



### SPOTLIGHT ON MARTA CHILTON, TUTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE

Dedicated. Innovative. An excellent communicator and listener. Empathetic. Patient. Adaptable.

These are just some of Marta Chilton's character traits – and ones that are, in essence, the attributes of a born (and lifelong) teacher.

And teaching is indeed what Marta has been doing for nigh on half a century, spanning the years from 1976 to her “retirement” from the formal arena in 2014, when she took off just the summer before beginning tutoring in the fall of that year, and continues to do so into the present. “If there’s a class called ‘retirement,’ I definitely failed it,” she quips.

Marta Chilton, pictured in front of the Dixon Elementary School. She is seated on the memorial bench for her late husband, Roger. The bench is fittingly situated on the tennis court that Roger was responsible for putting in.

Counting the seven students she has currently on her roster, Marta answers to both the after-school and in-school tutoring provided by EVTA. The latter service is unique among tutoring programs: Under teachers' supervision, EVTA tutors support students on site during the school day. This regular tutoring accounts for students' high percentage rate of improvement.

Armed with the awareness that learners have individual needs and abilities, and the understanding that instruction should be tailored to meet each learner's needs, Marta brings her training in the Montessori and Waldorf methods, and her knowledge of learning disabilities, Sounds In Syllables language training approach, and the Wilson system to bear upon her mentoring and tutoring. Thus, she mentors one of her students with more advanced reading and math; uses guided reading strips to aid a learner with ADHD to stay focused and attentive; enhances a young home-schooler's sense of accomplishment by penning the poetry she has made up and dictated to Marta, and which the child later reads aloud to her parents; parlays a student's predilection for fantasy books by incorporating myths and the part they play in order to learn history; or teaches science by discussing the Big Bang theory and the development of humans.

How does Marta measure the success of her tutoring? “The measure is different with each child. I observe them, see what works, pull out different tools if need be,” she responds. “I want every child to know they have choices. They can choose to go to college, or not. I want them to have opportunities, to have doors open to them. I'm gratified if I've helped them learn and develop the skills to accomplish that.”

## TEACHABLE TIMES AND FUN ABOUND AT THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Learning does not stop at Embudo Valley Tutoring Association–Embudo Valley Library Afterschool Program. Since its much-anticipated relaunch in October 2021, coordinator Chris Baca and assistant Alexa (Alex) Jaramillo – both passionate about cultivating the fertile minds of youth – have filled the program with a veritable grab bag of enrichment and science pursuits. With a shared desire to do something good for the community, and equipped with a store of experience ranging from public outreach and bicycle awareness and safety, to youth-centered educational and art programs and sustainable agriculture, respectively, Chris and Alex bring creativity, energy, and organizational know-how to this valuable and necessary resource.

The program's rich and varied activities are designed to build a sense of community for its elementary-school age students and expand their opportunities for educational and social-emotional growth. "Some of our students may not have opportunities to interact with other children on a regular basis, either because they're homeschooled or simply because of the rural area in which we live," says Chris. "It's a great feeling knowing we're providing students with a fun and safe environment to engage and learn with one another."

Alex concurs. "The program supports creativity through relationship building." She adds: "We plan to carry on bringing in folks with different backgrounds and knowledge to share their tools so our youth can become well-rounded as they continue to engage with life through their own choices as well."



Standing: Coordinator Chris Baca and assistant Alex Jaramillo.

Seated (l. to r.): Courage Delgado (6), Satya Rugsaken (10), and Trinity Ortiz (8).

A typical afternoon's schedule comprises about 15 minutes of outdoor play at the Dixon Elementary School playground, a health and wellness check-in, followed by a snack. Then it is time to gather around for a guest presenter or participate in a structured activity Chris has planned. The program's partnership with EVTA provides an on-site tutor most days of the week, so at least 20 minutes of tutoring or individual reading time is also a part of the routine, Chris explains.

Highlights of the program to date include stilt walking (hands down a favorite among the youngsters), juggling, and plate-spinning through a collaboration with the Penasco Theater Collective; science- and math-based learning activities alongside Albuquerque's Explora Science Center & Children's Museum; and create-a-space with Twirl, a play and discovery place located in Taos. Says Chris, "There's always something new and exciting happening at the program."

*To learn more about the afterschool program and your child's eligibility, please contact Rachel Exposito, Embudo Valley Library's executive director, via e-mail at [rachel@embudovalleylibrary.org](mailto:rachel@embudovalleylibrary.org) or by calling 505.579.9181.*

## PET PROJECTS – AND MORE – WITH TUTOR LEIGH SAUNDERS

Career scientist Leigh Saunders has an inquiring mind and encourages the students she tutors to be as inquisitive as she is. She wants to know how one of her student's will employ critical thinking, for instance, which is why she went head-to-head with Veda Chesakov (11) in a mock debate.

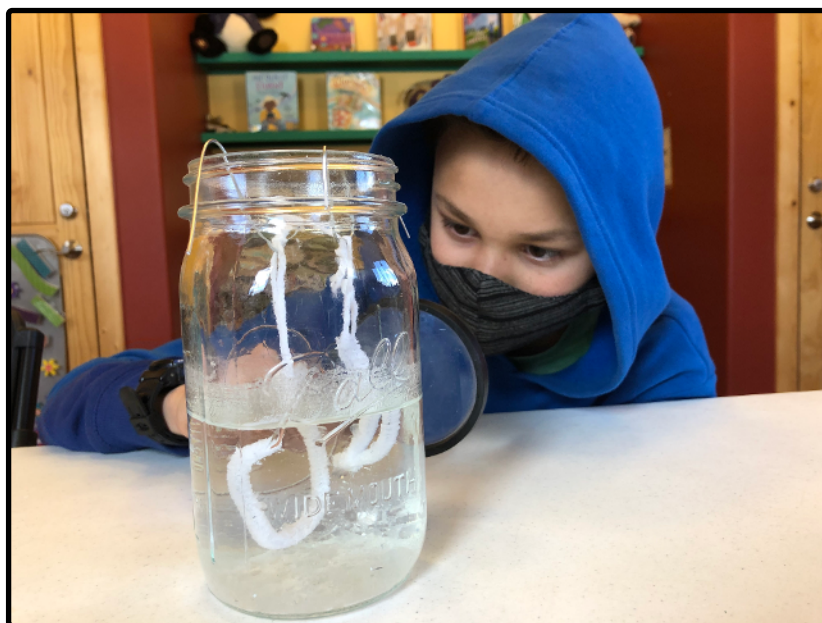
Veda's performance in the exercise belying the fact it was her first foray into debating, she nevertheless found the experience interesting. "The topic was a bit difficult," she says, "and I think I had the harder side to argue. And because there wasn't a lot of information when I was doing research, I had to think on my feet when I was presenting."

Is there a fun and relatable way to fulfill 6th-grade statistics requirement for math? Of course there is, according to Leigh, and she has done so by creating a survey for her students to circulate. Requesting survey takers to fill out the number of pets in their household, the project is designed to cover aspects of science, critical thinking, data collection, and analyses.

"It's pretty cool," says student Nahir Khan (12) of the crystal-growing project he is doing with Leigh. And it is cool, too, that he is thereby learning scientific concepts such as saturation, the properties of water, and the solubility of the minerals.



Avid reader Veda Chesakov feeds her love of books at the well-stocked Embudo Valley Library.



Nahir Khan takes a magnified look at his boron crystals growing on pipe cleaners.

## PHOTO GALLERY



Showing skill on stilts.



Learning science is fun – and exciting, too. As when we learn how to turn a plastic bottle into an erupting volcano.



Look at my gadget go! How cool (and colorful) is that?



Yay! It's time to learn, create, and play with Twirl of Taos.

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