

Colleen's Contemplations – October 2009

We had our annual client meeting in September, where we clear the slates and have everyone register for the new school year. This year we were blessed to have an actual Spanish interpreter with us. We go through the policies and procedures for using our services and then talk to each person individually for a moment to “check in”. It felt so good to know that we were actually communicating with everyone. It often felt like we were being rude or somehow not serving to the fullest when I'd try to talk to non-English speakers. So I felt a lot of relief. But I was unprepared for the consequences of our actions.

Turns out there were a lot of people who were also relieved to be able to communicate. Our poor interpreter was brought to tears multiple times translating the thank-yous. I'd always been frustrated that I couldn't really get to know our Spanish-speaking clients. There are things you just can't ask about when your interpreter is the 7 yr old family member. It's that personal connection to our neighbors that keeps us coming back. These folks are my extended family.

So think of all the words you know in another language and imagine trying to have a relationship based only on what you can say. It's something I've been struggling with; but selfishly I didn't see how frustrating it could be from the other side of the relationship. When someone touches your heart, it doesn't feel like enough to just say thank you. So there was this outpouring of emotional gratitude that left me extremely shaken. It was so overwhelming that I couldn't speak to my family when I got home; I just hugged them and assured them that my tears were good tears.

Thank you for all you do that allows us to do all we do.

Colleen Woerner
WNC Vice President & Store Manager