

In this week's Alumnae Spotlight, we feature Ilna Iris Rivera Colemere, from the Class of 1968.

Following graduation from PHS in 1968, Ilna went on to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Education, with a minor in English, from St. Mary's University. She later went on to obtain her Master's Degree in Education, with a concentration in Early Childhood, from the University of Texas at San Antonio.



Ilna began and maintained a career as a public school teacher. Simultaneously, she was invited to serve as an adjunct instructor at UTSA. The school day would end, and she would head to UTSA to teach night classes. Ilna stated that her work with students enrolled in education classes was just as rewarding as her elementary school classroom experience. In her mind, it was an honor and privilege to work at the university. She “walked among giants”, and seized the opportunity to learn from the professors and enrich her classroom with new, innovative approaches to teaching.

Ilna stated, “As an educator, it has always been my philosophy to share what I know, no matter the content. If I do not know and someone needs assistance, I must make a concerted effort to learn and share without expectation of reward or acknowledgement. It is how we improve the humanity of man.”

After retiring as a public school teacher, she was hired by UTSA as a Clinical Teacher Supervisor for the UTSA College of Education and Human Development (COEHD).

While visiting ISDs as a Clinical Teacher Supervisor to observe the clinical teachers, Ilna noticed technology was becoming a common tool for the classroom. Clinical Teachers were relatively unfamiliar with instructional technologies. She then decided she would approach the Director of Clinical Teachers with a proposal. She asked for an opportunity to train the clinical teachers via an instructional technology presentation, called *Imagine! the Possibilities*. This presentation had never been done before and gave Ilna the unique opportunity to introduce students in the teacher preparation program to applications they could use during their practicum. Basically self-taught, Ilna researched, learned and created a learning experience focused on the instructional technology needs of the classroom.

For the next 3 semesters, she designed and presented the sessions on a volunteer basis while completing her job responsibilities supervising a group of Clinical Teachers. This contribution was acknowledged by the UTSA Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching in 2011, when she was awarded a Distinguished Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Teacher Education Program.

While her interest in instructional technology and teacher preparation grew, she was hired as a full-time Senior Program Coordinator for Instructional Technology for the Office of Teacher Education Services COEHD UTSA.

Because of the ubiquitous nature of technology, 2 years ago, she was appointed to serve as the Instructional Technology Coordinator for the COEHD UTSA. She presently manages a Learning Management System and coordinates the Instructional technology workshops for the COEHD.

During her initial years as an Instructional Technology Coordinator, Ilina was approached by a UTSA Housekeeper, Erlinda Castillo. She asked if Ilina would teach her, along with about 100 other Housekeepers, how to use the computer. Ilina named and implemented the program "The Erlinda's Wish Program". For the last 6 years, she has volunteered to teach UTSA's housekeepers computer basics, iMovie, Power Point, Microsoft Word, Browser search, text, reading, writing, ESL and many other skills.

Regarding The Erlinda's Wish Program, Ilina stated, "Their sincere wish to learn and apply themselves has been an inspiration. Helping the Housekeepers enter the 21st Century world of technology has been a humbling experience. Their lives, by choice or circumstance, have not dampened their hunger to learn. Many have encountered life struggles, not uncommon in intensity, that have left them stronger and appreciative of all that life offers. They are amazing and an underrepresented segment of society. Because of their dedication and interest in learning, they have enhanced my appreciation for the fortunate life I have led. But also, heightened my awareness of the impact we have on the lives of others, intentionally or unknowingly."

Ilina's work with UTSA Erlinda's Wish Program Housekeepers was acknowledged in 2014 by UTSA, who awarded her the "Extra Mile Award". The award was made possible by the courageous voice of one Housekeeper, Erlinda Castillo.

Ilina recalls Providence as having an unstated expectation of success. She stated that the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence took an interest in each student as an individual, providing guidance and expected achievement. The manner in which the Sisters took an interest in their students, their modeling of positive behavior, laid the foundation for much of how Ilina views the world, as well as how she sees her place in it. Along with the guidance and investment of the Sisters, Ilina also enjoyed taking piano lessons with Sister Alexandrine.

When asked what advice she'd give to current Provets, Ilina stated, "Believe that if you argue for your limitations they are yours. We design our destiny with our choices in life. So it is critical to give serious thought to the paths we choose, but also know that altering our path for good reason may lead to a greater reward. Ask for guidance; look for role models, read, and research, keep a journal, value who you are and select a future you can reflect on with pride. There are teachers and counselors ready to help you. Talk to them. Your family knows you best. Listen to their counsel. It is never too late to change but keep in mind that with change comes growth and at times discomfort. But in the end, be gentle with yourself. We live in an era where life seems to move quickly. Change is inevitable. We must remember to always do the right thing, not for glory or reward. Choose the right thing because it is. Most importantly, always love what you do. Be passionate about your beliefs."

Congratulations, Ilina, on a wonderful career. Undoubtedly, your work has embraced the charisms of the

Congregation of Divine Providence, as well as our Mission Statement. Your commitment to justice and equity is something we are all proud of.

Check out this story, featuring The Erlinda's Wish Program:

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/UTSA-staffer-gets-some-computer-help-from-her-5833599.php#item-85307-tbla-2>