

Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary

United States Province



September 2, 2010

Mary Ward Center

A simple gesture like waving hello is quite empowering. It can bring a smile to anyone's face. Watch a person light up when you smile or wave at them. It's a human response. Think about the English language that you and I speak. We take it for granted that everyone we encounter speaks English. We know that is not so in many pockets of Chicago and the suburbs.

For years now our cities' and suburbs' growing populations are increasingly foreign-speaking. Children who attend public and private schools can learn English there; however the parents of these children have no means of learning English. Many literacy agencies are overcrowded or don't have the volunteer base to operate sustainable programs. Literacy programs are essential for new residents to move forward when applying for jobs and realizing their full potential in their communities.

When Mary Ward Center was founded in 1999, the IBVM Sisters extended their mission to include those without adequate education and basic skills. By fulfilling a need for literacy, Mary Ward Center is living out this mission. "In the spirit of Mary Ward, founder of the Institute, the Center recognizes the individual worth of persons and journeys with them to foster their true potential." (Mary Ward Center Mission Statement)

Mary Ward Center is home to three IBVM Sisters: Lorraine Crawford, Mary Howard Moriarty and Pat Pendleton. They carefully arrange their days and evenings during the school year in order to meet with a variety of multi-cultural men and women who learn basic skills.

The Center is set up with comfortable tables and chairs in a clean and orderly home setting. The lower level is equipped with four new computers and a wireless printer. This year, Christa Parra, IBVM, will join her IBVM Sisters a few days a week, working one-on-one with students in English and computer tutoring. There is also a hope for a part-time salaried employee who could assist the Sisters with teaching.

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Currently assisting the IBVM Sisters are seven dedicated and trained volunteers who, at different times of the day or early evenings, teach English as a second language. They come knowing that the Sisters have set up a system of learning that is based on desire, compassion and love.

“Our volunteers are essential to continuing to provide a safe and caring place of learning, but we never know who is able to return from year to year. It can become a problem when we know we have so many relying on us for help,” Sister Mary Howard Moriarty shared with me recently. Just as volunteers are necessary to effectively teach the programs at Mary Ward Center, they also rely on financial support from you. Please continue with your generous spirit and compassion so that the IBVM can continue with this and other vital ministries.

The IBVM Sisters’ presence in a place and time in which it is most needed can only be sustained with your help. I hope we can count on you so that we can continue these programs.

Sincerely,

Anne Delaney
Director of Development

Kay Foley, IBVM
U. S. Provincial Leader