

# Tidings

Fall 2017 Newsletter of the Durango Adult Education Center



**Durango Adult  
Education Center**  
*Serving Southwest Colorado*

## Preparing for a Fresh Start

*DAEC's GED Program at the La Plata County Detention Center*

Hello my name is Alonzo Summa. I am 32 years old and I am currently housed in the La Plata County Detention Center. I am looking at serving 5-6 years, maybe less here.

I have always felt the need to further my education. I quit school in the 11th grade upon hearing that my girlfriend was expecting our first child.

I needed to find employment to support my family. This became my first priority and has been ever since. I was blessed with four kids but sadly lost my youngest when he was 4 months old. Suffering through the loss, I have come to realize I must do all that I can to keep providing for my little ones. One of the ways to do that would be to at least obtain my GED.

In recent years, I have found out that it is getting more and more in demand from employers that you have a GED or high school diploma to get a job.

I love to be outside so of course I chose jobs in construction, concrete work, iron work, road work, fencing, roofing and just recently as a flagger for a traffic control company. Always ready to learn something new, I was in training for a supervisor position when I was indicted on my charges.

The GED program here at the La Plata County Detention facility has given me an opportunity to work towards my goal of finishing my high school diploma. I would say the best part of my time here is looking forward to class. My teachers have been so helpful with everything. It's like for that moment when I'm in class, I'm able to step outside of these walls. Even though some lessons could be explained a lot easier with more classroom materials available like in a regular class setting, my teachers are flawless in explaining and delivering the lesson with the limited materials they have. I don't see us as just student and teacher. I see a friend, a person I can talk to. That in return makes me comfortable to ask questions when I am stuck or don't understand a subject. I have passed 3 of the 4 required tests for my GED, and am working hard to be credentialed and accomplish my goal.

My teachers have encouraged me to look into going to college after I get my GED. The feeling of challenging myself to get a higher education is not only mine but my teachers' shared values too. Thanks to them and the GED program here, I cannot only look forward to getting a better job but a career when I get released.



*Alonzo Summa,  
GED Student*



## Director's Note

### Literacy Enthusiasts, Thank you for giving!

For the last three decades your generosity has created an educational safety net for individuals wanting to improve their lives through education. You've shared your talents, given freely of your hearts, and you've financially supported adult literacy in our community.

The gift of tutoring English language learners or preparing them for the US Citizenship exam is unparalleled. Socorro, featured in this newsletter, is just one example of how we make a difference for an entire family. When our students learn to read, we've imparted a skill for life. When you help a learner earn a high school equivalency diploma, you're launching them towards a future of opportunities. Thank you for giving more than 200 hours to our learners so far in 2017!

Your monthly and annual donations have allowed us to continue improving our community through effective and compassionate education to those who need it the most. We all know that education is the best investment we can make; it has the highest financial and societal returns. This year your financial contributions have helped educate the 265 individuals we've already served at the La Plata County Jail, our Cortez Center, and our Durango Center. Thank you for your generous support that helps to strengthen our community. Together we are creating a better world.

In partnership,

*Teresa*

Teresa Malone

Executive Director

## 30-for-30 Challenge Finale Who will win?

We've enjoyed a wild ride so far throughout this 30-for-30 challenge—30 ways to celebrate three decades of providing unparalleled adult education to this region. In this final installment, we complete our countdown and arrive at the single most important way you can support our center and honor the amazing students. Visit our blog at [www.durangoadulted.org](http://www.durangoadulted.org) to view our entire 30-for-30 list.

**No. 5: Give Your Regards to H-o-l-l-y-w-o-o-d** - Volunteer to help with our annual Spellebration fundraiser

**No. 4: Mock Your Moxy** - Provide mock interviews to students

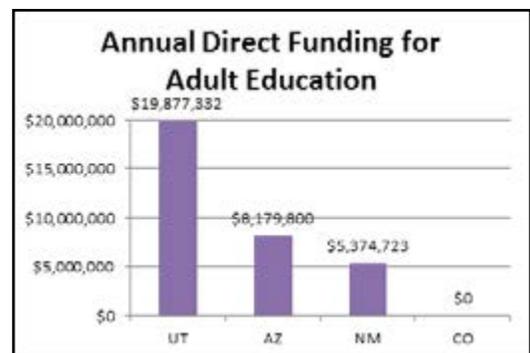
**No. 3: Number the Stars** - Refer students to DAEC

**No. 2: Spell Glitz** - Form a Spellebration team

### No. 1: Leap into Action

Issus coleoptratus is the only creature in all of nature to use a mechanical gear for motion. The fat, flat plant hopper interlocks the toothed grooves on its hind legs in order to pull off the precision timing needed for fantastic leaps.

For adult learners, accessibility and affordability of adult education centers are the interlocking gears enabling their tremendous leaps into better careers and more rewarding lives. Unfortunately, Colorado stands out as the only state that does not directly fund adult education. Our neighbors, Utah and Arizona, contribute over \$19 and \$8 million respectively, with New Mexico dedicating \$5 million of its budget, to adult education.\*



If these facts and figures bug you, now is the time to leap into action.

Please consider making a cash donation to the DAEC. Whether you give once or set up a recurring contribution, your generosity will ensure another 30 years of excellent education and stellar community service!

\* from ED.gov 2014-2016 National Reporting System

# Thanks to Your Support...

## *The Language of Thanks*

### *DAEC's Successful ESL Program Comes to Cortez*

For Thanksgiving this year, Socorro Prieto-Ruiz was extremely thankful for one thing most of all: her English as a Second Language class. "I love my class and I love my teacher," she beamed when asked why.

This time last year, she was worried her goal to become a fluent English speaker might never materialize. The community ESL classes being offered never seemed to advance. The instructor looped through the same introductory lessons, covering the same pages in the lesson book over and over. As a result, Socorro's learning stalled. The 20-year Cortez resident spent years relying on friends and family to translate for her. Working proved especially challenging because she could not catch all the instructions and requests. She craved independence.

Finally, other frustrated residents reached out to the Durango Adult Education Center's ESL instructors. A volunteer pilot program swiftly took shape. News spread and soon the tutors were overwhelmed. Clearly, the Cortez region needed more support. To meet the community's needs, the DAEC opened an adult education center in downtown Cortez with High School Equivalency and ESL classes meeting four times a week this fall.

Peggy Tennyson, Socorro's ESL teacher, supports student success by promoting lots of discussions where everyone contributes and practices speaking. "My students come to class usually after working a full day and taking care of their families," Tennyson explained. "I try to vary the lessons so that I can keep them engaged even when they are tired." Tennyson's efforts have so far paid dividends. "I like coming to the school," Socorro reported. "I make time to study even when I don't have time." "Socorro is very dedicated to learning English. It's obvious that she practices a lot outside of the classroom," Tennyson said.

"For the first time, I feel hopeful," Socorro enthusiastically shares.

## *A Lesson in Excellence*

Courtney Beaver is living "the dream." At 19, she has a solid job she enjoys at the Bank of Colorado, a retirement account, and a future full of wide-open opportunities. Growing up as a big fan of the show *Criminal Minds*, she has always felt drawn to criminal psychology.

Only 18 months have elapsed since she earned her GED through the Durango Adult Education Center, yet Courtney is already constructing plans for her next big accomplishment: a psychology degree. With the scholarship awarded at the winter graduation ceremony, she plans to attend night classes at either Fort Lewis College or Pueblo Community College.

Wherever she goes, she hopes the teaching matches the excellence she came to know at the DAEC. The evening classes she attended were particularly diverse; nonetheless, the teachers adapted lessons to all the different learning levels and speeds.

"Getting my GED opened so many doors," Courtney says. She goes on to explain how her experiences as a home school student brought plenty of assignments and projects, but not many tests. Students at the DAEC take periodic assessment tests so that they sit for their GED exams only when they have reached their individual learning goals and are thus equipped to succeed. All that testing and goal-setting had in impact on Courtney.

"It boosted my confidence," she says. "It turned my grades around. Now, I want to learn more and achieve more."



*Socorro Prieto-Ruiz,  
ESL Student*



*Courtney Beaver,  
GED Graduate*



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## Upcoming Events

### **Tuesday, December 5:**

#### ***CoGives Day***

Your gift on this day will help us get matching funds thus increasing the impact of your donation.  
[www.coloradogives.org](http://www.coloradogives.org)

### **Tuesday, December 19:**

#### ***High School Equivalency Graduation Ceremony***

Durango Public Library  
6 - 7 pm

### **Wednesday, January 31, 2018:**

#### ***Spellebration - Snowdown Spelling Showdown***

Henry Strater Theatre  
5:30 - 7:30 pm

## Our Mission

The mission of the Durango Adult Education Center, a caring learning community, is to fill educational gaps by providing the skills and knowledge necessary for livable wage careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.

## Why I Volunteer

My name is Judy Duke and I am a retired resource teacher from Durango High School. I have lived in Durango for 35 years. I have been Chair of Salvation Army of La Plata County and when I resigned from that I decided to volunteer at the Durango Adult Education Center.

I chose to volunteer after attending their annual fundraising luncheon. I was very moved by the stories about the education and support provided by DAEC and the impact on student lives. In the year that I have been volunteering, I have helped prepare a graduation speech, worked at the jail with GED preparation, and am currently helping a student one-on-one with writing.

Attending GED graduation and hearing the speeches given by the students has been a wonderful experience that has been quite memorable for me. I am inspired to continue to volunteer because students are coming to DAEC to improve their lives and being a part of that is very special to me.



*Judy Duke, Volunteer*