



Amazing Grace



Grace Lutheran School / Grace Christian Academy
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“Grace Taught Me Values and Priorities”

Petite and slight, Melitza Durante is not who you'd expect when hearing about an excellent dog trainer who routinely works with German Shepherd dogs or Pit Bulls. Yet, if you visit Grace in the Spring, you might be lucky enough to meet her and her dog, Bellatrix, on their occasional walks.

A 2001 graduate of Grace, Melitza has fond memories of the school. However, what is most important about Grace to Melitza is the effect that our school had on her life after graduation. “Grace taught me values and priorities”, she asserts proudly.

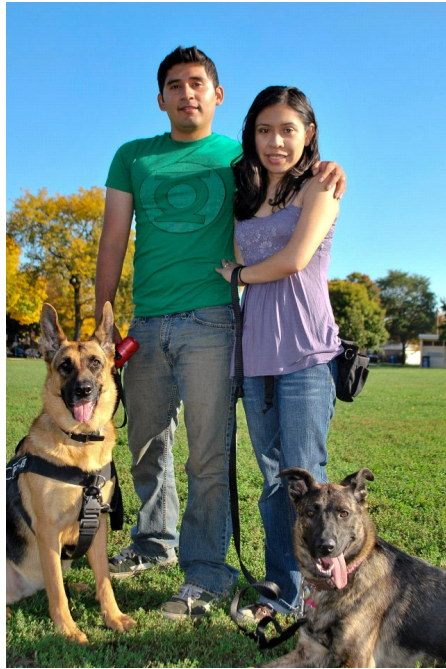
Although she was born in Chicago, Melitza and her younger sister Elizabeth lived in Mexico for several years. When Melitza moved back to Chicago, school was difficult for her. “My accent was thick!” laughs Melitza, “so I went to first grade, even though I'd already finished first grade in Mexico.” She remembers the day in first grade when Mr. Becker, let her go to the chalkboard and “since numbers are the same in any language” solve the second grade's math problems. Melitza was moved up to second grade a few weeks later.



Melitza in 2nd grade

After graduating as her class's valedictorian, Melitza attending Cristo Rey Jesuit High School. This highly respected school is known for its tough academic standards and its innovative programs. After high school, Melitza attended Columbia College, Chicago. “I credit Grace with encouraging me to always do my best, no matter what I attempt.”

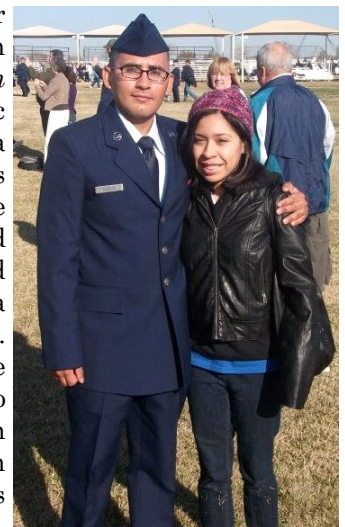
Melitza also credits Grace with teaching her about priorities. She saw first hand how enjoyment of your work is more important than being well paid. Nearly



two years ago, Melitza left her job as a Production Junior Executive even though it was a “fun, cool job” because she didn't feel satisfaction in what she was doing. Melitza explains, “It's important for me to help others and to know that I'm making a difference.” Melitza found both these qualities in her current position as accredited dog trainer for PetSmart. She teaches pet parents how to train and care for their dogs, as well as deal with problem behaviors, the leading cause of euthanasia. She also serves as a foster parent for abandoned dogs, caring and training for them until permanent homes can be found. Although she enjoyed marketing, Melitza's long term goal is to continue canine training and create her own personal training facility, which is why she recently joined the

Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

This past summer Melitza married Germain Duarte. This past *month* Germain completed Basic Training and became a member of the United States Air Force. He will be undergoing specialized training as a contractor and then he will be assigned to a “permanent” duty station. Melitza looks forward to the time when she and their two dogs and their cat can permanently rejoin him wherever in the world he is stationed.



Grace holds a special place in Melitza's heart, and she looks forward to the day when her family can attend this school and learn the same important lessons she did.



God Reaches All Children Everyday...at GRACE!



Holding Hands - Connecting Hearts

This past October, Grace hosted “Holding Hands– Connecting Hearts” at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Wheaton. This afternoon event reconnected Grace with our partners and gave us the opportunity to update everyone on our school’s mission and ministry.

Attendees watched the premier viewing of “I am Grace”. This five minute video features students, staff and alumni of the school as well as partners in our mission and ministry talking about the impact Grace Christian Academy has had on their lives.

The video was followed by a short heart-felt talk by Chris Candelas, a recent alumni of Grace and one of the people featured on the video. Chris attended Grace as part of the school’s Racetrack

Ministry and its outreach to the children living on Hawthorne Racetrack. He reiterated how Grace has changed his life, giving him opportunities he would have otherwise missed. Chris thanked everyone for supporting Grace and students like him . Chris is

currently attending college—the first in his family to do so.

If you are interested in viewing the powerful video, “I Am Grace”, there is both a three-minute and a five- minute version available for viewing on the Internet video site YouTube (www.youtube.com). Simply search for “I Am Grace” after connecting to this service. A direct link to the three -minute video is also available on our school’s website homepage at www.graceonkarlov.org.



THANK YOU!

Grace would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the following supporters. These donors designated Grace as the recipient of their Thrivent Choice Dollars since June of 2011. Their thoughtfulness in making this designation resulted in an additional \$ 4,384 for our school.

Colleen Ander
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William Deets

We thank them for their support of our school and its ministry!

If you are interested in designating your Thrivent Choice dollars to Grace, we urge you to login to the Thrivent website at www.thrivent.com for instructions on how to complete this process or speak to your local Thrivent representative for further assistance.

Grace Elects New Chairman

Grace would like to thank James Kirchhoff for his many years of service to our school, most recently as the school’s Executive Board Chairman. Jim has served on the Grace Executive Board since its inception. Jim also spearheaded the “sale” of Grace from Grace Lutheran Church and assisted in our transformation to a Recognized Service Organization, independent from NID. In 1997, Jim was awarded the Knights of the Round Table Award for his service to Grace. We thank Jim for his dedication to our school and its ministry to the children of Little Village.

Grace would like to welcome Tim Regan to the role of Executive Board Chairman. A Thrivent Wealth Advisor, Tim joined the Executive Board because of his commitment to Lutheran Education. Tim is a graduate of a Lutheran elementary school, as is his wife Sarah.

Tim and Sarah are the proud parents of four children, all who attend Trinity Lutheran School in Tinley Park.

