

# *Celebrating 25 Years*



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### **Celebrating 25 Years: Building Opportunities through Education**

Dear Friends,

The Safe Passage learning community is committed to providing the best quality education to our students who dream of a future with more opportunities for themselves and their families. This is why we work hard to create a learning space where students feel safe and are the protagonists.



In this post-pandemic time, we are committed to closing the educational gap that it left us—in literacy and mathematics processes—by enriching our educational programs and providing professional development to the teaching staff. We do this through the implementation of different strategies that accelerate the learning process and specific methodologies to address their social-emotional growth. Our teachers are deeply committed to their students and are constantly preparing and innovating to create enriched

*Continued*

and appropriate spaces for social-emotional growth and learning opportunities. Thanks to these efforts, we feel confident that we are on the right track in this process.

In this newsletter, we are sharing with you individual stories from our educational community. In them you will hear directly from our teachers and students about their experiences, achievements, and anecdotes during the school year. We invite you to enjoy these portraits of our educational community and share them with family and friends.

The challenges are big, but we are confident that with your support and generosity, we will be able to close this gap and continue to provide innovative opportunities to our students.

We deeply appreciate your trust and generous support.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Barneond  
Senior Director of Education

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM (3 YEAR OLDS)

**Sandra Maribel Roldan  
Sotoj & Joseph**

**S**andra has been with Safe Passage for two years. She describes the education team as creative and proactive and says that she enjoys working with them because they challenge her in her professional development and she feels free to express herself, give her opinions, and collaborate positively with her colleagues.



Sandra's role with the 3-year-olds is to help them develop their skills and abilities. She says that she focuses on things like communication, language, and helping them better express themselves, as well as developing their fine and gross motor skills and knowledge of their environment and their relationship to nature.

Sandra said that one of her students, Joseph, stood out to her this year as he progressed dramatically in his learning. At the beginning of the school year, he was very shy and cried each day. Over time, he began to change little by little, becoming more comfortable and happier in the classroom. He started

to become more motivated to join the rest of the group and he began sharing, talking more and expressing himself better. Joseph now is fully integrated with his classmates and listens, interacts and follows instructions. "He has developed many skills, I have noticed that his visual memory is very good, he is very attentive and participatory. It makes me feel good, because I see my work reflected in him. And I know he can do more."

Sandra will complete her bachelor's degree this year and said she looks forward to this and to continuing to develop as an educator. She

wants to be innovative in her teaching methods, especially for this very early stage in student's lives. "My motivation for being a teacher is that I want to witness that children, even though they are young, have dreams and goals. They know where they want to go. I want to provide them with challenges through which they will learn. I want to leave an impression on them, to have passion and love for teaching, so that they feel good and have a teacher who shares and lives in joy. The same way I teach, so I learn from them."





## PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN (4-6 YEAR OLDS)

**R**ocío has been teaching at Safe Passage for a year. While Rocío herself lives in Zone 3, she said she had never seen this side of it. When she found out about our work and the ways in which families are served and supported, she wanted to be part of the team.

"I feel very happy to belong to this team. We are guided by teaching with love. I am a teacher because I have always wanted to make a difference. I want to plant a seed of knowledge in the little ones—the children motivate me! They are the reason I am here, giving my best every day. I want to build a safe place for them, where they can have fun, feel free and loved."

Aaron is in his second year with Safe Passage—he came up through the Early Learning Program and at the start of the school year was having a hard time adjusting—he missed his teacher from last year. He wasn't participating in class and didn't want to follow instructions.

**Karen Rocío Salazar López & Aaron**



"However, slowly we started to adapt to each other," Rocío recalls. "Now, Aaron is the first one to come in, greet me, and give me a hug. He is the first one to participate in class; he talks a lot and expresses himself very well. One of his strengths is that he has great listening skills. He can be performing a task while I am giving instructions and I can see that he hears and understands, even though he is engaged in his task. He also shows a lot of empathy in caring for his classmates. If he sees someone sad, he is the first one to ask if they are okay."

At the beginning of the school year, one of Aaron's favorite activities was creating a giant book about the classroom norms. When he received the news that the book would be delivered to the Early Learning Program, he was thrilled to go visit his previous classroom and be able to help the new little ones there.

Rocío says that she would like to study at the university to improve her knowledge and teaching skills. She hopes to continue at Safe Passage as well and support our work.



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 1-6)

## Johanna Nisthal Rosal & Alison

**J**ohanna has over 25 years of teaching experience. Throughout her career, she has worked in many different areas, but always related to education and teaching.

She has been with Safe Passage for four years and started out teaching English to grades 1-6. She currently teaches English to grades 3-5.

Johanna says that Safe Passage was the answer to her prayers and to an emptiness left by what she was doing at that time. "When I asked myself what it was that made me happy, the word 'teaching' came to my mind, but I knew that I didn't want to teach just anywhere, but somewhere I could do my part to improve the quality of life for children. And then the opportunity appeared. I am here because I believe that I can teach children that they have the capacity to develop their talents and abilities, that they can dream and build those dreams and be happy. I want to ingrain in them that learning is fun, but also a rewarding path for their present and their future."

One of Johanna's favorite projects from last year was the English Festival which was organized and held on campus, something the English team had been planning since the pandemic. While initially it was meant to be a small activity, each teacher's work began to

grow and it turned into an event that encompassed the whole educational community and included a spelling bee, games, and projects presented by each grade level on different English speaking countries. "I loved that through English, we were able to do something meaningful that demonstrated solidarity and support from fellow teachers. It was a win-win!"

Alison has been enrolled at Safe Passage for four years and is in 5th grade. Last year, Alison started the school year a bit later than her classmates. She was very shy initially, because other students were curious

about her late arrival. Johanna said it took her a while to adapt, understand the routines and establish friendships. "I was her English and guidance teacher, and from the very first classes it was a drastic change from introvert to extrovert. I mentioned that she has a natural talent for English. I think when she realized the opportunity to make herself known in that space where she felt comfortable, everything changed for her. When her peers realized it, they recognized her for her knowledge and skills. Last year she was chosen as the grade representative for the Spelling Bee, but she could not attend due to health issues. The

person in second place took over the challenge, but despite being sad she could not participate, Alison supported her classmate who represented the grade and recognized her effort.

Alison is very self-confident in expressing herself and recognizes her abilities; during English classes she supports the learning process of the rest of her classmates. She is always willing to learn and self-correct."

"My plan is to work hard, so that I can do well this year," says Alison. "I wish my classmates this same success!"





## MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7-9)

**2**024 marks Paola's 9th year of teaching at Safe Passage and 20 years total as an educator.

"The years of teaching add to my learning and growth, but in particular the experience of working with the Expeditionary Learning method has taught me much more."

Paola teaches 8th and 9th grade Social Studies. "I have never been a teacher of traditional education, in university my formation was focused on participation and analysis. At Safe Passage one has the opportunity to be more dynamic, through the expeditions—there is debate and dialogue, and participation is very important—all of that motivates me to be here."

In addition to teaching, Paola is also in the process of starting a degree in Human Rights at the University.

"Everything I do is with the intention that my students learn and pass it on to their communities...last year I focused a lot on service and teaching my students that they can support others. Sometimes it is difficult because of the requirements to perform service activities. So we have developed the concept of serving their own classmates, starting from the premise that I serve from where I am and with what I have, and although they are young, they can do the same. For example, using the skills they already have; reading, writing, sports or painting. Last year, with the 9th graders we visited a Jardín class and the 8th graders visited the 1st grade class. We had good results.

So this year we have expanded, hoping to visit other classmates at least once per unit, working with the teachers, identifying what they would like us to do or reinforce. The 8th graders will focus on reinforcing shoe tying and laterality (working from left to right) with the little ones.

We can make a big impact in a very simple way and the service leaves an impression on us as well. It has a great impact on our self-esteem. I emphasize that they will also receive a benefit, even if not financially. They will experience personal growth through the process of learning something new and meeting new people."

José Carlos has been with Safe Passage for 6 years, and is currently in 9th grade. He hopes to study Electronics for his career tract in High School and in the future would like to study to become a Mechatronics Engineer. He has undoubtedly taken to heart the lessons Paola works to impart to her students. "I want my classmates to feel motivated to continue studying. There are some who don't want to, but I keep motivating them to do so, because that is what is good for their future."

**Heidi Paola Lemus Samayoa & José Carlos**



Paola describes José Carlos as, "an outstanding student—he is very participatory and collaborative—has a big heart and is always looking out for his classmates. Within the class he is their representative. He has an innate leadership and speaking ability...He has always been visible to his peers as someone they can turn to, he has a very noble heart, he likes to help others."

Even as José Carlos reflects on his academic success, he is thinking of others. "My favorite memory of last year was when I gave my civic presentation. I felt very proud of myself and the work we did as a team. I was congratulated a lot by teachers, directors, and classmates. I liked it because during the presentation I realized that they had a lot of fun too.

I want to thank my teachers for their work and passion for teaching us. To the kitchen staff, cleaning workers, directors; I appreciate them all very much."





## OPORTUNIDADES/HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 10-12)

### Alan Alvarez & Berenice & Amalia

**A**lan Alvarez is our technology course facilitator in the Oportunidades Program. He has developed a technology training that teaches new skills and competencies. His course allows students to explore the digital world more creatively, while encouraging critical and analytical thinking, experimenting with new resources, and integrating art and other mediums.

As part of our Founder's annual

birthday celebration in March, Alan was challenged to work collaboratively with students pursuing careers related to graphic design and advertising to create a logo. The objective was to represent our educational community and the celebration of our 25th Anniversary.

Amalia Reyes Larios (High School Marketing and Advertising student) and Paola Berenice López (High School student studying Arts and

Sciences with a focus on Graphic Design) joined the challenge. Both students developed their creative skills and interest in the technological area, which motivated Alan to expand his curriculum to include other technological tools; such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop.

They wanted the logo to embody the concepts of teamwork, educational quality, and the positive impact Safe Passage has on our learning



## THE PROGRENTIS PROGRAM

Our education team has been making a focused effort to close the learning gap left by the pandemic. In addition to modifying our learning plans and daily schedules to allow more time to focus on key learning areas; literacy and math skills, our teachers also implemented the Progrentis Program in March 2024.



This digital platform develops abstract, mathematical, divergent and collaborative thinking skills using neurofeedback and gamification. It utilizes time-structured lessons, brief microtasks for immediate feedback, individual and group challenges and competence achievement assessments to help students develop different

areas of attention: sustained, selective, alternated and divided. It supports the student, in a personalized manner, to develop foundations in reading and comprehension, as well as mathematical logical thinking.



**The color blue shows  
solidity and confidence,  
while silver represents  
innovation and modernity.**

community throughout the years. The color blue shows solidity and confidence, while silver represents innovation and modernity. The circumference that encloses the logo represents the stability and collaboration that characterizes us as an institution. They wanted to demonstrate, through this logo, that we are an organization that has changed and adapted to provide quality in everything it does and

the legacy it leaves within our community.

Alan, Amalia and Berenice were very pleased that the logo they created together was selected to be the organization's logo for the celebration of our 25th Anniversary. They feel proud to belong to the Safe Passage family and we are so proud of their innovative ideas and creations!

# WAYS TO GIVE



## BECOME A RECURRING GIVER

Education takes sustained support and your ongoing gift helps us to plan for the future of our programs. Just sign up once and your gifts, made on a recurring basis of your choosing, help us to maintain stability and more accurately budget!

## PLANNED GIVING

Visit our Planned Giving Page: [www.safepassage.org/legacy/](http://www.safepassage.org/legacy/) to learn more about how you can become a Safe Passage Visionary!

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## SAFE PASSAGE AROUND THE GLOBE

### Recent:

**Northwest:** In Fall 2023 and Winter 2024, Safe Passage friends and staff gathered in Berlin, San Francisco, Seattle and Portland to share hear updates on our work!



### Upcoming:

**Rochester, NY:** Friday, May 17, 2024  
EL Learning Observation at the Genesee Community Charter School

**Philadelphia, PA:** Friday, June 7, 2024

**Westbrook, ME:** Sunday, November 3rd, 2024  
Save the Date for our second annual race in collaboration with Northeast Credit Union's Nourish Network, which will take place at Rock Row!

\*If you are located in any of these areas and wish to connect with a Safe Passage staff member on an upcoming visit to your region, please send us an email at [info@safepassage.org](mailto:info@safepassage.org).



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