

## Western Avenue Community Center

600 N. Western Ave.

Bloomington, IL 61701

Main Line: 309-829-4807

Business Hours

Monday - Thursday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Friday:

By appointment only

Free summer activities for youth!

See inside for details or visit:

[www.WesternAvenueCC.org](http://www.WesternAvenueCC.org)

Visit us on Facebook:

WesternAvenueCommunityCenter



## Center Connection Newsletter

Summer 2017

Serving those in need by opening doors of hope and love ... through our faith in Jesus Christ!



Music Connections Foundation offers bilingual Kindermusik for free every fall at Western Avenue Community Center. Socorro Alvarez helps spread the word!

Socorro Alvarez, right, pictured with Illinois Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti, who spoke at Western Avenue in January 2017 at our Three King's Day celebration.

## Celebrating 25 Years of Outreach!

Serving people in the same community for 25 years will definitely earn you a reputation. A pillar. A mentor. An inspiration. These are the words that many who have been impacted by Socorro Alvarez, director of Hispanic Outreach Program at Western Avenue Community, use to describe her influence on them as well as on the Hispanic community in McLean County.

Since 1992, Mrs. Alvarez has provided daily case management to Spanish speaking individuals and families.

Born in Mexico, she immigrated with her parents when she was 17. The passion she brings to her work is borne out of a desire to provide support she never experienced as a young woman. She has helped many Latinos gain U.S. citizenship, obtain work documents, improve their employment options, sign up for classes to learn English and navigate cultural differences. Alvarez also runs the Employment Resource Program, which is funded in part by the United Way of McLean County.

A mother to five children and 11 grandchildren, she has a heart for families and children. Niños y Musica, a bilingual Kindermusik program, is held at WACC for Hispanic

mothers and their young children each fall. She often uses a community center van to pick up moms who need transportation. She also supports a youth folk dance group that practices at the center.

"Countless times, Socorro stayed after her regular shift to let us practice," said Bianca Abalos, instructor of Ballet Folklorico de Central IL. "She has supported the group at multiple events and is someone I consider very close to me. Socorro has not only been my backbone for two years, but she been the backbone of Western Avenue for many more."

During Fiesta Cinco de Mayo 2017, our recent fundraiser for which Alvarez cooked for three days, Western Avenue Board of Directors and staff members presented her with several meaningful gifts and a framed certificate of appreciation to mark her 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Also recognized was Liz Acevedo-Alstrum, licensed bilingual counselor at the center since 1998, and Saul Pulido, the director of Interpretation & Translation Program at the center, who has been with the program since 2002.



Our favorite murder mystery actors are coming back to Bloomington for one night only!


Tickets to the November 10 event include dinner by Baxter's American

Grille and an interactive, live show. This year's show has a Star Trek theme, but you don't have to be a Trekkie to figure out whodunit!

Sponsorships of our fundraiser event are available and include premium, reserved seating for four guests as well as recognition on all event signage and at the event.

Email [acottone@westernavenuecc.org](mailto:acottone@westernavenuecc.org) for details!

The link to purchase tickets or sponsorships can be found at [WesternAvenuecc.org](http://WesternAvenuecc.org).

AN INTERGALACTIC MURDER MYSTERY  
**Western Avenue's annual murder mystery dinner & silent auction event is BACK!!!**  
**MURDER: THE FINAL FRONTIER**  
Friday Nov. 10, 2017  
Holiday Inn Express & Suites  
1715 Parkway Plaza Dr., Normal  
Tickets: \$50  
Link to buy tickets at [WesternAvenueCC.org](http://WesternAvenueCC.org)!  
  
Cash Bar Available





We have received a \$3,000 grant from the **Illinois Prairie Community Foundation**!! It will help pay for staff time to train our tutors during the 2017/18 school year. We rely on about 80 or so tutors each semester to provide intentional reading support, homework help and meaningful mentoring to our K—5th graders.

Many thanks to the Ruth Carey Education Endowment Fund for the honor of this support.

#### Special Events

**June 10** - Low Income Pet Vaccination Clinic from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. at WACC.

**June 11** - Free dental services from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. at WACC. Absolutely free for anyone. No ID needed.

**Aug. 18 & 19** - Attend Bruegala 2017 at the Corncrib Stadium in Normal hosted by the Bloomington-Normal Jaycees. WACC was chosen as a charity partner this year!!

Volunteer with us to set up, staff a table or clean up after the event. **Email us at [volunteer@westernavenuecc.org](mailto:volunteer@westernavenuecc.org) to sign up to help!**

#### Saying Goodbye

This summer we bid farewell to Lisa Barton after three years of loving, dedicated and loyal service. Lisa is moving, and will be replaced by Jennifer Trimble, a wife, a mother of three, and a former early childhood educator and college instructor. Welcome Jen!



Faces may change but our dedication to positive relationships, academic success and social support will not waiver.

Applications for the 2017-18 school year are already being taken for K - 5th graders.

**Have you always wanted to volunteer after school?** We will train you! We have volunteers of all ages and stages with a heart for children. Applications for volunteers and more details can be found on the ASP tab of our website.

## Summer Youth Programming at the community centers!



**Summer is here!!** In lieu of a formal summer camp, Western Avenue Community Center has lined up many free, fun and exciting activities for children from K – 12<sup>th</sup> grades!! All classes at WACC require advance registration by emailing Jen Trimble at [jtrimble@westernavenuecc.org](mailto:jtrimble@westernavenuecc.org); or call 309-829-4807, ext. 1007; or stop by the center between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. FREE classes include: **Art Studio** for 1st grade and up from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

on June 5 to 8; **Summer Drama Camp** for students entering 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades from 1 to 4 p.m. on June 19 to 23; **Readers' Theater Camp** for 1<sup>st</sup> grade and older from 1 to 3 p.m. on July 10 to 13; and **Challenger Learning Center Workshops** for 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders from 1 to 3 p.m. on July 10 to 13. All classes will be held at the community center at 600 N. Western Ave., Bloomington, Illinois.

**Martial Arts Classes** will be available on Thursdays at the center from 4 to 5 p.m. beginning June 1 through mid-August for 10 to 18 year olds. Cost is \$15 for the summer session.

**Watch our website for new classes!**

**Summer 1:1** through America Reads/ America Counts is for students entering Kindergarten and older who want to be matched with a college-age tutor. Program is once per week, all summer with days, times & locations arranged between parent and child's tutor to meet your schedule and transportation needs. Applications are available at the center.

**Teen Club** will continue to meet every Tuesday and Thursday night this summer at Lawrence Irvin Neighborhood Center, 1615 West Illinois St., Bloomington. Fun activities include bowling, swimming and movies. Call 309-808-1142 for more details or stop by on a Tuesday or Thursday night!

## We traveled to Mexico for a day at Fiesta Cinco de Mayo!

We are thrilled to announce that with your help at **Fiesta Cinco de Mayo 2017** we raised \$8,870.04 for the Hispanic Outreach Program! Thanks for eating, dancing, and celebrating with us on May 5, 2017. More than 200 were in attendance at the Plumbers & Pipefitters Union Hall in Bloomington, and many, many tamales and tacos were enjoyed.

Our volunteer chefs were Nora Espino, Marisol Gonzalez, Teresa Reyes and, of course, Socorro Alvarez. Our guest DJ was Alberto Espinosa. Many more volunteer sous chefs, servers and decorators helped in so many ways. Thank you everyone!

This family-friendly event attracted many youngsters who enjoyed face painting, food, candy, games and watching a colorful, fun performance of Ballet Folklorico de Central Illinois, a local youth folk dancing group. Adults took a salsa dance lesson, played la loteria – a Mexican bingo game – and enjoyed authentic food.

Money raised at this event will be used to continue the work of case management, employment resources, bilingual counseling and more to our Hispanic neighbors.

Mark your calendars for May 4, 2018 for next year's celebration!!

Many thanks to our sponsors & supporters:

**Numero Uno Sponsor:** Mr. John R. Schoening

**Amiga Sponsor:** American Family Insurance Agent Kathy Alwes-Petri

**Hot Tamales Sponsors:** Afni, Inc., Health Alliance Insurance, Mr. Michael Jones, Mr. Eric Rehtmeyer & Mr. Jay Taylor



Additional support was received from these generous companies & individuals:

Cyndy Alvarez, Catharine Crockett, Clemens Insurance, Commerce Bank, Conexiones Latinas de McLean County, Myra Gordon, Scott Henderson, IAA Credit Union, Barbara Pratt, The Copy Shop and Jeff Woodard

## Collaboration with The Salvation Army for food pantry services

The Salvation Army of Bloomington and Western Avenue Community Center are collaborating to better serve the community. WACC has decided to streamline its services and because of this, has closed its food pantry. The last day of services was May 30, 2017.

The center is working with The Salvation Army to ensure all clients have access to Food Pantry Services. Clients were informed of the closing and directed to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, which operates out of the Family Services building at 611 W. Washington Street. WACC will also be donating food pantry equipment, recruiting volunteers and helping to promote the S.A. Food Pantry.

"The decision to discontinue food pantry services at Western Avenue Community Center has been a long time in coming due to space and setup issues," said Amy Cottone, WACC Executive Director. "Several years ago, a decision was made to move the Food Pantry storage and function into the gym to provide more storage and space for participants. As this space is shared with other WACC

programs, setup and teardown each service day has become increasingly difficult with time and manpower."

"A survey was conducted of clients earlier this year and it was discovered most participants are using other food pantries across the Bloomington-Normal area as well and do not solely rely on WACC for food assistance," she added. "With Bloomington-Normal being blessed with an abundance of Food Pantry options, other food pantry space and partnerships were investigated that have a similar mission as WACC's. The Salvation Army is just what we were looking for."

The Salvation Army building has a set up for a true food pantry. In addition, it offers services to clients that are not offered at Western Avenue, such as shelter, bill paying assistance, and furniture.

The Salvation Army Food Pantry is open Monday-Thursday from 1 PM – 4 PM to residents of McLean County. For questions regarding the SA food pantry, please call Kiki Brown at (309) 829-9476 ext. 218.



*We are so thankful for all of our long-time food pantry volunteers & staff!!*

