



Mercy Learning Center of Bridgeport, Inc. provides basic literacy and life skills training to low-income women using a holistic approach within a compassionate, supportive environment. All women are welcome without regard for race, religion, color, creed, sexual orientation or national origin.

chrysanthemum



Marissa Rodriguez (2nd from right) takes a break from providing casework at MLC to visit with students.

“I Want Them to Believe That They Matter”

MLC Case Worker Draws on Her Own Experience as an MLC graduate

“Women don’t usually ask for help,” explains Mercy Learning Center (MLC) president and CEO, Jane Ferreira. “They could be suffering—hungry or cold—but they’re too proud to ask for help.” But help with basic necessities is what too many women enrolled at MLC need. “So we try to be good observers and quietly offer help where we think it’s needed,” says Jane. Last year just about half of all enrolled students received casework for issues including domestic violence, abusive landlords, illness, hunger and homelessness. MLC’s goal in working with each woman is to remove these barriers, clearing a path for continued education.

As MLC’s caseworker, Marissa Rodriguez is on the front lines, meeting with women all day every day, helping them with their problems. “Problems that would bring tears to anyone’s eyes,” says Marissa. The work is tough and the stories are heartbreaking. But there is no one better qualified than Marissa, herself a graduate of MLC. In 2005 she earned her GED® at MLC and went on to study at Housatonic Community College and the University of Connecticut. She also served a tour of duty in Afghanistan with the U.S. Army and recently married a fellow soldier. Now, she is back at MLC, working hard to make sure other women have the same opportunities she had. “In the last 10 years, I’ve come full circle,” she remarks.

Marissa is motivated both by her own experience as a woman who had to fight for her education and by the amazing women she helps each day: “Little do they know that they are my inspiration and motivation. Ultimately, I want them to believe that they matter.”

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From the President: Jane E. Ferreira

Dear Friends,

In December, MLC closed out a first semester filled with accomplishments. We celebrated the seventh student this year to earn her high school diploma and the eighth student to become a U.S. citizen. Among all of our enrolled women, we saw wonderful academic gains in reading, writing, math, speaking and with their technology skills. MLC women are guiding their families to better lives through education. Without you, this would not be possible. Thank you for believing and investing in women’s literacy and acknowledging the value that it brings to our society.

In gratitude,

Jane E. Ferreira
Jane E. Ferreira

President and Chief Executive Officer



Jane celebrates with recent graduate, Jennifer Rojas.

DID YOU KNOW?

The annual household income needed to support a family of five in Bridgeport is **\$73,000** after taxes.*

98% of currently enrolled women report annual household incomes of **less than \$40,000.**

43% of women report annual household incomes of **less than \$10,000.**

** Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Project*

IN HER OWN WORDS

“Now I feel strong, sure of myself and optimistic about the future.

Now I can talk with teachers, doctors, therapists, police officers, with everybody!

Now I can help my children with their homework. Now they are more successful in school.”

- Olga Cruz, graduate

Mock Interviews Deliver Valuable Lessons

MLC welcomed representatives from area businesses in November to conduct mock interviews. The sessions helped MLC students hone their communication and job search skills, providing them with an invaluable experience that goes far in advancing their confidence and competence. Our thanks to the volunteers from AWARE CT, BIC, First Niagara, GE, Greater Bridgeport Transit, Monroe Staffing, People’s United Bank, United Rentals and Webster Bank.



Volunteers simulated real job interviews with students in November.

Glad Tidings to All

With over 50 countries of origin represented among the women enrolled at MLC, it is natural for our holiday festivities to be multicultural. At our annual Holiday Teas in December, students and tutors shared traditional stories and songs from their own cultures, shining a light on both our differences and what we have in common. Our thanks to everyone who attended and helped with these wonderful celebrations!



“My experience as a tutor at Mercy Learning Center has been wonderful. My students are a joy to work with, the staff is caring and supportive, and the positive atmosphere in the building is amazing. I always look forward to my tutoring sessions at MLC.” - Gary Anderson, Tutor



Gary Anderson began tutoring in March and is one of many men who volunteer at MLC. Gary (center) and his three students recently enjoyed a Holiday Tea along with other tutors and students.

Grateful for the View

MLC's annual fundraising event, A View of the Harbor, was another resounding success! On October 4th, threatening skies cleared just in time for guests to enjoy the spectacular view from the Country Club of Fairfield. Tutor speaker, Nancy, and graduate speaker, Marissa, moved the crowd with their stories of the power of education. We are so grateful to the many, many people and organizations who helped support and host the evening and to all of our guests.



Meet the Clarks

Hayes and Clare Clark of Westport have had an affinity for the mission of women's education since they were first introduced to MLC 20 years ago. "One thing that draws me to this work is that you're helping people who don't have a circle to help themselves," says Clare. "Who's helping them? It's not glamorous, but the women are very deserving."

Over the years Hayes and Clare have pitched in however they can. Hayes is a member of the Board of Directors and recently became a tutor. Clare provides vision and leadership for fundraising events and she and Hayes co-chaired the MLC development committee for several years. And throughout their involvement, they have supported MLC financially.



The Clarks show off items from an auction package they won at A View of the Harbor in October.

In talking about their many contributions, Hayes and Clare are quick to note that they get as much as they give. "I feel good using my strengths in meetings and event logistics. I feel that my unique gifts as a person have been appreciated, acknowledged and valued," says Clare. Hayes agrees: "Everybody has a need to feel good about something they're doing," he says. About his newest role as a tutor, he reflects, "It's not always easy, but it's rewarding."

MLC MAKES THE GRADE!

Mercy Learning Center has earned a 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency from Charity Navigator for the third consecutive year, ranking it among the top 12 percent of rated charities nationwide.



★★★★
CHARITY NAVIGATOR
Four Star Charity

WISH LIST

This winter many MLC families are in need of food and basic supplies. We welcome donations of grocery store gift cards for these families. Thank you!

Join us! Become a Tutor at MLC

It's fun, flexible, and rewarding. To sign up or learn more, contact Lynn Gabriel at lynn.gabriel@mercylearningcenter.org or 203-334-6699.

Join us:

Scrabble for Success

A LADIES NIGHT OUT TO BENEFIT
MERCY LEARNING CENTER

March 9, 2016, 7 - 10pm

Fairfield County Day School, 2970 Bronson Road, Fairfield
Team Scrabble® / Great Prizes / Wine & Light Bites

Two rounds of Scrabble®: First round will follow official
Scrabble® rules; second round will be noncompetitive.

Individuals will be placed with a team.

To register, call 203-334-6699 or visit
www.mercylearningcenter.org.



Empowering the Future

With planned giving, you can support future MLC students, while realizing benefits for yourself and your family now and in the years to come. Talk to your attorney or financial advisor to discuss the many options, including:

- bequests or estate gifts • stocks • securities • certificates
- life insurance policies • real estate • annuities • trusts



Let's connect!

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Winter 2016



"Educate a Woman... Educate a Family"

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