



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



### October Tutor Support Workshop

*So grateful to Catherine Mitch, former affiliate program director for Literacy New Jersey, who joined us on October 19th to dig deeper on "Grammar Instruction that Works: Looking at Lessons."*

## The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

November reminds us of a time to share with family and friends, and of the many things to be grateful for not just this season but every day. And we are so grateful for each and every one of you who make up the LVA Essex and Passaic Counties community. Thank you to all who joined us during the Annual Award Ceremony on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

In our "Getting to Know You" section, we highlight Joseph. Originally from Haiti, Joseph traveled through Surinam, French Guyana, and Martinique before arriving in the U.S., on a journey that lasted nine years. He worked hard to save money, survive, and send money home to his family. Learning English has been life-changing for Joseph. He now feels empowered to assert his needs and aspirations confidently.

Read on to find Lou's story, our Tutor of the Year for 2023, whose connection with LVA spans a decade. He passionately advocates for the idea that everyone should be able to become literate in English, enabling them to achieve personal, educational, and career goals and finds joy in connecting with people from diverse backgrounds.

If you have been following LVA's journey for some time, you will now adult learners of color represent a large share of our students. With this in mind, we wanted to share with you an insightful article from the Lumina Foundation, discussing the REACH Collaborative and some of the things we can all do to increase opportunities for adult students of color to attain associate degrees or other credentials.

This time of the year also helps us reflect on what we want to see for the future. If you are able to do so, please keep us in mind during Giving Tuesday on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Every act of generosity counts whether you give your time, make a financial donation, or help us share the work we do with others who can. If you would like to donate, please visit <http://www.lvaep.org/donate.html>

## In the News

Copy and paste the highlighted website into an internet search bar to view the following stories.

**"Learn about Google's free tool for learning English"** The Cleveland American. <https://bit.ly/3MWVYQT>

**"Demand for ESL classes for adults is soaring with migrant influx"** Times Union. <https://bit.ly/3MSNvcD>

**"You're in America, learn a language other than English"** The Michigan Daily, Opinion Piece. <https://bit.ly/3QOq8gL>

### Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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

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

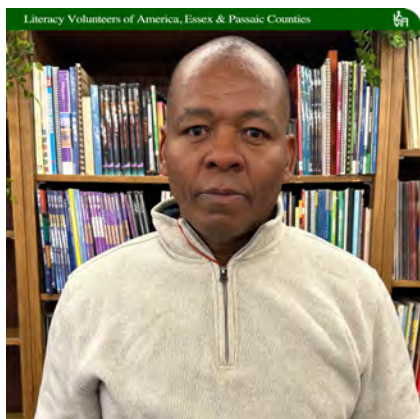
Cristhian Barcelos -Executive Director  
[cbarcelos@lvaep.org](mailto:cbarcelos@lvaep.org)

Jorge Chavez -Data Processing Coordinator  
[jchavez@lvaep.org](mailto:jchavez@lvaep.org)

Valeria Garrido -Social Media & Newsletter Coordinator  
[vgarrido@lvaep.org](mailto:vgarrido@lvaep.org)

Cheryl Locastro -Tutor Support Specialist & ESOL Instructor  
[clocastro@lvaep.org](mailto:clocastro@lvaep.org)

Marisol Ramirez -Student Coordinator  
[mramirez@lvaep.org](mailto:mramirez@lvaep.org)



## Getting to Know Us

### Joseph, LVA student

Joseph's story is one of resilience, determination, and the transformative power of education. Originally from Haiti, Joseph spent nine years traveling through multiple countries before finally arriving in the United States in 2001. Despite the numerous challenges he faced, including escaping abuse in Haiti by running away from home and living on his own in the bushes, Joseph never lost his enduring spirit.

It was thanks to a friend that Joseph discovered Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), which proved to be a crucial turning point in his life. Despite never having had the opportunity to attend school in Haiti, Joseph joined LVA last year, marking his first formal education experience. Learning English became essential for Joseph as he aimed to connect with people and improve his communication skills.

Reflecting on his progress, Joseph expressed that he now feels better. However, he recognizes that there is still room for growth, and he emphasizes his desire to enhance his reading, writing, and conversational skills. Joseph's commitment to learning is inspiring, especially considering he never had the chance to attend school before.

Learning English has been life-changing for Joseph. He now feels empowered to assert his needs and aspirations confidently. A memorable moment in his English-learning journey is when he told his boss, "I don't do this job anymore; I want a promotion." This newfound ability to speak up for himself has given him a sense of agency that he never had before.

Joseph acknowledges the crucial role of his tutor, who provides support on weekends. The guidance from teachers and tutors has been instrumental in helping him understand homework and practice speaking English. To aspiring students, Joseph offers simple yet profound advice: "Practice, and get help." These two things have been key to his success.

Looking ahead, Joseph has clear goals—he wants to become fluent in English and secure a better job. Learning English, for him, is not just about language; it's about gaining agency and breaking down barriers. "This makes a big difference in my life," he shares. With improved English skills, Joseph feels that people can no longer deceive him, and he now stands more confidently in the world. His story is a testament to the transformative impact of literacy and the indomitable human spirit.

*Joseph's journey to the United States involved traveling for nine years working and living in various countries to send money back home to his family in Haiti. His spirit of resilience and perseverance, and his constant desire to improve himself are admirable.*

## Tutor Training Workshops

**Online Training, by TBD**

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm

January 16, 23, 30, February 6, 13, & 20, 2024

**Online Training, by TBD**

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Wednesdays, 9:30 - 11:30 am

January 17, 24, 31, February 7, 14, & 21, 2024

## Tutor Support Workshop

**"The Podcast Puzzle: How to Listen to Podcasts,"**

with Catherine Angus

Platform: Google Meet

Thursday, December 14, 2023, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

## Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 3pm (General online meeting)

Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 3pm (Themed online meeting)

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

***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.*

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



## Prioritizing adult learners of color makes education better for all of us

Lumina Foundation

Written by Wayne Taliaferro, Katy Launius, Nov. 7, 2023

Adult learners of color are focused, ambitious, and resourceful, and represent a sizable share of students at community colleges. But policies, practices, and beliefs rooted in history unfairly hold many of these learners back from a better education and its benefits. These same policies have created inequitable systems of education resulting in fewer resources and less capacity at community colleges to fully serve adults of color. Against these odds, community colleges continue to be catalysts of opportunity, but more must be done to ensure that these learners are well-served and supported on these campuses.

Over the last two years, Lumina has supported the REACH Collaborative, which stands for Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education and works with community colleges to help adult students of color attain associate degrees and other credentials. The collaborative does this by working to identify and remove racial barriers. It works alongside community colleges as they build pathways that embrace the unique experiences and needs of these learners.

The REACH framework, which continues to evolve as this work progresses, features three guiding principles.

- Credential-to-Degree Pathways. These remove unfair barriers to high-wage, family-supporting careers. Their speed and stackability are a necessary and practical response to the costly stops and restarts that adult learners of color often face.

- Bundled and Sequenced Supports. These provide vital academic and non-academic resources—from tutoring to transportation—all along a student’s educational journey. Giving adult learners of color what they need, when they need it, inside and outside the classroom, makes education work better for everyone.

- Culturally Sustaining Practices. These encourage adult learners of color with the messages they need to persist: Their experiences matter, they have what it takes, and they can trust their colleges to help them obtain a quality education and the benefits it affords.

For the full story, copy and paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3upsOdh>

*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.lvaep.org/students.html>*

## Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Louis Donofrio, LVA Tutor

Born in New York City and armed with a Bachelor's degree in Engineering Science from SUNY Stony Brook, Lou spent the majority of his professional life in the energy field, excelling in Project Management. In 2022, he and his wife made a pivotal decision to relocate to New Jersey to be closer to their children and grandchildren.



Lou's connection with LVA spans a decade, with most of his tutoring experience rooted in LVA Suffolk County on Long Island. However, his commitment to the cause led him to join LVA Essex-Passaic upon his move to New Jersey in 2022.

The driving force behind Lou's involvement in the LVA program is his unwavering belief in its mission. He passionately advocates for the idea that everyone should be able to become literate in English, enabling them to achieve personal, educational, and career goals. Lou also finds joy in connecting with people from diverse backgrounds, learning about their customs, and understanding various cultures.

A significant moment in Lou's LVA journey was his recent recognition as Tutor of the Year at the LVA Annual Awards Ceremony. The ceremony exposed him to the incredible stories of students making personal sacrifices to come to the United States. Lou acknowledges the excellence of fellow LVA tutors and expresses gratitude for the support from the LVA organization staff.

Lou emphasizes his openness to new ideas can help his students attain their goals. He finds the challenge of preparing weekly lesson plans for diverse students with varying goals and abilities rewarding. The most fulfilling moments come when students share that something discussed in class has significantly impacted them.

Beyond his tutoring role, Lou's commitment extends to his personal life. While living on Long Island, he encouraged his wife to become a Literacy Volunteer, and she continues tutoring a Basic Literacy (learning disabled) adult through LVA-Suffolk County.

Lou Donofrio's story is one of dedication, impact, and the profound influence of education on individuals and communities. Through his efforts with LVA, he exemplifies the belief that literacy opens doors to endless possibilities, and his journey continues to inspire both students and fellow tutors alike.

### *2023 Annual Awards Ceremony Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties*

*At our Annual Awards Ceremony at the Bloomfield High School last month, students, tutors, instructors, and teachers were recognized for the time they'd devoted to their sessions and for their personal goals and achievements. Award winners came from programs and libraries in both counties, including programs with our partners at, Maplewood Public Library and the NCC-Adult Learning Center.*



*Students and tutors were awarded for their hours and personal achievements, including as Students of the Year from Essex and Passaic Counties, Peterson and Teresita. The Tutor of the Year from Essex County and President's Award winner was Louis D'Onofrio and from Passaic County Tutor of the Year was Jalaira Craver.*



*Culture shock can feel overwhelming at first, but with LVAEP, some students find their way with new friends at tutoring and in their community. Two students who met at a table in the Bloomfield Public Library came from different countries, languages and faiths, now call each other 'sister.'*



### *2023 Annual Awards Ceremony Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties*

*One student is learning English with the help of a new magnifier that enables her to see text with her visual impairment, all because of her tutor who helped her secured it. Tutoring offers so much more than a language exchange for both to tutors and students.*



*“The students make a personal commitment to tutoring considering they work long hours and have family commitments. It is such a viscous cycle. If you can’t learn the language, you can’t improve your life conditions,” a tutor said. “I am impressed with how seriously they take the program.”*



***Congratulations to all of our students, tutors, instructors, teachers, and affiliate organizations!***