



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

Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted
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Spring 2013

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**Greetings
from the RRC**

Dear Friends,

It was great seeing many of you at our 15-year celebration. Those of you unable to attend, but who sent good wishes and donations, were also present with us in spirit. Without your support there would not have been a party and what a party it was! Without donors, volunteers and friends it would not be possible for us to help our families.

I'd like to introduce you to our newest and youngest donor. Mary Catherine, who just celebrated her sixth birthday. She is only six and has already learned the meaning of giving. Instead of her friends bringing gifts to her party, she asked them to bring hoodies or school supplies for the children being served at the RRC. Seeing the beautiful gifts she brought to us tells me that this young lady is a very special little girl ... look out Oprah, your competition is building!

Our spring session is winding down the first week of June, followed by a break before beginning our four week summer session. At the end of this session we are hoping some of our present students will move on to Cañada College. It isn't their lack of readiness that holds them back, as much as their fear of losing the comfort and support of friends and mentors.

The winter classes will begin at the end of August. In mid-September I hope to add another Conversation Club class. If anyone is interested in volunteering and have any questions, please contact me. I know you will enjoy the experience of getting to know our students; Spanish is not required.

It amazes me how fast this year and the past 15 years have gone. Your support, friendships and deep interest have kept me healthy and happy all these years.

God bless you all, without YOU the past 15 years would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

Sister Trinitas Hernandez, D.C., Executive Director



Mary Catherine & Sister T

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Sponsored by the
Daughters of Charity Ministry Services Corporation

Fifteen Years of Planting Seeds

More than 200 people gathered on April 29, 2013 at the Rosalie Rendu Center to celebrate 15 years of success. The gorgeous courtyard was filled with cheerful voices as people shared memories of the center. East Palo Alto City Council Member Laura Martinez was one of the attendees. As a small group of us led her around the Carriage Manor apartment complex, we shared the following story with her.

Sister Trinitas Hernandez had been working in East Palo Alto for several years taking food and clothing to the poor with the support of the Daughters of Charity. This work gave her the opportunity to not only meet East Palo Alto residents but also to visit the many apartment buildings in the community. Sister T realized that the donations of food and clothing were just not enough, so she decided that she wanted to lift people out of poverty. Because there were so many new immigrants living in the city, she decided to offer free English lessons as a way to help mentor mothers with young children. She set her sights on the Carriage Manor Apartment Complex

because it was filled with many young children and impoverished families.

At about the same time, Carrie Du Bois of the Junior League of Palo Alto•Mid Peninsula was looking for a new community



project in East Palo Alto. The League did not have a project there, and Carrie wanted to do something related to poverty. She consulted a friend at St. Elizabeth Seton School, who introduced her to Sister T. Carrie met with both Sister T and Sister Fran Ciluaga, and a new partnership was formed.

Sister T started her program by turning a small rental apartment at the Carriage Manor into a classroom for mothers to learn

English. The Junior League sent volunteers and funding to help build the program. If there was anything that Sister T needed, the League was able to provide it enthusiastically. League members created the Tot Spot for young children to attend, while their mothers were in class with Sister T. The League also supplied volunteers to teach free English lessons for the men at night.

Sister T has always been very firm about her vision. When the League partnered, she did not want the volunteers to simply approach the Rosalie Rendu Center as another community service effort. Instead, this would be a true community partnership in which League members would learn from new immigrants and the immigrants would learn from the volunteers. All participants would stay focused on the children. League members would bring their children to the Tot Spot to play and learn with the children of the Carriage Manor. The women of the Carriage Manor would teach League members how to make tamales and share stories of their lives. Everyone was inspired by this community effort.



Top: Cakes celebrating "Fifteen Years of Planting Seeds." Bottom left: Sally Falkenhagen, Alain and Rosemary Enthoven, Debbie Denton, Margo Grant and Carrie Du Bois. Bottom right: Sister T receives a Certificate of Recognition from Margo Grant on behalf of Assemblyman Rich Gordon.



There are so many stories to share from the 15 years of the Rosalie Rendu Center project. Here are some of the highlights:

- ♦ The first Tot Spot was located in the bedroom of the apartment where Sister T now teaches. Ten to 15 children would crowd into this room with a single League volunteer.
- ♦ When the Tot Spot was moved to the second apartment, it was converted to a toddler-friendly zone with books, toys, and a mini slide. One League volunteer made adorable bumblebee curtains for the window.
- ♦ Sister T became a mentor and friend to countless women in East Palo Alto and volunteers from the League. She continues to inspire and advise on a daily basis.
- ♦ The old courtyard of the Carriage Manor often became a muddy mess during the rainy season, leaving no place for the children to play. So a mini park was created next door to the Carriage Manor.
- ♦ Amazing parent education has been offered through the Children's Health Council. Parents also form friendship support groups to help each other with babysitting and errands.
- ♦ The famous philanthropist Bill Somerville showed up at the Center one morning. He was so delighted with what he saw that he began to fund Sister T immediately. His

funding expanded to pay for some of the mothers to work as Parent Involvement workers at Cesar Chavez Academy.

- ♦ When an investor from Palo Alto unexpectedly purchased the Carriage Manor, eviction notices circulated throughout the complex. The League mobilized in partnership with the Daughters of Charity and the Daughters of Charity Foundation to purchase the building back. This effort not only saved the Rosalie Rendu Center but also all of the low-income housing available in the apartment complex. The Housing Industry Foundation spearheaded extensive remodeling both inside and outside the apartments. The fund-raising efforts generated an amazing amount of press including feature articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News*, and a front-page article in the *Wall Street Journal*. The Carriage Manor was also highlighted in Peter Jennings' book *In Search of America*.
- ♦ Sister T identifies children for scholarships to Seton School in Palo Alto. Many of the children now attend the most competitive private high schools and the best public and private colleges.

- ♦ Computer training for ESL students (using the Complex's free wireless internet network installed by volunteers) and homework help for the school aged children are part of the list of services available to participants. Trips to museums, libraries, and parks are also offered.
- ♦ Many students become gainfully employed and promoted. Adult confidence is on the rise.
- ♦ Several of our graduates and their families have purchased their own homes.
- ♦ Sister T has been honored for her work, including a 2003 Community Leadership Award from The San Francisco Foundation, a Jefferson Award in 2005, named Women of the Year by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin in 2006 and a Local Heroes award in 2012.
- ♦ The Monday morning "Conversation Club" has been thriving for 3 years, with native English speakers and the 10:30 English class students meeting to talk in English but, more importantly to share lasting friendships. The Conversation Club is an excellent example of Sister T's original vision—that the Rosalie Rendu Center would be a true partnership across many communities.

We could go on and on, but this gives you a flavor of the incredible legacy of Sister T and the Rosalie Rendu Center.

Above: A photo from the Center's early days. These children are all young adults now. (Photo by Lisa Tayeri)



A Special Thanks to Our Generous Donors

Donations received from May 1, 2012 to April 30, 2013.
We do our best to include all donors in our list and apologize
if we've inadvertently missed your name. Please send omissions
to rosalierendu@yahoo.com.

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New Volunteers at the Center

The Rosalie Rendu Center operates successfully because it attracts a well-educated and caring group of volunteers, including retired English professors and electrical engineers.

Jane Stern, a certified English teacher who volunteered regularly at the Center last year, has now agreed to join our small staff and teach three classes per week. Before she retired, Jane worked as a teacher and high school guidance counselor. She enjoys her spare time with her grandchildren and husband, Jerry. Jane is committed to working for social change, and she has worked on many political issues, including, most recently, sensible gun control legislation and immigration reform. Jane describes her work at the Rendu Center as "one of the best experiences I've had in my lifetime ... I'm honored to have discovered 'Sister T' and the positive, enthusiastic women in my classes." Jane recruited two additional volunteers from her book group, Gita Gopal and Nancy McClenny.

Gita is a computer science specialist with a PhD in the subject. She volunteers at the Center teaching the computer classes with Ivan Barragan. Gita worked at HP for eleven years, then ran her own business, Fun With Media, a digital arts studio for kids and adults. Last year, she closed Fun With Media and began her volunteer career. She has three children, ages 24, 21 and 16. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and traveling (she is going to Peru in June with her family). She says, "I love meeting people, and I am happy I can help people become more comfortable using a computer. I am really impressed by the Rosalie Rendu Center!"

Nancy McClenny, a clinical laboratory scientist specializing in microbiology, is volunteering in a unique way for the Center, tutoring one of the Center's "graduates" in English language skills. Our graduate, also named Nancy, is a parent involvement worker at one of the schools in Ravenswood School District and is attending Cañada College. She asked Sister T to find a volunteer to help her develop English language skills beyond the high level she has already attained. In her spare time, volunteer Nancy M. enjoys gardening with California native plants, reading, yoga classes, and hiking in Northern California's wonderful parks and preserves. She says she was immediately drawn to Sister T's openness, thoughtfulness, and strong commitment to helping others and that working with student Nancy has been as easy and enjoyable as making a new friend. "Nancy is a quick learner and dedicated to learning the complexities of English so that she can help others communicate clearly and deal with everyday challenges effectively." For both Nancys, it's all about communication, communication, communication.

Cathy Morden has supported the Rosalie Rendu Center for many years by participating with her colleagues at the Daughters of Charity Health System (DCHS) when they provided Christmas boxes, back-to-school supplies or shoes or other special support for the Center. Cathy recently began volunteering regularly on Thursdays at the Center's Homework Club, the after-school program that helps young students practice reading and completing homework. In her spare time, Cathy enjoys reading. She says, "I'm so glad I have this opportunity; it fills a special place in my life. God has blessed me, and the chance to share this bounty gives me purpose and much joy and satisfaction."

The students at the Rosalie Rendu Center are grateful to have such extraordinary volunteers helping them.



Jane Stern (right) dances with one of her students at the 15TH anniversary celebration.

