



The Insider, the monthly newsletter of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, will keep you in the loop on all of the organization's upcoming events.



Thank you, Catherine Mitch (shown, upper left) for giving us some great examples on when and how to incorporate grammar into our lessons during last month's workshop.

The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

Another year done! We at LVA, Essex & Passaic Counties wish you a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season and new year.

Sally Rice has been a literacy leader for some four decades, beginning with a career at the East Orange Public Library where she served as a supervising librarian and coordinator of adult services, to the Essex Literacy Consortium of the 1980s, and finally as the president of the Board of Trustees at Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. She has also held other leadership positions in the literacy field which you can read about here: <http://www.lvaep.org/our-team.html>

Last month she stepped down as board president but, the good news is, we still have her amazing talents and knowledge. "I want to continue on the Board and help out in any way I can but it's time to pass the torch," she said last month during our annual membership meeting, which included Board elections. Thank you, Sally, for your remarkable leadership!

Our newly-elected officers include Board veterans Jordan Fried, President; Harsh Parikh, Vice President and secretary; and Jamie Stieger, Treasurer. Kathleen Mollica and Maria Roman were both re-elected and will join Sally and new members Mariella Andrade and George Pillepich. You can read all Board members' bios on the link listed above.

The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) is holding its ninth annual adult learner writing contest, with cash prizes offered in five categories: Fiction, non-fiction, memoir, poetry and photography. Winners will have their work published in the organization's magazine and some will be invited to read their submissions at the NJALL annual conference in May 2023. So please encourage your students enter. <http://www.njall.org/>

In the News

To view the following story, copy and paste the highlighted website into an internet search bar.

"The United States is facing a reading crisis."
ntdaily.com <https://bit.ly/3PAQnGg>

"How a 71-year-old immigrant in Seattle got a job and citizenship." Seattle Times. <https://bit.ly/3jbbqZej>

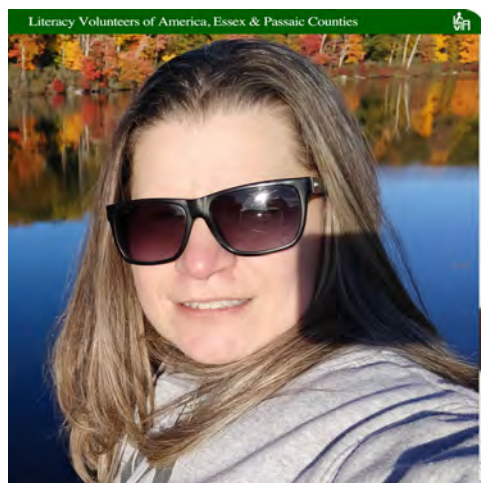
"Reading for pleasure can strengthen memory in older adults, Beckman researchers find." Beckman Institute. bit.ly/3Bzt7Tw

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
(973) 566-6200, ext. 217 or 225

195 Gregory Avenue, 2nd Floor, Passaic, NJ 07055
(973) 470-0039

Cristhian Barcelos	-Executive Director cbarcelos@lvaep.org
Catherine Angus	-Tutor Support Specialist cangus@lvaep.org
Russell Ben Ali	-Social Media & Newsletter Coordinator rbenali@lvaep.org
Jorge Chavez	-Data Processing Coordinator jchavez@lvaep.org
Marisol Ramirez	-Student Coordinator mramirez@lvaep.org



Yosmar, an intermediate literacy student, was a business administrator in her native Venezuela. She left the country due to its problems with security and violence.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom

Wednesdays, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

January 25, February 1, 8, 15, 22, & March 1, 2023

Tutor Support Workshop

"Using Interactive Storytelling in the Classroom,"

with Dr. Erik Jacobson

Platform: Google Meet

Tuesday, January 17, 2023

10 am - 11:30 am

Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Catherine Angus

Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 4:00 pm (General meeting)

Thursday, May 11, 2023 at 4:30pm (Themed meeting)

<http://www.lvaep.org/workshops.html>

Getting to Know Us

Yosmar, LVA student

The future seemed limitless for Yosmar, a Venezuelan woman who earned a bachelor's degree in computer systems at a young age.

Her prospects became better still when she received a second degree not much later, this time a bachelor's in business administration.

And, for a while, times were good. Yosmar, who was raised with nine siblings in Los Teques, a city in the mountains not far from Caracas, worked as a manager in the plastics industry and in the construction company of her architect husband.

Then, in her own words, "things began to get complicated in Venezuela."

"They were difficult times," Yosmar explained. "We had to leave due to the problems of insecurity and violence against us."

In the last eight years, following the collapse of the nation's economy, more than 7 million Venezuelans fled the country, escaping violence as well as food, medicine, and essential services insecurity, according to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. The agency describes the movement as "the second-largest external displacement crisis in the world."

Yosmar and her husband would find themselves among the displaced. They first wound up in Peru before arriving in the U.S. in March 2021.

She joined us the following year, studying each week with two different tutors, and already seems to have a firm grasp of spoken English.

"She has been a key asset to the group since she joined, her attendance is excellent, and she demonstrates a genuine desire to increase her English language skills," said Melissa, one of her tutors, who leads a group with Yosmar and four other adults from Latin American. "Yosmar provides positive feedback to other members and brings up topics and questions often. This has helped me to promote group cohesion, and I see the rapport the students have with each other."

Outside of her classes, Yosmar volunteers in the food pantry of a Clifton church. It's her way of giving back to the community "for the many good things that immigrants like me receive," she said.

Literacy opens a wide door to life. Help us keep that door open with your donation!

Thanks in large part to you, we are able to aid hundreds of students each year. Please continue your efforts to improve the lives of others by giving the gift of literacy. You can contribute by mailing us a check or through our website @:

<http://www.lvaep.org/donate.html>



‘A fifth of American adults struggle to read. Why are we failing to teach them?’

The nation’s approach to adult education has so far neglected to connect the millions of people struggling to read with the programs set up to help them.

ProPublica

By Annie Waldman, Aliyya Swaby and Anna Clark, with additional reporting by Nicole Santa Cruz, December 14, 2022

In Amite County, Mississippi, where a third of adults struggle to read, evidence of America’s silent literacy crisis is everywhere.

It’s in a storefront on Main Street, in the fading mill town of Gloster, where 80-year-old Lillie Jackson helps people read their mail. **“They can’t comprehend their bills,” she said. “So many of them are ashamed that they haven’t finished grade school.”** She longs for the day she can retire, but she doesn’t want to abandon her neighbors. “That’s the only reason I really stay open,” she said.

It’s in the Greentree Lumber mill, where dozens of residents cut Southern yellow pine into boards, but supervisors — who must be able to page through machine guides and safety manuals — are recruited from other counties. “We’re going to have demand for jobs with no people to supply them,” mill accountant Pam Whittington said. And it’s in the local high school, in a district where a fifth of students drop out, one of the highest rates in the state. Principal Warren Eyster has seen low literacy trickle from one generation to the next — an unusually American phenomenon. (cont.)

Reprinted from ProPublica. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: bit.ly/3jas4mJ

Learning a new culture is more than studying a language. Tutoring is more than learning techniques. Our “Resources” webpage covers everything from legal matters, health care, & scholarships for immigrants, to professional development for tutors. Give us a look @: <http://www.lvaen.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Melissa, LVA tutor

Making mistakes is one of the most effective ways to learn a language, researchers have found. Sadly, many language students are terrified of making them and opt to remain silent when they encounter native speakers.

That’s where volunteers like Melissa shine the brightest.



Melissa, a tutor since April, is quick to assure her students that it’s totally fine to boggle a few vocabulary words or miss a couple of turns along the road to fluency.

“I try to put myself in their situation and I tell them all the time ‘Don’t ever feel worried or ashamed that maybe you’ve made a mistake’,” Melissa tells her group, which consists of five adults from Latin America. “Don’t ever beat yourself up about it. I try to normalize it for them so that they don’t feel bad about themselves if maybe they’re not remembering everything.”

Even native-born English speakers make mistakes, she tells them in her quest to build their confidence and encourage students to take more risks. And she is seeing improvements.

“Sometimes they’ll tell me things that they remember from prior classes with me and I see that they’ve learned something and that they remember what I taught them,” Melissa said. “That makes me feel really good to know they’re really taking information in and using it.”

Students describe her sessions as innovative. “Melissa is an excellent tutor,” said Yosmar, a student from Venezuela. “She always brings to the class new topics, new words. I’ve learned so much about everything from her.”

Melissa, a New Jersey native, earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Montclair State University and, for 15 years, has worked as a senior probation officer in a busy state courthouse.

She has taken on volunteer assignments since high school, when she transported residents from one nursing home room to another as part of a school community service requirement. She also has tutored before during a long record of giving back. “I enjoy volunteering,” Melissa said. “I enjoy feeling like I’m making a difference, like I’m helping people.”