

Rosa Alvarez, Project More

Rosa's nominator, Barbara T. Burger, describes Rosa as, "a truly exemplified tutor who cares about the community and is devoted to helping her students make a better life for themselves and their children." When Rosa first began teaching a classroom of over thirty parents last year, she showed no apprehension. She is a flexible tutor and teacher, as well as a positive influence to both her students and co-teachers.

Rocio Arreola, St. Joseph Services

Trained as a teacher in Mexico, Rocio serves as a skilled, bi-lingual tutor and teacher at her organization. Her nominator, Lisa Sullivan, describes Rocio as, "the backbone to our tutoring program," as Rocio often substituted for tutors last summer. Rocio takes great pride in her students' accomplishments, with one of her students learning how to type, use Microsoft Word and the internet in just four months.

Cathy Backer, Howard Area Community Center

Cathy's nominator, Alexis Hansford, used these words to describe Cathy's work: creative, caring, compassionate and patient. Cathy goes above and beyond her responsibilities as a tutor by driving her student to appointments, bringing her lunch, and encouraging her to utilize the other resources at HACC. By meeting for tutoring twice a week, Cathy's student, who was inspired to seek a tutor when her daughter began college, has shown much improvement with her literacy skills.

Sara Belger, Carl Sandburg College

Sara has volunteered for over two years, and has been involved with nearly all aspects of her program. In addition to tutoring, Sara has led book clubs, worked with ESL learners of all levels, developed and demonstrated science experiment lessons, and helped with administrative tasks. Sara's nominator, Karen Avalos, says that, "all of Sara's experiences have been undertaken with enthusiasm and consideration."

Margi A. Charleston, Prairie State College

In addition to ten years of volunteer experience, Margi also brings a professional background in health care to the program. She is committed to helping others learn to read, because of the extreme consequences illiteracy can have on a patient. Margi's nominator, Dora Ivory, says that Margi provides an, "invaluable service as a tutor/student lesson demonstrator," and that she, "warrants and deserves recognition."

Jaike Ceisel, St. Joseph Services

Jaike volunteers twice a week at both the Humboldt Park and Austin locations. Each of draws clients of different cultures, backgrounds and needs, but as Jaike's nominator, Lisa Sullivan, says, "She adapts beautifully." In addition to tutoring, Jaike helped start an ABE program, enlisted her family and friends to volunteer, attended fundraisers, and donated a computer to one of her students. She is a compassionate volunteer, who cares about her students and the organization.

Erlinda Escobar, Midwest Asian American Center

During the almost five years that Erlinda has volunteered, she has proved to her students that she is a reliable tutor, who sees that her students reach their goals. All of the students enrolled in her Citizenship class not only passed the test, but also became registered voters. Erlinda's nominator, Vandana Dalal, says that Erlinda, "encourages her students by offering flexible hours," and is "very punctual and keeps to her commitments."

Sheila Faut, St. Joseph Services

Sheila's nominator, Lisa Sullivan, says that Sheila, "has proven to be dependable, caring and always goes the extra mile to help her students. She has helped many of her students with goals outside of the classroom, including helping a student correspond with his employer and assisting another student with job connections. Sheila is also a proponent in building the agency, as she has recruited new volunteers and helped plan a program expansion.

Kelly Ann Gallagher, South-East Asia Center

During the six years that Kelly has been at the Center, she has been a reliable tutor and teacher, committed to making sure her students understand what they are learning. When one student wanted to memorize the questions and answers to the Citizenship test, Kelly stressed the value of learning the meaning of the material. Her student passed the test and found employment. Her nominator, Tien Chen, says she is, "very dependable" and, "an excellent teacher."

Sarah Hill, St. Joseph Services

When Sarah is not volunteering, she is an architect. She has lent her skills and ideas to the program by mapping a fire-evacuation plan, improving the silent auction "blueprint" and other silent auction responsibilities. Sarah's nominator, Lisa Sullivan, describes Sara as, "instrumental" and "generous."

Gayle Huffman, District 214 Community Education Read to Learn

Gayle is an inspiring and respected tutor in her program. On the first day that classes resumed in the Spring, Gayle's student wrote about how Gayle had inspired her to volunteer when she returns to her native country. Gayle has forged a friendship with her student and has met outside of the classroom to meet her student's family. Gayle's nominator, Lesley Goldberg, says that, "Gayle is an exceptional tutor. She has a great sense of humor, is warm, kind and caring."

Saira N. Khan, Midwest Asian American Center

In addition to being a tutor, Saira is also a student. She offers empathy and patience for all her students, as she often shares her own experiences with them. Her eight students have passed the Citizenship test and registered to vote. Saira's nominator, Vandana Dala, says that Saira is, "very reliable," and, "puts in a lot of effort."

Jenn Kloc, World Relief

Jenn's nominator, Valerie Strattan, says, "Jenn has been an incredible asset to our refugee clients." Jenn goes the extra mile, by accompanying her clients to doctor's appointments, pharmacy trips, school events and more. She has also been given additional responsibilities from case managers and other employees at World Relief. Jenn is a trusted and caring volunteer, who is always willing to assist both her clients and World Relief in every way she can.

Geoffrey Land, South-East Asia Center

Geoffrey has volunteered at South-East Asia Center for twelve years, and has been an asset to the organization. He is a reliable and dedicated teacher, who teaches a class of twenty-four two days a week. Geoffrey enjoys making his class fun by going on field trips to the local library. His nominator, Tien Chau, says, "There are not enough words to talk about Geoffrey's work."

Bob McGarry, Literacy Chicago

As a returning tutor at Literacy Chicago, Bob is an outstanding volunteer, who assists in many aspects of the organization. He matches tutors and students during orientation, offers tech support to updates organization computers, and does an outstanding job at archiving tutor files. Bob's nominator, Jessica Keller, says, "Bob is always finding things to do to make Literacy Chicago a welcoming place for tutors and students."

Sheila Murphy, School on Wheels/Congregation of St. Joseph Services

Sheila is a leading tutor at her organization, as she often serves as a mentor and presents on the Language Experience Approach for new tutors. As an active member for the organization's Advisory Board, Sheila offers creative fundraising ideas and volunteers for events. Whether Sheila is doing one-on-one tutoring or organizing an event, she is, as her nominator, Deborah Bradt, says, "always well organized, punctual and dependable."

Jose Oreo, UIC's Project More

Jose's nominator, Barbara Burger, says, "Jose brought two very special gifts with him when he joined the Family Start program: his love of art and his compassion for individuals to learn English." Jose began learning English when he was in the second grade, and is able to use his own experiences to relate to the ESL learners he now teaches. He tailors lessons so the focus is on the learner, and makes learning fun by incorporating art into learning English. Jose has a great rapport and mutual respect with all the students he teaches.

Gina Purpura, World Relief

With a reputation at World Relief as a "super tutor," Gina has not only tutored Karen refugees, but also has assisted them with other important aspects of their lives. She often accompanies students to the doctor's office and the pharmacy, as well as teaches yoga lessons. Gina's students are very appreciative of the time and services she volunteers, as Gina was recently invited as a guest of honor to the Karen New Year celebration. Her nominator, Valerie Stratton, says, "She is consistent, sensitive to culture, good with kids and adults alike, a creative teacher who incorporates many aspects of learning – mind, body and hear – into her lessons."

Jai Ramos, Indo-American Center

Jai began volunteering five months ago, and has already contributed greatly to the Indo-American Center's literacy program. He volunteers three times a week, and has attended every Literacy Works training. His nominator, Yasin Patel, says, "During his short time here, Jai has become an asset of this program, and a well known face to both staff and students."

Denise Rondini, Mercy Housing Lakefront

Eight years ago, Denise began volunteering at Mercy Housing Lakefront as a one-to-one tutor. Today, she continues to tutor, as well as facilitate the Creative Writing group that meets three to four times a week. For her Creative Writing class, each of her students will self-publish a book of their writings. Denise, as her nominator, LaKeeta Charley, says, "has earned the respect of her students and has developed a high-impact group." A few weeks ago, her students showed their appreciation by surprising Denise with a birthday celebration.

John Sanchez, South-East Asia Center

John has volunteered at his site for five years. He is a reliable and diligent tutor, as he accommodates his students' schedules and studies new teaching techniques. His nominator, Tien Chau, says, "John takes his volunteer work seriously," and, "is always willing to provide flexible hours."

Stacy Searchy, Anixter Center

Stacy has gone above and beyond her role as a tutor for her student, who has a disability and is an ESL learner. Stacy not only encourages her student to increase his English, but also assists his mother in advocating for a son with a disability. Both her student and her student's mother have increased their confidence since Stacy began tutoring at Anixter. Stacy's nominator, Amy Arthur, says, "Stacy has a patient and firm support for her student and his mother."

Tom Smith, World Relief

For both of Tom's students, their quality of life has greatly improved since Tom was matched with them. During one tutoring session, Tom brought his student dinner, took him to the library, lent DVDs, and gave him a vocabulary list to study for homework. Tom is always willing to help his students in any way, and has even invited his student to visit his family during a weekend in the fall. Tom's nominator, Valerie Strattan, says, "without the assistance of Tom, two of our refugee clients from the Democratic of Congo would not be where they are today."

2010 Tutor of the Year

Sheryl Szott-Gallagher
Moraine Valley Community College
Palos Park, Illinois

Sheryl has been a tutor with the Adult Literacy Program at Moraine Valley Community College for the past 3 years, during which time she has worked with 11 students. In 2009 she provided 82 hours of instruction to her students, and volunteered a countless amount of other hours in lesson planning and other tasks related to her tutoring.

Sheryl is creative in her lesson planning and frequently tailors her reading lessons to reflect local current events and holidays, wrote her nominator, Joanna Summa. By doing so, she keeps her lessons fresh and dynamic. Her students enjoy this approach because it provides them with the opportunity to work on their reading skills and learn something new. For example at Super Bowl time, Sheryl incorporated football trivia and football stories into her lessons.

Beyond her creativity and dependability, Joanna wrote, Sheryl can also be counted on in other ways, for example taking on students with low reading levels, disabilities, and other life challenges who other tutors feel unequipped to work with. She has high expectations for all of her students, and with her support, they gain both hope and confidence. This can be seen in the work she has done with her students in public speaking. She not only helps them to develop their presentations, but coaches them on their delivery and attends conferences with them where she joins them as a presenter. She is reliable, dependable and a motivator, concluded Joanna.

CeCe M Tilsley New Reader Leadership Award

Mary Madden
Moraine Valley Community College
Palos Park, Illinois

Mary became involved with the adult literacy program at Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) over ten years ago when she began taking college classes on campus. She enrolled in the adult literacy program at the same time to strengthen her comprehension skills. Once involved with the program, she put her heart and soul into it and became involved in a number of areas including, tutor training, student orientation, and the annual book sale. She also re-organized the program's book collection, and with the facility she has with computers, provided tech support to adult ed staff who were struggling with new applications. She was also active with the College's New Readers chapter, where she was known to always give that extra "hug" to new students to make them feel more comfortable and at home.

Being the enthusiast that she was in her New Readers chapter, Mary then became involved with the New Reader for New Life of Illinois, where, in short order, she became the Secretary. As anyone that's been in organizations knows, that is one of the hardest jobs. Mary not only performed and continues to perform it well, she excels in it. She takes minutes at meetings and distributes them, maintains the mailing and membership lists, and is a constant source of support to her fellow officers. Mary is passionate about her work with New Readers, and the New Readers and LVI feel privileged to have her among us and be able to honor her and her work.