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Learning by Heart

LINDA BARKER IS PASSIONATE ABOUT LITERACY AND EDUCATION, AND IT SHOWS

BY TERESA LEE RUSHWORTH

Imagine being unable to ask a question at a store's customer service desk, being dependent upon translators at your medical appointments, and having job opportunities limited by poor English language skills. English is not an easy language to learn, and many immigrants who come here to give their families a better life face the daunting task

of attaining proficiency in it. Such was the predicament of Guillermina "Guille" Cendejas, whose education had been cut short during her early life in Mexico due to the need to begin working to help support her family. Once in the United States, Guille continued to put her family first, but as her children became young adults, they encouraged her to

further her own education. That's when she met Linda Barker, and Guille's life has never been the same since. Linda, a native of Reston, Virginia, moved to Vero Beach with her husband, Ken Koziol, in 2011. It was at that time that Linda became involved with Literacy Services of Indian River County as well as the Vero Beach chapter of the American Association of

University Women. Both organizations were good fits for her volunteer efforts, as she holds a B.A. in classical literature from Connecticut College, and her graduate studies at Goddard College in Vermont focused on English as a second language. She then taught ESL at The New School and City University of New York. Literacy Services' students fall into two

"Now I'm able to speak, write and read English. I'm still working hard every day to practice and get better, but I'm grateful for all this program has done for me."

- MARISELA KEMPF IN *STORIES BY THE SEA*

categories: native English speakers seeking to improve their language skills and immigrants learning English as a second language. All 10 of Linda's students over the past 11 years have been ESL learners. Tutoring sessions can take various forms: individual students, pairs, or groups. Presently, Linda is working with a pair of pupils - Guille, whom she has been tutoring for eight years, and Marisela Kempf.

Linda doesn't have to look far to see the fruits of her labors, nor to find inspiration in the accomplishments of the women under her tutelage. Marisela has overcome immense obstacles and now owns her own cleaning business. She aspires to complete her GED, earn U.S. citizenship, and continue to grow her business.

Guille has advanced in her job and is now employed as a certified child development associate. Her daughters have noticed big changes in her as her English skills have grown. Guille has

overcome her shyness, and her self-confidence has blossomed. Linda and her fellow tutors have seen many happy outcomes; in fact, Linda chaired Literacy Services' Fiftieth Anniversary Committee, which produced a book of success stories called *Stories by the Sea*. Linda finds a gratifying connection between her tutoring with Literacy Services and

her involvement with the AAUW, which gives scholarships to local young women pursuing higher education. Speaking for herself and her fellow AAUW members, Linda says, "We're all proud of helping other young women succeed." In a touching intersection of the two education-oriented organizations, one of the AAUW's recent scholarships was awarded to the

daughter of a Literacy Services student. One can only imagine the degree to which this woman's diligence in studying English has inspired her daughter's own academic dreams. Perhaps that's the best news of all about doing good on the local level - each time we lift up another person, we strengthen the community in ways we can only begin to imagine. ☼



Micheld Moreno and her tutor, Ursula Duguid, with Marisela Kempf and Linda Barker