

# AWARD RECIPIENT PROVIDES BEACON OF HOPE TO IMMIGRANTS



The Matthew 25 Award was established at DWC in 2001 to honor those in or connected to the area, who minister in the spirit of the Bible passage Matthew 25:35-36: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."



(left-to-right): Sr. Corrine Murray PBVM, College President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD, Executive Director of the Lantern Center Megan Ruiz, and Sr. Carmen Hernandez PBVM

In November, Divine Word College presented the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque with the 2023 Matthew 25 Award to recognize the organization's incredible work in improving the lives of immigrants in the greater Dubuque area. The Lantern Center offers hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants at no cost. Students there can work one-on-one with tutors to improve their English skills, prepare for citizenship exams, learn practical life skills and meet people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In 2002, the center was opened by the Sisters of the Presentation after research showed a great need for these types of services in the area. Since then, the Lantern Center has served more than 1,700 adult immigrants.



Last semester, DWC Student Angel Rodriguez Fuentes tutored immigrants at the Lantern Center for his Ministry Practicum.

"I feel like we're able to meet the needs of our community because of the generosity of our volunteers," said Megan Ruiz, Executive Director of the Lantern Center. Each year, volunteers give between 3,000 and 4,300 hours of their time at the center.

Among those volunteers are a handful of Divine Word College students who spend a few hours each week working directly with immigrants. More than 90 percent of the students at Divine Word College are international students. Many of them know what it's like to move to the United States and not speak English, so they bring a unique perspective to the people they tutor.

No matter where the Lantern Center's students go after finishing their studies, Ruiz said the impact of the organization is a lasting one. "I think it's neat that they'll probably always carry a piece of Dubuque and the Midwest in their hearts wherever they go," she said. Much like the spirit of the passage from Matthew 25, the staff

at the Lantern Center have never turned away an immigrant seeking the organization's services. "Nothing compares to how rewarding this position is," Ruiz said. "The adults who study here, we befriend them and welcome them to the community, and they're just grateful beyond words."