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F O S T E R I N G I D E A L I S M i n E D U C A T I O N , M E D I C I N E a n d L A W

SUMMER 2010 ■ VOLUME 7 ■ NUMBER 1

S. Mark Taper Foundation Gives \$170,000 to Support Physicians Serving the Poor

The S. Mark Taper Foundation has made a generous \$170,000 grant to Uncommon Good to provide support for idealistic young doctors and dentists who serve impoverished populations in Los Angeles County. This follows a \$100,000 grant that the foundation awarded in 2005 for the same purpose.

Young people now are graduating from medical and dental schools heavily in debt from their college and medical schools. It is not uncommon for a new physician to owe over \$300,000 in educational loans. It is difficult, or even impossible, for these young professionals to accept jobs in free clinics serving the poor, the lowest paying jobs in the medical profession, and repay such debt.

The S. Mark Taper Foundation grant will be distributed among ten young doctors and dentists working with low income communities and populations. The grants are for educational loan repayment assistance, so that these young people can repay their loans while providing health care to the neediest patients.

The recipients were selected by Uncommon Good, in partnership with the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County. Uncommon Good Executive Director, Nancy Mintie, expressed her appreciation for the grant, saying, "The generosity of the S. Mark Taper Foundation will allow these compassionate and inspiring young doctors and dentists to provide quality health care to those who have no where else to turn when they or their children fall ill. The foundation is to be commended for recognizing that educational loans are a significant obstacle for new graduates of medical school who wish to devote themselves and their careers to serving the poorest among us."

One of the grant recipients, Dr. Joy Jackson of the Mission City Community Clinic in North Hills, California, stated upon being informed of her award, "I am beside myself. I am so grateful to Uncommon Good for this help. I feel so blessed. I will continue to pay it forward." ☑



Photo compliments of Xochitl Jackson

Dr. Xochitl Jackson of the Eisner Pediatric and Family Medical Center, examines a patient. Dr. Jackson is one of the physicians in our Adopt an Angel program whose grant is funded by the S. Mark Taper Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation.

The World's Most Overqualified Tutors

(The following is an article and photos by Janet Evans, a member of Pilgrim Place, a remarkable retirement community of prominent, in some cases world- renowned scholars, humanitarians, and individuals who have engaged in ministry around the world. Janet also is a member of our Uncommon Circle support group. Recently she interviewed her Pilgrim Place neighbors who responded to the invitation of Pilgrim Place resident and Uncommon Good board member, Charles Bayer, to tutor the students in our Clinic to College program.)

"Mrs. Rogers is a teenager in a little old lady's body!" That's how one junior high school student described Barbara Rogers when she retired from teaching English and history in 1997. Barbara, who has lived in many places around the world and has more energy than many teens, laughs when she tells the story. The twinkle in her eyes suggests that she is flattered by the young man's characterization. When Barbara and her husband moved to Claremont's Pilgrim Place in 2007 they looked back on a lifetime of service in churches and public schools. [continued on page 6]



Photo by Janet Evans

Eleanor Scott Meyers of Pilgrim Place tutors Andrea.

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A Healer Comes Home

The California Wellness Foundation and the S. Mark Taper Foundation support a selfless physician



Photo by Nancy Mimie

Dr. Carmen Morales of the Wilmington Family Health Center.

I was sitting in the office of a Stanford educated doctor, but something was awry. Her office is just off fabled Pacific Coast Highway, known world wide for its heart stopping views of the Pacific Ocean. She herself could have lived and worked in any of the rarified boutique towns set like jewels along the California coast.

Yet this section of Pacific Coast Highway leads one to the Tesoro Oil Refinery at the entrance to the City of Wilmington. The sprawling 300 acre plant is a gigantic mass of twisted metal pipelines, storage tanks, rusting industrial structures and belching smokestacks, as if a hideous grey growth had metastasized at the city gates. Tesoro, a Texas oil company, is one of the top ten polluters in our state. Its refineries spew 3.74 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the atmosphere annually. (Currently it is providing financial backing to an initiative that would gut California's clean air law.) The largest number of such refineries in California is in the Wilmington area. Their processing of dirty crude oil accounts for the leaden grey of the sky, even on sunny days.

However, this concentration of "black gold" has not enriched the local citizens of Wilmington. A visual inspection could lead one to conclude that the city itself had been built with the detritus of the refineries. Rusted signs and peeling billboards advertise "\$49 dental extractions" and a "pick your part" junkyard. Barred windows, graffiti and boarded up storefronts reinforce the impression of economic rot.

But let's get back to the Stanford doctor. Her name is Carmen Morales and she is a daughter of Wilmington and today is a physician at the Wilmington Family Health Center. The eldest of six children of a Mexican mother, she has happy childhood memories of playing in the park around the corner from the clinic, and of special family outings to the local Pizza Hut and McDonalds. But by the time she was a teenager her home life had disintegrated. Her father, stressed by poverty and the demands of his growing family, turned to drink and expressed his frustration by physically attacking his wife. Ultimately he experienced what may have been a psychotic breakdown, left the family, and became homeless.

Carmen's mother had been a traditional Mexican wife, without workplace skills, and forbidden by her husband even to learn to drive. Her solution to her family's dire new situation was to get a minimum wage job and demand that Carmen drop out of school to become the second mother to her younger siblings.

But young Carmen did not want to get trapped as her mother had, and caring teachers and counselors at her high school had given her a glimpse of a very different life. She also concluded that she could help her mother more by getting an education than by dropping out of school to babysit her siblings. So reluctantly she fled home and took refuge with a friend's family so that she could continue to go to school. She started school at 7 a.m. so that she could get all of her classes in before going to work. She took a 40 hour a week job at Pizza Hut as an assistant manager, and still managed to graduate as the valedictorian of her class. She had been so unassuming about her academic achievements, however, that her friends were shocked when she was named valedictorian. "You've been an undercover nerd!" they laughed.

Her hard work in high school paid off with a science scholarship to Stanford University. At first she thought she wanted to be an engineer, but after completing an engineering internship she realized that she wanted a career that would involve more people contact. At first, medicine seemed like an impossible career goal since it was so far from anything she had dared to dream before. Yet by mid-college, she was able to switch to a pre-med major, even though she admits that it was still "scary to say out loud." Her fellow students were amused by her. "People don't drop IN to pre-med," they told her. "They drop OUT of it!" She found the courage to pursue a medical career by remembering the people who had believed in her and encouraged her. In particular, she remembers her high school counselor and her chemistry teacher, the first people in her life who told her how smart she was.

After being accepted into Stanford Medical School, Carmen wanted to give other youngsters the same kind of encouragement that she had received, so she began mentoring and tutoring underprivileged children while pursuing her own studies. After graduation she left the ivied halls and green expanses of Stanford to practice medicine at the Wilmington Family Health Center.

"So.....you could have gone anywhere in the country to practice after you graduated from Stanford," I said, stating the obvious. "Why are you here?" "What do you mean?" Carmen responded.

"What do you mean, what do I mean?" I said. "You could have had a rich comfortable life in a beautiful place, and yet you chose to come here. Why?" "I don't understand the question," she repeated.

The confusion registering on her open face seemed genuine.

“You could have had a rich comfortable life in a beautiful place, and yet you chose to come here. Why?”

“I don’t understand the question,” she repeated.

“So this isn’t a sacrifice for you to be here in Wilmington? You aren’t a martyr?”
 “Oh, no!” she exclaimed. “I was ecstatic when this position opened up. I know the neighborhood so well.”

Yet Carmen’s deeply felt desire to return home to practice medicine is threatened by her daunting six figure educational debt resulting from her years at medical school, and her need to provide for her young daughter and son. The work of her husband, an elementary school teacher, is long on hours and effort, and short on remuneration. To help make it possible for her to continue to do the work that she loves, which also happens to be the lowest paying employment in the medical profession, Uncommon Good accepted her into its Adopt an Angel program. This program provides educational loan repayment assistance to dedicated young community clinic physicians. Carmen’s aid, in particular, is the result of generous grants from the S. Mark Taper Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation.

At the Wilmington Family Health Center, Carmen and her fellow staff members treat 2,000 patients a month. The majority of the patients are middle aged Latinas and remind her of her mother. They struggle with chronic diabetes and high blood pressure which usually have gone untreated for a long time and have resulted in serious health complications. These diseases are made more difficult to treat by the patients’ lack of access to affordable healthy food, the basis of good health. Since the economic crash of 2008, the clinic has been seeing a new class of patients as well, those who lost their health insurance when they lost their jobs. Now the crowded clinic has become even more so.

But Carmen’s favorite patients are the young people. She sees her own young self in them and encourages them to think about their future, stay in school, and research career possibilities. Recently a smart twelve-year-old came to the clinic with her mother. “What would you like to be when you grow up?” asked Carmen. “She wants to be a nurse,” her mother answered for her. “That’s good,” answered Carmen, as she turned to face the young girl. “But how about a doctor?”



Dr. Carmen Morales with her co-workers (left to right) Shelley Agrusa, RN; Diana Ortiz, NP; Carmen Morales, MD; Gina Wing, RN; Mauricio Flores, MD; and Matt Lombard, MD.

Photo by Nancy Mintie

The Most Beautiful Word

If you were charged with the responsibility for listing the five most beautiful words in the English language, which would you choose? My list would include “love,” of course, then “justice,” followed by “beauty,” followed by “justice” and then ending with “justice.”

Ten years ago, when Uncommon Good started the program that was to become the Open Court Partnership, I thought it was going to be easy. Who could fail to be moved by the valiant young men and women who sacrificed all to fight for the underdogs of our world: abused children, women working in sweatshops, families in slums? Who could resist the “David v. Goliath” stories of young lawyers battling wealthy established interests to ensure that justice (ah, that beautiful word) was done? Well, nearly everyone, it turned out. Americans love their TV lawyers, but the real life ones, not so much.

Yet having been a bull dog in my last life (the only explanation I can come up with for why I repeatedly take up impossible causes) I and an intrepid Uncommon Good Board of Directors rallied around the challenge of ensuring the survival of the next generation of lawyers for the poor.

For most of the two decades in which I had worked as a lawyer for the poor, I was too busy to notice the withering of my wing of the profession. Both litigation and nonprofit organizations are harsh mistresses, demanding virtually all of one’s time, energy and creative thinking. Yet one day in the waning years of the 1990s, I lifted my nose from the grindstone and noticed that almost no young lawyers were taking up legal aid work anymore. The few that did enter the profession exited after a year or two. Legal aid organizations were shrinking and disappearing. In those that remained, the experienced lawyers had moved up into administration and there were no experienced attorneys to take their place actually representing clients. As a result, legal aid programs were transforming into “pro per” models, in which poor, often illiterate and non-English speaking clients were given a little advice and then sent into court to represent themselves, with predictably disastrous results.

I was curious about why young people were no longer choosing legal aid as a career. Could human DNA have changed overnight? Had that 15% or so of the population that had always been idealistic suddenly dropped out of the gene pool? Since this seemed unlikely, I began to talk with law students and newly minted lawyers about their career choices. They soon gave me the answer to my question. The cost of college and law school had risen to historic heights, and students were graduating with heavy six figure debts so that a legal aid salary was not enough to repay those debts. Work that had been an economic sacrifice when I was young had now become an economic impossibility. I worried that when the time came for my generation to hang up our spears, there would be no one to carry on the essential work of ensuring justice for all.

A fantastic group of people who shared my concern about the future of legal aid work joined with me to form Uncommon Good and to serve as the organization’s Board of Directors. An appeal to attorney Ralph Shapiro resulted in a generous gift of \$20,000 in seed money that started what was to become our Open Court Partnership, an educational loan repayment program for legal aid lawyers. Our aid made it possible for young people to enter this work even though they earned the lowest salaries in the profession, in some cases less than they would have made waiting tables in a restaurant.

About this time, our work came to the attention of Oprah Winfrey, whose Angel Network made us a gift of \$100,000. Other generous donors followed, including our board member Timothy Dillon who directed class action funds our way, the law firm of Buchalter Nemer, the Immaculate Heart Community, the law firm of Hadsell & Stormer, and the Sidney Stern Memorial Trust.

The young attorneys funded through the Open Court Partnership should constitute their own Choir

of Angels, ranked somewhere between the Principalities and Archangels.

There was Georgina Mendoza, herself the child of farmworkers, who represented laborers in the vast agricultural fields of Central California who were exploited in many ways and poisoned by the neurotoxins in the pesticides sprayed over the land.

There was Jose Tello, brought by his father to this country at the age of nine, then abandoned on the doorstep of an uncle he’d never met. He worked his way through middle school as a butcher in his uncle’s store, and eventually made it to Harvard University. After earning his law degree he became a legal aid attorney, representing people working in sweat shop conditions.

There was Mark Yoshida, courageously representing the immigrant community in the midst of the hysteria after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in New York.

There was Heather McGunigle, who after graduation from law school, single handedly and against great odds, established the Inland Empire Program of the Disability Rights Legal Center, representing disabled children in a region where this work had never been done before.

There was Dora Luna, whose family was so poor when she was a child that they went through an entire year with little more than beans to eat. Dora put herself through law school while supporting her extended family, and then took a job as a legal aid lawyer, despite her heavy debts and family obligations.

Over the past ten years, our Open Court Partnership distributed nearly half a million dollars to 23 young attorneys at 14 different legal aid organizations. (See the accompanying Honor Roll of Justice.) These lawyers served 203,550 poor clients during that period.

However, our best fundraising efforts proved limited and so we decided also to pursue a legislative strategy. Neal Dudovitz, the long time dedicated Executive Director of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles, worked diligently with us to form a statewide coalition in support of legislation that would provide loan repayment assistance for young attorneys who wished to serve in legal aid offices. After much arduous work, our coalition managed to get the legislation passed. However, just before the new program was funded, the Enron scandal broke, sending California into a fiscal crisis from which it never emerged.

The financial collapse of 2008 dealt a fatal blow to our private fundraising for the Open Court Partnership. As grants and donations dwindled, we kept the program alive through last year by cannibalizing our operating funds. It was with very heavy hearts that we put the program into suspension this year when no further funding sources materialized.

However, over the past decade, with the help of key partners such as Neal Dudovitz and others from the legal aid and law school communities, we did achieve a major victory. When we began our program, no one but the young lawyers themselves were aware of the deadly corrosive effect that huge school debt burdens were having on the ability of the next generation of lawyers to take up legal aid work. Now, however, through the hue and cry that we helped to raise over this issue, the problem has become widely acknowledged, and serious efforts have been made to ease the crisis. Many law schools have started loan repayment assistance programs for their graduates, or increased the amount of aid that they were offering through these programs. Some legal aid organizations have mounted successful campaigns to include this issue in their fundraising efforts. Several pieces of federal legislation have passed that over time will provide increasing aid to young attorneys who serve the poor.

Here at Uncommon Good we will remain alert for funding sources that could be used to provide loan repayment assistance to our young legal aid colleagues. Targeted donations for this purpose are always welcome. And we continue to search for viable ways in which we can bring justice to our client



Jose Tello, Alejandra Cedillo and Rocio Garcia, Neighborhood Legal Services of L.A. County

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Photo by Ardon Alger

Linda Samels, Inner City Law Center

community. Promising new ventures are emerging in efforts to help our client families find work that will raise them above the poverty line. Stay tuned for future reports on our new green job training and placement program, and our urban agriculture initiative. And of course, we remain dedicated to the only sure way to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, which is through the education of our clients' children.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to all of you whose generosity has made it possible for us to provide support for the remarkable young attorneys of our Open Court Partnership over the past decade. You have earned a share in their victories and with them have embodied the highest American ideal of "liberty and justice for all." 📌

Photo by Daniel Hayman



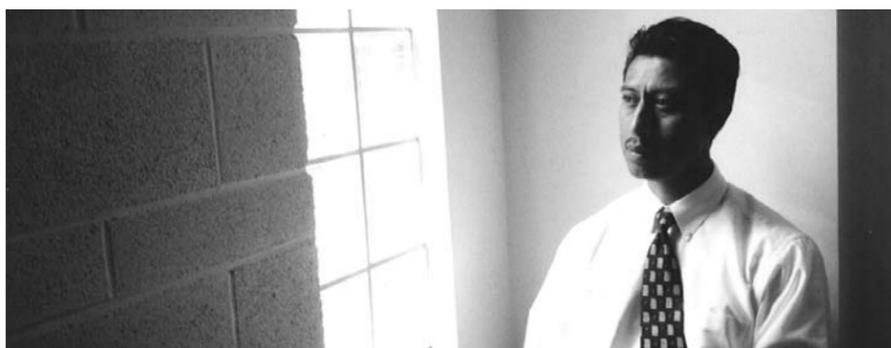
Georgina Mendoza, California Rural Legal Assistance

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Christina Chung, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Jesus Rodriguez, Inner City Law Center

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Joseph Templeton, Inner City Law Center

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Heather McGunigle, Disability Rights Center

HONOR ROLL OF JUSTICE

Over the past ten years, our Open Court Partnership has provided educational loan repayment assistance to these attorneys for the underprivileged:

Alejandra Cedillo - *Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Christina Chung - *Asian Pacific American Legal Center*

Anel Flores - *Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles*

Marci Fukuroda - *California Women's Law Center, and Rainbow Services*

Rocio Garcia - *Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Hellen Hong - *Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, and Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

An Le - *Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates*

Dora Luna - *Western Center on Law and Poverty, and Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Suma Mathai - *Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice*

Heather McGunigle - *Disability Rights Center*

Georgina Mendoza - *California Rural Legal Assistance*

Jennifer Phan - *Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Lucia Reyes - *Levitt & Quinn Family Law Center*

Jesus Rodriguez - *Inner City Law Center*

Linda Samels - *Inner City Law Center*

Jose Tello - *Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Joseph Templeton - *Inner City Law Center*

Lydia Templeton - *Public Counsel*

Julius Thompson - *Inner City Law Center*

Carrey Wong - *Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County*

Alicia Valdez Wright - *Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law*

Rebecca Yee - *Neighborhood Legal Services*

Mark Yoshida - *Asian Pacific American Legal Center*



Dora Luna and Neal Dudovitz, Neighborhood Legal Services of L.A. County

Photo by Nancy Mintie



Mark Yoshida, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Photo by Nancy Mintie

The World's Most Overqualified Tutors (con't)

[continued from page 1]



Photo by Janet Evans

Martin and his Pilgrim Place tutor, Teresa Wilson

Barbara's clergy husband John served churches in Paris, Bali, Vienna, Strasbourg, and Berlin, as well as in Michigan, Washington state and Portland, Oregon. As the mother of three boys, Barbara maintained her interest in public education by establishing a program for gifted and talented students in one town, chairing the local school board in another city, and teaching at the junior and senior high school level in many different places.

When an opportunity to tutor through Uncommon Good was presented, Barbara was eager to share her skills and knowledge. Once a week she meets with Melissa, a highly motivated junior at Claremont High School. Barbara describes the tutoring as an effort to provide an enrichment experience. Melissa's family came to the U.S. from Guatemala and El Salvador. As American citizens, Melissa's parents are eager for their children to succeed in their new land. Barbara's work with Melissa involves listening to the girl as she works on assignments from her advanced placement history and English classes, encouraging Melissa to make the historical and literary connections, and working on vocabulary, word meaning and pronunciation. Melissa is eager to go on to college. Barbara encourages her aspirations and provides the guidance and support which students need as they find their way in the world.

Melissa's sister and brother are also part of the Uncommon Good tutoring program. Eleanor Scott Meyers is a tutor for Melissa's sister, Andrea. Andrea is a 14-year-old 8th grader who is working with Eleanor on writing so that she can join the advanced placement English classes when she gets to high school.

Eleanor brings a lifetime of experience to her work with Andrea, including years as Professor of Church and Society at Union Theological School in New York City, and as President of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. Eleanor began teaching in elementary schools and then went on to get a Masters of Divinity degree as well as a PhD. in Sociology. She worked with campus YM-YWCAs and as a minister of the United Church of Christ. Her academic credentials include many journal articles and books, as well as nonfiction stories for children. And in her spare time she is an accomplished painter. Eleanor got involved in tutoring because she wanted to be in touch with what public education was like for middle school children in this area. Eleanor retired to Pilgrim Place in 2006 and chairs the Fine Arts Booth for the annual November Pilgrim Place Festival.

For Jim Lamb, a World War II veteran, tutoring Melissa and Andrea's brother has been an opportunity to contribute to his vision of the future and his values. Jim was previously a mentor for Uncommon Good but found that he could no longer commit to the time needed. Tutoring provided Jim with an opportunity to remain in touch with young people. One of Jim's assignments for Carlos was to write about the most important person in his life. To Jim's great delight, Carlos wrote about his Uncommon Good mentor, a Pomona

College undergraduate!

Jim meets regularly with his ninth grader, reads what he has written and reacts to it. He then suggests fields of interest for further study or exploration. Jim found that Carlos was well able to write a clear concise essay, so Jim has introduced him to other kinds of writing such as short stories and plays. As an educator, Jim loves having the time to think and plan for his meetings with Carlos. It's a luxury he has not always had as a teacher. Throughout his career, Jim was involved in international development primarily in Latin America. He founded a Summer Institute for International Service at Seton Hall University, founded and directed the Center for the Study of Development and Social Change in Cambridge, MA., and was a Program Director for the Ecumenical Institute at Cuernavaca, Mexico. Jim is delighted to have an opportunity to introduce Carlos to other cultures. By the end of the summer, they hope to have 'experienced' Nicaragua, Nigeria, Mexico, Ireland, and 'The Big Apple' with Carlos sharing his learning through various writing modes.

Lou Ann Parsons describes her experience as an Uncommon Good tutor as going from "some trepidation to pure enjoyment." She was not a college English major so she wondered how she could possibly help Kathy improve her writing skills. Kathy is a student who achieved the highest honors at El Roble Middle School with a sharp, creative, and expressive mind. Kathy and Lou Ann brainstormed ideas for Kathy's writing skills, including writing a letter to



Lou Ann Parsons of Pilgrim Place with Kathy, the student she tutors

Photo by Janet Evans

accompany a college application, a sympathy letter, poetry, and songs. Kathy has dreams of Broadway and has considerable experience in theater productions in Claremont. She says her happiest experience was being accepted for a part in a local musical production. She'll do theater over the summer and expects to be part of the Claremont High School theatre group next fall.

Lou Ann came to Pilgrim Place in 1992 after many years in South Africa with the American Board of Foreign Missions. She studied Zulu which was essential in her Christian Education work among churches in Durban and Johannesburg. Here in Claremont, Lou Ann has been closely involved with the Petterson Museum of International Art at Pilgrim Place. As former President of the Museum Friends Board and regular volunteer at the museum, Lou Ann is passionate about promoting increased understanding and appreciation of the art, customs, and culture of different countries and people.

Teresa Wilson was a representative from a non-governmental organization to the United Nations and the Commission on the Status of Women. She traveled extensively around the world to Mexico, Uganda, South Africa, Australia, the Philippines, the Soviet Union and China. As a tutor for Uncommon Good, Teresa says, "I've come to grips with what it means to be bilingual." Each week she has met with a 12-year-old boy from Pomona who is struggling with the complexity of the English language. His potential, especially in math, is great and his family has high expectations for their children as evidenced by their older daughter who just graduated from nursing school with highest honors. But for her young student, Teresa finds that English grammar is a great challenge. His ability to read is clear and he has mastered the computer including Power Point. Teresa is focusing on helping him to sort through the difficulties of English using a computer program called Jabberwocky and reading the newspapers, especially the sports section. As the parent of three grown children, Teresa knows that a good relationship between parents and teachers is essential, so she encourages good communication between them. And as a long range planner for non-profit organizations, Teresa knows that it will be important for her student to get the basics of English under his belt before he can succeed at the topics he loves.

One of Jim's assignments for Carlos was to write about the most important person in his life. To Jim's great delight, Carlos wrote about his Uncommon Good mentor, a Pomona College undergraduate!

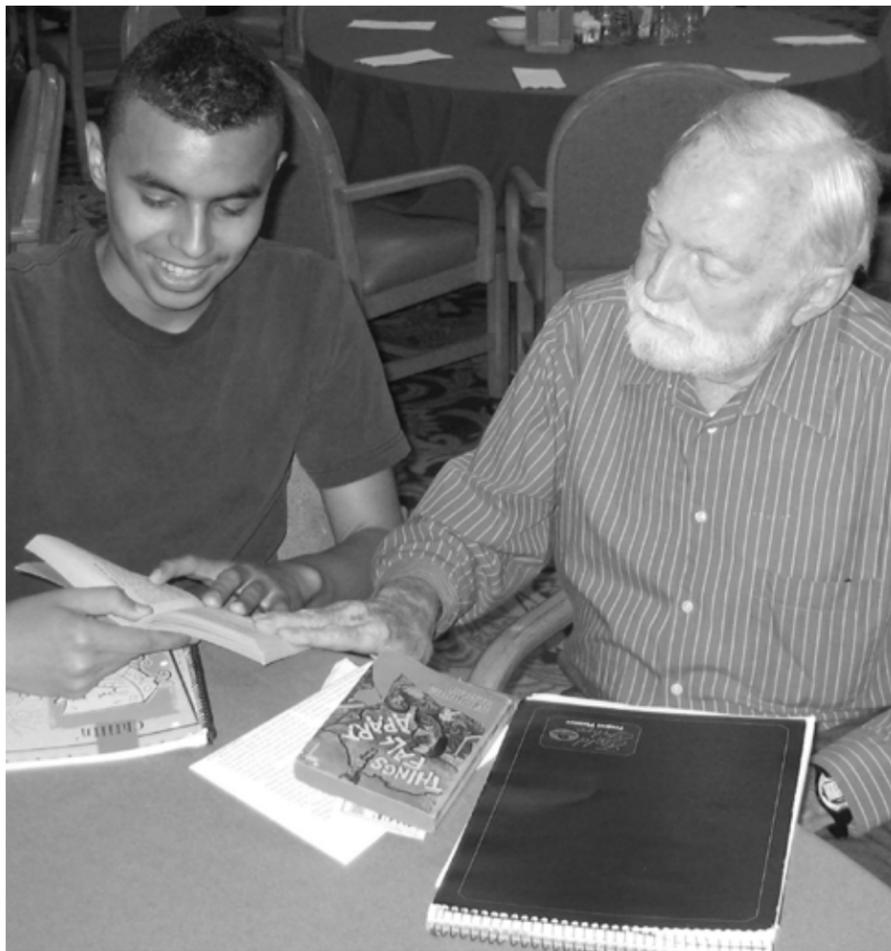


Photo by Janet Evans

Carlos with his Pilgrim Place tutor, Jim Lamb

Pilgrim Place attracts retired clergy, missionary workers, educators, and social service professionals who wish to be part of a unique retirement community. Residents make a commitment to the wellbeing of the community and each other. "Pilgrims" as they are known, are active in the wider community seeking social justice, environmental sustainability, and peace. These values have shaped their lives for many years and continue to direct their retirement years. The synergy with Uncommon Good's mission is obvious. Each of the Pilgrim Place tutors spoke about their devotion to the goals of Uncommon Good and to the work which they share. For the volunteer tutors, for the students and their families, and for the organization, the connection is uncommonly good. 📖



Photo by Janet Evans

Barbara Rogers of Pilgrim Place tutors Marissa