



Spring, 2016



East Side Learning Center

Unlocking each child's potential through the foundation of reading since 2001

The Bookmark

A Message from Sister Audrey —

“OUR STRENGTH IS IN OUR UNITY”



These words of Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, has been the theme of our staff and tutors during this 15th year of service on the East Side of St. Paul.

In June, you and all of us committed to the ESLC mission will mark the end of this 15th year of changing the lives of children through one-on-one reading tutoring. This seems like an opportune time to reflect and **count some of the blessings flowing through our united efforts**—blessings that can be claimed by all of us who believe in “unlocking each child’s potential through the foundation of reading.”

During these 15 years, we’ve been blessed to work with a totally dedicated staff, hundreds of extremely generous volunteers, steadfast donors, supportive funders, and committed Board. Throughout these 15 years, ESLC has remained focused on rigorous and compassionate work to ensure our

children have the reading skills they need to flourish.

You, our readers, through your support and continued belief in OUR children, **are playing a vital part in their success** so these blessings can reverberate throughout the entire St. Paul community for today and into the future. These are just a few of our abundant blessings made possible because “our strength is in our unity.”

- ◆ What began as a pilot at John A. Johnson Elementary for 19 children through the support of 25 volunteers and School Sisters of Notre Dame is **now serving 320 children, each four days a week**, at five schools.
- ◆ We’ve grown from one host school to five, which all **offer rent-free space, furnishings, and internet access.**
- ◆ We’ve moved from tutoring grades 1-3 to grades K-3 with a **greater focus on kindergarten** as “prevention,” providing strong

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Help children advance in reading through one-on-one tutoring, one hour a week!

Be a volunteer tutor

Training and support provided

Contact Lauren
lauren.johnsen@spps.org,
651-793-7331

foundational reading skills rather than future “intervention.”

- ◆ The “secret sauce” of ESLC since its beginning is the **personalized lesson plan** prepared by educators every day for each child.
- ◆ Stir that “secret sauce” with **nearly 200 well-trained community volunteers every week** who bring love and learning together for our children and you have a formula that offers our struggling readers success.
- ◆ Since the beginning, supporters like you have made it possible for **over 2,100 children to become more confident readers.**



WHY EAST SIDE LEARNING CENTER?

By Lauren Johnsen
Coordinator of Volunteers and Communications

As the new Coordinator of Volunteers and Communications at East Side Learning Center, I was quickly astonished by not just how massive the ESLC family really is, but also how dedicated and caring each and every supporter is. Over the few months I have worked at ESLC, hundreds of contributors have touched my heart by promoting the ESLC mission of unlocking each child's potential. Here is a story about one of our volunteers who represents our strength. She is just a sample of the many of you that remind me of my most favorite quote:

“Just as one candle lights another and yet can light thousands of other candles, so one heart illuminates another heart and can yet illuminate thousands of other hearts.” – Leo Tolstoy

Thirteen. Thirteen is how many years have gone by since **Nancy Grace**, a now-retired chemist, was referred by a friend and started volunteering at ESLC in just its second year of operation. The students whose lives Nancy has touched have had time to grow up to fulfill the potential she helped to unlock so many years ago. Nancy shares memories of one of the first students to leave an impact on her.

Nancy. **“My favorite picture was with Denzel at Johnson, maybe 10 or 11 years ago.** It may have been in your newsletter or maybe posted in the hallway, back then! The quilt, still on the wall at Johnson Elementary, has a poem he wrote, about why did his father have to die. He was learning so fast, his dream was to be a doctor, and his grandma was a strong figure in his life. I tutored him for third and fourth grade; two days per week.

I remember him, looking quizzically at me, as we took turns reading pages of his chapter book. **I think he began to love to read.**

I often wonder what he is doing today. Was he able to do well in school and pursue his dreams?”

Denzel. Whatever became of Denzel? In a happy coincidence, Denzel introduced himself to Sr. Audrey when

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Thanks Pat, for your kind words in honor of our 15th year!
(Pat Gohla is a former board member and tutor)



A TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF SISTER THOMASIN SERGOT, SSND



It is with a heavy heart that we inform you that Sister Thomasin Sergot, SSND, passed away at her home on March 18th after a two-year journey with sinus cancer.

Many of you knew Sr. Thomasin and worked with her over the years. She began working with children at ESLC in January of 2006, serving either as Site Coordinator or Site Assistant at St. Matthew's, HOPE Community Academy, Bruce F. Vento, and John A. Johnson. Most recently, she served as a tutor at St. Paul Music Academy. Even in illness she continued tutoring there until two weeks before her death.

Sister Thomasin deeply respected and valued each child and adult with whom she came in contact. She particularly had a magical way of working with children who sometimes presented the most challenge. She took the time to learn as much as she could about the circumstance, likes and dislikes of the children, along with their learning style. While tutoring a child, she would use as many resources as needed to ensure that every avenue was taken to make the child successful in the quest to be a good reader. She once said, "Children unlock our energies. We build their self-confidence so that they 'see' themselves as readers."

Sister Thomasin changed the life of each child she tutored not only because of her skill as an outstanding educator, but more so because she loved, affirmed, and motivated each child as her own. **Sr. Thomasin embodied the spirit of ESLC as she lived its mission of "unlocking each child's potential through the foundation of reading."**

We'll miss Sr. Thomasin's cheerful greetings and her unconditional commitment to children. Her warmth, kindness, and gentle spirit will gratefully be remembered.

Secret Sauce Now Cooking at Vento

Sister Audrey Lindenfelser, Executive Director of East Side Learning Center, sometimes refers to the "secret sauce" when asked what makes the ESLC tutoring program so successful. The introduction of kindergarten tutoring at Bruce Vento Elementary this year provides a moment to reflect on this incredible recipe. Here's the basic starter recipe for all to enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1 Site Coordinator
- 10 ripe kindergarten students (Just ask the K teachers – they know who's ready!)
- 10-20 loving, caring volunteer tutors
- 1 classroom with 10 tutoring stations
- Personalized lesson plans with learning activities
- Box of materials for each station
- Lots of beginning reading books

Basic Directions

1. Carefully match 1 kindergartner with 1 tutor four days each week.
2. Gently stir for 30 minutes each day by following the lesson plans.
3. Generously season with encouragement.
4. Skillfully use tutor feedback to adapt and adjust to special needs and interests.

The lesson plans emphasize knowing the letter names, site words, letter sounds, segmenting, and reading while using decoding strategies.

Sister Sharon White, Site Coordinator at Vento, reported that as of February, most of the 20 children knew letter names and were fast becoming readers. Given the successful launch of kindergarten tutoring this year, ESLC and our Vento partners plan to expand to six batches of "special sauce" next year, four at kindergarten and two at first grade. This means more staff needed to tutor 60 children!

—Dean Andrew, Board Chair





Courtesy of Craig Lassig Photography for United Way

On April 14th, **East Side Learning Center was selected as the winner of a United Way 2015 Best Community Impact Award!** The award recognizes United Way non-profit partner agencies that make a profound impact on a community need in one or more of United Way's three focus areas: stabilizing families, helping children succeed, and empowering healthy lives. ESLC won in the small agency category. It was a night filled with celebration and inspirational stories.

One of the impact goals of Greater Twin Cities United Way is to ensure that **children have foundational reading skills.** United Way is committed to making it possible for many of us to participate in this basic commitment that will have lasting impact on our community. As "living united" participants with United Way, we are provided with opportunities to play a vital part in the success of these children so the impact can reverberate over the entire community for today and into the future.

We are mindful that this award began in 1998, when a committee of School Sisters of Notre Dame met for three years without giving up until ESLC was realized. The combined efforts of our partners from the past and now – funders, individual donors, board, high quality staff, and invested volunteers – give life to the East Side Learning Center's work and mission. **This award celebrates the work and commitment of all of our partners and supporters for 18+ years.**

THANK YOU for making a difference!

Did you see the recent **Deluxe Cares tutoring video** featuring our very own board member, **Garth Andersen.** or the **3M video created for United Way,** featuring ESLC's 2015 Summer Literacy Camp? Visit www.eastsidelearningcenter.org

New This Year: Until June 30, 2016

BOARD OF DIRECTORS—ADDITIONAL CHALLENGE MATCH

Your generosity has helped ESLC earn our Katherine B. Andersen \$20,000 match for the third year in a row. That means every new dollar you donated became \$2.00. Your gift worked twice as hard to help our East Side children read with joy and pride at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. **THANK YOU!**

East Side Learning Center has a **new** challenge opportunity sponsored by our Board of Directors. All donations up to a total of \$3,500 made between now and June 30, 2016 will be matched and used to help us close a cash flow deficit of \$50,000 for our 2015-2016 fiscal year. Give now and double your donation. **Any donation of any size, no matter your giving history, will be matched – no restrictions.**

Please help ESLC maximize a matching gift. Donate before June 30, 2016. **Help close this gap!**

Again This Year:

THE KATHERINE B. ANDERSEN FUND OF THE SAINT PAUL FOUNDATION

**ESLC received a new challenge grant for 2016
Double your gift by qualifying for this
matching grant!**

Donations that meet any of the following criteria will be matched:

- Dollar for dollar for all **new contributions**
- Dollar for dollar for **contributions from lapsed donors** who have not given for a year or more in support of ESLC
- Dollar for dollar for **increased portion of contributions** of those who donated during the 2015 calendar year

It's easy!

You can donate using the enclosed envelope, or online by visiting our website
www.eastsidelearningcenter.org

THANK YOU, THANK YOU...

- ✓ To **Mel Hartman** for contributing 360 **handmade wooden bus crayon holders with crayons** through **TLC Toys, Inc.**, enough for every ESLC student being tutored! Also, our gratitude to the **Saint Paul East Side Optimist Club** for delivering these one-of-a-kind buses!
- ✓ To **Pax Christi Catholic Community** for providing 125 **Spring Easter baskets** with books and other fun and useful items like toothbrushes and paste, puzzles, candy, small toys, sidewalk chalk, and stuffed animals!
- ✓ To **Generation Next** (through the generosity of **General Mills**) for the gift of nearly **3,000 books**, and to **Bob Temple, redlineeditorial.com**, for nearly **1,900 books**, all for home libraries! There's nothing quite like the feeling of choosing books to take home and keep for your very own!
- ✓ To **"Santa"** (via board member **Melissa Meinke**) for the gift of **6 Kindles** to enhance student learning in real-time!



Why East Side Learning Center?

Continued from page 2

they bumped into each other at Aldi's recently, and she, in turn, was able to arrange a happy surprise reunion with Nancy at our recent appreciation event!

Although Denzel's time with us was many years ago, he remembers being supported by tutors and staff at ESLC. "Tutoring helped me a lot! I could always get the help I needed right away," Denzel recalled. "It was clear to me that people weren't just doing their jobs. They really cared. They were always there for us."

Today Denzel is married to Demetria, proud parents with a beautiful daughter, Catalina. He is working full-time while pursuing a triple-major in criminal justice, business management, and human services. For 3 years, he ran a youth program to help kids off the streets, and he is still a counselor through Everyday Living.

Rarely do we hear what happens to the children who benefited from tutoring. Thanks so much, Denzel, for reconnecting and sharing the good news of your life!



"The surprise meeting was wonderful! Though I wondered whether Denzel was able to follow his dreams, I never expected to have an answer." – Nancy Grace



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1. Visit eastsidelearningcenter.org
2. Scroll to "Newsletter Signup" at the bottom.
3. Enter your email address, click Subscribe.

EAST SIDE LEARNING CENTER

ESLC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that relies on the generous donations of individuals and foundations dedicated to "unlocking each child's potential through the foundation of reading."

For the sake of children who could benefit from one-on-one tutoring with a caring adult or teen, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution.



East Side Learning Center
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*Thank you, Travelers Insurance,
for making reading more fun
for our students!*

Toys lined the window sills. Kindergartners shouted letters of the alphabet and chanted the ABC song with their tutors in varying degrees of harmony. These 5- and 6-year-olds had a clear goal: add another letter to the paper-chain dog leash attached to their dog. As soon as they could learn the entire alphabet, they could take their dog home with them.

Travelers Insurance donated 350 dogs to East Side Learning Center (ESLC) in August. These stuffed animals look like Chopper, the dog that appears in Travelers Insurance commercials. The dogs quickly became a companion and incentive for the students in their effort to learn the alphabet.

“The students were really motivated. They named their dogs,

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and it did not take long for the dogs to find a home,” said Rebecca Nordstrom, a site coordinator for one ESLC school.

All ESLC kindergartners were able to earn dogs by learning each letter of the alphabet, one paper chain link at a time. First, second, and third grade students had the opportunity to take their dogs home as a reward for completing reading activities during December and January. Instead of the alphabet, these older students earned their dogs by learning more high-frequency words by sight.