



Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted

2345 Pulgas Avenue, East Palo Alto, CA 94303

(650) 473-9522 • <https://www.rosalie-rendu-center.org/>

Fall 2022

ROSALIE RENDU C E N T E R

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Dear Friends & Loyal Supporters,

I can't believe that I'm writing for our Fall Newsletter! Summer has come and gone and, as you read on, you will discover how productive and fun our volunteer-led summer workshops were.

Now, our fall session is in full swing and God has blessed us with many new students.

Almost 25 years ago, the Center started out small: just the enthusiastic volunteers from the Junior League of Palo Alto•Mid Peninsula who served as teachers, and me.

Since the beginning, our logo, a watering can refreshing the fertile soil of our families, and our motto, "where seeds are planted," have expressed our mission to awaken and cultivate our students' potential for growth and progress. Initially through English as a Second Language instruction, and now also through our Conversation Club, Language Partners, and various workshops, we have equipped our students to take the initiative to further their own education and to encourage their children to pursue higher education. We have been blessed to see the next generation graduate from college, enter rewarding careers, and become homeowners.

This September, we again began planting seeds with new learners, several of whom are recent arrivals to the U.S., having lived here for less than a year. All are eager to learn their new language. To meet this need, we opened two Introduction to English classes. The day class has 14 students, and the evening class has 25, with 17 on the waiting list.

Hearing about the benefits of working with a Language Partner from their classmates, several of our Intermediate Level learners are requesting to be matched with a volunteer to improve their speaking ability and increase their confidence by having regular conversations with a fluent English speaker from the broader community. Knowing Spanish is not necessary to become a Language Partner. It only requires patience and an hour a week to befriend and encourage an English language learner. **If you are interested in becoming a Language Partner, please give me a call at (650) 473-9522.** You will feel energized and blessed to help our wonderful students.

Tending a garden takes much work and, with the help of many of you, "seeds have been planted" and continue to produce fruit. God bless each of you for your love and support over the years.

Gratefully yours,

Sister Trinitas Hernandez, D.C., Executive Director

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



In a summer workshop designed to build culinary skills, students learned to make spring rolls. Sister T, a resident expert, shows a student how it's done.

In This Issue

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- Summer Workshops Advanced Students' Art and Language Skills
- Skilled Kiwanis Club Members Tackled Big Projects on our Wish List
- Family Night Generated Homefront Support for New Students

P.S. **SAVE THE DATE! On April 29, 2023, 2-4 p.m., we will celebrate the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Rosalie Rendu Center. The success of our students and you—our generous supporters and volunteers—deserve celebrating! Details will follow.**

Summer Workshops Advance Language Learning by Engaging Students' Love of Arts and Culture

By Karen Engelbart



Poet Charlotte Muse sparked the imaginations of her workshop students by directing them to create a sculpture while they were blindfolded.



After studying the life and art of Georgia O'Keefe, a student creates a work of her own.



Artist Carolyn Brennan directed a workshop about the lives and artistic styles of iconic painters, including self portraits by Frieda Kahlo.

This summer, we offered workshops led by accomplished artist and Advisory Board Member Carolyn Brennan, and renowned poet and author Charlotte Muse. Besides being insightful and talented in their respective fields, Carolyn and Charlotte are compelling teachers who introduced our students to world-class poets and artists, and provided them with opportunities to create their own art and poetry in the diverse styles of artistic legends.

Students Study Distinguished Artists Kahlo, O'Keefe and Kusama

Over the course of three workshops, Carolyn introduced the students to the world-renowned painter from Mexico, Freida Kahlo; American painter, Georgia O'Keefe; and Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama.

"The students all read from a short biography of the artists," reported Carolyn. "We then had a brief discussion about the artists and I showed examples of their work. Inspired by these artists, they then worked on a related art project."

Carolyn had the students paint a portrait inspired by Kahlo; decorate a pumpkin in the artistic style of Yayoi Kusama and paint flowers like Georgia O'Keefe.

"The willingness of the women to engage in each of these projects was amazing," Carolyn reported. "They were creative and plunged right in. What an enjoyable time it was!"

"I found it fascinating learning about Frida Kahlo's lifestyle," student Gloria said. "She was authentic, liberal, rebellious, and a feminist. She carried a unique image without caring about social stereotypes. Regarding her paintings, I liked how she used a self portrait to portray her life experiences."

"Trini lit up when I asked her about her experience with the summer workshops," reported Maria Lozano, Program Director. The normally shy student liked learning about the painters, expanding her knowledge, and picking up tips on drawing portraits.

In the Poetry Workshop, Students Discover Nobel Prize-Winning Latin Poets

"I love Latin American poetry," said Charlotte. "I included some poems by Gabriela Mistral, the first Latin American woman poet to win the Nobel Prize. Gabriela entered a nationwide poetry contest and—to everyone's astonishment—she won, and went on to become world famous as a poet and a diplomat.

"And, of course, I included poems by Pablo Neruda, one of my favorite poets. Neruda is one of Chile's most beloved public figures, a prolific poet and also an international diplomat," Charlotte said.

"I liked the poem 'Amor' by Pablo Neruda," Gloria reported. "I felt that his words transmitted personal moments in a natural

way which made me nostalgic. I connected to his poem," the student reported.

"The magic I find in the best Latin American poetry is its simplicity of language and its deep human understanding. It isn't affected or self conscious—usually! It's written for everyone to read and enjoy, and it contains so much love of life."

"As to the workshop itself," Charlotte explained, "I try to invent exercises that surprise people into thinking in a different way."

An art project she brought to the class was one she tried herself. She had the students put on a blindfold and make an object out of Play-Doh.

"Then they respond in some way to what they made. Most people have untapped unconscious resources; and much more imagination than they think they do!" Charlotte reported.

"I thought the students in the workshop did wonderful work."



In for a Penny, in for a Pound

Taking on a New Role: Managing the Finances

By Dick Hutsell

Editor's Note: Richard (Dick) Hutsell (above right), an Advisory Board member and RRC's computer consultant and teacher, has taken on yet another role: managing the Center's finances.

My work with the Center began when Sister T asked if I could help set up a class to teach basic computer skills to her students. It was 2016 and I had just retired from more than 30 years as head of technology for the Daughters of Charity Health System.

I had met Sister T many times when she served on the Board of Directors at several of our hospitals. Initially, I worked with Sister T and Maria to organize a program to teach our students computer literacy and find resources and class materials from around the country. I had taught doctors, nurses and hospital executives how to use computer technology to do their work faster and better, so I thought I could teach the RRC class.

The launch of the computer class would have been a disaster without Maria and Sister T's translating skills. At that time — and still today — I did not speak a word of Spanish. Without their participation, it would have been impossible.

When COVID hit and shut down in-person learning, in lieu of teaching, I started to help set up a budget for this year.

When Jeanna Essick, the bookkeeper and administrative assistant, began making plans to move back to the Chicago area, Sister T asked if I knew anyone who could replace her. I volunteered to do the bookkeeping part and shadowed Jeanna for several months.

When the Center moved, Maria was able to get new MacBook Air computers through the Streetcode Academy. Streetcode's mission is to bring the Bay Area spirit and expertise on technology and innovation to communities of color.

I then got us connected with TechSoup, another technology company that works with major software and hardware companies to offer products at attractive prices to qualifying non-profit organizations. We've obtained QuickBooks and Google products to make the Center's "back office" functions more efficient and effective.

What started as helping set up a computer program led to teaching computer skills, and now managing the finances for the Center.

I love it!

The Center is Thrilled to Announce Our New Employee Sandra Godoy

By Carrie Du Bois



The Rosalie Rendu Center is excited to announce our newest staff member, Sandra Godoy. Sandra will work as the new office administrative assistant. She comes with fabulous community work experience and a passion for helping others. Sandra formerly worked at the East Palo Alto Library where she planned community events and served as a library assistant, focusing on customer service and communication.

Sandra's sister told her about the Rosalie Rendu job opening and she immediately applied for the job. Her sister has volunteered at the Center as an art teacher and is a big fan of the work.

Sandra is a busy working mom with three children, ages 2 1/2, 8 and 14. She lived in East Palo Alto from 1983 to 2015 and now resides in Palo Alto. She is excited to be back in the community working and helping other moms.

"I'm proud to work for this organization that helps families navigate their children's education," said Sandra. She's also "very happy to be working for a wonderful non-profit" where students learn to speak, read and write English, and so much more.

As a mother herself, Sandra understands how much support families need, especially newcomers. She feels it's important to give back to the community by serving others. The Center is a positive and happy place to work, so everything about the opportunity appealed to her.

Sandra is looking forward to planning meaningful events and socials, and supporting the Center's teachers. She also hopes to develop clear communication channels with the students so they can quickly access any help they need. Sandra will also be managing donations as they come to the Center.

Sandra attended her first Advisory Board meeting recently and was introduced to advisory board members on Zoom and in live attendance. It was a great way to get to know advisors from the community and The Daughters of Charity.

Welcome, Sandra. We are so happy to have you join us.



A Network of Blessings

By Maria Lozano

Earlier this year, Judy Deggeller joined our enthusiastic team of volunteers as a Language Partner after her friend, Kristine Erving, told her about how much she enjoyed being one. As Sister T gave her a tour of the Center, Judy asked if there were any house projects that needed doing, since her husband, Marty, and fellow members of the **Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto** (<https://palo-alto.kiwanisone.org/>) were always looking for community projects. Sister T showed Judy the entryway closet that could use some shelves. Judy responded with a twinkle in her eye, "Oh, Sister, they like BIG projects."

Soon after, Marty came by the Center and our wish list started taking shape. Before we knew it, John, Kristine's husband, presented us with a sketch of our future xeriscape front yard. John and Marty promptly got to work, pruning the rose bushes and fruit trees. A volunteer, completing community service, prepared the front and back yards by pulling up most of the grass.

Our new Kiwanian friends: Brian, Kimo, and Girvin came by and started planning for two workdays. On a bright May and a warm July morning, a contingent of Kiwanians took over the Center, joined by three of our students' husbands. The front yard's transformation included two strawberry trees provided by **Canopy** (<https://canopy.org/>).

Among the various tasks:

- Children's books were organized and categorized for easier lending to our families.
- More visible house numbers were installed.
- The garage doors received a facelift.
- The hot water heater closet was painted to match the exterior of the house.
- The front door was revarnished.

Recalling the words of the Center's namesake,

"A Daughter of Charity must be like a milestone on a street corner where all those who pass by can rest and lay down their heavy burdens,"

Sister T had a special request of Brian: a small bench for people to rest while they wait at the bus stop in front of the Center.

Thanks to a generous grant from the **Carl Gellert and Celia Berta Gellert Foundation**, the backyard received a similar makeover. Now, our Tot Spot children have a better surface to play and ride tricycles.



(Above): Our front yard was transformed from a thirsty lawn to a water-conserving landscape, created for us by volunteers from the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto.

(Right): On Family Night, our students and their husbands brainstormed best ways on the home front to support our new language learners. Carrie Du Bois (L) and other advisory board members, staff, and volunteers joined in the supportive strategizing.



We recently hosted a Family Night attended by students, their families, some of our Language Partners, and Advisory Board members. (Family Nights at the Center are evenings designed to help the students' families understand the kind of commitment and hard work their loved one has undertaken to learn English.)

The backyard was the perfect setting for conversation and making new friends.

We are very grateful to the Kiwanians for contributing to the enhancement of the Center's mission to create a safe and welcoming environment for learning and community building.

And, yes, they did install shelves in that closet.



The holidays are coming!

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