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From left, Jack Banning, Evelyn Garzetta and Walter Cadette have been chosen to be honored by Grace Church for their community outreach efforts.

Three honored for 'Latino Outreach'

MILLBROOK — Grace Church will host its seventh annual golf tournament and benefit dinner at the Millbrook Golf and Tennis Club on Monday, July 15. This year's honorees are Dutchess County residents Jack Banning, Walter Cadette and Evelyn Garzetta for their work with the church's "Latino Outreach."

The program began in 2006 under the leadership of the Rev. Douglas Fisher, who at the time was rector at Grace Church. Banning and Cadette are founding advisory board members and Garzetta is the program's executive director.

At the time, a demographic survey of the immigrant community in northeast Dutchess County, commissioned by the church, revealed that the greatest need that the church could help meet was English-language instruction not just because English is essential to everyday life in this country but also because learning the language was seen as the best way to break down the fear and isolation that mark the lives of so many newcomers to this country, now just as in the past.

The centerpiece of Latino Outreach became English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction at the church, under the auspices of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). Classes, which are held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, are taught by a certified BOCES teacher, assisted by community volunteers and, when needed, Grace Church teenagers who baby-sit the students' children.

Amenia has been added as an ESL site, where Garzetta is the instructor, assisted here too by community volunteers. And plans are in the works to set up ESL sites in Pine Plains and Millerton.

Many immigrants have learned to speak, read and write English, and because of that some have been able to go on to earn their general equivalency diploma (GED) and even head to Dutchess Community College.

Latino Outreach has assisted immigrants (Latino and others alike) in a number of other ways as well. In collaboration with Catholic Charities, dozens of immigrants have been walked

through the process of filing U.S. federal income tax forms (using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). And they have become owners of demand deposits at a prominent local bank, thanks to the association that advisory board members had with senior officials of the bank. The activities are wide-ranging. They include such things as help to find medical care, legal counsel and transportation to job interviews and doctors' appointments. Some specific examples of Latino Outreach's activities include:

- A child was detained at the Texas border and put into the "federal protection program," which is designed to prevent children from getting caught up in human trafficking or otherwise exploited. The process for a family to get a child released is extraordinarily complicated. But Latino Outreach was there to assemble all the paperwork. The child is back with his family and in school in Dutchess County.

- A young man whose hand was severed as a result of an automobile accident got a prosthetic hand, thanks to the contacts

that Latino Outreach was able to make at a New York hospital. Another young man got needed medical help for renal failure.

- Still another man was finally brought to trial after having languished in jail for almost two years, without trial, on a false charge.

The overarching goal of the program is to help people make their way in a world that is so unfamiliar in so many ways. It is to bring a sense of support to people who often feel alone and powerless, because they do not know where to turn when they need help. Latino Outreach is a kind of support system that those who have been born in the United States have taken for granted all of their lives.

To register for the golf tournament and/or the benefit dinner contact Maria Galli at 845-677-3064 or Robin Capers at 845-677-5405 or somerscapers@aol.com. The Millbrook Golf and Tennis Club is located at 103 Route 343, Millbrook.

Submitted by Pamela Freeman, parishioner and member of the Grace Church Tournament Committee.