

# The teacher files

## Tour with Spanish instructor Irma Bjerre

STORY AND PHOTO BY MERARI CALDERON RUIZ

She arrived in Salmon, Idaho, 37 years ago with the Amity Institute Exchange Program. It was 40 degrees below zero. Today, Irma Bjerre is a Clackamas Community College Spanish instructor of and has traveled all around the world exploring and learning about new cultures.

### The Clackamas Print: Where are you from?

**Irma Bjerre:** I'm from Caramanta, Colombia.

### TCP: How long have you been teaching?

**Bjerre:** I have been teaching now for almost 20 years and at Clackamas for 16 years.

### TCP: What is your favorite part about being a teacher?

**Bjerre:** I love teaching my language and my culture and it is fine that I'm not a native speaker. I grew up in Colombia and I still have my family in Colombia. For me, I am always learning even about my own culture and I love to teach new ways of life to my students.

### TCP: What is your teaching style?

**Bjerre:** I think I'm an eclectic teacher because I teach foreign language, which is Spanish. I use several methods and several techniques to get my message across. I think in teaching foreign languages, you learn a lot about different methodologies and different techniques so the students can learn the foreign language.

### TCP: What are your hobbies?

**Bjerre:** I love to spend time with my husband and go hiking. I love traveling, anytime during the summer when we can travel and especially, I like going to Colombia. We spend some time in the country and go to school. My husband is a former architect and has worked abroad, going to Spain and Italy. I don't travel just to travel and be a tourist.

### TCP: What's the most interesting thing that has happened to you as a teacher?

**Bjerre:** I think that being a teacher in itself has been very interesting to me. I feel very happy when the students can tell me they can use what they have learned in the classroom. In fact, this week I had a student in one of my classes, in beginning Spanish, and she works in the school district. They have this big meeting with parents and the principal and staff and she was able to use some of the vocabulary words of some of the sentences we have learned in Spanish 101. Not only that, but she was able to greet the Latin parents the way that we learn to greet people in the Spanish class.

### TCP: Where have you traveled?

**Bjerre:** I have traveled a lot through Europe. I have been to Italy. I have been in Spain. In fact, I just took my sabbatical during the spring break and studied in Barcelona, Spain. I went through 150 hours of Spanish teacher training. We lived there with my husband for seven weeks during my course work and then we traveled to places we have been before, we went to Italy. I love being in Venice and we went to Germany. Then we went to Denmark. I have been in Kosovo. I have been in Macedonia, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay and South America. I've been to Peru, too. I took a group to Peru in about 2008, we went to Machu Pichu. I have also traveled to Central America and Mexico.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and space.*

*Read more of this interview at [TheClackamasPrint.com](http://TheClackamasPrint.com)*



Bjerre



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Copy Editor

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copyed@clackamas.edu

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Web Editor

Chelsea Pagan

webeditor@clackamas.edu

Ad Manager

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#### STAFF WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

Cassidy White

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Lily Shaver

Merari Calderon Ruiz

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#### PRODUCTION

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#### JOURNALISM ADVISER

Melissa Jones

melissaj@clackamas.edu

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Email comments, concerns or tips to: chiefed@clackamas.edu or call us at 503-594-6266 19600 Molalla Ave. Oregon City, OR 97045

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