

VOLUSIA COUNTY EDUCATION

Spelling out a better life

Food Brings Hope expands literacy programming to adult Spanish speakers



Adela Gomez listens to teacher Silvia Torres during an English language lesson at Pierson Elementary School. Torres helps adult students weekly with pronunciation and comprehension of English words. Many of her students, she said, are working to enhance their language skills in order to improve their career prospects and better their children's lives.

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By Erica Breunlin

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Silvia Garcia and Demetrio Hernandez communicate as one when branching out from their native Spanish to carry on a conversation in English.

He listens. She talks.

"Sometimes I don't understand what (someone is) saying and he understands so he translates ... what they are saying and he says, 'OK, now you answer them,'" Garcia, the stronger speaker of the two, said with a translator by her side.

"We have to be together all the time," Hernandez added.

The Seville couple, who came to the United States from Mexico 15 years ago, have been

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sounding out their way through English syllables and stacking up their vocabulary at Pierson Elementary School, where they study weekly under a free literacy program offered by Food Brings Hope.

The Daytona Beach nonprofit formed in 2007 under Forough Hosseini, senior vice president of information systems at ICI Homes, who sought to give kids living in poverty more stability through nutritious meals and extra academic support.

That core mission now

touches more than 1,000 children at 23 schools across Volusia and Flagler counties.

Since its inception, the organization has focused on children while expanding its programming to include a variety of field trips, financial literacy initiatives and one of its most ambitious projects yet – Hope House, which shelters unaccompanied and homeless high schoolers with a safe living environment.

But last fall, Food Brings Hope turned its attention to the parents of many of the children it helps by starting adult literacy courses that pave the way toward English language proficiency.

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