

Class was over, but Zayra stood, waiting at our sign-in table. So, I asked her, *¿Puedo ayudarle con algo? Can I help you with something?* Looking uncertain she replied, *¿Cómo funciona eso de la donación? How does that donation thing work?* Unsure of what she was getting at I asked her what she was referring to. She motioned toward our lobby where we had the blackboard inviting people to help RPM's ministry by making a donation, and said, *¿Cómo hago una donación? How do I make a donation?*

Even as I write this I'm still deeply moved by her simple question. Zayra is one of our newest students working hard to learn English. You see, for Zayra, and so many like her, committing three hours each week to learn English already a sacrifice of time and energy as they struggle toward a better life and a brighter future. Many live a meager budget. Their lack of fluency in English often hinders their ability to move into higher paying jobs despite their skills. They are the ones in need. Other people donate to RPM to help them.



Zayra, by the RPM Donation Board

Zayra's donation left me grateful and humbled. Later that week I asked her what prompted her generosity. She told me this (translated from Spanish):

Well, from the time you told me the cost I thought, okay, that's very accessible, that is so good. And then I found out you include a book and everything else. And I realized you [RPM] are a community of help, and you're helping people, and I like that. So, like the Word of God says, give according to the grace that you've received.

She shared how much she appreciated learning English in a what she called a "bonita atmosfera" a beautiful atmosphere, where she said, "we talk, we laugh, we make mistakes, we learn, we make the effort to get up, and we are mutually encouraged in our learning. It has helped me so much."

I was struck by the gentle joy she radiated, and realized she understood the power of giving back. Like she said earlier, "give according to the grace that you've received."

I didn't see it coming ...

That same morning, after giving Zayra her envelope, a voice behind me said in Spanish, "Hey, I'll take one of those envelopes, too." Now I was stunned, it was Henry. Henry and Miguel showed up at our ministry this past July. When they walked into our office, they were hungry, tired, penniless, and unemployed. Yet the reason they came to RPM was because they wanted to take English classes. They'd traveled on foot from Ecuador, through Colombia, Central America, and Mexico, turning themselves in at the border of Texas seeking asylum. Miguel, a mechanical engineer, had been exiled from Cuba over a year ago, surviving as a nomad, working in

different countries. While working in Ecuador, he met Henry, an Ecuadorian registered nurse, and they developed a close friendship. Last September they decided they both wanted a better life and started the trek to the United States. For nearly 6 months they braved tropical forests, dysentery, heat, hunger, dehydration, COVID-19, and *pandillas* (gangs). Providentially, both were granted asylum in the United States and released to apply for work permits and eventual residency.



Once again, I was curious. Why were they wanting to donate to us?

They were the ones challenged by a new language, a new culture, and a future full of unknowns. Miguel replied, *"When we arrived here, you were the first people to help us. We were starving and you gave us something to eat. We needed clothes and you gave us coats, and then you made phone calls and got us connected to a place that provided us with clothing and more food. You let us do volunteer work so we could pay for our membership and take English classes."* Both had huge smiles as they said, *"We want to give back."*

Exciting Growth – Great Need



RPM Morning ESL and SSL-50% of our Students

We are excited and grateful our enrollment in our English, Spanish, and Computer classes this Fall is up over 60% from last year at this time. We've launched our language café and our *Encuentros con Jesus* (Encounters with Jesus) Bible study. Most of our growth is from our students telling their friends and family members about RPM and inviting them to come experience quality

teaching in a caring environment. We are a community where people like Zayra, Henry, and Miguel, feel the love of Jesus and are prompted to give back.

However, our growth, combined with a drop in financial support during 2021-22, has left us with an urgent financial need as we close out 2022. We need your help to make up a serious budget shortfall within the next month. We don't want to cut our programming or essential staff. We want Roosevelt Park Ministries to remain a strong and vibrant community ministry so we can continue to build bridges between languages and cultures. We take joy in providing Christ-centered, holistic support to our multi-ethnic, often low-income clients.

RPM is a great place for you to experience the joy and the power of giving back. If you've been blessed this year, will you also, like Zayra, give according to the grace you've received? Your gift will bring help and hope to our neighbors in need. Giving is easy. [Click here now to donate](https://RooseveltParkMinistries.org). Or, call our office and give using your debit or credit card. We can take your calls at 616.475-5881, Monday – Thursday, from 9:30 am to 5 pm. You can also mail a check to the address below. Together we are sharing Jesus with clarity and compassion.



May His presence be your peace,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Joel".

Joel B Groat, Exec. Dir.

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Website: <https://RooseveltParkMinistries.org>

All donations to RPM are tax-deductible and received with gratitude.