

With Literacy and Justice for All

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Noche de Estrellas

Luz was an extremely quiet child when she first came to the Valencia County Literacy Council's (VCLC's) preschool in El Cerro Mission. In fact, she was too quiet. Luz was having trouble developing language skills at all.

Luz was solitary, playing by herself in her own little world all the time. Her emotional expression was always the same, even when her mother left her and came back. She wasn't rebellious, but she couldn't follow instructions, participate in projects, or understand when the teachers read a book to the children. She never spoke at all. She was 2 years old.

Our Preschool Coordinator, Martha Oros, evaluated Luz with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and realized she needed more help. So, Martha contacted another great Valencia County agency, La Vida Felicidad, to intervene in Luz's development.

While Luz was attending sessions with La Vida Felicidad, Martha and Assistant Preschool Coordinator Nereida Gonzalez began taking turns spending time one-on-one

with Luz while she was at the *escuelita*. They talked to Luz's mother about what Luz liked and spent time on those things with Luz. Slowly, Luz began to open. Then she began to play with the other children as well.

Now, Luz is 3 years old. She speaks in complete sentences that Martha describes as logical and *amplio*—ample, spacious, roomy. She knows all the rules of the classroom, such as when it's time to play outside or read a book, and she explains the rules to the other children. Luz can write her name, knows all her colors, and can identify all her numbers and letters.

Luz also loves to draw. The other day Luz drew a rabbit and a flower and told Martha, "Teacher, the rabbit wants to eat the flower!" She not only plays with the other children now, she even helps other children resolve problems, giving them ideas.

What has happened with Luz in the last year would not have been possible without the generosity of Valencia County residents. With your help, your local Literacy Council served 122 children in El Cerro Mission last year, helping their lights to shine, and 60 of their parents were able to attend literacy classes.

Susan Howard, our Volunteer Tutoring Coordinator, also served 240 Valencia County residents last year (a 52% increase) in improving their reading and/or speaking of English with the help of 47 dedicated volunteer tutors, such as Bunny Guenther, who just won the Governor's Distinguished Service Award for 2009.

Lori Griego, our BOOK Coordinator, organized volunteer BOOK Readers, such as Molly Madden and Marj Conner, who read to 397 children in local low-income medical clinics last year. Lori also gave out, through the medical clinics, 2,199 books to families that may have had few or no books at home.

But, the Literacy Council needs your help now, and what we need is for you to come have fun with us! The recession has hit us, and we are holding our *Noche de Estrellas* Talent Night and Chocolate Buffet on November 20 from 7:00 to 9:30 at Calvary Chapel in Belen to raise funds.

In addition to a wonderful night of performances, MC'd by Belen Mayor Ronnie Torres, ticket holders receive a free pass to our unlimited chocolate bar. Tickets are only \$15 and are available at MyBank in Los Lunas, Belen, and Rio Communities or by calling 925-8926. We will hold a Silent and Live Auction at the event as well.

Thank you so much for supporting your Literacy Council in Valencia County. We hope you will come be part of our team on Nov. 20th and be part of bringing "Literacy and Justice for All" to Valencia County.