



Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted

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Fall 2021

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

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Dear Friends & Supporters,

As leaves turn and fall colors greet us, changes abound here at the RRC. The students—masked and fully vaccinated—are back, learning English and building community in person.

The students' happy voices and laughter are heard from the classrooms, and the playful cries of their children resound from the Tot Spot—all warming my heart.

Updates from Students, Past and Present

When Marco called to invite me to his graduation into the Sheriff's Department, it truly brought tears to my eyes. This has been his dream since I have known him as a child when he and his family were at the Carriage Manor Apartments where we began the RRC over 20 years ago. Now, he and two of his siblings own their own homes, are married with children, and have launched their careers.



Sister T, Marco and his mother Hilda at Marco's graduation.

As we all know, reaching our goals takes time, stick-to-itiveness, and hard work. I've been blessed to hear many stories of students who have achieved their goals and dreams.

Sonia, after graduating from UC Berkeley and working for several years, is now on her long-chosen path to obtain her master's degree. Gloria, a present student, has a daughter who has followed her brother to UC Davis where both are studying biology and science. Ashley and Elizabeth, residents of Carriage Manor Apartments, are attending San Francisco State, pursuing medical and business careers. These young ladies have joined several other residents who are currently attending San Francisco and San Jose State.

Several former students are now owners of their own businesses. Stephanie, along with her husband, owns Diamond Window Cleaning, Dani owns a construction company, and several ladies have their own cleaning services.

Many Thanks to Our Language Partners

Our students are becoming more and more comfortable speaking in English, which gives them the courage to reach out.

More of our students have asked for Language Partners. If any of you are interested, or if you just have questions, please give me a call. It's a good way to serve God and Country! All it takes is one hour a week on Zoom or in person. The students and LP's love it.

All in all, without your love and support, many of our students would not be able to reach their goals for a better life for themselves and their children. Many thanks for all you do for us to help our students. If you are ever in the area, please stop by our new Center. There is street parking! Hurrah!

Blessings. Gratefully,

Sister Trinitas Hernandez, D.C., Executive Director



MINISTRY SERVICES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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Classrooms are Bustling this Fall

Our four daytime ESL classes are now held in person at the Center. Besides making it easier for students to learn English, in-person learning is a benefit to the students because it creates great opportunities for community building.

We continue to hold evening classes via Zoom — both ESL and Citizenship classes.



Generous Funding Flows to the Rosalie Rendu Center

Support from foundations and community funds ensures the Center's dynamic growth.



By Debbie Denton

The Rosalie Rendu Center is immensely grateful to have received support from many foundations and community funds in the past year.

The Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund, the Palo Alto Community Fund, the Facebook Local Community Fund, the Gellert Foundation, the CZI Local Community Fund, the Atkinson Foundation, and the LatinXCel Foundation have given us the funding needed to meet the needs of our adult students and their families during a difficult and trying year.

The funding has allowed us to finish renovating and furnishing our new building. We were able to continue to provide quality virtual instruction last year, as well as implement rigorous cleaning protocols to keep our students safe as we return to in-person instruction.

Foundation funds are being used to pay the salaries of our new evening teacher

and our new Tot Spot supervisor. We are now offering the six-week YMCA Project Cornerstone parenting program. We have started new citizenship preparation classes; and we're investigating ways we can help with immigration paperwork.

Most critically, we were able to help our families during this time of crisis— including offering mental health counseling and helping with rent and utility payments.

We are also grateful to the Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, spearheaded by Bill Somerville, for giving us funds to pay for our first family field trips in almost two years!

Student Committee Back in Action

New handbook on effective meetings by Stanford students.

The RRC Student Committee contributes ideas for directions that the Center takes, including enrichment and community building activities. One of their ideas for community building that will be implemented this fall includes all students meeting once a month outside of the classroom for team-building exercises.

During the spring semester, in our ongoing partnership with Stanford's Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford students volunteered, serving as mentors and Language Partners, as well as creating a handbook for the Student Committee, "Effective Meetings."

Students on the committee use the handbook often as they meet regularly to build community, advance their skills, and create activities and opportunities for all students.

A Special Visit from the Primary School of East Palo Alto

Visitors from the Primary School of East Palo Alto—a small private school founded by Priscilla Chan of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative—came to the Rosalie Rendu Center to learn about community resources. On the tour were Shawneece Stevenson, the Manager of Family Success Coaching, and the Primary School's team of wellness coaches.



Shawneece Stevenson

The Primary school is based on an innovative, collaborative academic and health model. It serves 300 children in the East Palo Alto and Belle Haven neighborhoods. Advisory board member Carrie Du Bois was able to sit down with Shawneece to reflect on the recent visit.

CARRIE: *Shawneece, when did you first hear about the work of Sister Trinitas and the Rosalie Rendu Center?*

SHAWNEECE: I'm not sure exactly but it was years ago. Sister Trinitas has a good reputation in East Palo Alto, so I heard about her several times. I think I first saw Sister Trinitas at an East Palo Alto City Council meeting during a conversation about more affordable housing. Sister was part of a housing committee and she spoke about the need for more low-income housing. I was impressed with her at the meeting but also heard about her ESL program over the years.

CARRIE: *Why did you decide to visit the Center with your Primary School colleagues?*

SHAWNEECE: Part of my job is to know about services in the community and we wanted to know more about citizenship programs and ESL programs currently running in East Palo Alto. We need to have good options for our families at the Primary School as part of our coaching program. We also knew that some of our families had been through the Rosalie Rendu Center and had heard good things. I thought it was time to take the team on a tour.

CB: *So what did you think of the Center?*

SS: Many of our families need more support and this is what the Rosalie Rendu Center offers.

I like the wrap-around model where it's more than just learning English. The Center is very nurturing and safe. Many of our parents are not ready to go directly to the community colleges for ESL classes. I think the Center is a great first step to help build confidence and improve communication skills.

After feeling more confident, we know some of the students of the Center go on to community college.

We also heard about the Center's family outings, supervised play groups and more; and we learned that the Center serves more than just Spanish speaking families. We serve more than Spanish speakers at our school. We were very impressed with Maria and Sister Trinitas and the work they do. I think that having women of faith leaders also adds another level of security and safety.

It was good for me and my team to learn about this resource in our community.



Introducing Cynthia Fagan, New Evening ESL Teacher

As our newest evening ESL teacher, Cynthia Fagan is teaching working students on Zoom every Tuesday and Thursday night. The students are excited to take advantage of this time to learn and study together.

Creative and energetic, Cynthia was born in West Texas. After one year of college, she ventured to California to become an actress in Hollywood.

"After eight years trying to get discovered in Hollywood, I moved to Santa Cruz," reported Cynthia. "I went back to college and earned my bachelor's degree at the University of California, Santa Cruz."

Cynthia has taught English in Tokyo, Japan, Watsonville, and San Jose at the adult education schools and in private companies. She recently retired and has been living in Milpitas.

One of Cynthia's favorite experiences was traveling on her own in Italy for six weeks. She also likes to scuba dive.



Carolyn Brennan Joins the Advisory Board

Longtime volunteer Carolyn Brennan joined the advisory board in March, 2021. She and her late husband Dick have been long-time supporters of the Center. Carolyn is a Language Partner for Sister Cristina. They converse in person at the Center on Friday mornings so that Sister can practice speaking in English.

“Sister Christina is a quick learner besides being such a dear person,” said Carolyn who enjoys the experience of being a Language Partner.

Carolyn is an artist and has brightened the lives of everyone who comes to the Center with her work, including selecting the paint colors for our new home; and all the cheerful signage at the Open House was Carolyn’s work.

Carolyn has served on the board at St. Elizabeth Seton School for many years. It was at one of their events that Carolyn encouraged Sister T to ask Dick if he would join the Conversation Club at the Center.

“It was love at first sight,” Carolyn reported. Dick became a beloved conversationalist and mentor to our students.

Carolyn’s professional work was in management sciences for SRI and Polaroid, and then in public policy. Following that, Carolyn returned to San Jose State to study graphic design. She volunteers at Art in Action as well as the Center, so her artistic talents benefit many in our community.

Welcome Maria Macias

Maria, a former student, has joined our team as our Tot Spot Supervisor.

Maria said she took the job because she loves children. And as the mother of eleven children and grandmother of ten, her credentials are outstanding!

The young children of our students just love her! And so do their mothers—grateful to her for readily sharing her wisdom and experience with babies, children and youth.

Maria is continuing ESL studies at the Sequoia Adult School.



Top: Maria Macias, Tot Spot Supervisor. Above: Sister T at the Tot Spot.

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