

MEET GWEN!



**VOLUNTEER
SINCE
2014**

Gwen with Maria serving take out meals for workers

Originally volunteering to teach English classes, Gwen has volunteered in so much more! She's helped with resume and job interview workshops, nutrition workshops and she is currently the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program coordinator at the Center. Most recently, she's been going in on Saturdays to help serve lunches for workers and their families. When asked about that experience, Gwen states, "It is an important part of my week because it helps keep me engaged with the Center and with workers that come for lunch. That has actually been a highlight for me this last year. It is also an opportunity to contribute especially during the difficult challenges of the pandemic."

Due to the pandemic, the Center paused onsite volunteer opportunities, including ESL classes. However, Gwen has been sending weekly updates for ESL volunteers in order to keep them engaged. Ever since August 2020, Gwen has been tutoring a couple of compañer@s through Zoom and WhatsApp during an hour a week class. Gwen is a very special member of the Day Worker Team!



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LEARN MORE ABOUT GWENS VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

WHY DID YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER AT THE CENTER?

I have volunteered all my life. For me it is important when you live in a community to connect with people and especially understand the disadvantages and challenges confronting the underprivileged. I always try to do that and it has always been a great life experience for me. I love working with organizations and people at a grass root level. You begin to understand the issues in your community, how people are impacted and is a way for you to get involved. I also speak Spanish so when I was hunting around for a volunteer opportunity, I came across the DWC. It was certainly interesting to me so I filled out the application and the rest is history!

WHAT HAS VOLUNTEERING AT THE CENTER MEANT TO YOU?

It's been a great experience, I really enjoy it! I love talking to the workers and hearing their stories. Teaching ESL and especially when we had in person classes, was a lovely part of my daily life routine. I really enjoyed preparing classes and being with the workers and I miss that. There is the aspect of connecting with workers but I also think the Center is a great organization and provides much needed services, skills for people and trying to engage across sections of community members. I regard myself as an activist and I like to know if there are issues in my community, what those issues are and how to support those issues. The Day Worker Center provides that kind of focus, that is also my attraction to the Center. In addition, it's an organization where the staff is great, the volunteers are great, the workers are great, and it brings us all together despite the hardships, the issues, and the problems. There is a certain sense of humor and a certain sense of commitment and support, that makes you feel really good!

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC MEMORIES YOU HAVE?

There have been funny moments in class. The mistakes you make and everyone has a sense of humor about it so those are funny memories. However, most of the memories I have are because of the stories of the workers. Most recently, last December, the worker I have been tutoring came down with COVID. He was intubated in the hospital for weeks, and no one really knew what was going to happen. His son would text me and I would try to find what was happening because I tutored him, it was very personal. It was amazing despite all the odds to see his strength and his desire to live. He recovered and we are back tutoring again. To me his story is astounding. I won't ever forget it and it will always be a memory, not only of the Center but also what happened this last year and how everyone has had to cope with COVID, especially the less privileged, but how it was a success story and how one person overcame COVID and came out of it strong, with a sense of humor and a positive attitude. That to me is inspiring!

**THANK YOU
GWEN!**