



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



One of the fabulous fashion designs of our student Carlos De Moya, who is featured on the next page of this newsletter.

The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

Annie found a simple way to survive conversations with her neighbor, an elderly woman who was well-meaning but spoke rapid-fire English every time she visited. It generally went like this: Avoid her whenever possible!

The unconventional strategy is well-outlined in a cleverly-penned essay by our student, Sophonie Pierre Louis, entitled *The Little Old Lady*, which appears later in this newsletter. The fiction work, which won a first-place award in the NJALL 2022 Adult Learner Writing Contest, turns out to be not fiction at all.

"This is what happened to me," Sophonie, a student from Haiti, told participants at the NJALL annual conference last month during a Zoom video session. "Yeah, I'm Annie," she said. "I'm learning English. I don't really speak English very good. So I feel uncomfortable when she starts to talk to me and sometimes I don't understand what she's saying."

Embarrassing communication problems persisted. At one point Sophonie tried to end a chat by saying she had to leave to cook "rice and beans", which her elderly neighbor heard as "rest in peace." To see how Sophonie handled her dilemma, please read on. You can view the work of other award winners, via: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15QKwmTpHBOhjqrwD0qXrdtct5qMYDhKv/view>

A million thanks to Todd Evans, the director of professional development for ProLiteracy, who last month led our tutors in the very helpful support workshop "Writing Can Be Fun, Even Virtually!" Todd introduced a 5-step process to writing and discussed writing with pictures using Google Jamboards, a free and user-friendly digital whiteboard tool. He highly recommends this Jamboard tutorial: <https://youtu.be/XLwfMkjEB8Y>

In the News

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

"There are 2 types of immigrants: Those who look back and those who don't. I'm both." NPR.

<https://n.pr/3mwStt9>

"Barstow woman, 83, earns high school diploma after six-decade break: 'I wanted this for my dad'." Daily Press.

<https://bit.ly/3xhvg35>

"When your patient can't read; Working with illiterate patients." MDLinx. <https://bit.ly/3zpqO51>

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Getting to Know Us

Carlos, LVA student



Carlos, a fashion designer who has exhibited his work in shows all over Latin America, credits his tutors for his ability to communicate fluently in English.

Two musical theater producers were chatting one day about their urgent need to hire a costume designer as they prepared to launch a production of *Saturday Night Fever* in the Dominican Republic's bustling capital city.

"I said 'I can do the job'," recalled Carlos, then a dancer for the disco musical drama, who overheard the pair during a rehearsal.

As a dancer, Carlos performed in Santo Domingo musicals and flashy productions like the Miss Dominican Republic beauty pageant. As a designer, he had no fashion show portfolio to speak of but had spent his youth sewing and designing patterns, skills he learned from his mom.

"They said 'Are you sure?'" Carlos said. "One week later I presented a folder with my work and I got the job. That was the beginnings."

Hairspray, *Legally Blonde*, and *Godspell* productions followed, earning him a reputation as a designer capable of quickly producing 300-400 wardrobe pieces per show.

"Musical theater gave me a lot of skills and made a lot of people recognize my work and my name in my country," he said.

As his career blossomed Carlos, who'd already earned a bachelor's degree in advertising and a master's in visual arts, traveled to Italy to study at Istituto Marangoni, a school of fashion and design in Milan. He has since presented his designs on stages all over Latin America and in U.S. cities like New York, Chicago, Miami, even Anchorage, Alaska. You can view his work at: <https://carlosdemoya.com/> or via Instagram @CarlosDeMoya

Partially sidelined by the pandemic, Carlos spends much of his time today studying English with the help of tutors Bob Bounczek and Jennifer Fidlon-Bugat. He continues to sell his designs to his principal clients in the Dominican Republic, he designs uniforms for a Dominican airline, and he still draws every day, which he calls his "therapy".

As an educator Carlos spent 14 years teaching at a Dominican Republic college. He currently teaches employment prep skills at Children's Art & Science Workshops in New York, a non-profit organization that engages with at-risk youth and grooms them for success.

"One year ago, I couldn't do that," he said of the city teaching job. "But now I can speak in English and Spanish."

Tutor Support Workshops

"Language and Beyond: Integrating English Language Learning with Cross Cultural Understanding,"

with Lauren Randolph
Platform: Google Meet
Tuesday, June 21, 2022
11 am – 12:30 pm

Archived Webinars

NJALL

The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning offers a series of webinars that are archived online, on everything from vocabulary instruction for English language learners to transitioning to the new reality of adult education, among others. The videos include the latest series of workshops conducted at the organization's annual conference last month, and are available to all via:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDWUWANSq56c91md02ir6Ig>

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



Here's What No One Told Me About Trying to Learn English as an Adult

HuffPost

By Ching Ching Tan, May 21, 2022

I am 49 years old. Three years ago, I didn't know who Frank Sinatra was. About a year ago, I finally realized I actually knew the character of Sherlock Holmes. In March, Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins died. I had no idea who he was.

I did not recently come out of a cave.

I am a Chinese immigrant who came to this country at age 32.

I teach public speaking and interpersonal communication at San Jose State University. Today, I consume 99% of the news in English. After years of being in America, I can express myself freely in my second language, even laughing at "SNL" jokes like *Osh Kosh F'gosh on baby clothes*. Still, when I first encountered the name Frank Sinatra, I was in an MFA workshop reading Gay Talese's "*Frank Sinatra Has a Cold*." Unlike everyone else in the room, I had no grasp of the singer's cultural significance.

We can't separate language from culture, but a chasm separates language and cultural knowledge. The very first thing many immigrants notice upon arriving in the U.S. is a sudden loss of a free tongue, the ease of expression, along with the loss of mainstream cultural references, which is ironic considering the U.S. has the largest immigrant population in the world. *(cont.)*

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

<https://bit.ly/3xC3SOA>

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.)

Hedda Maleh, LVA tutor

Hedda Maleh and her students have grown close over the past year. They've shared personal stories both sad and joyous.

They've consoled a student whose mother is stuck in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, unable to leave and fearful of having her daughter visit. And they've cheered on another, a Chinese native who recently became a U.S. citizen.



They're a tight-knit group, for one that's never seen each other in person.

"I would love to meet them," said Hedda, whose group also includes students from Colombia and Turkey. "They've become like family. For a year we've had a lot of trials and tribulations together."

Hedda is a Middletown, NY native and retired educator who taught 4th grade Elizabeth public school students for 25 years. She's much more accustomed to face-to-face lessons and, while she bemoans online classes a bit, she's practical about their convenience.

"There's no way we could ever meet in person," said Hedda, explaining that some in her group live far from the library or babysit during the day. "They actually like being online. It's easy for them."

And helpful, according to her students, who appreciate Hedda's style of encouraging them to speak about themselves and their families while they help one another through exercises focused on the news, conversation, and writing.

"She never stops a student from speaking, she encourages us to talk about our lives," said student Qingling, an internationally-known artist from Shanghai, China, who recently passed the U.S. citizenship test. "She is very compassionate and thinks about others. She is my window to understanding the American people."

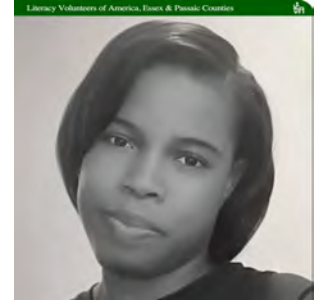
Hedda said she is just as impressed with her adult students and their sheer eagerness to learn. "They really want to be there," she said. "They're totally motivated. I enjoy talking to them on an adult level. I just find it very rewarding and I look forward to seeing them each week."

New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning

2022 Adult Learner Writing Contest

Congratulations to our talented student author, Sophonie Pierre Louis whose story, *The Little Old Lady*, shown below, tied for a first-place fiction award in the NJALL 2022 Adult Learner Writing Contest.

Contest winners are eligible for cash prizes and will have their work published by the organization in its magazine *INSIGHT 2022*.



The Little Old Lady

Annie lives in front of a beautiful gray house that has two floors with large windows.

A little old and beautiful lady lives in this house and always looks out the window to wave hello or goodbye to Annie every time Annie goes outside.

One day when Annie was cleaning her yard, the little lady came to see Annie, and said "Well, can we speak? I've been waiting for such an opportunity for a long time and I didn't have chance before."

Annie was surprised because she wasn't expecting this.

"My name is Susan," said the little old lady. "I am from New York, more precisely from Manhattan but, my parents were Irish." She also told Annie that she was educated in Chicago and returned to work in New York.

Annie was listening carefully to understand what the little old lady was saying because Annie does not speak English very well. Annie is learning English.

After a long conversation while Annie was sweeping, the old lady said to Annie "You're too young to do all this work by hand, you have to buy yourself an automatic broom."

Annie didn't understand all of the words and she got nervous. "Excuse me," said Annie. "I have to go back inside because I have to do something very important."

The little old lady was speaking very fast, and Annie didn't understand anything. She just heard some words like *pretty, friend, sure, and supermarket*.

The little old lady said to Annie. "Oh, talk to you another time, Annie! Sure!"

The little old lady waved to Annie as Annie went back inside her house.

Since then, every single time Annie went outside, the little old lady came out and started to talk.

One day, the little old lady greeted Annie and she started talking about everything. Annie asked her how she felt.

"I feel ok now, but sometimes I have pain in my back and in my legs," the little old lady said.

"I am sorry to hear that" Annie said. The old lady told Annie that with age, you know, it always is like that.

The Little Old Lady (cont.)

Then she started talking about shopping. Annie was getting uncomfortable. She felt like she could understand some of the words but not all of them. It was confusing. When you don't understand, it feels like the people are talking too fast.

Annie was getting upset. When people talked too fast, it made her feel stupid.

Annie didn't like to feel stupid. So, Annie escaped and decided to go inside her house to rest. Annie felt bad because she couldn't speak to the little old lady. She wanted to talk to the little old lady but she couldn't always understand what the lady was saying.

Annie started to feel like she was not smart. Annie wondered sometimes if she was ever going to speak English!

On another day, Annie took the garbage out. Annie knew the little old lady was coming. Annie knew that as soon as she went outside to do her work, the little old lady would come and try to talk to her. Annie wanted to take the garbage out fast so the little lady would not have time to come outside to talk to her but, the little lady was faster than Annie.

The little old lady called Annie's name "Annie"! she said "Hi honey".

The little old lady asked Annie how her Christmas was. "It was good thanks," Annie said. "Yours?"

The little old lady started talking about policemen, and something about the garbage. And a car. But Annie didn't understand.

Annie had to lie to the old lady. She told her that she had something on the fire. But that was not true.

Annie had to tell her that so she could go inside her house.

But the old lady was still waiting outside for Annie.

Annie went inside and talked to herself. "Oh my God." She said to herself. "I don't know what that lady is talking about."

Annie watched from inside her house to see if the lady was still there waiting. Finally, the little old lady went back into her house. After that day, Annie stopped talking to the little old lady. The little old lady went to Annie's house several times after that day, but Annie didn't open the door because she was still afraid, she couldn't understand the little old lady. Annie feels bad and she regrets her attitude toward the little old lady. Annie thinks the old lady might feel she is a bad person, weird or hates her.

Annie made a new plan. She prepared herself to go to the little old lady's house to talk to her and explain that she is learning English. Annie wanted the little old lady to slow down when she is speaking to her, so that Annie can understand what she is saying.

Annie walks across the street and knocks on the little old lady's door.

"Hello" Annie says. "Do you have some time to talk?"

The little old lady smiles and opens the door.

"Come in," she tells Annie. "Come in."