

Tutoring with RT by Aimee Nichols

Working in a non-profit that deals with issues faced by low-wage (often immigrant) workers - not receiving a living wage or affordable health care, for instance - it is easy for me to feel discouraged. But every Wednesday, when I arrive at Mary and James' house, I feel uplifted. I tutor a young Burmese couple once a week, and also spend time bonding with their two children. I feel so welcomed each night; Mary and James are prepared with soda, snacks, and their workbooks. I am constantly impressed with their dedication and positive attitudes.

Last weekend, I decided to take Mary and James out to dinner - their first meal in an American restaurant! We arrived at the Thai restaurant, and with wide smiles and nervous laughter they told me to order for them. As we shared curry, pad thai and trout, I was able to enjoy deeper conversations with Mary and James. This night, we weren't worrying about nouns, verbs and conjugation. They told me about their heritage and personal stories, and asked about mine. The only English lesson we had was about the phrase "my treat." At the end of dinner, James said with a grin, "This time, Aimee's treat. Next time, my treat." I was inspired that night by their outlook on life in the US, that everyone - regardless of race - is treated the same and given the chance to be free and successful. I think I dwell too much on what is wrong with our country, but that night Mary and James reminded me what is right in our country. I was also reminded why I enjoy tutoring them so much, and that I probably learn as much from them as they do from me.