



# Rosalie Rendu Center ... where seeds are planted

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## Fall 2023

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

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### In This Issue

- *An Interview with Maria Lozano*
- *Workshops with Stanford Volunteers*
- *Donor Maureen Kennedy*
- *Ukrainian Student*
- *Governing Board Profiles*

*Dear Friends,*

As we enter this golden season of thanksgiving and celebration, we are deeply grateful for and joyfully celebrate YOU! Your support and encouragement throughout the years have sustained the people and work of the Rosalie Rendu Center.

Our jubilant 25th Anniversary Fiesta in April gave us the opportunity to reminisce with old friends and to look forward to the work ahead with confident anticipation. This confidence springs from our witnessing God’s provision of eager students, compassionate volunteers and staff, and faithful donors.

After a summer filled with volunteers leading a variety of workshops and Fridays on the patio with the Conversation Club, we prepared for fall registration and classes.

As I observed the arrival of returning and new students, it occurred to me that registration at the Rosalie Rendu Center is more than a process; it is a really festive occasion. Returning students were greeted with warm handshakes, hugs, and smiles. We reflected on how much English they have acquired since we first met them and how much more confident they are now.

Registration is also our first opportunity to have a personal exchange with new students, learning about their interests, challenges, and goals. It is an expression of our vision to affirm the value and worth of each individual. They leave encouraged in their decision to dedicate precious time and energy to coming to class to learn English.

As students spread the word about our classes, we continue to receive calls from interested students, especially for evening classes. We have a growing waiting list.

If you have been considering how you can become more involved in the work and joy of our community of learning, we have a variety of vital volunteer roles waiting for you: ESL instructor, teaching assistant, language partner, to name a few. Contact Sr. T and she will provide you with more information.

This year has brought us many blessings, not the least of which are the members of our Governing Board of Directors. They all have a heart for the people and mission of the Rosalie Rendu Center. We have the pleasure of introducing them to you in this newsletter. Additionally, we are looking forward to new community collaborations as we seek to nurture and respond to our students’ aspirations to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

Thank you for being our partners in this endeavor. May the Lord bless you as you gather with your family and friends this season.

Sincerely,

Maria Lozano  
Executive Director



# Maria Lozano is at the Helm as Executive Director

By Carrie DuBois

*I was so excited to interview Maria Lozano. Before our lunch conversation, I did a quick Google search on qualities of exceptional leaders. Biblical references of leadership came up on the top of my feed. I thought that was interesting since our non-profit is guided by the principles of the Daughters of Charity. In Colossians, leadership is said to call for kindness, compassion, patience, humility, and gentleness. All these traits came through during my conversation with Maria.*

## **Q. Tell me about your background.**

A. I was born and raised in Salinas, California. Both of my parents came from Chihuahua, Mexico located south of Texas. My parents were immigrants which helped to shape my thinking. I was able to get into Stanford after high school but wasn't a great college student at that time. I ended up dropping out of college but went back to Stanford 20 years later. I originally planned to major in French but later switched to Linguistics. During my second time at Stanford, I was in the community-based organization class that was partially taught by Bill Somerville. During that class — to learn more about parent involvement programs — I was able to visit the Rosalie Rendu Center and meet Sister T and some of her students. Several years after college, I volunteered at Project Read and became interested in teaching English to immigrants. I also volunteered in Belle Haven and at the Sequoia Adult School. During this time, I discovered my passion for teaching and working with the community. I decided to get my Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Certificate at UC Santa Cruz Extension. I eventually started teaching at the Rosalie Rendu Center.

## **Q. What was it like for you when you started to work at the Rosalie Rendu Center?**

A. It was pure joy for me to work with students who wanted to better their lives. I met many moms with young children who were eager to learn. I had a strong bond with my students and I was also impressed because students developed such a strong bond with each other. At the same time, I was learning so much from Sister T. I remember one of our first field trips was to the San Francisco Zoo. We took several families, and I loved the

strong sense of a community we were building.

## **Q. Now that you've taken the helm, what are your thoughts on leadership?**

A. We are really growing, so that presents some new challenges for us. I'm currently looking at how to secure new classroom space and that is exciting. The need is there and we really want to serve more students. We also have more men participating in the program than ever before. Women who come to the Center are often motivated by the need to better communicate with their children's schools and health care providers. Men are coming because they want to improve their positions at work or find better jobs. Our students are serious about improving their language skills. We also now have students from different countries and cultures than we have had in the past, so that has truly enriched our program. We're also recruiting more Language Partners. Growth is something I'm very mindful about. We also have high demand for Introductory Level and Level 1 classes which has meant some reorganizing of classes to meet the current need. The Citizenship classes have also been very successful. We cheer everytime we receive a text message or phone call from a student saying, "I passed!"

## **Q. How do Sister T and the Daughters of Charity support you?**

A. Sister T is helping with the recruitment and management of volunteers — a big job, so I'm grateful for her expertise in that area. The Daughters of Charity have also been a valuable resource — always available to answer my questions and offer guidance. I feel very well supported. The Daughters' long history in serving the poor provides the



Maria presented Reina Peña with a Certificate of Completion in June at our family barbecue.

perfect umbrella for our program. They are role models in patience, compassion and perseverance; and they understand the importance of flexibility and changing needs.

## **Q. Is there one student story that has most inspired you?**

A. There are many. One that comes to mind is when our student Gloria broke her leg. The volunteers and other students came together to help her. One of our language partner volunteers is in the health field, so she was able to help Gloria navigate all the medical appointments and help with questions to ask her medical team. It was amazing to see all the support come her way.

## **Q. It seems that you have found your calling and you love your job.**

A. I do love my job and I'm so lucky. There is so much to be proud of here with our amazing partnerships, the people working to serve, and our student-centered approach. All of the work is so inspiring.

*Thank you Maria!*



## Stanford Volunteers Held Workshops to Enhance Our Students' Job Interview Skills

By Maria Lozano

Volunteers from Stanford Health Care's Emerging Professionals Employee Resource Group shared vital tips to help our students prepare for jobs and participate in successful job interviews.

The Center's students took part in mock interviews, practicing how to talk about their strengths, work experience, and skills — all with the expertise and support of our volunteers from Stanford!

Thank you, Jaelyn, Michelle, Sanam, Loto, and Sigi for investing your time

and knowledge in helping our students uncover their potential value to an employer and gain confidence in preparing for and participating in a high-pressure speaking situation. Our students were energized by these engaging workshops.

Members of Michelle's Human Resources Talent Acquisition Group have shown interest in becoming Language Partners and developing our students' employment potential. We look forward to bringing this new opportunity to our students.



## Dedicated Donor Maureen Kennedy Believes in the Power of Giving to Local Non-Profits

By Sally Falkenhagen

Maureen Kennedy, a long-time donor, learned about the Center through her membership in the Junior League of Palo Alto-Mid Peninsula ("the League"). When Sister T founded the Center, she developed a partnership with the League to help with funding and volunteers in the early years.

The Center was popular with League members because of the important service it provides to our community. Maureen regularly reads the newsletter to stay in touch and continues her support because the Center is so successful in teaching ESL.

Maureen was an active member of the League. She served on the committee that established the Tech Museum of Innovation ([www.thetech.org](http://www.thetech.org)). She then joined the staff of the Tech Museum as its CFO and served there for twenty years until her retirement.

Maureen's philanthropy is aimed at smaller, local nonprofit organizations that don't have as much access to larger funders as large, nationally known nonprofits. She believes that our community of individuals should support vital local nonprofits.

Maureen and her husband — David Kennedy, a retired consulting environmental engineer — each have their own favorite charities but they honor and respect each other's choices for philanthropy.

We're profoundly grateful for the support of faithful donors like Maureen and others who are crucial to our success.



## Ukrainian Student Embraces Her New Community at the Rosalie Rendu Center

By Carolyn Brennan

It was a long journey for Tetyana Menshykova from her beach home in Crimea, Ukraine on the Black Sea to California.

When the Russians began the war in Ukraine, Tetyana and her husband, Oleksandr, moved here where they had often visited their son, Danil. Their daughter, Anastasia, and her husband and three children joined them in May.

Originally from Russia, Tetyana graduated from the Institute of Culture, got married in Crimea, and began working with children in the Palace of Culture. She then earned a degree in accounting and auditing and served as an accountant for five years. Aware of the new technologies

available, she opened a travel agency using the internet.

Tetyana studied English in Ukraine but felt the need to practice. Through a friend, she found the Center near her home. She participates in all the classes and events: English class with Jason ("a good teacher"); Conversation Club; summer school classes; Language Partners; and field trips. She also baked a Ukrainian carrot cake for the students and taught them about Ukraine.

Tetyana and her family are happy here and they're committed to staying.

Her positive attitude is reflected in her statement "Never give up!" Laskavo prosymo, Tetyana.



## Student Gloria Gabriela del Rio Joins the Advisory Board

By Carolyn Brennan

As a new Advisory Board member, Gloria del Rio's input will be presenting the student community perspective — a critical role at the Center. For now she says she is listening.

Gloria is from the Michoacan area of Mexico on the Pacific Coast. The eldest of five, she still has family living there including a talented brother who is a well known photographer, painter, and creator of masks.

Her family first came to California seventy years ago when her grandfather was a part of the Bracero program. Her family has now been here for five generations.

Gloria has been a full time mom with three sons and a daughter. Her daughter, a junior at UC Davis, is studying biomedical engineering; one son, a senior at UC Davis, is studying biochemical engineering; a second son is a senior at the Menlo School applying to colleges to study computer engineering; and a third son, a junior at the Menlo School, hopes to be an Architect. An impressive accomplishment raising such students!

Gloria has also found community outside her home — particularly at the Rosalie Rendu Center. She has been coming for five years, although she said it was difficult at first. But she is now an enthusiastic participant enjoying Conversation Club; homework class with a teacher; working with a language partner, Judy; and attending many of the summer programs offered. Of particular interest to her is listening to the interactions of students and teachers.

In an interview with the *Palo Alto Weekly* two years ago, Gloria reported that learning how to speak English has been valuable for many reasons, including speaking with her children's healthcare providers and teachers without a translator. In one less traditional way, speaking English helped her report a hit and run driver to the police. They were able to capture the runaway driver and Gloria was able to collect necessary insurance information.

*Welcome to the Advisory Board, Gloria.*

## Newly Elected Governing Board

By Martha Edwards

This spring, a new governing board for the Rosalie Rendu Center was elected by the Ministry Services of Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Our new governing board has responsibility for fiducial and legal duties and reflects the diversity of the population we serve. The governing board brings valuable resources to help sustain and improve our ability to fulfill our mission. It is composed of three members of the Daughters of Charity and six local community members.

**SR. PACITA CALICA, D.C.**, has been a Daughter of Charity for 36 years. She served as an educator for 20 years, and currently serves as the Provincial Secretary of the Province of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. She is the chair of the board.

**JENNIFER CASTELLO** retired in 2019 after 43 years of teaching ESL at Cañada College. She has spent the past four years enjoying life and interacting with many different people: babysitting grandchildren, volunteering in the community, and visiting family and friends around the world.

**CONCEPCION (CONY) FUENTES** is the Program Director of Una Vida, the Spanish language services branch of One Life Counseling Center. She is responsible for developing and integrating life-enhancing services for the community; and expanding the bilingual volunteer programs and community celebrations. Her past experience includes serving as Case Manager for Catholic Charities.

**STEWART HYLAND** is a nonprofit professional with experience in database management and affordable home advocacy. He has been a community and union organizer in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. At St. Francis of Assisi, he is a catechist, Knight of Peter Claver, and President of the SFA Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul San Mateo.

**SR. PATRICIA MIGUEL, D.C.**, has worked with children and families for many years as a Daughter of Charity. She looks forward to serving on the Rosalie Rendu

Board as our programs continue to develop. She is the secretary/treasurer of the board.

**SR. ESTELA MORALES, D.C.**, has been a Daughter of Charity for 56 years. She is a social worker with a special love for working with young children and their families. She is the vice-chair of the board.

**SARAH ROSENDAHL** is a retired public policy professional and community volunteer. Her work in East Palo Alto dates back to the early 1990s as one of the founders of Rebuilding Together Peninsula. Her community work is focused on supporting children and youth in foster care. Her professional work was focused on issues such as housing, transportation and agriculture.

**JOSE TALAVERA** is the Associate Director of Advocacy at KIPP Public Schools Northern California. Jose has worked with youth from different socio-economic backgrounds. He engages local leaders and community members from the Peninsula to promote leadership development of low-income families through community organizing and advocacy. He also serves as a board member at Canopy in Palo Alto.

**YESICA VERA** is a community and tech educator. She works at Think Together in San Jose to provide access to resources, opportunities for achievement in higher academics, and fun extracurricular activities before and after school.

