

Tutoring Provides Assistance to Reach Educational Goals – Josephina Ruiz

Written by Melissa Lachcik

When Plainfield resident Josefina Ruiz moved to the area a few years ago, she wanted to learn English so she could understand the language and assist her children with schoolwork. Initially she began taking General Education Development (GED) classes in Spanish at Joliet Junior College through the Department of Adult Education & Literacy. However, she had to tend to family matters in Mexico and was unable to finish the program. When she returned to the United States, she was determined to pick up where she left off.

Josefina connected with Tania Brenner-Hess, ELL/ESL Liaison for the English as a Second Language program at the Plainfield Public Library District. She learned about free tutoring services, offered at the library in partnership with JJC, that were available to her as a resource. She worked very closely with a tutor who helped her prepare for all subjects that would be on the GED test. Josefina said, "I think Bonnie (tutor) helped me a lot because she's very patient and you can ask her again and again. She's always available to help." After working with Bonnie, Josefina began taking GED classes in English at JJC's Romeoville Campus.

As Josefina explained, one of her biggest challenges was taking the GED test in English because it was out of her comfort zone. She said she would've been more comfortable taking the GED in Spanish, but she wanted to prove to herself that she could do it. She was determined and worked hard towards her goal.

When she took the GED test the first time, she explained that she had trouble passing the English section, but she kept trying. After the second attempt, she passed. Josefina said, "It was a challenge, but I told myself I can do it. I was very happy because I did it." She added, "It's not easy but if you stay focused and on track, you can do it".

Josefina completed her GED test and also had the honor of serving as one of the student speakers at the Adult Volunteer Literacy Thank You Banquet this past summer. Now she is working towards US Citizenship and continues to work with a tutor at the library.

Mandy Dwyer, Literacy Specialist for JJC's department of adult education & literacy, noted how important it was that Josefina stuck with it. Despite having

minor setbacks and needing to take time off, she kept coming back and finished the program. Mandy said, "She worked hard and persevered, and she did it."

The Adult Volunteer Literacy Program offers free tutoring for Reading, Math, and English Literacy. Adults receive volunteer tutoring at local libraries, JJC Campuses, and community sites throughout the JJC district. Learners meet weekly with certified volunteer tutors for up to two hours; and sessions are available morning, afternoon or evenings to meet learner and volunteer needs. Instruction is learner-focused with materials provided.

For more information about the Adult Volunteer Literacy Program, contact Mandy Dwyer at (815) 280-1331 or email: mdwyer@jjc.edu