

# The World's Most Overqualified Tutors

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Uncommon Good

*(The following is an article and photos by Janet Evans, a member of Pilgrim Place, a remarkable retirement community of prominent, in some cases world- renowned scholars, humanitarians, and individuals who have engaged in ministry around the world. Janet also is a member of our Uncommon Circle support group. Recently she interviewed her Pilgrim Place neighbors who responded to the invitation of Pilgrim Place resident and Uncommon Good board member, Charles Bayer, to tutor the students in our Clinic to College program.)*

"Mrs. Rogers is a teenager in a little old lady's body!" That's how one junior high school student described Barbara Rogers when she retired from teaching English and history in 1997. Barbara, who has lived in many places around the world and has more energy than many teens, laughs when she tells the story. The twinkle in her eyes suggests that she is flattered by the young man's characterization. When Barbara and her husband moved to Claremont's Pilgrim Place in 2007 they looked back on a lifetime of service in churches and public schools.

Barbara's clergy husband John served churches in Paris, Bali, Vienna, Strasbourg, and Berlin, as well as in Michigan, Washington state and Portland, Oregon. As the mother of three boys, Barbara maintained her interest in public education by establishing a program for gifted and talented students in one town, chairing the local school board in another city, and teaching at the junior and senior high school level in many different places.

When an opportunity to tutor through Uncommon Good was presented, Barbara was eager to share her skills and knowledge. Once a week she meets with Melissa, a highly motivated junior at Claremont High School. Barbara describes the tutoring as an effort to provide an enrichment experience. Melissa's family came to the U.S. from Guatemala and El Salvador. As American citizens, Melissa's parents are eager for their children to succeed in their new land. Barbara's work with Melissa involves listening to the girl as she works on assignments from her advanced placement history and English classes, encouraging Melissa to make the historical and literary connections, and working on vocabulary, word meaning and pronunciation. Melissa is eager to go on to college. Barbara encourages her aspirations and provides the guidance and support which students need as they find their way in the world.

Melissa's sister and brother are also part of the Uncommon Good tutoring program. Eleanor Scott Meyers is a tutor for Melissa's sister, Andrea. Andrea is a 14-year-old 8th grader who is working with Eleanor on writing so that she can join the advanced placement English classes when she gets to high school.

Eleanor brings a lifetime of experience to her work with Andrea, including years as Professor of Church and Society at Union Theological School in New York City, and as President of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. Eleanor began teaching in elementary schools and then went on to get a Masters of Divinity



Eleanor Scott Meyers of Pilgrim Place Tutors Andrea

degree as well as a PhD. in Sociology. She worked with campus YM-YWCAs and as a minister of the United Church of Christ. Her academic credentials include many journal articles and books, as well as nonfiction stories for children. And in her spare time she is an accomplished painter. Eleanor got involved in tutoring because she wanted to be in touch with what public education was like for middle school children in this area. Eleanor retired to Pilgrim Place in 2006 and chairs the Fine Arts Booth for the annual November Pilgrim Place Festival.

For Jim Lamb, a World War II veteran, tutoring Melissa and Andrea's brother has been an opportunity to contribute to his vision of the future and his values. Jim was previously a mentor for Uncommon Good but found that he could no longer commit to the time needed. Tutoring provided Jim with an opportunity to remain in touch with young people. One of Jim's assignments for Carlos was to write about the most important person in his life. To Jim's great delight, Carlos wrote about his Uncommon Good mentor, a Pomona College undergraduate!

Jim meets regularly with his ninth grader, reads what he has written and reacts to it. He then suggests fields of interest for further study or exploration. Jim found that Carlos was well able to write a clear concise essay, so Jim has introduced him to other kinds of writing such as short stories and plays. As an educator, Jim loves having the time to think and plan for his meetings with Carlos. It's a luxury he has not always had as a teacher. Throughout his career, Jim was involved in international development primarily in Latin America. He founded a Summer Institute for International Service at Seton Hall University, founded and directed the Center for the Study of Development and Social Change in Cambridge, MA., and was a Program Director for the Ecumenical Institute at Cuernavaca, Mexico. Jim is delighted to have an opportunity to introduce Carlos to other cultures. By the end of the summer, they hope to have 'experienced' Nicaragua, Nigeria, Mexico, Ireland, and 'The Big Apple' with Carlos sharing his learning through various writing modes.

Lou Ann Parsons describes her experience as an Uncommon Good tutor as going from "some trepidation to pure enjoyment." She was not a college English major so she wondered how she could possibly help Kathy improve her writing skills. Kathy is a student who achieved the highest honors at El Roble Middle School with a sharp, creative, and expressive mind. Kathy and Lou Ann brainstormed ideas for Kathy's writing skills, including writing a letter to accompany a college application, a sympathy letter, poetry, and songs. Kathy has dreams of Broadway and has considerable experience in theater productions in Claremont. She says her happiest experience was being accepted for a part in a local musical production. She'll do theater over the summer and expects to be part of the Claremont High School theatre group next fall.

Lou Ann came to Pilgrim Place in 1992 after many years in South Africa with the American Board of Foreign Missions. She studied Zulu which was essential in her Christian Education work among churches in Durban and Johannesburg. Here in Claremont, Lou Ann has been closely involved with the Petterson Museum of International Art at Pilgrim Place. As former President of the Museum Friends Board and regular volunteer at the museum, Lou Ann is passionate about promoting increased understanding and appreciation of the art, customs, and culture of different countries and people.

Teresa Wilson was a representative from a non-governmental organization to the United Nations and the Commission on the Status of Women. She traveled extensively around the world to Mexico, Uganda, South Africa, Australia, the Philippines, the Soviet Union and China. As a tutor for Uncommon Good, Teresa says, "I've come to grips with what it means to be bilingual." Each week she has met with a 12-year-old boy from Pomona who is struggling with the complexity of the English language. His potential, especially in math, is great and his family has high expectations for their children as evidenced by their older daughter who just graduated from nursing school with highest

honors. But for her young student, Teresa finds that English grammar is a great challenge. His ability to read is clear and he has mastered the computer including Power Point. Teresa is focusing on helping him to sort through the difficulties of English using a computer program called Jabberwocky and reading the newspapers, especially the sports section. As the parent of three grown children, Teresa knows that a good relationship between parents and teachers is essential, so she encourages good communication between them. And as a long range planner for non-profit organizations, Teresa knows that it will be important for her student to get the basics of English under his belt before he can succeed at the topics he loves.