

Hope Through Technology Tutoring: A CMC Volunteer Story

By Laura Green

A couple of times each week, Rudy Molina volunteers at the Catholic Multicultural Center (CMC) using his background in technology to help guests learn computers. He began volunteering just less than a year ago after finding out about the Center through his Parish, St. Maria Goretti. Part of his work involves tutoring participants in the Culinary Creations job training program in the technology skills they need to succeed in the job search process. While learning technology can greatly improve a trainee's prospects, the work Rudy does with trainees goes far beyond computer skills. Rudy uses helping others with technology as an opportunity to connect with trainees and offer them hope and inspiration as they continue on their journey.

"I listen to their story, I hear how hard they've been working, and I see their struggles," said Rudy, speaking of his work with trainees. He explained that some people in the program have already worked many different jobs in their lifetime and are still trying to find the path that is right for them. Despite already having gone through so much, they have not given up, something Rudy really admires. "The desire I see in these people is just incredible," he commented. He added that trying



Rudy welcomes guests at the CMC computer lab.

to relate with people, even if they have had a very different experience from him, is crucial in the work he does with trainees. "You need to respect others. If you do, then you get to meet and know so many more wonderful people [that you otherwise might not have a chance to know]."

In supporting trainees along their journey, Rudy offers motivation by using his own father's story as an example. His father grew up in the Philippines in a one room house with no electricity and no running water. Every day was a struggle for his father and family just to get by. Economic opportunities were scarce; to make money, they would sell food

on the street or scavenge items to re-sell. His father was smart and a hard worker, but that meant nothing without having opportunities to advance. One day life gave Rudy's father a break: a family friend offered him the chance to go to medical school. He accepted this offer and studied hard, sitting at the ironing board because his parents' house had no desk. He passed the exam and started a medical career that eventually took him and his wife to the United States, where Rudy was later born. His father's humble background and status as a person of color meant he had to work harder to advance in comparison to many of his colleagues. His father did not let

this detain him, but kept on striving for more success, culminating with the prestigious achievement of becoming the first Filipino-American to be appointed chair of the State of Wisconsin Medical Examining Board.

needing help today. He says he doesn't want trainees think they can't achieve their dreams because of the situation they are in now. "Sometimes all people need is hope," said Rudy. In his work with trainees, he strives to

ceremony is always a touching moment, seeing how proud trainees are of their accomplishments and witnessing how important this ceremony is to them, with some trainees even inviting family members or friends to attend the event. He is also touched when a trainee he has worked with moves on from the training and successfully establishes her or himself at employment beyond the enterprise.



Culinary Creations trainees use their technology skills to take their online food safety certification exam.

"I love seeing the joy of people obtaining their goals. I hope I helped them along the way, but ultimately it's their goal and their accomplishment [that they worked hard to achieve]. It's so satisfying to watch that unfold."

Rudy uses his dad's story with job training participants to illustrate that seemingly insurmountable odds can indeed be overcome with hard work, motivation, and the right circumstances. Rudy recognizes that if it weren't for his father's hard work and the opportunities that opened up for his father, that he himself could easily have been the one struggling to make ends meet and

offer hope through listening with empathy, trying to relate to what people are going through, and sharing his father's story to let them know that hope is never lost.

For Rudy, the best part of volunteering is watching the trainees use the opportunities the program offers them to succeed. Rudy says the trainee graduation

When Rudy sits down with a trainee from the latest Culinary Creations cohort, such a seemingly simple act like teaching basic computer skills has a meaningful and lasting impact on both tutor and student. All it takes is a little understanding, and a reminder that there is always hope.



If you would like to learn more about the Culinary Creations Catering job training enterprise or about volunteering at the CMC, please contact Laura Green at 608-441-1180 or laura@cmcmadison.org.