A Message from....

Sister Cecilia La Pietra

Dear Friends in Mission,

Here it is March 3, 2023 and we are well into the Spring Semester. This past Wednesday we had ten new students arrive and thank God we had a new teacher for them. As you read this, note that we continually have new students. You are most needed and welcome to join our dedicated teachers and energetic students.

I hope that you will join us at our Hands of Hope Gala on May 12th, celebrating 26 years of dedication to our mission of empowerment. Our Honorees are very special people with deep compassion and action for the good of others. The Advocate Award will be awarded to Michael Patrick Davidson for speaking on behalf of Mother Earth and all her creatures through his words and his filming of nature and wild life in remote parts of the Earth. Michael's message directly affects our students and the poor of the earth because their displacement is in many cases due to climate change.

Karen DiMatteo will accept the Humanitarian Award for "Cindy's Friends who follow in the example of Cindy, a young woman who reached out to the poor with gifts of food and clothing through her life. When she died her friends continued her mission. Within the last several years our students and their children have benefited from their generosity at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The Founder's Award is named for Alice Mary Thorpe, founder of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, and is given to a Sister or Associate who has supported our mission. This year the Associates Membership group will be honored for their outreach to ‘One to One Learning’ as well as into the community of Rockland in many ways, including the Christmas Pajama Project.

We will honor Sabrina Greco and Steve Wilson (posthumously). Both of these creative and inspiring individuals worked hand in hand with each other and Development Committee members to prepare the most engaging events for the last six years. We will miss Steve as our MC but his spirit will be there, blessing us from his place in Heaven.

Special teachers will be honored. Terrence Armonica, started teaching when he was a student at Albertus Magnus HS and continued more recently after college, as he prepares for Medical School. Martha Patterson has been teaching for several years with a special interest in our mission of empowerment. Jessica Reck is now a senior at St. Thomas Aquinas College and has taught for all four years and is a cheerleader for ‘One to One’ at the college, getting many Education Majors to volunteer.

Our Youth Award will go to Duong Nguyen, a senior at Albertus Magnus High School, who, with her story of immigration, relates well with her students who started with her as beginners and are now advancing, almost to the end of the “Side by Side” text.

Students/Alumni to be honored are persons who support the mission and believe in “Paying it Forward.” They are Elvia Stuart, now in the Citizenship Class and William Martinez, graduating with an Associate of Arts degree from Rockland Community College.

In these difficult times I am so grateful to you for your support. As noted in the list of our donations, you were most generous and we were able to put some of the reserve into our Legacy fund as we prepare for the future. Please support the Gala and celebrate the Honorees in any way that you can and get together with some friends to buy a raffle ticket.

Blessings, peace, good health for you and your families.
IN-PERSON CLASSES

Beginner Groups 2022-23
February 2023 First 2 weeks
1 new class
Joyse Sanchez-Redmond Burke
2 classes Beginner Ready to be tested
to begin “Side by Side” Kathleen and Peter Engel
Bill Kivlehan-Candy Pittari
2 classes tested and passed on to “Side by Side”
Grady Brunelle-Pam Pariseau,
Vera Aronow-Sreya Barna
3 classes Chapters 1-2 in “Side by Side” Susan Fella
Alfredo Castro-Lorraine Marden,
Eileen Wasserman-Jessica Reck
4 classes Chapters 3-4-5 “Side by Side” Martha Schindele
Ivonne Tirro, Kotti Christie-Blick, Cecily Gottling

Beginner Groups 2021-22
3 classes Chapter 7-8-9 “Side by Side” Denis Shea
Roberta Avantifiori-Rosemary Amabile
Stephanie Sweeney-Vicky Kelder
3 classes Chapter 11,12,13 “Side by Side” Martha Patterson,
Clare La Duke, Susan Hanna-Hane Nguyen
1 class Chapter 16 “Side by Side” Terrence Amonica

Beginner Group 2020-2021
1 class Chapter 9 in “Side by Side II” Deacon Rob
Citizenship Class 2 students passed test
Paul Parsekian-Gretchen Kane
Pre-literate class Sandy Rivera

Morning Classes
1 Beginner Group preparing for test Rosemary Ambrey
1 group “Side by Side” Chapter 11 Maureen Dowling
1 group “Side by Side” Chapter 4 Barbara Chen
Citizenship Kathy Gnazzo

On-Line Classes Most began in September 2020
2 groups GED Preparation Barbara Bedway,
Robert Sbordone
2 groups “Side by Side III” Chapter 9 Sr. Maureen Conway
Alexandra Lescaze-
1 group “Side by Side III” Chapter 4 Genevieve Goswick
1 group “Side by Side II” Chapter 12 Al Birkmaier
2 groups “Side by Side II” Chapter 4 Sylvie Blaustein
Linda Schwartz-Ira Lipson
1 group “Side by Side II” Chapter 2 Rita Sarubbi
1 group “Side by Side II” Chapter 11 Minnesota
Rosemary Amabile
Various levels Pre-literacy, Citizenship, “Side by Side I”
Ann and Red Rosenberg

Morning On-line-Sister Maureen Conway
“Side by Side III” Chapter 9 1 student
“Side by Side II” Chapter 4 2 students
TEACHERS’ HOLIDAY GATHERING

On December 14, 2022 Sister Cecilia and the Board of “One to One Learning” hosted this gathering to thank our teachers for all that they do and are for our students. Because of COVID concerns, this was the first year since December 2019 that we gathered. All were delighted to be there and to see each other, especially teachers who are on-line. Board members were happy to meet some of the teachers, some realizing that they knew each other. The food and desserts were delicious, all prepared by the hosts. Teachers received scented candles to symbolize the light that they shine in the lives of their students and Board members for their dedication to the mission of empowerment of students.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

THANKSGIVING

In 2021 we had so many students at the time of Thanksgiving so we were able to provide each one with a $50 ShopRite Gift Card. Again, our request to In-Serra Supermarkets was denied due to a great number of requests received. We depended on our wonderful Circle of Friends to help us...

Albertus Magnus HS who held a dress-down day, St. John the Baptist Parish in Piermont, and Karen DeMatteo from Cindy's Pals. We are grateful to our benefactors, Alison and Boniface Zano, and we also used donations from our Immigration Fund that is set up for student needs. Dominican Sisters of Sparkill also helped us with a collection to buy Shop-Rite gift cards to be used for our most needy students for Christmas.

CHRISTMAS

This year because of so many students, we also had more children for whom we provided gifts. We made up 200 bags of family gifts, bags ranging from an average of three children and with some ranging from five up to seven children. Thank God our Circle Friends came through. Fr. McKeon St Francis of Assisi Parish, Janet Pavarati New City Senior Center, Karen DeMatteo and Cindy’s Pals, Sister Diane Albertus Magnus HS and Dan Cumming from Paramus Catholic HS donated toys and games. Maria Nest/May Pang coordinating giving from St. John the Baptist Parishioners donated children’s clothing, individually wrapped with an angel with the child’s name. Roberta Avantiﬁore with the Romanesque Lodge and Ed Tangredi with St Ann’s Parishioners in Nyack donated clothes, hats, gloves, etc. for the adults.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH

Tea Party

Another event, that had not occurred due to COVID, returned in November 2022. Fr. McKeon, Sister Pat and the organizing group were so happy to host it again. We had a beautiful prayer to our Lady of the Ukraine to unite ourselves with those suffering and to pray for peace. The young women from Albertus and Clarkstown were our wonderful servers, supplying us with delicious teas, sandwiches, Irish soda bread, and cookies. There were many prize winners. One to One Learning was gifted with $1,611 dollars and another $150 donated by Kathleen D’Large from part of her raffle winnings. The spirit of this parish is one of giving in so many ways, reaching out to the needs of so many groups. We are grateful to be one of their special groups.

IN MEMORIAM

STEVE WILSON

December 5, 2022

It is with great sadness that we remember our beloved Steve, Devoted Teacher, Board Member, and MC extraordinaire. Steve put his heart and soul into everything that he did. He is deeply loved by his family and Claudia, his honey, became a big part in Steve’s culinary adventures at our events. Steve was an excellent teacher because he really believed in his “One to One Learning” students. At development committee meetings, Steve listened and then summarized it all in one sentence. We miss you Steve, your warmth, your creativity, and your love.
LA FIESTA DE LOS REYES MAGOS

This year we did celebrate La Fiesta de los Reyes Magos. It was the first time since January 2020, the last celebration that we had before COVID. Everyone was so happy. Each small group provided the food, desserts, and drinks for their table and delicious aromas came through the dining room and cabins. There was a great variety of foods from our students’ different cultures. We had the procession of the children bringing the statues of the Presebre to the altar with everyone singing “Noche de Paz” played by Hernon on his guitar. We could not have all the cabins join in because there were too many students.

Each student received a wrapped gift and families received bags with gifts for their children, one clothing gift and two toys. Leadership friends distributed the gifts and everyone went home happy.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Our mission statement states that we empower our students through English classes and other supportive services. Outside organizations have, through the years, been the source of providing these services for us. During these last two years, because of COVID, we have not sponsored these activities. Hudson River Health Care (now called Sun River Health Care) had provided several activities including blood pressure and diabetes monitoring during class time. If a problem was noted, the student was given an appointment in one of the three near-by clinics. They also provided exercise, nutrition, and health classes from 7-8 PM before English for students who opted for them. We are hoping to collaborate with them and they have promised to begin the testing in March and, in the future, develop some of the classes. We have had connections with Mental Health Organization of Rockland and they have done small group work with our students on immigration issues and parenting. Because of heavy caseloads they have not yet provided these activities. However, we have connected with Nathalia Mahecha with her program “Happiness for All”, a mental health group that leads the participants through an understanding of Felicidad and that all are worthy of it and have the responsibility to have it in their lives, bringing it to others through Compassion. Nurturing gratitude, Breathing, Meditation, Yoga. All activities that reduce stress are considered. Ten students participated in the first group in January and another group is in process now.

Here are some of the comments from students:

Always have positive thoughts to achieve what we set out to do. Silvia
I learned that there are many tools to help us be happy. Susana
I learned to give thanks to God for everything and not to complain. Also, of the importance of doing meditation in the morning and thinking about how to help other people. Elvia
It helped me a lot to learn to breathe in the right way and to apply it in stressful situations. Ana

Another service that we have always provided was the “Know Your Rights”, a program provided by attorneys from different organizations: Catholic Charities and Center for Safety and Change. The last one that we had was on March 9, 2020 and on March 11th classes ended because of COVID.

It seems that 2023 is the year of returning to normalcy. So, on February 13th, Marcia Guevara, Esq., Vladislan Tomic, and Lina Stillman came to provide information and to answer questions from students during a class session. Marcia provided the basic immigration information and then fielded questions. Lina Stillman spoke specifically on rights in the work place. Both speakers received many questions. After the session which went from 8-9:30, students enjoyed juice, water, cookies and donuts provided by the presenters. Attorneys provided their cards and handouts on the program.
The following quotes are from our teachers and some of their students:

From at home teacher, previously in-person. Students primarily have been pre-literate and now in the beginner level.

Ann and Norman Rosenberg: We have volunteered with “One to One Learning” since 2016. We are trying to fulfill the commandment that one should improve the world (Tikkun Olam). We try to help immigrants who often have difficult lives by teaching them English, civics, computer skills, and arithmetic. We help them deal with administrative paperwork. Volunteering has enriched our lives in terms of becoming acquainted with immigrants and working with Sisters Cecilia, Maureen, Nancy and Diane. We know that we have improved the lives of our students as they have improved our lives.

Nora: I study with “One to One Learning”, because to advance in the United States, everyone needs to be able to understand English and to speak with Americans.

I come to the house of my friend to study English and to study for my citizenship exam. I thank God and my friend for helping me greatly. She is very patient when answering all my questions.

P.S. Vitello passed the citizenship exam!

From On-line teachers, who previously had students in-person before COVID. These students have been through the Beginner Pack, “Side by Side I” and are now about to begin “Side by Side II”.

Linda Schwartz: I have been teaching for over 6 years. I love meeting dedicated people who want to work hard to accomplish a goal. I particularly love teaching this class because the students are always so warm, friendly, and caring. They always make me smile! It is fun to see the progress they make and to share our stories in English. I learn so much and I hope that I help them.

Ira team teaches with Linda

Nora: I come because I want to learn English and I want to have better communication. I am learning a lot, now I understand much better.

Jhonny: I like to be in class and meet with everyone and learn from them especially that we have the best teachers I ever had! Honestly, my English has improved a lot through communicating with others everywhere.

Thanks to “One to One Learning”.

Alida: I come because my friend recommended it. She told me it’s very nice and there are friendly teachers helping. So now In my can talk to people and doctors and teachers and I feel more comfortable having conversations. Thanks to my teachers Mr. Ira and Mrs. Linda for the time and patience for us.

Gloria: I came 5 years ago and the first time I remember that Sister Cecilia gave me a test to see what group I would be in. So, I started with a group, then I became pregnant and could not continue. And then there was COVID. Now I have returned and am learning on the internet which is easier for me so that I don’t have to drive.

Sylvia: I want to learn to speak English because I need to communicate with other people especially my family, my children. I want to have a better job. In my life it helps because now I understand a little more and that’s the reason I am trying to practice and try to listen to audio. Sometimes I feel embarrassed because my children sometimes feel bad about me because I don’t speak English.

Nora: “One to One” helps me a lot. Now I can understand English. Before I didn’t understand the past, present and future and now I can.

This is from a woman who has been studying since September 2020, starting as a beginner and has advanced from Beginner to “Side by Side I” to “Side by Side II”

Deacon Rob has been the teacher of this class

Magaly: When I arrived in the U.S.A. in the year 2020, someone recommended to me this school and I was accepted. I’m learning and understand English little by little. Thanks to this place, I’m fulfilling my dreams of improving myself. I can go out shopping and am developing confidence day by day. There are wonderful people here and with great hearts to help me to have better job opportunities, thanks to English. I can find better financial stability and I’m very happy to learn in this wonderful school that helps my dream come true. I feel proud to attend this school.

Then and Now

“Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve”

(Napoleon Hill)

English is a beautiful worldwide language and to learn it, was always one of my biggest dreams. My name is William Martinez and this is my story.

I arrived to the United States in 2006. I came to be reunited with my father who was living in Nyack NY at the time. I was nineteen back then and because of that I could not go to high school. Then my father and his friends told me about an ESL school program for adults, “One to One Learning” that was hosted at St. John the Baptist Church in Piermont. On Monday and Wednesday nights Sister Cecilia and a group of volunteers taught English. They had also taught most of my friends who came years before me.

I was enrolled in the program during the fall of the same year (2006) for about four months. “One to One” was a great experience and I can say that my passion for the language grew even more after four months. Because of work I had to leave “One to One” but not my dream. Beginning in 2007 I attended ESL classes at Rockland BOCES in Nyack. Classes were held Monday to Friday during the day. Mr. Albert Moschetti was the Director of BOCES ESL program. He mentored me during the time I was there. I remember taking the bus from Nyack to Tappan and reading the English/Spanish dictionary every day. I advanced from level one to level four in one year. I stopped attending classes because of work. I returned to school in 2015 and I was ready to study for my GED test. I received my high school equivalency diploma in 2016.

I had the great opportunity to meet Dr. Susan Deer who was the Vice President of Rockland Community College (RCC) at my graduation ceremony. Dr. Deer gave me the opportunity to enroll in RCC. I received a scholarship which enabled me to start working towards an Associate of Arts degree which will be completed in May 2023. COVID caused a delay in my desire to achieved my college degree. From “One to One Learning” to Rockland BOCES to RCC has been a great journey and I am so grateful for the experience. I will continue my education towards a bachelor’s degree as I currently work in the construction field.

I am a member of St. John the Baptist Church. It is here that I met my wife and had my children baptized and where we celebrate mass every Sunday with this amazing community.

My most sincere thanks to those who helped me throughout this journey and especially to Sister Cecilia who has been a second mother to me. Sister Cecilia has been my spiritual inspiring leader who I love with all my heart. Thanks to my wife Arelis and my three daughters, Ariana, Alexa, and Arisbeth who are my inspiration and motivation to keep dreaming.
RESPONSE FROM OUR BENEFATORS

We are grateful to you as you assist us in paying our monthly bills in support of our programs. At this time of Thanksgiving and Christmas, you have been especially generous so that some of the proceeds will go into our reserve legacy fund as we look to a new administration into the future. The following donations total $20,280. We remember our friends and benefactors in prayer each morning.

Vincent Abbatecola
Robert Gunderson
Michael and Helen Brady
Anonymous
Morrie and Marianne Brown
Al Birkmaier
Cheryl Burton
Kim L. Birkmaier
Memory of Martha Monitto
William Kivlehan
Frank and Elaine Cappadona
Ramona Whitney
Sr. Joan Corrella
Memory of Shelton Noel Townsend
Sr. Eileen Cunningham
Kim L. Birkmaier
Sr. Nora Doody, Sr. Elizabeth McAleavey
Dr. Mary Anne Evangelist
Meg Feerick
William Kivlehan
Sheila Garvey
Ramona Whitney
Margaret Grace
Joyce Gavin, Bernard Doyle
Patricia Hans (Memory of Betty Gruffy)
Gerry and Kathy Geisinger
Sr. Grace Hogan
Rust Gilbert
Honor of Rosemary Lundberg
Kathy and Michael Gnazzo
Diana Kriz
Kerry Haggerty ($150/Mo)
Mary Ill
Margaret Grace
John and Mary McCoy ($100/Mo)
Patricia Hans
Therese McSherry
(Partnership with Sr. Grace Hogan)
Gus and Liz Nolan
Sr. Nancy Richter
Mary Spengler
Phyllis and Bruce Schweizer
Claudia Wilson (Memory of Steve)
Mary Spengler
Ugo Volpati (Memory of Cell)
Jo Winograd
Susan Wilmink, Thomas Schneck

INSTITUTIONAL DONATIONS

Achilles Foundation
$20,000

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Tea Party
Ridgewood Savings Bank
at Request of Paul Fitzpatrick
$2,375

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Tea Party
$1,611

John Cardinal McCloskey Council
Knights of Columbus

CONCERT OF PEACE AND LIGHT

We thank all who attended the Concert of Peace and Light. The following supported the event with donations:

St. Thomas Aquinas College
sponsored a table

Michael P. Davidson
sponsored the cost of the Ensemble

Paul and Una Fitzpatrick
sponsored a table

John and Amy Piperato
Flora Piperato
Town of Haverstraw
Alejandra Silva-Exias

PARTNERING

Donation for cost of one Student $400
Memory of Kevin Nulty
Peter and Mary Beth Modafferi

IMMIGRATION FUND

$500 Albertus Magnus High School
$150 Sister Peggy McGirl

STUDENT RAFFLE

FIESTA DE LOS REYES MAGOS
$510

GRANT

FSC Foundation Christian Brothers
$3,500

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STUDENT RAFFLE

FIESTA DE LOS REYES MAGOS
$510

GRANT

FSC Foundation Christian Brothers
$3,500
PEACE AND LIGHTS OF THE SEASON CONCERT

The seeds of this new event came about at a Board meeting in 2020 when the idea of celebrating public servants who have dedicated their lives to work for the good of people was raised in a discussion. Without a second thought, Paul Piperato, Rockland County Clerk and former Board member, friend and benefactor, was chosen to be the first Honoree. The fruition of that discussion did not come about until December 3, 2022, due to COVID concerns. In the interim, Paul Piperato unexpectantly passed to his place of glory and for us he was to be honored posthumously.

We were gifted with a donation of her time and talent by Sue Matsuki, one of the stars of “Star-Fest” over the past years. What a great way to begin the season with a concert by this tremendous award winning, singer, accompanied by her ensemble of piano, bass, and drummer. Michael Davidson sponsored this cost.

Our first time at “Terrace on the Hudson” was a tremendous success with a Holiday Buffet from 12 to 4 with tempting appetizers and wine provided first and then the guests seated in the grand ball room, beautifully decorated for the Christmas season. Manny and his staff provided wonderful service and delicious food and desserts.

Our MC, Sister Nancy Richter, introduced Sister Cecilia La Pietra who spoke about Paul Piperato and his service to the community of Rockland and his dedication to “One to One Learning” as Board Member, MC at events, and friend and benefactor. Since Paul’s family was unable to attend, his very close friends, Kathy and Michael Grant, accepted the framed remembrance and spoke about their friendship and Paul’s many accomplishments as County Clerk, including hosting the “Swearing In” ceremony for new citizens in Rockland County. Then followed a lovely afternoon of Christmas and light music with Sue and a delicious buffet. There was a special auction for a night at the “Grand Hotel in SoHo” donated by Ricky Gonzalez the son of Martha Gonzalez, Board Member, won by Alfonso and Diana Infante and a 50/50 raffle won by

Save the date for early December to join us as we again Celebrate the Season of Peace and Lights. Do you have a suggestion for a nominee of a public servant who you think should be honored for his/her exemplary service. Please send to Sister Cecilia at one2one-learning@gmail.com.