

# DEClaration

Summer 2014 Newsletter of the Durango Education Center



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## Meet Our Student

**Myriam Costantino-Balaguer**

Myriam and her family moved to the United States 15 years ago from Argentina, settling in Chicago. In 2007, her husband and son Brian took a trip to Durango and fell in love with the town. The family eventually relocated here in 2009.

Brian struggled at school and sought other alternatives. Brian came to the Durango Education Center in 2010 and attained his GED May 2011. After getting his GED, Brian worked to save money for college but eventually looked into more-affordable colleges abroad. In October 2013, Brian started attending The Adventist University of the Philippines. Living in the dorms on campus, Brian interacts with students from all over the world and is thoroughly enjoying his college experience.

With her son off to college, Myriam had more time to focus on her own goals. "I wanted to get my GED about 10 years ago but was busy with the kids and a little scared to go back to school – I hadn't gone to school since 1977," said Myriam. A nanny by trade, she was looking for a new career as it became increasingly difficult to lift the children she cared for due to her hip problems.

Myriam started the DEC's English as a Second Language (ESL) Program in February 2014. "I knew I needed to improve my pronunciation and vocabulary, even though people think I speak English well enough," she said with a smile. The ESL teachers at the Center quickly found out Myriam was ready for higher-level English and encouraged her to enroll in the GED program. Just like her son did a couple years ago, Myriam is now taking classes to get her GED. Excited to start a new chapter in her life, she plans to pursue a career in medical billing.



*Myriam, GED Student*

### Test Your Knowledge: GED Sample Test Question

"Byron purchased a \$5,000 certificate of deposit (CD) at his local bank. The CD will pay him 7% simple interest. How much INTEREST, in dollars, will Byron have earned from his CD at the end of a 2-year period?"



## Director's Welcome

I have been with the Durango Education Center for 18 months and not a day goes by that I take for granted the incredible way that we improve people's lives. Our organization believes that the entire community benefits from an educated populace, and we work tirelessly to make that a reality.

While we are best known for our high school equivalency and English as a Second Language programs, we educate people of all ages, from infants to senior citizens. Last year we changed our name from the Durango Adult Education Center to the Durango Education Center to better reflect the people we serve.

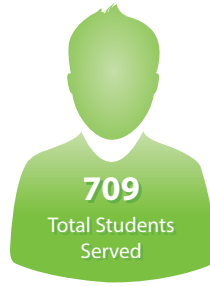
Along with the name change, we revisited our mission, beliefs and goals. In addition to helping students attain a basic education, we aim to prepare our graduates to enter college and be prepared for workplace success. We teach lifelong skills because we are the last-chance educational option for most of our students.

With ongoing support from individuals and community partners, we will expand our ability to help people help themselves through essential education. I'm looking forward to making an even bigger difference together.

Thank you for your continued support!

- Teresa Malone, Executive Director

## Who We Serve



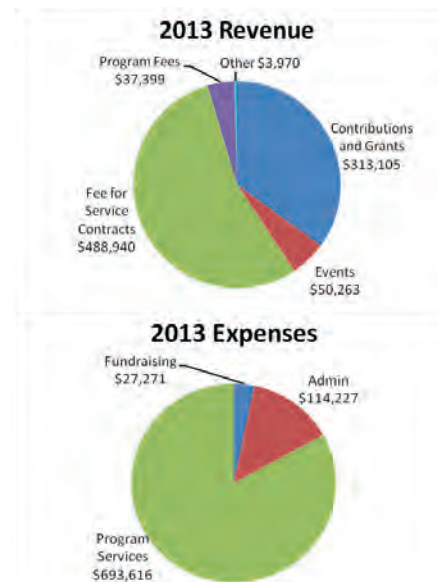
- 90 students from other countries learned English
- 112 infants and toddlers received care
- 112 youth participated in Del Alma programs
- 70 La Plata County Jail inmates studied for their GED
- 16 La Plata County Jail inmates earned a GED
- 108 adults learned computer skills, Spanish, or life enrichment
- 287 students studied for GED

## Financial Report

Due to some very generous donations and well-timed grant awards, our programs continue to thrive even though we do not receive funding from the State of Colorado.

We are pleased to report that the Durango Education Center's federal grants for ESL and GED programs will continue for the 2014-15 year. The Center was only one of fifteen programs selected for this grant statewide. While this grant does not cover the entire cost of these essential programs, it will enable us to add summer GED and ESL classes beginning this July.

For a complete financial report, our 2013 990 tax return can be viewed on our website: <http://www.durangoedcenter.org/AboutUs>.



# Program Updates

**New GED Test.** The 2014 GED Test differs significantly from the version released in 2002, the last time the test was revamped. Now aligned with the Common Core State Standards, the four subject tests – Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Math – are all computer-based and take longer to complete. The Reading and Writing tests from the previous GED were combined into one test, Language Arts. The Math Test is now 55% algebra and requires more analytical thinking. The new GED exam is a true high school equivalency series of tests. “Two of the tests require substantial writing – Language Arts and Social Studies – and students must analyze and compare and contrast differing perspectives on important topics relevant to today’s adults,” explains GED Program Manager Stephanie Moran. “Gone are the days when adult learners just needed to be a decent reader and our instructors could fill in a few gaps for them to pass the test. Now students need to be problem solvers and devise answers versus choosing from a multiple choice menu. The new GED prepares graduates for college and the workplace more thoroughly than the older version.” In 2013, donations covered \$1,800 in GED test fees. In 2014, students have even greater expenses: not only has the cost of the GED Exams increased, there is now a charge for practice tests. Community support directly helps DEC students complete their education by helping with these test fees. For more information, contact Stephanie at 385-4354 x107.



**Summer School 2014.** The DEC will be offering summer classes from its GED, ESL and Community Education Programs. Starting July 8 and going through August 14, classes will be offered Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 5 – 8 pm for ESL and GED.

**Introducing Ballet Folklorico de Durango.** DEC and Fort Lewis College’s El Centro de Muchos Colores Hispano Resource Center have partnered on a pathway-to-college program that aims to increase Latino student graduation rates in La Plata County and recruit more Hispanic students at FLC. Now called “Ballet Folklorico de Durango,” the dance program is a merger of the El Centro Ballet Folklorico program and the Del Alma Ballet Folklorico program. FLC Dance students teach participants, ages 5 and up, traditional Mexican dances.

**U.S. Citizenship Preparation.** With a grant from the City of Durango, DEC is helping more immigrants gain citizenship by training volunteers to help them pass the U.S. Naturalization Exam. “Tutors are trained to assist students on all aspects of the test, from the oral portion to the civics questions,” said Libby Baumchen, ESL Program Coordinator. “The one-on-one relationship is ideal, as students can work at their own pace and reach their goal of citizenship faster.” For more information, contact Libby at 385-4354 x109.



**Customized Computer Training.** DEC continues to deliver computer training to employees from a variety of business sectors and nonprofits, both in its onsite computer lab and at employers’ worksites. Trainings can be customized to fill employees’ needs, or, if businesses need to train only one or two employees, they can send them to one of the Center’s open-enrollment computer training classes. Visit our website or contact Kelly Quach at 385-4354 x105.

**Childcare.** DEC continues to serve GED and ESL parents with its quality infant/toddler program. Availability of childcare is one of the biggest barriers for people needing to complete their education, and the onsite program allows parents to take classes while their children are receiving excellent care. The only program of its kind in the region, DEC will not be able to continue offering this licensed childcare center without additional community support. Contributions to childcare may be eligible for a 50% Colorado tax credit. For more information, contact Christine Imming at 385-4354 x102.

**GED Test Answer:**

**\$700**

# 2013 Donors

## Literacy Friends and Sponsors

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Wells Fargo Bank  
Jamie Whitten  
Nicholas Yonker  
Sidny Zink  
CosmoQuest  
KSUT Radio

*This represents all 2013 donations. We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.*

## WAYS TO DONATE

Thank you for considering a donation to the Durango Education Center. Because the Center is a non-profit organization, most donations qualify for federal and state tax benefits.

- On-line at [www.durangoedcenter.org](http://www.durangoedcenter.org)
- Mail to: 701 Camino Del Rio, Ste. 301 Durango, CO 81301

Donations over \$250 qualify for Colorado Enterprise Zone Tax Credit. You can claim a Colorado State income tax credit of 25% of the value of the contribution. The amount for in-kind contributions is 12.5% of the value of the contribution. Please consult your tax advisor to determine the benefits of the CO Enterprise Zone and federal tax deduction for your donation.

## OUR BELIEFS

*We believe that:*

- All people have inherent worth.
- A sense of belonging is a building block for a stronger community.
- All people have the potential to create positive change.
- Education empowers the individual to achieve positive character attributes, social and economic mobility, and self sufficiency.
- Literacy and cultural competency are essential to thrive in this interconnected world.
- Family and culture impact the development of each individual.
- The right of every person to have and make choices is basic to freedom.
- Each individual has unique learning capabilities.
- The entire community benefits from an educated populace.
- A top priority of humanity is to create a better, more compassionate world.

# 2013 Donors

## Literacy Proponents and Benefactors

Anonymous  
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Clyde & Paulette Church  
Joe & Mary Colgan  
ConocoPhillips  
Durango Center for Prof. Dev  
Durango Herald  
Durango High Noon Rotary  
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Stephanie Moran  
Heather Pacheco  
Red Willow Production Company  
Cordelia Stites  
The Payroll Department  
Lillian White

## Literacy Leaders

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Gigi Baty  
Cheryle Brandsma  
Cathy Crum  
Beverly Danielson  
De Colores Civitan Club  
Durango Area Association of Realtors  
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Tim Guill  
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La Plata Electric Association  
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Ann Smith  
Gordon & Dene Thomas  
Carol Treat  
Nancy Wallace

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Durango Coffee Company  
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Terry Swan  
Ellen Matthews Turiel  
Tom West  
Nan Uhl

"One of my favorite quotes is 'Give someone a fish, they eat for a day. Teach them to fish, they eat for a lifetime'. Teaching and empowering individuals is the greatest gift we can give. Supporting the Durango Education Center through financial gifts helps others develop their skills and talents to enrich their life and become financially independent."



Moni Grushkin, Donor



## I am eager to help the Durango Education Center!

\$50 Literacy Friend       \$150 Student Sponsor       \$250 Literacy Advocate \*  
 \$500 Literacy Leader\*       \$1,000 Literacy Champion\*       \$ Other

Check enclosed. Payable to **Durango Education Center** - 701 Camino Del Rio, Ste. 301 Durango, CO 81301

Donate on-line at: [www.durangoedcenter.org](http://www.durangoedcenter.org)

Credit Card

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (needed for receipt) \_\_\_\_\_ Please sign me up to receive DEC e-newsletters \_\_\_\_\_

The Durango Education Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.

\* Donations over \$250 qualify for Enterprise Zone Tax Credit. Thank You for your support!

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## Upcoming Events

**July 8:**

Summer GED and ESL classes begin

**July 21:**

Summer Community Education classes begin

**September 2:**

Fall GED and ESL classes begin

**September 16:**

Ballet Folklorico de Durango performance Fiesta on the Mesa, 5-7 p.m. Fort Lewis College Student Union Plaza

### DEC Mission Statement

The mission of the Durango Education Center, a caring learning community, is to fill educational gaps by equipping adults, children and families with the skills and knowledge necessary for 21st century careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.

## Why I Volunteer

After relocating to Durango last year, I had extra time for volunteer work while I searched for employment. I'd heard about the Durango Education Center and thought it may be a good fit. I'd done some math tutoring back East after I lost my job in the steel industry. (From 1980-2008, a thriving economy of 23,000-plus steel workers in Pittsburgh had dwindled down to about 800.)

I started to tutor math on weekdays and evenings at the DEC. In my previous tutoring experiences, I was pretty successful at getting students to overcome the fear or shyness that held them back in the public school system. Working one-on-one, I try to give DEC students the confidence and willingness to stick with basic algebra and geometry until that light comes on in their heads. I encourage students to first try to work the problems at home on their own. Then I show them what they're doing right and what short-cuts not to take.

It's been a win-win situation for the students and me. I feel good when I can give something to the community by helping a struggling math student earn their GED.

*Tim Shanahan, Volunteer*