



THE MCIF GAZETTE

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR—JANET HENRIQUEZ



This November marks my second anniversary as Executive Director at MCIF. A lot has happened since I first walked through the doors in 2008. The agency has transformed. We have been able to not only preserve but also strengthen our core services. Our continual waiting lists, particularly the demand for basic ESL and GED classes, is evidence of our success. For that, we do not only thank our donors but acknowledge the fact that you are the reason we open our doors everyday to improve the lives of hundreds of families.

Yet, we continue to strive for more excellence and this year, I

am happy to announce, MCIF has reached one of its long term goals: the establishment of a new state of the art computer lab. When I first arrived at MCIF, I visited a basic computer class in session. The room was not full with participants and several of the computers were not on. The screens were antiquated and the computer instructor was proceeding with the lesson very slowly. I thought perhaps the participants had not been exposed to computers and needed more assistance. What I soon discovered was that not all of the computers worked, the software was outdated and there was no internet access. The slowness of the lesson wasn't the instructors' style but the speed at which the programs ran on the computers.

The next day, when I arrived, I

noticed that the participants posted their work on the bulletin board—clip art flyers welcoming me to my new position. My heart almost burst.

At that moment I promised myself, the staff and the participants that we would have a new state of the art computer lab. Combined with the vision of what would be possible if MCIF had new computers, software programs, and language tutorials touched, moved and inspired me into action.

It took a while but this year we introduced the participants to their new computer lab. They were so happy and can not wait to take the new and improved basic computer course. Read more about it on page two.

The Maura Clarke—Ita Ford (MCIF) Center is named for two New York City women, Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, who were Maryknoll Sisters killed in El Salvador in 1980 while working to empower poor people. The MCIF Center was founded in 1993 in a desire to continue their work here in Brooklyn.

MCIF Center

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Executive Director

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Education Coordinator

Amparo Arjona
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MCIF STUDENT PROVIDENCIA CASTRO SHARES HER JOURNEY



This is the story of one of MCIF's newest students. She is in Carol E. Moore's class (highlighted on page 2). This is her journey:

My name is Provedencia Castro and I am a first time student at MCIF. I am from Puerto Rico and am married to Michael Gilbride. In my country I worked as a registered nurse but now I am retired. I was very happy for the opportunity that was given to me to learn English at the Maura-Clarke Ita Ford Center.

The reason that I want to learn English is because my husband's family only speaks English. I want to share with them my day and my feelings but it is hard to express myself. I use different words and a lot of times it takes me a long time to find the right words.

When I first walked into MCIF I felt very comfortable and I was given a time to take a test.

I am always nervous when I have to take a test because I want to do well. When the teacher gave me the test she let me take my time and was very nice. After I took the test I got a phone call telling me that I would be starting class.

My teacher is Carol E. Moore. I love my teacher and she looks and sounds like she loves her job as a teacher. She is so patient with the class and says the lesson over and over until everyone understands.

There is also a rule that everyone has to try to speak in English first. The Director Janet Henriquez is always in the halls and comes in the class to make sure that everyone is speaking English. It is important to learn and she makes sure we are learning.

One of my favorite times is when I am in the computer room. The computers are very nice. I did not see the old ones but the new computers are very good. I use them to learn more English. I hope one day to be able to speak English as best as I can.

MCIF INSTRUCTOR CAROL E. MOORE SHARES HER JOURNEY



I use the word serve by no means lightly; I am here to serve.

The only constant in life is change. Things are always changing. I changed careers in December 2008 after more than 20 years in local city government as a civil servant. I was employed at several city agencies the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, the Civilian Complaint Review Board and the Department of Corrections to name a few.

At each of these agencies, I served in a clerical/secretarial/administrative capacity. Although I gained a wealth of information and irreplaceable experiences. While serving in each of those city agencies, I

had to delve into my true passion: teaching.

I use the word *serve* by no means lightly; I am here to serve. In the fall of 2009, I came to MCIF as a volunteer. I volunteered for about three months when a position became available in January 2010. This is when my journey as an ESL Instructor began.

It has been a beautiful experience right from the onset. I am most grateful to have the opportunity to teach some of the most hard-working, willing, and appreciative individuals in Brooklyn, New York. I come to work excited and ready to serve these students daily.

I am so impressed that they have embraced the idea of a second language acquisition. Learning a second language is no easy task; however, the students at MCIF have transitioned from comfort and complacency into English language learning. They are well on their way to becoming fluent in English. What a feat to take on!

I am humbled and filled with gratitude for the chance to be a part of our participants' aspirations to learn English. Also, it makes me smile to be a part of the Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center as we offer some stability and continuity to the lives of the participants in an ever changing world.

MCIF INTRODUCES ITS NEW STATE OF THE ART COMPUTER LAB



Before: One of our past participants with our computer instructor Barbara Perez in the MCIF Computer Lab

With no internet access and antiquated computers, screens, and software, MCIF's computer lab was extremely outdated. To add to the problem, only half of the computers worked, making it impossible for an entire class to use the computer lab at one time. Classes were divided in half and most of the participants stated that they memorized the language software and that it was not challenging them at all.

MCIF knew it would need to update its system, but that would cost lots of money. Thanks to two foundations and a non-profit organization called Tech Soup we were able to make this goal a reality. It all started with a request to a foundation to purchase updated software. During the site visit, the foundation's representative told us to amend our request to include new computers. To our delight, the foundation, funded the entire request but that

led to another issue we did not anticipate.

We did not have enough new furniture for our computer lab. Our former Director of Education Catherine Talia, OSU met someone from the Patricia Koenig Foundation and explained our predicament. The foundation provided MCIF with the funds to purchase the furniture.

The final piece of the puzzle was when MCIF's Executive Director called Dell Computers and ordered 20 computers with internet access but no software. The Customer Service Rep was very confused by the request but MCIF could not afford an additional \$15,000 in Microsoft Office software costs. Enter Techsoup.org, an organization that assists non profits in obtaining software to the rescue- in this case, Microsoft Office 2010 for all 20 of our computers for an astounding \$635.00! And that is how our goal became a reality!



After: Now with Internet Access and new computers the MCIF Computer Lab is a state of the art center.

Interested in making a difference? Your tax—deductible contribution can help us help others. To make a donation simply go online to our website, www.mcifc.org and click the donate button on the top right hand corner.

No donation is too small and your generosity can make a difference in someone's life.

MCIF CELEBRATES THE START OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR WITH CAKES BY FAITH



Niger Brown, the Level 1B Instructor surprised the Center with two customized cakes that were created by her sister's company "Cakes by Faith." The participants were so grateful and asked Niger how her sister made the cakes with such vivid decorations. At the end the only evidence of these tasty masterpieces are these photos. Thank you "Cakes by Faith." Our participants gave your cakes an overall rating of: "Yummy!" For more photos of the celebration log onto our Facebook page!



GAUDIUM DINNER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Breukelein Institute is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian 501-c corporation formed by the Fathers and Brother of the Pontifical Congregation of the Brooklyn Oratory of St.Philip Neri twenty years ago.

Each year the Breukelein Institute presents the Gaudium Awards to men and women whose lives have "illuminated the horizon of human experience" through their extraordinary vocations in the arts and public service (for more information log onto www.breukelein.org). The Gaudium Award dinner and ceremony is not only honorific but through the generosity of those attending, significant funds are raised which are distributed annually to worthwhile charitable organizations. The Gaudium Awards will be presented on November 15th and MCIF will be one of the fundraising recipients! Thank you Breukelein Institute for your continued support.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA VISITS



Council Member Diana Reyna stopped by to visit the Center and greet our participants. Visiting each class, she addressed the participants and acknowledged their hard work. MCIF presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation for her continuous support.

Yes, I would like my tax deductible gift to continue the important work that the Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center provides empowering women to reach their goals and to have them become reality:

\$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$200 _____ \$500 _____ OTHER \$ _____

My Information: Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Yes I would like to attend a performance of "Resilient Souls" at \$50 a ticket on:

___ Wednesday December 1st at St. Francis College at 7PM and would like ___ ticket(s)

___ Friday December 3rd at the Church of St. Joseph's at 8PM and would like ___ ticket(s)

___ Sunday December 5th at The Mary Louis Academy at 2PM and would like ___ ticket(s)

___ I can not attend but would like to donate \$ _____ to go towards production costs

Please note: tickets will be held at the door. Make checks payable to MCIF Center



Maura Clarke—Ita Ford (MCIF) Center

“A center by and for the women of Bushwick”

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MCIF’s Mission Statement

The aim of the center is to provide opportunities for developing self esteem, individual growth, and educational learning skills that will enable women to claim and realize their own potential.

By providing a safe place of acceptance and encouragement, the Maura Clarke-Ita Ford Center aims to give quality education and self help skills in ESL, basic reading and math, job training and life skills that will lay a foundation on which the women build a whole new world. Upon completion of the program, women will be equipped with the self confidence and the necessary skills that will lead to employment.

HONORING 30 YEARS OF “RESILIENT SOULS” AND REMEMBERING OUR NAMESAKES



On December 2, 1980 four women lost their lives, brutally murdered, while empowering the impoverished in El Salvador. Their names were Maura

Clarke, MM, Ita Ford, MM, Dorothy Kazel, OSU and Jean Donovan a lay missionary.

Thirty years later, the legacy of these women lives on, through centers, such as MCIF, memorials, schools and the work of individuals and organizations throughout the world. Elizabeth Swados a Tony Award nominee and three time Obie Award recipient, has continued to tell their story through three of her works. The first play, *Missionaries* was based on the women’s written letters and spoken words and was performed in 1997 at the Brooklyn

demy of Music. The second, titled *Ten Years of Hope*, was composed in 2003 and based on MCIF Center’s first ten years. One of its most memorable songs being “The Two Mary’s” in honor of Mary Burns, SC the founder of MCIF and Mary Dowd, OSU the Center’s Co-Director.

We are honored that Liz Swados has again graced us with her talent with *Resilient Souls*, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the deaths of the four martyrs. This piece will be performed at three different venues:

- Wednesday, December 1st at 7PM at St. Francis’ College, Bklyn Hts
- Friday, December 3rd at 8PM at the Church of St. Joseph’s, West Village
- Sunday December 5th at 2PM at the Mary Louis Academy, Queens

“The first play focused on the four women and what was happening in El

Salvador, while the second focused on the Center” explained Ms. Swados. *Resilient Souls* focuses on the global impact that the passing of these women has had 30 years later. I have gathered personal stories, from their friends and family in the States as well as abroad. The stories I received were very inspirational and moving.”

Currently in rehearsal, this performance promises to be a memorable event. “I personally want to thank Ms. Liz Swados for generously donating her own time and talent to tell this vital story—as relevant now as it was 30 years ago—and to benefit MCIF. It is our hope that these works of art will be performed for many years to come.” stated Chris Morrison Board Chair of MCIF Board of Directors.

To attend this event send the coupon from this newsletter [page three] in the self addressed envelope or log onto our website at www.mcifc.org and click on **EVENTS**.

The Maura Clarke Ita Ford Center
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