



the Lantern

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A newsletter of the Presentation Lantern Center
Sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, IA

★ Divine Word College recognizes Lantern Center

By Emily Sheded

On Nov. 30, Divine Word College presented the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque with the 2023 Matthew 25 Award to recognize the organization's work improving the lives of immigrants in the greater Dubuque area.

The award was established at DWC in 2001 to honor those in or connected to the area, who minister in the spirit of the Bible passage Matthew 25:35-36: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

The Lantern Center offers hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants at no cost. Students can work one-on-one with tutors to improve their English skills, prepare for the citizenship exam, learn practical life skills and meet people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In 2002, the center was opened by the Sisters of the Presentation after research showed a great need for these types of services in the area. Since then, the Lantern Center has served more than 1,700 adult immigrants.



Divine Word student Angel tutors Lantern Center student Junieth as she prepared for her citizenship exam.



Presentation Lantern Center founder Corine Murray, PBVM; Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD; Lantern Center executive director Megan Ruiz; and Carmen Hernandez, PBVM leadership team, celebrate the Lantern Center's Matthew 25 award from Divine Word College.

"I feel like we're able to meet the needs of our community because of the generosity of our volunteers," said Megan Ruiz, Executive Director of the Lantern Center. Each year, volunteers give between 3,000 and 4,300 hours of their time at the center.

Among those volunteers are a handful of Divine Word College students who spend a few hours each week working directly with immigrants. More than 90 percent of the students at Divine Word College are international students. Many of them know what it's like to move to the United States and not speak English, so they bring a unique perspective to the immigrants who they tutor.

Much like the spirit of the passage from Matthew 25, the staff at the Lantern Center have never turned away an immigrant seeking the organization's services. "Nothing compares to how rewarding this position is," Ruiz said. "The adults who study here, we befriend them and welcome them to the community, and they're just grateful beyond words."

Divine Word College is the only Roman Catholic undergraduate seminary in the U.S. dedicated to educating men and women for missionary service. It is owned and operated by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), the largest missionary order of priests and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church.



Sr. Hilda of Divine Word plays Candyland with the child of a Lantern Center student in the Center's children's play area.



'Driving' education for immigrant women

Though Lantern Center tutoring focuses on English and citizenship, our students often need multiple supports to navigate a bewildering and foreign world. We work hard to meet students wherever they are in life and help them gain the resources to be successful.

Several of our students need to learn how to drive in order to facilitate their independence, professional growth and financial stability. Driving class is a growing need for Lantern Center students, especially as we have begun to serve more students from Central and South Asia. To help facilitate driving courses, we provided scholarships with the help of money from United Way and other grant funds, to several women who were learning to drive.

The women utilized Dubuque Driving Academy, while our student Gul Naz, who is fluent in English and Pashto, devoted significant time to interpreting for the driving students. Gul sat with them through lessons and made sure that they understood the concepts of American driving that were being presented in English. Her dedication is just one of the many ways that we see our students pay it forward, helping others who face significant roadblocks in their American journey.

With this education and support through interpretation, the first of this driving school cohort has now earned her license! Cities like

Dubuque are designed for drivers, and she can now enjoy a mobility that many Americans take for granted.

While our core programming remains unchanged in our 21 years of existence, the Lantern Center seeks to be nimble and provide help where it is most needed. Driving lesson support is just one way that we work to help our many neighbors who come to Dubuque seeking a better life.



Gul Naz, a student at the Lantern Center and Divine Word College, visits with Lantern Center executive director, Megan Ruiz at the college's Mission Sunday, in October. Gul, who has a teaching degree from her native country Pakistan, had been looking to return to school for an intensive English program & perhaps pursue an Iowa teaching license or other bachelor's degree.

Mary Lou Mauss retiring from board

This December, we bid a board farewell to Mary Lou Mauss, who is retiring after nine years as an active and enthusiastic board member, serving as vice president for six of those years. Mary Lou has helped plan and carry out beautifully coordinated volunteer appreciation picnics, Lighting the Lantern events, as well as serving on the Presentation Lantern Center's marketing and development committee. Mary Lou has a tireless heart for the Presentation Lantern Center mission and, as a proud Presentation associate, always extends a spirit of hospitality.

Years ago, she even volunteered to watch our executive director's young son when he was sick with the flu a couple weeks after she started the position. Not wanting Mary Lou to become ill (or have that kind of a first impression ;), Megan declined, and Grandma came in clutch - but if that isn't hospitality and welcoming someone as if they are family or living out Matthew 25, we're not sure what is!

The Lantern Center has benefited from her sound judgment, strong work ethic and thoughtfulness. We greatly appreciate the many friends and family she frequently, proudly introduced to the center, some of whom have become supporters or volunteers over the years, such as Catholic Financial Life and her former employer, Midwest One (formerly American Trust).

While we're naturally sad her official term with us has concluded, we are moreover grateful to know she will stay close, as she generously offered to continue to be a member of our hospitality and advocacy committee, and we are grateful.



Mary Lou Mauss



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The Presentation Lantern Center is a drop-in center offering hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants, especially women, who are striving to better their lives. Founded by the Sisters of the Presentation, the Center is generously sustained through donations from our founders and individual donors like you. Thank you and God bless you.

HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
10 am-3 pm

Tuesday and Thursdays:
1-7 pm

Contact us at

563-557-7134
info@thelanterncenter.org

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