



Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted

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Spring 2021

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

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Dear Faithful Friends & Supporters,

Can you believe we have been sheltering-in-place for a little over one year? It seems much longer. Yet other than being “hug-deprived,” we at the Rosalie Rendu Center have held together well. Our students are strong, resilient, non-complaining and supportive of each other. Our wonderful team: Maria, Instructional Program Coordinator; Jeanna, Administrative Assistant; and Jason and Sister Patricia, our dedicated teachers, have adapted to a virtual work and teaching environment.

Our many wonderful volunteers and you, dear Friends, have kept us going by your loyalty and support during these exceedingly difficult days. Zoom, email, and our phones have become our mode of communication.

I still prefer “face to face” contact but have learned to go with the flow. Seeing our students’ resiliency has taught me that you can still teach this old lady some new tricks! Classroom learning continues on Zoom which has been made easier because of our recent collaboration with StreetCode Academy. The Academy has allowed our students to attend class on loaner laptops instead of their cell phones.

Connecting with their Language Partners has also kept our students from feeling isolated while offering them a safe place to practice their English and develop cross-cultural friendships.

Our learning community will continue to thrive at our new Center which is ready to receive students and volunteers when it is safe to do so. When that time comes, each of you will also be welcome to visit. In the meantime, take a virtual tour on our website <https://www.rosalie-rendu-center.org/sister-t/> and see how God has blessed us with our new spacious home.

We continue reaching out to understand and help meet the needs of our students and their families. Our newly formed Student Advisory Committee is a great source of support in this regard. We are adding a Citizenship class this spring, and in the fall, we will start a fifth ESL class. Both classes will meet remotely and in the evening for those unable to attend day classes.

We remain hopeful that our leaders will take steps toward positive immigration reform. The Center will continue to find new ways to help families become more integrated into their communities and assist our brothers and sisters to live peacefully, without fear or anxiety, in the USA—the nation they have called home and have helped strengthen for many years.

Many thanks for all your support.

May God bless you and your families and keep you safe and healthy.

Sincerely yours,

Sister Trinitas Hernandez, D.C., Executive Director



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Computer teacher Dick Hutsell helps a student with her new loaner MacBook from StreetCode Academy.

Distance Learning at the Rosalie Rendu Center

Empowered By StreetCode Academy and Computer Teacher Dick Hutsell

Advancing our students in computer literacy for distance learning is a team sport.

When COVID-19 forced our students into distance learning on Zoom — without adequate technology at home — it was the generosity of two pivotal players — **computer provider StreetCode Academy and long-time computer teacher Dick Hutsell** — who stepped up to make it possible.

Imagine trying to learn English remotely, when all you have at home for screen and sound is a cell phone and your internet connection is poor or non-existent. To the rescue, StreetCode Academy provided 25 loaner MacBook Air laptops, and Dick Hutsell, the Center’s computer class teacher, provided each student with instruction on how to use them.

When students arrived two-by-two at the Center to collect their laptops, Dick showed them how to download software, connect to the internet, and set up their email accounts. He configured their MacBook Air’s with a typing program, Zoom, and a simplified set of free productivity programs from LibreOffice. He also guided them on how to set up affordable, high-speed internet accounts at home.

Computer Class

Before the pandemic forced students to learn from home, long-time volunteer and advisory board member, Dick Hutsell taught a computer class which he had created and developed over the years.

Newly retired from his 30-year career with the Daughters of Charity, Dick got a call from Sister Trinitas asking him for advice.

“She was thinking about a computational learning program for her students. I said I would stop by and talk to her about it. I did and ended up volunteering to set up and teach the program. It was a *great* decision,” Dick reported.

Dick taught them Microsoft Office and Google search capabilities and then introduced learning programs in Spanish and free resources for word processing, presentations and spreadsheets.

“Our first year’s class was usually a short lecture by me, often with translation into Spanish by Maria. I then had the students do structured, hands-on exercises.”

Dick encouraged students to do exercises that supported work in their language classes and also on projects that would have personal meaning to them. Projects included a wedding album and a hard bound memory book using text and captions, photos from their phones or cameras, and images found and captured from the internet.

“The last major piece we assigned was for each student to write a story or history of their life, with a focus on their life before coming to the United States, and what challenges they faced when arriving,” Dick reported.

Because both Dick Hutsell of Rosalie Rendu and Kyle Carter of StreetCode Academy are convinced that understanding leading edge technology is fundamental to learning, working and creating — and they’ve been willing to give generously to make that happen — it’s our good fortune that our students are becoming computer literate, comfortable with distance learning, and ready to face a thriving future.



Long-term volunteer John Dhuey offered to work with our students to create a vegetable garden in the backyard at the Center. John met with the student committee to work together on plans for the garden.

The Character and Resilience of RRC Student Maria Sanchez

By Jane Stern



One of our volunteers, Jane Stern, advisory board member, teacher and Language Partner, is often struck by the incredible students who pass through the Rosalie Rendu Center each year.

A relative newcomer, Maria Sanchez came from Mexico when she was 19. Having finished Secundaria and earned a certificate in business, she was eager to start her adult life.

When her parents suddenly decided to move the family to California to join her older brother, her excitement quickly turned to despair. She was lost in a culture she didn't understand, hearing a language she didn't speak. Her brother's advice: "Get a driver's license and learn English, in that order!"

Maria was unhappy in the new country but determined to succeed. She quickly passed community college ESL classes, earned an AA in business and got a job at Bell Industries cleaning CDs on an assembly line. Working and going to school at the same time was a challenge. She attended classes Monday through Friday while working 12-hour shifts on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Maria married and had children. She was adamant about staying close to her young children but also wanted to move forward herself. "My mom was always there for me when I was young. I think that's where I got my confidence."

Maria Launches a Business

Maria saw an ad in the paper on a program for "All Women Who Want to Own a Business."

"I don't know where I found the courage, but I piled the kids in the car, drove to San Francisco, got terribly lost and was late for the first day of classes."

Students were to find a site to rent and create an imaginary business. Within weeks, Maria actually bought a small unit and began a business selling dresses and party supplies for the many religious celebrations in the area. For seven years, she poured money into the store and made it successful.

Maria then began volunteering at a juvenile detention center. "Those kids needed me too," she said. She sold her business and headed to Cañada College for a degree in psychology and counseling, "to help me help those kids."

When the new owner, unable to maintain the business, begged Maria to buy it back, she did -- unafraid to begin the work-school routine again. Then COVID-19. The family used most of their savings to help the business survive. At this point, Maria's husband is unemployed and business is very slow.

Maria often attends RRC classes via Zoom while tending to customers at the shop. Her dream to earn a degree in psychology and counseling sometimes seems far away.

"But I've got this," Maria said, and then, of course, went back to school!

Citizenship Class Preps for the Real Thing



Co-Teacher
Debra Stritchartz

Becoming a citizen is a complex process. Requirements include speaking English, having good moral character, establishing residency for five years, and a fundamental understanding of our country's history and values.

"Besides learning all the requirements for citizenship, students have to learn 100 questions and answers for the civics test — including history, geography and government," said Debra Stritchartz who co-teaches the class with Jane Stern.

"What they need to know and understand includes things like the three branches of government, the role of checks and balances, what an amendment is, who their current Senators are, and basic principles of democracy," said Debra.

"Students also have to show they can read and write in English," reports Debra. "They take dictation showing they understand the language."

"In the beginning, we have conversations, helping them become proficient in English," said Debra.

"We also help guide the students with mock interviews. They're asked questions such as, 'Why do you want to be here in the United States?'"

"Candidates for citizenship are also asked questions such as: Have you ever been a terrorist? Have you ever been a communist? Have you sold guns? Do you owe taxes?"

"They must easily speak about their family, their legal status; their marital status, and how they got here," said Debra.

In the actual citizenship test, of 100 possible questions — all of which the students are expected to learn — ten questions are asked in person and six correct answers are required to pass.

"After they've had their interview, they start the test where there are simple sentences to read, showing their proficiency in English, like 'George Washington is the first president of the US.'"

Even in the midst of studying a daunting amount of information, including civics — and not in their first language — the students and teachers manage to make the class fun, often with a lot of laughter, report both Jane and Debra.



Thank You!

Thank you to our friends who supported us from April, 2020 through May 1, 2021. Our apologies if we have missed anyone. Please let us know if we missed your name inadvertently.

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