

July 2025

Reflections

The Power of Love and Literacy

“¿De dónde eres?” (where are you from?) the kind, smiling lady asked me as I finished my presentation. Though it took me by surprise, it felt homey to be greeted in my native tongue.

“Soy de la Republica Dominicana!” (I’m from Dominican Republic), I answered as she embraced me as if I were a long lost friend. A candid conversation ensued as Elsa shared her passion for teaching and her love for children.

Elsa Gordon-Whitfield is a retired teacher and member of Agape SDA Church in St. Louis, Missouri. She was recently invited to join the North American Division (NAD) Sharing The Adventure Reading Starts (STARS) tutoring and mentoring program, a literacy program for children in at-risk communities. The program offers a safe place with loving people who want to invest their lives in the life of community children struggling to read. Elsa immediately felt God was choosing her to serve her community in this way.



GLADYS S. GUERRERO is an educator with 20 years of experience in K-8 and a master’s degree in Language Acquisition, with an emphasis in Curriculum Development. She has a passion for reading and helping children discover the freedom reading offers to them. She is the Tutoring and Mentoring Coordinator for the Office of Volunteer Ministries.

PAYROLL BULLETIN BOARD

Checks /EFT
Released

THIS MONTH:
July 25

NEXT MONTH:
August 27

The Office of Volunteer Ministries is the mission office of the NAD. It recruits, screens, and deploys trained missionaries all over the world. Recently, the Office, in collaboration with Adventist Community Service department, has launched an initiative to open outreach tutoring and mentoring sites across the North American Division for children who are struggling with reading in at-risk communities. The goal is to offer a chance for these children to have access to caring, loving, Christian adults who will, through literacy, provide them with the tools to succeed in life and perhaps break the poverty cycle in which they currently live.

Upon hearing about the goals of the program, Elsa did not hesitate to offer her skills as a seasoned teacher to help the children of her community to learn how to read. Most of these children were already behind academically when the COVID pandemic closed schools and forced them to an online education. A great majority of them had to begin their academic life in front of a screen, if they had access to a computer, while others are just beginning their educational journey and already falling behind in reading and math.

As an educator, Elsa understands the additional academic struggles a child must face when reading skills are lacking. “They get bullied in school, get in trouble in class, get suspended for fighting with others, are distracted, etc.” Elsa explains. “It’s important to give them the tools that will help them catch up, and with the help of God, succeed in school and ultimately in life.”

Elsa constantly smiled as she shared with me her experience as an Adventist educator, how much she loves teaching, and how God placed her in public schools to bless children with His love. She worked as a teacher for 32 years, 4 of those within the Adventist school system. She has been retired for 8 years now but continues

to bless her community with her gifts. This program answered her prayers to be used by God to help children.

“This program is definitely an answer to prayer for this community!” Elsa when talking about her church’s initiative. “I am retired, but I love teaching, and I love children. They are so smart!” she said with a smile as she assisted Aika, one of the students, with his response to the group reading. Aika is in 3rd grade but struggles with reading and expressing what he understands from the read story. Elsa patiently works with him and encourages him to press on. “You got this! You are soo smart!” she says as he intently looks at her lips while she sounds out the words he’s trying to write.

*Elsa’s encouragement for retirees:
“Find a ministry doing something
that you love and share that love
with the next generation. Come
and bless the life of a child.”*

The Agape SDA Church in St. Louis opened its doors late last fall. Currently they serve 16 community students with the help of 9 rotating tutors, 4 or 5 per session. They meet twice a month for two hours at the church. The children listen to a story, have a snack, and then divide into groups to work on reading, math, science or simply play with letters and numbers as they develop their letter recognition skills.

Elsa thoroughly enjoys her time in this program. “I love it! I look forward to working with the children every time,” she says with a chuckle. “It brings me life! It makes me feel useful. They keep me young!”

As we said our goodbyes, I asked Elsa to encourage retirees to serve. Without any hesitation she said, “Find a ministry that you enjoy! Don’t wait for death to come knocking

at your door! Find a ministry doing something that you love and share that love with the next generation. We can't take things with us when we die, but the time we spend blessing the life of others is a gift that keeps on giving. So come and bless the life of a child." ■



Instant Pho-ish

By Angeline D. Brauer, DrPH, MHS, RDN

- 12 cups water
- 3 Tbsp (heaping) mushroom seasoning
- 2 Tbsp vegetarian chicken seasoning
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 19 oz firm water-packed tofu, cubed
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups chopped bok choy
- 3 oz rice noodles

- In large pot on high heat, boil water and seasonings. Add carrots and cook till carrots soften.
- Meanwhile, sauté tofu, onion, and garlic in oil till tofu is slightly browned, stirring occasionally.
- Add tofu, bok choy, and rice noodles to boiling water and lower heat. Cook till bok choy and noodles are just beginning to soften. Do not overcook.
- Serve hot with fresh mint and lime.

Adapted from the **Joy of Eating** site.
Go to <https://nadhealth.org/joyofeating/recipes/>

SHARP Corner

(Supplemental Healthcare Adventist Retirement Plan)

A Message of Gratitude

By Lisa Sharpe

As I sat down to write this message, I found myself thinking not just about news or updates—but about how thankful I am.

My beginnings in Retirement office started in February 2011 as a benefits processor. I loved that job! Before that, my passion was church membership work—keeping records and helping with details. It turns out that retirement work is also full of details and care, and every retiree's application is unique.

Over time, I moved into the healthcare side of things, which at first felt scary. Honestly, I didn't know much about healthcare benefits—maybe you can relate! Like many people, I just followed what I was told. But now, after 14 years with Adventist Retirement, I'm so grateful for this role. It truly is a calling for me, and for the team I work with. We get to serve you—after your many years of service, we have the honor and privilege of serving you each day. Some days you're happy to talk to us, some days, not so much—but I am grateful that we are able to be here for you when you need us. Every day brings something new, but what stays the same is how grateful we are to serve you.

If you have a question or concern—or even just want someone to pray with, please reach out. We are here for you, just as you have been there for others through your life and ministry.

Thank you for all you've done and continue to do. ■

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." –Ephesians 1:16



Adventist Retirement

Seventh-day Adventist® Church
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

9705 Patuxent Woods Drive | Columbia, MD 21046



Adventist Retirement | www.adventistretirement.org

Edwin Romero

*Administrator &
Chief Executive Officer*

Andrew Choi

*Associate Administrator &
Chief Financial Officer*

Lisa Turpen

*Associate Administrator,
Defined Benefit &
Healthcare Plans*

Wirmin Alcantara

*Associate Administrator,
Defined Contribution Plans*

Lisa Sharpe

*Assistant Administrator,
SHARP*

Tara Mead

*Assistant Administrator,
Defined Benefit Plans*

Adventist Retirement:

*Reporting a death, change of address,
disability reviews*

Ph.: 443-391-7300 | Fax: 443-259-4880
Email: NADRetirement@nadadventist.org
Address: 9705 Patuxent Woods Dr,
Columbia, MD 21046

Alight Retirement Health Solutions:

Phone: 1-844-360-4714

SHARP Healthcare Eligibility Queries:

Ph.: 443-391-7338
Email: SHARP@nadadventist.org

Submit DVH claims to:

Adventist Risk Management
PO Box 1928,
Grapevine, TX 76099-1928
Ph.: 1-800-447-5002

Payroll Bulletin Board:

Ph.: 443-391-7343

General payroll information:

*Lost checks, tax withholding, direct deposit,
award letters for housing, loans, Medicaid*
Ph.: 443-391-7345 or 443-391-7344

GO PAPERLESS!



To receive this newsletter via email instead of print, scan the QR code above with your smartphone or tablet or sign up at

www.adventistretirement.org/retiree/newsletter/

You can also view and download archived issues of *Reflections* using this QR code or link.