothers

When Sister Trinitas Hernandez first opened up the Rosalie Rendu Center nearly 15 years ago in East Palo Alto, her vision was to build the self-esteem of mothers.

She knows that when mothers feel good about themselves, this means better outcomes for children. Research also shows that when mothers have a good circle of friends, they are happier and do a better job of parenting their children. These friends step in to help each other with childcare, errands and other support.

American society has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Educated affluent women often live far away from their family and don't have close relationships with neighbors. To combat this, women of privilege often join mother's groups, the PTA or other volunteer organizations in order to create a community of friends.

There is nothing more challenging than raising children, so connecting with other parents is essential.

At the Rosalie Rendu Center, as women gather around to learn English, stories are shared about work, marriage and raising children. The women seek counsel from Sister Trinitas but also support each other in amazing ways. They encourage each other to try new things, share advice about positive discipline and talk a lot about education. This incredible community building helps the students of the Rosalie Rendu Center feel good about themselves and the jobs they are doing as mothers.

The mothers that participate in our weekly Conversation Club sessions are starting to have enough confidence in their English skills to move toward becoming more fully engaged in the local community. The atmosphere of the Club is relaxed and supportive. The focus of the Club is

conversation, no homework, no grammar. Sister Trinitas first heard of Project Read, offered at the East Palo Alto Library through the San Mateo County Library system, when one of her students needed to find a job. Sister suggested to Imelda that she find a tutor to help her improve her reading and writing English skills. Imelda and her Project Read tutor were together for years—the tutor even helped Imelda study and pass her citizenship test. Recently four of our Conversation Club participants were encouraged by Sister Trinitas to become involved with Project Read at the East Palo Alto library, and three of them had enough confidence in their spoken English skills to sign up for private tutors. Project Read provides weekly, free one-on-one tutoring to adults.

This is a huge step for our students and is an indication of how effective Sister Trinitas' ESL program and the Conversation Club have become. First of all, they had to place a telephone call in English to sign up for the private tutor. Secondly, Project Read requires that the student speak English comfortably, as the tutoring session is held entirely in English. (Most of the tutors do not speak any Spanish.) The tutoring sessions are guided by the goals of the learner. The students all have different goals, from being able to interact with their children's schools to helping their children do their homework. The Rosalie Rendu Center and its Conversation Club has given our students the confidence they needed to seek further improvement in their language skills. With these skills, we are certain that our students will not only be better parents but will achieve greater success at work, and contribute more to their local communities.



Yanette, as doctor and Patty as concerned mother, role playing and using their new vocabulary words.

Congratulations to our New College Students!

This year, the Rosalie Rendu Center is proud to announce that eight children of our ESL students graduated from high school.

This semester, all eight graduates are attending various colleges around the country.

The students have received scholarships to help them with their books and/or tuition, with at least one student receiving a full scholarship. The students tell us that their parents, who are learning English and working hard to help their children become successful adults, are the driving force behind their scholarships and college acceptance. Our parents really want to see their children grow up to participate in careers that will allow them to escape poverty, purchase a home and save to help their own children attend college.

We're so proud to watch our vision of "educating the entire family" come to light and wish all our kids huge success in their studies!



Kids with their new shoes!

School Shoes Update

In our Spring newsletter earlier this year, we spoke to you about our annual Ice Cream Social; a time when we distribute new school supplies and backpacks to children. When beginning the new school year, one of the many needs we try to meet is a new pair of school shoes for children. We reached out and asked that you donate a gift card from Foot Locker or make a donation, so that we could provide gift cards to parents. The response we received from our donors has been incredibly generous. We are pleased to report that we raised \$3,400 for school shoes! With these funds, we purchased gift cards in the amount of \$50 and parents were given the gift cards to take their children shopping. Children whose parents could not take them were given rides to buy their shoes. The positive impact that these donations have made on our families cannot be overstated. Through the generosity of our donors, we are able to fulfill one of the key components of our mission: raising the self-esteem of the entire family.



Mission Moment

By Rick Anderson, Volunteer Teacher

Teaching is a two way street. While I do my best to teach English to the nine students in my evening Rosalie Rendu Center English class, they definitely return the favor. With their coaching, my poor Spanish is improving—but unfortunately, not as impressively as my students' English.

Over the course of the week, the students cover a wide variety of English-language-learning subjects. We work on grammar: recent topics have included the differences between “this, that, these, and those” and the past tense of regular and irregular verbs. Every two weeks the students memorize a four-line dialog, and recite it in front of the class. But possibly the most fun is the story. The students practice orally reading a story—a story that usually ends with a humorous twist. They

work on everything from understanding the meaning of the words and phrases, to working on maintaining a good rhythm to the spoken sentences. Each story is accompanied by a number of exercises. These exercises include answering questions from the story, matching “story” words to their (English) definitions, and of course, practicing the spelling of the “new” words in the story.

So here is one place the two-way street comes into play. Relying on my rudimentary Spanish and several on-line translation services, I attempt to translate the story from English to Spanish. While I usually get pretty close—close enough that I can help my students understand the story—I’ve always wondered where I was missing the more idiomatic aspects of



the translation. Finally, I got brave enough to solicit the help of my students. We made helping me a game.

Here’s how it works. If EVERYONE in class gets a perfect score on their biweekly spelling test, the students get to go home early. But on the other hand, if I get my translation perfect, I get to go home early. So far, no one has gone home early. But I think the students are going to get there first.

Many Thanks!

All of us at the Center are thankful for your generosity toward the Rosalie Rendu Center. We appreciate your friendship and your monetary contributions.

Your financial support is used ...

- To pay the rent and utilities for our classrooms,
- To buy supplies for the classrooms,
- To purchase workbooks (which our students partially reimburse) and dictionaries,
- And, to pay the salary of the director’s assistant.

In the near future, we will likely be paying a daytime teacher to help Sister Trinitas meet the continually strong demand for English classes.

Each summer, the Center helps equip the children of our students to go back to school, providing backpacks and school supplies. This past summer, we also provided new shoes. Occasionally, the Center augments the volunteer tutoring of the children in the homework club with more in-depth, paid tutoring to meet specially identified educational needs. At Christmas time, the Center, with the help of our generous supporters, provides a box of food and gifts for families who might otherwise go without.

Your support helps us maintain our website and communicate via our newsletter. So, thank you very much for keeping the Center humming!

