

# Impact of the WELS Model ESL Program

The WELS Model ESL Program was started in 2003 with a grant allocated by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod from the Thrivent Churchwide Foundation.

The preceding slideshow documents how the WELS Model ESL Program served Latino immigrant families surrounding Gethsemane Lutheran church between 2004 and 2010.

This innovative program model also became well-known throughout the U.S. Between 2003 and 2010, over 140 congregations and missions contacted Director Beth Thompson for information on starting English Conversation Outreach (ECO) programs.

- 50 received consultation over the phone and by email.
- 26 sent 52 members to Gethsemane for three-day training weekends. Besides congregations in Wisconsin, participants came from Texas, Michigan, Virginia, Minnesota, Kansas, and Florida.
- 4 sent 5 program coordinators for a week of job-shadowing.
- 36 started ECO programs.

Three programs in Milwaukee that were served through training at Gethsemane and consultation with Beth Thompson are:

## **St. Peter's on Southside Milwaukee**

In 2006, Vicar Ben Sadler (now Pastor Sadler at Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Orlando, Florida) attended a weekend training seminar and came to Gethsemane to tutor for a module. In 2007, he started English Conversation Outreach at St. Peter's, assisted by John Vircks, a St. Peter's member who had volunteered for almost 300 classes at Gethsemane. At present, the English program for Latinos is in hiatus. However, since 2009, John Vircks has been coordinating St. Peter's current English Conversation Outreach program for Karen refugees from Myanmar. He is assisted by Ron Metoxen.

## **St. Andrew on Southside Milwaukee**

In 2008, several Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students assisting at St. Andrew, including Nathan Zastrow, came to Gethsemane to tutor and observe the Model Program. Mr. Zastrow began directing St. Andrew's ECO program in 2009. In 2013, he returned to continue his work. A few of the current volunteers, Carl Nolte and Kristen Miller, were part of the original training offered at Gethsemane in 2003 and 2004. Enrollment is about 30 students a semester.

## **Empowering Latino Parents at Notre Dame Middle School**

In Fall 2009, Vista Volunteer Celeste Baldassare from Mount Mary College was charged with starting a volunteer-based ESL program for parents of pupils at Notre Dame Middle School and recruiting Mount Mary students as tutors.

While visiting ESL programs in Milwaukee, Celeste saw two classes that epitomized the instruction and structure she wanted to emulate: 1) Gethsemane, where Lori Stankiewicz was teaching, and 2) a class at the Council for the Spanish Speaking, conducted by Elizabeth Pizano, former co-director at Gethsemane, who was doing practice teaching for her MATESL degree. As both teachers had been trained by Beth Thompson in the ECO model, Celeste asked her for help in starting the program at Notre Dame Middle School. Beth sent background information and sample lesson plans, and Celeste structured her program according to the Gethsemane model.

In September 2010, Vista Volunteer Erica Steele took over from Celeste. In September 2011, the program was relocated to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Wisconsin and is now known as HCCW's *Empowering Latinos* with Erica serving as director.

The WELS Model ESL Program provided opportunities for future WELS pastors to be involved in ministry-related field experiences while attending Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

WLS Students' Participation at Gethsemane's English Language Outreach Program

2012

Schmiege, Caleb  
Kolander, Ryan  
Peter Janke Employee

2003-2011

Barthel, Tom  
Bergemann, Scott  
Bondow, Daniel  
Bourman, Tim  
Bowe, Paul **MLC -1**  
Cherney, Ethan Employee  
Cherney, Isaac Employee  
Cortright, Ryan  
Degner, Abe Employee  
Degner, Sam Senior Vicar  
Dowling, Keegan Employee  
Ewald, Andrew  
Chris Ewings Employee  
Fritz, Paul  
Gawal, Adam  
Gurgel, Phil  
Hagen, Peter  
Hanson, Josh  
Heuer, Preston  
Johnston, Andrew  
Koepke, Mike  
Kuehl, Stephen  
Lange, Doug  
Meyer, Andrew  
Micheel, Paul  
Nass, Nathan  
Novotny, Mike Senior Vicar  
Olson, Dan (NYC)  
Raasch, John  
Retberg, Andrew Senior Vicar 2003  
Sadler, Ben  
Scharf, Nate  
Schmiel, Stephen

Schmitzer, Silas  
Sigrest, David  
Strackbein, Thomas  
Walther, Peter  
Wrobel, Brian  
Zak, Ben  
Zastrow, Nathan  
Zell, Joseph

Assisted with Ethnographic interviewing in November 2003 as preparation for the WELS Model ESL Program's first module:

Johnston, Andrew  
Lindner, Dan  
Salinas, David  
Schmidt, Dan

Volunteer for Spanish literacy program in 2006; engaged by Multi-Lingual Publications to write Spanish-language Bible class series for Latinos with low reading skills.

Schmidt, Dan