



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



## "I Am Providing Inspiration"

*Jenny Tovar Manufactures a Bright Future for Herself and Her Son*

From the window of the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom on the third floor of Mercy Learning Center, you can just barely see Housatonic Community College rising above the treetops. It is only a few blocks away but when Jenny Tovar was a student in the ESL class, the college seemed like it was in another world.

Jenny, who has always been serious and smart, says, "I had grown up believing that having a great education would never be possible for me." When Jenny arrived in the U.S. from Mexico as a teenager, her parents didn't know she was allowed to attend school so she started working at McDonald's instead. She worked and studied English part time for years but made little progress. In 2010, a friend told her about Mercy Learning Center. Here, Jenny worked hard and advanced quickly, with her baby boy always safe in MLC's free childcare. Just four years after arriving at our door speaking only a few words of English, she earned her high school diploma. She was such an exemplary student that she earned MLC's highest honor, the Beth B. Davis Scholarship.

Then, Jenny proudly took that short but momentous walk to Housatonic Community College. She enrolled in the one-year Advanced Manufacturing Certificate Program where she continued to work hard. In May, Jenny celebrated another milestone she never could have imagined back in that ESL classroom: she got a full-time, salaried job at a manufacturing facility. Always humble, Jenny is nevertheless reflective about the magnitude and unlikelihood of what she has accomplished: "I am providing inspiration for my entire family, including my son, of how it is possible to overcome obstacles."

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## From the President: Jane E. Ferreira

Dear Friends,

From all of us at MLC, thank you for another year of learning and empowerment for women and families. Because of you, we served nearly 900 women and over 140 of their young children this year. Twenty-two women earned high school diplomas--many as the first in their families to do so--and hundreds more learned new, life-changing skills. Education is the key to a better life for struggling families. The role you played over the last year helped to turn that key and unlock tremendous potential.

In gratitude,  
  
Jane E. Ferreira  
President and Chief Executive Officer



Members of MLC's 2014-15 staff

## DID YOU KNOW?

With a high school diploma, annual income rises from about **\$18,000** to about **\$26,000**, a **44% increase**.

With some college or an associate's degree, the average annual income jumps to over **\$32,000**, a **78% increase**.

This year, **22** women earned their high school diplomas at MLC.

**45** MLC alumnae were enrolled in college in 2014-15.

## IN HER OWN WORDS

"Even though I graduated, Mercy Learning Center keeps supporting me by providing me the opportunity to continue my studies in college. I feel so proud of myself to be in college and pursuing an even better education. When I hear my children talking about their future they always look to me for support and guidance. They know that I think it is important that they go to college."

- Maria Rivera,  
2014 graduate

## MLC's Accomplished Graduates

### 22 Women Earn High School Diplomas at MLC in 2014-15

Congratulations to the 22 women who worked hard, persevered and overcame obstacles to earn their high school diplomas through MLC's GED® Program and National External Diploma Program this year. These amazing women are not done yet! In their own ways, they are all continuing to study, train, work and make us proud.



*Some of MLC's 2014-15 graduates, celebrating with staff, tutors and family members.*

## Goodbye to Summer Learning Loss

### The Learning Continues at MLC this Summer

Mercy Learning Center is gearing up for a fun and full summer! We offer a variety of programs for women to continue to advance their literacy and life skills in addition to our popular Family Fun Program that brings moms and kids together to learn and explore side by side.

**If you are interested in volunteering this summer, contact Lynn Gabriel at 203-3346699 or [lynn.gabriel@mercylearningcenter.org](mailto:lynn.gabriel@mercylearningcenter.org)**

MLC's summer offerings include:

- Family Fun Program (for moms and kids ages 5 - 12)
- Tutoring
- English conversation classes
- Computer classes
- Driver's education
- Transition to college class
- Social services
- Child care



*Moms, kids and volunteers enjoy the Summer Fun Program last year.*

## Scrabble for Success Scores Big!

### Annual Event Combines Friendship, Fun and Fundraising

MLC welcomed friends, old and new, to our annual ladies night on March 11 at Greens Farms Academy in Westport. Participants enjoyed team Scrabble®, wine, food, prizes and laughter. We thank everyone who helped make it a wonderful event! To see more photos, check out the photo album on MLC's Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/mercylearningcenter](http://www.facebook.com/mercylearningcenter)



*A team of friends enjoys the Scrabble for Success fundraiser earlier this year.*

## Volunteers: Valuable Beyond Measure

### MLC Celebrates its Volunteers

At Mercy Learning Center, we know that volunteers make it all possible. During National Volunteer Week in April, we celebrated the many contributions of our tutors, childcare volunteers, computer aids, board members and other volunteers, taking every opportunity to say “thank you” to these generous individuals. They use their skills and passions to advance the learning and life skills of MLC women each and every day, forging friendships and changing lives.

**Go to [CTPost.com](http://CTPost.com) to read Jane's op-ed, “Volunteers: Valuable Beyond Measure” (4/13/15).**



*Hundreds of volunteers share their time and talents at MLC each year.*

## Empower the Women and Children of Tomorrow!

### Introducing Mercy Learning Center's Endowment Fund

Contribute to Mercy Learning Center's newly-established endowment fund and play an important role in MLC's ability to deliver quality education and life skills programs to undereducated, low-income women well into the future.

Call us at 203-334-6699 to learn more.

## WISH LIST

- Gift cards (Stop & Shop, Walgreen's, CVS, Kohl's, Target)
- Baby items (diapers sizes 4, 5, and 6; wipes)
- Non-perishable food

**And a new roof for our building in 2017!**

## 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](mailto:lynn.gabriel@mercylearningcenter.org) or 203-334-6699.



## SAVE THE DATE!

On October 4th join us for *A View of the Harbor*, an evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, live auction, and inspiring stories of education and empowerment, all while enjoying sunset views of Southport Harbor.

Visit [mercylearningcenter.org/VOH](http://mercylearningcenter.org/VOH) or call 203-334-6699 to learn more about tickets, sponsorship opportunities and other ways to get involved.

## Your Support Changes Lives!

Donate today to empower women and children with education. [www.mercylearningcenter.org](http://www.mercylearningcenter.org)

**Doing a little online shopping?** Consider starting at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Select Mercy Learning Center and Amazon will send donations (at no cost to you!) to MLC.



Let's connect!

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Summer 2015



"Educate a Woman... Educate a Family"

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637 Park Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
(203)334-6699  
[www.mercylearningcenter.org](http://www.mercylearningcenter.org)

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