

Adults find value in learning to speak Spanish

By Valerie West
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Karen Stanko of Holly got off the plane in Guadalajara, Mexico, and realized she couldn't finish an important sentence.

"I couldn't say, 'Where's my luggage?'" Stanko said.

Stanko, 46, knew "dónde está" is Spanish for "where is," but that didn't get her very far without the word for luggage.

Stanko accompanies her sons, who play on a traveling soccer team. About once a year, they travel out of the country. She decided that learning Spanish would be a benefit to her after her 100-word vocabulary was tested during the trip in Mexico.

She mentioned to her children's Spanish teacher, Melanie Hendrick, that she would be interested in learning the language.



Melanie Hendrick

Hendrick - who teaches Spanish to seventh-through 12th-grade students at Oakland Christian School in Auburn Hills - offers the Spanish conversational class for adults 3-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the school.

"If you come in here, I'll help you gain confidence," Hendrick said. "I think people should give it a try. There are no grades, so no pressure."

The class is made up of adults who want to learn the language for various

purposes.

Some want to learn so they can travel with their children on missionary trips. One Italian man wants to learn how to speak Spanish to his Puerto Rican wife, and another is a nurse at POH Regional Medical Center who wants to communicate better with Spanish-speaking patients, she said.

Sunnie Morris of Oxford home schools her two children and wanted to learn the language to help her children learn it.

"It is becoming more and more prevalent," Morris said. "I think it's something they are going to need to know."

Morris said she would like to plan a trip to a Spanish-speaking country, adding she will feel more confident traveling, ordering food in restaurants and speaking because of the class.

The class covers two

chapters each session and, by the end of the 10-week course, the participants have taken the equivalent of a basic Spanish class, Hendrick said.

The course costs \$135 and includes a book and two CDs and offers personalized training, she added.

She said adults do have the capacity to learn a new language, and Stanko, who will travel to Barcelona, Spain, in a couple of weeks, said the classes have helped her gain confidence.

"I think Spanish is one of the easiest languages to learn," Stanko

said. "If you do it for six weeks, you can get a lot of fun out of it. I don't mind making

Stanko said she will be at home with her restaurant.

She said it is a possibility to learn with her Spanish-speaking friends.

"You can do it yourself through me," she said, "I know two for luggage maleta."