



WALC Talk

Fall 2015

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President’s Message

by Pat Almada

“You must be the change you want to see in the world,” Gandhi once said. Some think that it is impossible for a single individual to make a difference in our troubled world, but I disagree. Simple acts of kindness such as helping another human being without asking for anything in return, do make a difference. Our collective efforts as WALC tutors have indeed made a difference in our little corner of the world. Sometimes the benefits of tutoring are not readily evident; they show up years later as occurred for Andrew, one of our middle school students. His mother stopped me at the YMCA the other day to tell me how well Andrew was doing in high school. “It’s been two years since Andrew left WALC but now he has matured and is taking school very seriously. He is able to focus and realizes that the help his tutor gave him has helped him succeed!” she told me with such joy.

With just six months left in my term as president, I would like to thank all of our tutors for helping us comply with the fingerprinting requirements and for your patience and help during our training period for Maria. She is now in “full command” of our program and is ready to move our organization forward. Our incredible board of directors made the transition flawless; I thank each and every one of you. It has been an honor and privilege to serve this awesome organization and I look forward to helping our new president in the years ahead!



Introducing Maria, WALC Program Coordinator

Hello, my name is Maria Alejandra Olvera and I am the new Program Coordinator at the Whittier Area Literacy Council.

I am a Cal State Los Angeles alumni. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology that emphasizes in Inequalities and Diversity, and a minor in Social Gerontology. I was born and raised in the unincorporated East Los Angeles, CA.

I am mother of a 7-year-old boy and of a 1-year-old girl, and I'm also a wife. In the near future, I would like to continue to pursue higher education for the Master's Program in Social Work or Family Counseling.



Not Only English

By Lucy Alaniz as told by Luba and Tamara

Many wonderful tutoring stories were told at our inaugural Tutor Social. A noteworthy contribution was that of Luba G. about her ESL student, Tamara. About six months ago, Tamara came to tutoring looking worried. She asked if Luba might help her fill out an application for housing. Tamara said, "Too many questions, can you help me?" Together they filled it out.

A few weeks later, Tamara received an answer. Luba said, "Her application had been rejected!" She wanted to find out why Tamara had been denied and decided to call the credit bureau that had sent the rejection. They stated that Tamara had an outstanding debt disqualifying her application.

Luba explained that when Tamara first came to the United States she became very ill and was hospitalized. Unable to fully pay the hospital bill of \$33,000, she was considered a bad credit risk. Luba wanted to find a resolution to help Tamara saying, "It was unfair to her and I thought we had to fight."

They discussed possible actions at each tutoring session. Luba resolved to call the hospital to explain Tamara's situation and to ask if the debt could be modified. The hospital representative recommended she call Dignity Health in Sacramento.

After several calls and more forms to fill out, they received the news that her debt was cleared. Tamara was now able to resubmit her application for housing. Full of hope, they waited. Each time they met for tutoring, Luba asked, "Any good news today, Tamara?" But the answer was always "No". Then at long last, Tamara happily said, "Good news today." Tamara showed Luba the letter of approval for housing. With delight Tamara told her, "I am on the list! I see the floor plan of the apartment!"

Smiling at each other Luba summed up the experience with, "I feel very good that I was able to help my student. She is very dedicated and she deserves the best." Tamara added, "My Luba, give me good tutoring, not only English."

SCRABBLE TOURNAMENT

WALC's 9th annual Scrabble Challenge fundraiser was held on Friday, October 16, 2015, in Newman Hall. We thank First Christian Church for their generosity in offering the use of Newman Hall for this event.

WALC's 2015 Scrabble Challenge was a success thanks to all those in attendance, including the Scrabble Challenge participants and all the volunteers whose efforts contributed to a successful, fun-filled evening. We are especially grateful to our Scrabble committee.



WALC would like to thank our grant funders, whose generosity and commitment sustains WALC in our mission to provide literacy skills to our students.

**BCM Foundation
City of Whittier
East Whittier Lions Club
Whittier Sunrise Rotary Club
Weingart Foundation
Whittier/Hacienda Heights**

Family Literacy Night

WALC will again offer three Family Literacy Nights during the 2015-16 academic year. The first one has already been held. The dates for the next two are February 24th and April 27th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. (dates are subject to change). Our November FLN was well attended. Our guest speaker for the evening was WALC's board member, Lisa Dabbs. She spoke about technology tools in the classroom, such as the use of chromebooks, tablets, PCs and Macbooks among others. She mentioned different web-based software and iPad Apps that help in the development of literacy skills. She also stressed the importance of being vigilant as to what websites your children visit.

We encourage parents to assist the upcoming Literacy Nights. Keep in mind that we always have offered childcare so parents are able to attend. Maria Olvera will be mailing flyers as the event dates get closer. We would also like to thank all WALC board members that help put on these events.



Tutor Support

Exchanges of helpful teaching strategies, discussions of frustrating times, and sharing of successful interventions: these were some of the happenings at WALC's Tutor Social on October 23. In our one-to-one connections with our students, tutors do not always have the opportunity to interact with one another. Thus it was that the idea came about for tutors to meet to discuss one another's joys and concerns.

One recently retired tutor with a background in special education was able to offer suggestions to a tutor who needed some tips. Another tutor shared a story of having helped her student beyond the realm of the hourly tutoring sessions. Tutors with many years of experience were able to talk to tutors who had been tutoring for just a couple of weeks. The event reinforced the fact that WALC tutors are certainly the core of our organization!

WALC conducts three Tutor Support Workshops throughout the year. Our first one was held on November 18 with a wonderful turnout. Tutors first heard about a program called Rewards, introduced by Celia McCabe, a retired teacher tutor who has a background in training student teachers. This program focuses on phonics, prefixes, and suffixes and guides students to more successfully read new words.

Pat Almada, WALC's president and a former principal, presented a program called Megawords, which aids with students' decoding, spelling, and understanding of multisyllabic words. For those students who struggle with sounding out words, Megawords can provide a helpful tool. We have already been able to measure growth in some of our students through the use of these programs and encourage more tutors to use them.

The last portion of our tutor support program, presented by Lucy Alaniz and Barbara Walters, WALC's tutor trainers, introduced the writing prompt for our Soup and a Good Book story. This year the topic is "Someone I Admire." Guidelines for submitting students' writing were discussed.

Those tutors who missed the workshop will be able to pick up handouts in the WALC office.

Upcoming Events

WALC Closed
Dec. 21, 2015 – January 1, 2016

New Tutor Training
January 16, 23, and 30, 2016
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

WALC Mission Statement:

To provide literacy and ESL programs for adults and children who are in need of better skills and to train volunteers to perform these services.

Through your generous donation, you can help WALC achieve its mission.

See Maria for more info.

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