

Tidings

Spring 2019 Newsletter of the Durango Adult Education Center



Durango Adult Education Center
Serving Southwest Colorado

Lisa Roger's Badge of Courage

The pregnant 20-year-old girl trekked across the posh San Antonio suburb. Her wheeled suitcase rumbled at her heels as she passed by towering, palatial homes with vast, velvety lawns and glittering fountains.

Could onlookers see the tears sluicing down her cheeks?

"I didn't know anybody and I was so sad thinking what I am gonna' do?" Lisa Rogers says, recounting her arrival to the United States five years ago.

Going back to her home in Chiapas, Mexico was not an option. Despite its lush, emerald, mountainous jungles, the place was too full of sadness. Her parents had passed away and her boyfriend and the father of the child she carried had left her for another.

At the airport, she'd hailed a cab and knowing she needed to find a job, instructed the driver to take her wherever she might get hired on as a house cleaner. An hour outside of the city, the driver deposited her in the wealthy suburb. The cab fare totaled all the money she had. The thick wrought-iron gates and security guards blocked her efforts to secure some work.

That's when she lost hope and wept.

At last, Lisa encountered a cluster of cars and a woman who spoke her language. After hearing Lisa's predicament, one of the women explained that she, too, was a single mom from Mexico with a house cleaning business. Not only would she take Lisa in, but also, she would employ the girl.

"God sent me that person!" Lisa nods.

After her baby, Alisson, was born, Lisa came to Durango to live with a distant cousin. She worked multiple jobs and eventually got her own apartment. She went to the Durango Adult Education Center to inquire about their English as a Second Language classes in 2015. A few tests revealed her language aptitude was already exceptional, so the staff recommended she enroll in the GED program instead. However, she didn't start her GED classes until last year.



Lisa Rogers with her daughter

This coming May 29 at the Durango Public Library, Lisa will attend the DAEC's graduation ceremony and receive her GED diploma. She will also deliver the commencement address to her fellow graduates. In August, she will join the police academy.

continued...

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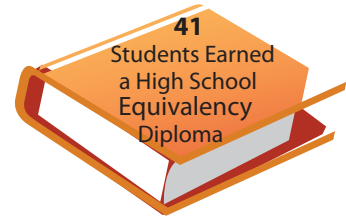
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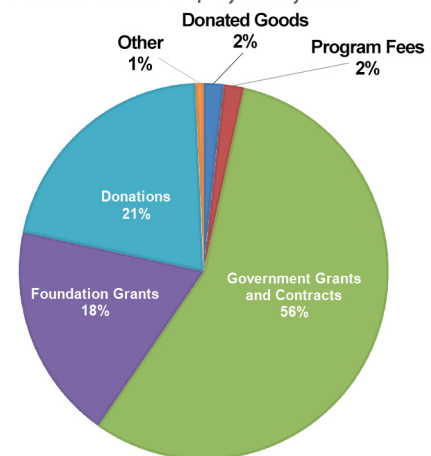
2018 Accomplishments



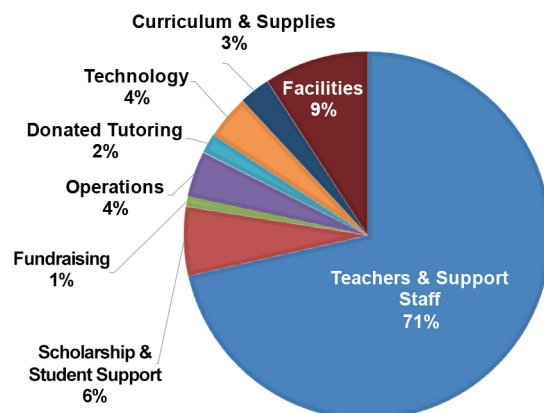
- 123 students from other countries learned English
- 20 different countries were represented by our ESL students
- 45 children were taken care of in childcare
- 123 individuals received career & support services through the BOOST Program
- 232 students studied for their high school equivalency
- 533 tests were administered at our Pearson Vue Testing Center
- 693 volunteer hours were donated to help our students

2018 Finances *(unaudited)*

REVENUE: \$1,000,539



EXPENSES: \$990,472



The Impact of Your Support

Lisa Rogers *continued*

"I never did think about that as a career," she shakes her head. "I was thinking I am going to be cleaning all my life. But it was always on my mind that if you can have a job where you help people, I think that's great."

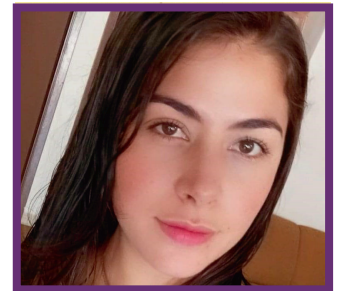
The idea arose while chatting with Career Advisor, Sierra DiMarco, who rattled off a list of careers Lisa could explore now that she had a GED. Police officer resonated with Lisa—hardly surprising, given the badge of courage she'd worn throughout her life already.

"It's a beautiful career. It's dangerous but you are there to help, you know. To do something good," she says. With a grin, she adds, "I love all the rules."

For Lisa, rules and laws create calm and order. They result in civility and clean neighborhoods. She used to feel afraid whenever she heard sirens wailing through a city. Now, she hears them as the sound of help coming. Especially inspiring are the mottos on the squad cars: To Protect and To Serve.

Although too many headlines reveal police in metropolitan centers embroiled in racial scandals across the country, Lisa remains undeterred. She believes she'll make a great cop, explaining, "I am a good thinker and I have a beautiful heart."

In the five years since she came to a foreign country loaded with questions, Lisa can now cast a fond eye around the DAEC classrooms. This is a place where she found teachers she adored; where a Career Advisor helped her fill out stacks of paperwork and scholarship applications; the place where she discovered her calling and realized how she might give back to a world that gifted her so many blessings.



Lisa

"In this Durango Adult Education building," Lisa smiles, "I find all the answers."

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.

The Impact of Your Support

Driven: One Woman's Road to a Better Career

"I guess it's the way I'm raised," Audra Tunnell says. "Whatever you want to do, you do it."

As it happens, she was raised around big trucks with engines singing gravelly ragga-ragga-ragga idling songs. Audra's father worked for Schwan's. He drove the iconic, creamy yellow frozen foods truck emblazoned with blue swans. Her mother drove big trucks. Later this fall, Audra will join their ranks when she, too, becomes a truck driver.

That this field may be male-dominated does not bother her.

Audra shrugs, "It doesn't matter if it's mostly men. If you can do it, do it."

For the last eight years, the single mom of two has driven buses for the Cortez School District. She works other driving jobs, too. Her Class B Commercial Driving License qualifies her to drive just about any kind of vehicle that combines the truck and cargo-hold into one unit. However, the work is seasonal and part-time.



*Audra Tunnell
GED student*

"I'm tired," Audra exhales with a laugh. "I want to work just one job that pays well enough to take care of my bills." In trucking, those well-paying jobs are usually associated with Class A vehicles, or what we commonly call big rigs and eighteen-wheelers; trucks attached to a separate trailer.

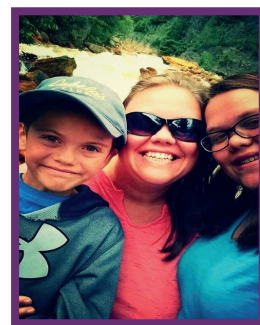
Audra dropped out of high school as a sophomore. Seeing her 11-year old son grapple with learning difficulties at school due to ADHD caused Audra to reflect on her own educational experience. She suspects that her own struggles may be linked to an undiagnosed condition on the Autism spectrum.

Young Audra promised her parents she would finish her education. "But life happens," she remarks. "Two kids and twenty odd years later, I have the opportunity."

After enrolling over the winter, Audra has successfully passed three of the four required exams. Math remains the final hurdle to leap before getting her diploma.

"My scores have just floored me," Audra says. "I thought I was going to struggle a lot more."

The targeted and tailored teaching available at the Durango Adult Education Center's Cortez site (Cortez Adult Education Center) has enabled Audra to flourish regardless of her learning differences. In fact, the Center has served her unique learning style so well that Audra's 17-year-old daughter has begun taking classes there, perhaps circumventing the dreaded dropout cycle.



Audra with her children

Thanks to the career services of the BOOST Program, the Center has helped her enroll in a truck driving school and provided some scholarship money to help offset the cost of tuition. In the fall, Audra will complete a 4-week intensive licensure course through San Juan College. After the course, she will have the experience and the Class A CDL needed to shift her career into higher gear. She's also making herself doubly competitive by earning her GED.

One of the things Audra knows best: to have drive is to be driven. She was raised knowing life's roadways are winding and not always mapped or marked; sometimes scenic and sometimes under construction. Either way, getting anywhere begins with getting behind the wheel.

Audra points out, "[The GED program] has empowered me and made me feel stronger and smarter than I did before. I feel like a strong person. Like I can do whatever I want to do."

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Durango Adult Education Center

Serving Southwest Colorado

701 Camino del Rio, Ste. 301
Durango, CO 81301

Return Address Requested

Upcoming Events

May 28

GED Graduation - Cortez
Osprey Packs Headquarters - 6-7 pm

May 29

GED Graduation
Durango Public Library - 6 pm

June 3-27

ESL & GED summer school classes - *Durango*

June 3-27

ESL summer school classes - *Cortez*

July 1-26

GED summer school classes - *Cortez*

August 26

Fall Classes Start
Cortez & Durango

DAEC Mission

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

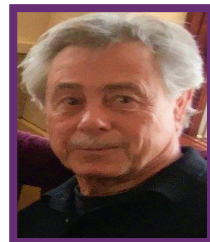
Why I Volunteer

I recently retired from 30 years of teaching Psychology at Fort Lewis College. I have been volunteering at the Durango Adult Education Center since November. I work twice a week with Jessie, a delightful Chinese student who is improving her speaking, writing and listening skills in English.

I chose to volunteer at the suggestion of one of my FLC colleagues who has been tutoring at the DAEC for more than a year. I was inspired by how meaningful the experience is to him.

Every week presents new memorable moments. I am constantly impressed by how dedicated my student is to her English language learning practice.

I will continue to volunteer because it gives me a sense of purpose and accomplishment. After working with my students for 30 years as a college professor I missed the opportunity to teach others. Also, I am learning a lot about English as a second language instruction and my student.



-Michael Anziano