

ENGLISH IMMERSION PROGRAM, California, U.S.A.

From November 15 – December 15, fourteen students from La Enseñanza, Company of Mary School in Barranquilla, Colombia participated in a month-long English Immersion Program at Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac School in Tustin, California. The program was prepared by Susan Agle who had previously done a two year volunteer experience as an English instructor at La Enseñanza.



The program was designed to strengthen the speaking and listening ability of the English language in a native speaking environment. The students were divided into two ability groups and had several hours of formal instruction each day. Exposure to English in a non-formal setting took place in the interaction with the students at Saint Jeanne's, as well as a weekly visits with a family from one of the Company of Mary schools in the area. A most memorable experience was spending all of Thanksgiving Day with their host family living this American tradition first hand. The opportunity for a mutual learning and sharing of each other's culture was an added benefit.

Visits to cultural and recreational sites were an integral part of the program and provided further learning and exposure in an English speaking context: Universal Studios, Hollywood-Beverly Hills, Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm, Museum of Tolerance, Grammy museum, etc. Sunday afternoons were spent at one or another California beach. The opportunities available in Southern California are limitless, so the challenge was to choose among the many places available.

It is difficult to summarize in one short article all that was learned and experienced in an intense month of diverse, creative and rich opportunities. For each young woman, the experience was unique and not only helped her advance to another level of English comprehension and speech, but also to personal maturity and appreciation for others, for another culture. The unique value and characteristic of this program is that it takes place within a Company of Mary context promoting the values of our educational charism worldwide.



The Province of the Pacific now makes this program available to other Company of Mary schools throughout the world. As this was a pilot program, it provided the experience to continue adjusting it and tailoring it to the needs of each particular group that comes. We look forward to strengthening the network of our educational institutions throughout the world through this program. It is one more experience of the universal body that distinguishes us.

Sister Ernestine Velarde, odn