

The Impact of Rebecca Hill's Service in the ESL Community

Rebecca Hill exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding volunteer through her dedication to serving the ESL community, particularly through the "Let's Talk" Ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pullman, WA. This ministry, which has been offering free English classes to learners at all proficiency levels for the past 19 years, welcomed Rebecca as a level 1 teacher three years ago. Though her early career and life path were not directly connected to education or ESL, her passion for teaching emerged as she navigated her own family's educational challenges.

Rebecca's journey into teaching began when her first child struggled with reading. This prompted her to dive deep into research on effective teaching techniques to support her son. The success of her efforts led to homeschooling, where she honed her skills and eventually helped her son make remarkable progress. Her success spread among her neighbors and friends, who sought her assistance with their own children. What began as a personal mission grew into a small home-based tutoring business, where from 1990 to 2018, Rebecca taught beginning and remedial reading, writing, Latin, and logic.

Her interest in TESOL arose while tutoring students from diverse backgrounds, including those from Mexico, Ethiopia, and Korea, who were entirely new to the English language. Witnessing how learning to read could transform lives, just as it had for her son, inspired Rebecca to delve deeper into the challenges faced by non-native English speakers. Her commitment to understanding the learner's perspective led her to experiment with learning new languages herself, including Korean, Hebrew, and Greek. This personal experience gave her profound empathy for her students and a better understanding of the mental processes involved in acquiring a new language and alphabet system.

In 2018-2019, Rebecca retired from her tutoring career and returned to university to earn a TESOL certificate at Trinity Western University in Canada. Determined to dedicate her retirement to volunteering, particularly in areas where she could apply her language teaching skills, Rebecca began teaching at "Let's Talk" in 2021. Her commitment to her students extends far beyond the classroom. She has consistently demonstrated a personal investment in their well-being, such as organizing food drives and a baby shower for a Mexican student who recently gave birth and had no family support nearby.

At 71 years old, Rebecca continues to embody a lifelong passion for teaching ESL. Her dedication is further fueled by her own language-learning pursuits;

she is currently studying Spanish and maintains her proficiency in other languages she has explored. Her approach to continuous learning allows her to stay connected to the challenges her students face, and she remains committed to supporting them with empathy and understanding. The Pullman ESL community deeply appreciates Rebecca's years of service.

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