

They weren't begging, but almost ... *"Queremos seguir tomando clases en el verano."* We want to keep taking classes this summer.

Our spring semester was nearly done. All our staff looked forward to using the summer to catch up on projects and train at least one new team member. That's when several English students started asking to sign up for summer classes. To be honest, we didn't want to - but *they* did. They wanted to stay connected to RPM and so we said "*¡Claro que sí!*" (Of course!)



A few of our ESL students and instructors

By the end of the eight-week summer session, I was glad we had sacrificed some "project time" so people like Gracia* and Petrov* could build literacy skills and improve their English fluency. Gracia is from Cuba and was a regional accountant there - yet she earned less than \$20 *per month*. Petrov is from Romania. I didn't see that coming.

Petrov didn't look super Latino, but I've learned not to judge by appearances. This time I should have. When I greeted him in Spanish, he gave me a blank look and then said, "*No Spanish.*" I switched to English but got a similar result. He shook his head and said, "*No speak much English.*" The accent was European, so I gave up guessing and just asked where he was from. Answer - Romania. He was surprised to learn I'd visited his country and seemed delighted when I told him I'd been to his city. *Connection made.* Unfortunately, in the moment I could not recall any of the Romanian I'd learned. However, he never missed a class and at semester's end he wrote, "I give thanks to God for RPM because here I could learn English."

Connections. They are at the heart of RPM. We connect people to English, a language they need to navigate and flourish in a new culture. We connect them to jobs, housing, clothing, and food. Every day, brave, resilient, hard-working folks like Gracia, connect to our RPM community -- determined to make a better life for themselves and their children. Gracia and her 10-year-old daughter entered the US with a promise of permanent residency, but recent changes in the immigration system left her in limbo with no real status this summer while waiting for her papers. For three weeks she never left home. No work, no driving, nothing. She couldn't risk losing the life she'd worked so hard to build here. *Then good news.* On July 15th she got her residency papers and green card. She renewed her license, returned to work and told me how grateful she was to God and RPM. The English classes had helped her through this process. She's already looking forward to applying for citizenship, but she won't be eligible to apply for three years.

Meanwhile, she's working hard. She gets up at 2 am and works till 3 pm. She's proud of her daughter who is doing great in school. Her daughter says "*me encanta Michigan*" - *I love Michigan.*" But Gracia reminds her that she'll also have to work hard to succeed in life.



Some of our Fall 2025 RPM ESL Students taking their English pre-assessment.

Next year marks RPM's 30th year of serving and working alongside our neighbors to build a brighter future. For nearly three decades people like you have fueled our work - praying, giving, volunteering. You, our staff, volunteers, interns, students, and clients have forged a place where people find hope to dream of a better future and get the tools to make that dream a reality.

As we close out this year we need some extra financial help. For just \$100 per-year, our members get English and computer classes, plus free workshops on financial literacy and mental health. In addition, they get free consults with our family worker who helps with essential needs like jobs, housing, and navigating our complex immigration system. We're thrilled that our Fall enrollment jumped 40% from last year and we added 20 more students.

We love reaching more people, but it costs RPM over \$1000 per student annually to provide these essential services. Would you help me cover this \$20,000 in added expenses before our semester ends on December 4th? Any size contribution helps us provide both the literacy and the love people like Petrov and Gracia need.

Despite this critical financial need, however, the main thing I'm asking for is prayer.

- Pray that our students finish strong.
- Pray our RPM community stays loving and supportive of one another.
- Pray that God brings us urgently needed bilingual staff.
- Pray that God moves people to give generously, *we need it to serve and grow.*

Together we are forging connections that restore hope, inspire dreams, and share God's love with people like Petrov and Gracia. I'd love for you to be a part of it. You can send a check (envelope included) or go to our website to donate. You can also scan the QR code with your phone or tablet -- it will take you directly to our donation page.



May your life flourish under God's care,

Joel B Groat, Exec Dir.

**Names changed to protect privacy.*

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All gifts are tax-deductible, received with grateful hearts, and used to share God's love.

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