



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



Picked up some new techniques last month during the "Using Images With Your Students" workshop presented by our tutor support specialist Catherine Angus.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

Welcome to our first newsletter of the spring, a time for New Jerseyans to break that long spell of cabin fever, get outdoors to enjoy a glimpse of the state's cherry blossoms and daffodils, or even cross the river for a baseball opener.

This spring we're looking forward to two virtual conferences, open to any tutors, students, and others who want to brush up on their skills, learn new ones, or just find a way to stay motivated.

First, there's Literacy New Jersey's annual conference, "Literacy for Life 2.0", April 27-April 30, 2022, which offers more than 30 online sessions for adult literacy tutors, teachers, trainers, students, staff and board members – everything from ESL games to sessions on writing, citizenship, careers, technology instruction, even book and film clubs for literacy students. You can view these diverse workshops and register here: <https://bit.ly/3IHxEeb>

Then, there's the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) annual conference from May 18 – 21, 2022, with workshops on writing, listening skills, family literacy, digital literacy, immigration policy, and data storytelling, among other offerings. For more info:

<https://sites.google.com/view/njall-2022-annual-conference/home>

Know someone who started college but didn't finish? New Jersey may be hunting for them. Under a proposal by Gov. Phil Murphy, the state budget would include \$3 million for "Some College, No Degree", a new program to identify residents who started college but didn't finish. The state would then offer the adults support to reenroll in their old colleges or new ones. For more info: <https://bit.ly/3rgZAsH> Now, if we can just extend the plan to high school non-finishers ...

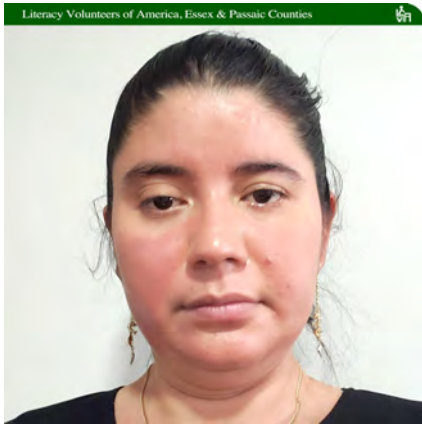
In the News

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

"Immigrants find long and complicated road to citizenship." Kansas Reflector <https://bit.ly/3Q36knx>

"Why are adults so bad at learning new languages? We may be trying too hard." bigthink.com
<https://bit.ly/3sgPNGz>

"NJ schools were facing a staffing crisis before COVID. Now, the challenges are daunting." USAToday (via northjersey.com) <https://njersy.co/3uokqsl>



Blanca, a student from El Salvador, has taken adult school English and computer literacy classes for nearly a decade and has no plans to stop.

Tutor Support Workshops

"Taking the Fear out of Speaking,"

with Darnelle Richardson

Platform: Google Meet

Thursday, April 21, 2022

12 pm - 1:30 pm

"Writing Can Be Fun - Even Virtually!"

with Todd Evans

Platform: Zoom

Thursday, May 19, 2022

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Catherine Angus

Thursday, May 12, 2022 at 1 pm

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

Literacy Assistance Center (LAC)

These professional development offerings are provided through funding from the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the Literacy Assistance Center.

Getting to Know Us

Blanca, LVA student

There's likely some truth in the notion that a great deal of success is gained simply by showing up. At least it's true for Blanca, an English language student from El Salvador who has become quite the lifelong learner.

That's why, even while holding physically-demanding jobs such as a factory worker, hospital clothes launderer, and office cleaner, she's managed over the past decade to attend one computer or English class after another, mostly at New Community Corporation's Adult Learning Center in Newark.

She also studies English online with two literacy tutors in our program. And, while she may not be there yet, in terms of her language fluency goals, she's closer than she was yesterday. And that's progress.

"I'm learning to communicate more with my boss and people at the work," said Blanca. "And at the school for my sons. And when my sons go to the doctor, I understand the doctor better, which is very important."

She is quiet, and fairly modest about her progress. Sara Olson, one of her tutors, said "Her vocabulary and grammar are good," and that they, along with several other Latin American adult students in the group, work mainly on reading comprehension.

Blanca was raised with two sisters and a brother in the bustling capital city of San Salvador. She arrived in the states a few years after earning a high school diploma but, with little knowledge of English, conversing with others was a struggle.

"It was difficult," she said. "I didn't speak English and I couldn't communicate with many people."

But she tried to remain positive, keeping in mind the opportunities that she hoped to enjoy in her adopted country. And, eventually, her English improved.

Today, she said, her struggles are mostly centered around employment. "I want a better job," said Blanca, who is currently an office cleaner. "I would like to work as a secretary."

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>



The Literacy Journey of Kenny Denison: Self-Made Man

Wilmingtonbiz Insights

By Alesha Edison Westbrook, March 17, 2022

Kenny Denison was a successful Wilmington-area businessman, well-loved husband, and father, loved and respected in the community -- and ashamed because, in his own words, "I can't read." That is the man I met in 2011 at the Literacy Council, where I was volunteering as a tutor.

Having been officially diagnosed as dyslexic, Kenny was basically ignored by his teachers in his classroom at Reidsville Middle School. This was in the 60s before many programs to help people with learning disabilities were established. When asked by the judge who saw him frequently for truancy why he wouldn't go to school, Kenny replied honestly, "Because I can't read and nobody will teach me." Finally, the judge told him he would allow him to drop out of school but warned him that his life would be difficult, that he would have to work very hard to support himself. He assured the judge that he could do that. Kenny was twelve years old.

He found work by walking around the neighborhood to find job sites and asking if they had any work for him. Kenny said, "I had a strong back and a weak mind, and that's what they wanted, so I had no trouble getting work." Luckily, he worked with a good painter and learned to paint well. By the time he was eighteen, Kenny was supporting himself and his mother. He worked for the painter for years, paid by the hour. Eventually, he asked to sub-contract jobs instead. (cont.)

Reprinted from *Wilmingtonbiz Insights*. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

<https://bit.ly/35VtDhU>

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.lva.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Thomas Thottukadavil, LVA tutor

Thomas Thottukadavil encourages students to speak up - to speak up for and about themselves, their families, their lives.

Even when the outlook is grim, it still helps to talk.



That was evident in recent sessions when one student offered heart-breaking descriptions of the life of her family in north-central Ukraine, where war-time shelling forced many to flee their homes. Her emotional words moved everyone; instructor included.

"We always say we are praying for you," Thomas said of his student and her war-weary family. "It's a shame what they're going through."

These talks his students offer are neither random nor entirely improvised; a fair amount of preparation goes into their presentation. You see, Thomas, who became a volunteer literacy tutor in late 2019, is a veteran of Toastmasters International, a non-profit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills. He's a recipient of the Distinguished Toastmaster award, which represents the organization's highest level of educational achievement.

"I do the beginning of public speaking," he said, in addition to his other class activities. "All they need is self-confidence so I try to give them that self-confidence by having them talk about themselves."

Thomas came to the U.S. about 40 years ago from Kerala, a state in southwest India. He knows several languages, and holds a bachelor's degree in engineering, and a master's degree in electrical engineering. He enjoys spending time with his family, which includes his wife, four adult children, and four grandchildren who live in New Jersey and Houston, Texas.

At LVA, Thomas became a volunteer tutor shortly after he retired from the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), where he spent 37 years as an engineer. He also volunteers at a soup kitchen, and at his Paterson church.

"I like volunteering because I'm blessed to be in this country and it's time to give back to the community that we live in," Thomas said. "Volunteering is one of the best ways to do that."