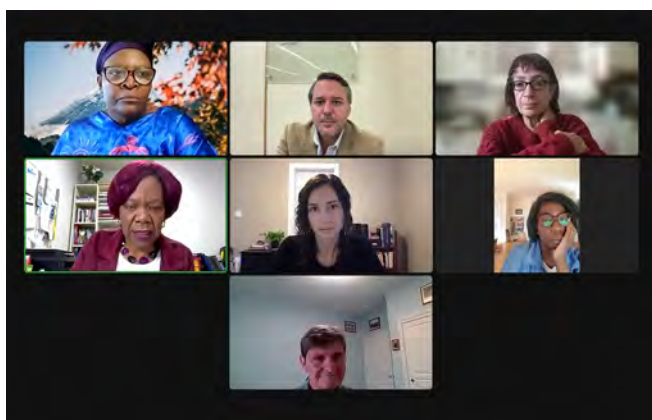




*The Insider*, the monthly newsletter of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, will keep you in the loop on all of the organization's upcoming events.



We thank presenter Darnelle Richardson for sharing her insights on "Curriculum Building for Diverse Groups of Learners" during our November Tutor Support Workshop. The workshop provided tutors with knowledge on using differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners in their groups.

### *The Insider*

Greetings LVA family!

As the shimmering lights of the holiday season cast a warm glow on our endeavors, we extend heartfelt greetings to you all. It is with immense joy and gratitude that we present our December newsletter—a treasure trove of tales that illuminate the transformative power of literacy.

In this month's spotlight, we introduce you to two exceptional individuals who embody the spirit of our vibrant LVA community. First, meet Hannah, a passionate tutor whose dedication to the written word is shaping the futures of those she guides. Join us in celebrating her commitment, resilience, and the unwavering belief in the magic that unfolds when words come to life.

Next, we invite you to embark on the journey of Irma, a relentless learner from Peru who is reshaping her narrative through the art of language acquisition. Irma's story is a testament to the profound impact literacy can have on an individual's sense of self and possibilities.

But the literary feast doesn't end there! Delve into our curated articles, "100 Notable Books of 2023" from The New York Times—an exploration of literary gems that promise to captivate your imagination. Additionally, don't miss "The Science of Reading also Applies to Students Learning English as a Second Language" from EdSource, shedding light on the universal principles that guide our approach to language education.

As we embrace the holiday spirit, don't forget to join us in celebrating the birthday of Literacy Volunteers of America's founder Ruth Johnson Colvin. When she read that over 11,000 people in her hometown of Syracuse, NY, struggled to read and write, she began organizing volunteer tutors out of her basement.

May this festive season fill your hearts with warmth, laughter, and the magic that comes from shared stories. Here's to a December filled with the joy of reading and the spirit of giving.

Together, let's continue fostering a community where every word sparks growth and every story fuels inspiration.

### *In the News*

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

"100 Notable Books of 2023" The New York Times.  
<https://bit.ly/487AC2g>

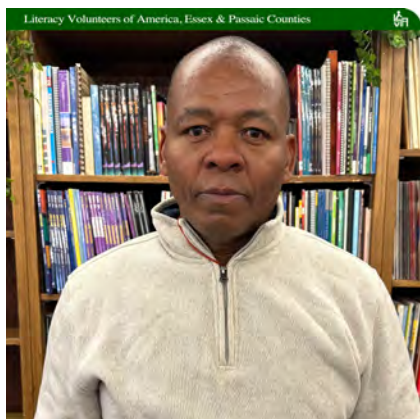
"The science of reading also applies to students learning English as a second language" EdSource.  
<http://tinyurl.com/bdcb7akn>

### 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

|                    |   |
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| Cheryl Locastro    | -Tutor Support Specialist & ESOL Instructor<br><a href="mailto:clocastro@lvaep.org">clocastro@lvaep.org</a> |
| Marisol Ramirez    | -Student Coordinator<br><a href="mailto:mramirez@lvaep.org">mramirez@lvaep.org</a>                          |



Originally from Peru, Irma was delighted to arrive in the U.S. to join her husband who had been here for a few years. Upon arriving, she realized how important English learning would be for her to adapt and thrive in the daily tasks of her life here. She has persevered through struggles to continue learning and growing.

## 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

**"Using Interactive Storytelling in the Classroom," with, Dr. Erik Jacobson**

Platform: Google Meet

Thursday, January 18, 2024, 11 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>

## Getting to Know Us

### Irma, LVA student

Irma, a determined learner from Peru, is transforming her future through English classes at Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Arriving in the United States in 2018 to join her husband, Irma faced communication barriers that made her rely on him for daily interactions.

In Peru, Irma earned a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering, but language barriers hindered her comfort in addressing daily activities.

Discovering LVA through her husband, Irma embarked on a three-year English learning journey, focusing on writing and speaking skills. Her goals included everyday tasks like shopping, doctor visits, and ordering deliveries, recognizing their importance for day-to-day life. Irma's commitment peaked when she independently completed her citizenship application, showcasing a meticulous understanding of complex instructions.

Amid setbacks, like a year-long recovery from a broken ankle and surgery, Irma demonstrated resilience. She utilized online resources, her husband's books, and engaging mind exercises, turning obstacles into opportunities for continuous learning.

Irma's success story revolves around practical tools and real-life approaches from dedicated tutors like Pearly and Stephanie, to whom she is grateful. Their support empowered Irma to navigate setbacks, supplementing her learning through YouTube tutorials and printed verb lists during recovery.

Her advice to aspiring learners emphasizes the importance of viewing learning as a positive activity, coupled with dedication and discipline. Irma plans to achieve fluency in English, recognizing its pivotal role in accomplishing broader objectives.

A unique habit Irma adopted involved documenting her daily routine, evolving from a tedious task to a stimulating exercise, significantly impacting her language proficiency.

Irma recently finished reading *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, inspired by its message on developing good habits and breaking bad ones for significant life changes. Her story illustrates the power of language acquisition, overcoming barriers, and inspiring others on a similar path. In the evolving tapestry of her life, Irma is crafting a narrative of strength, determination, and the enduring impact of language on self-discovery.

***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>



### Celebrating Ruth Johnson Colvin's birthday, Founder of Literacy Volunteers of America

#### ProLiteracy, Women of the Hall

Ruth Johnson Colvin has been an educator world-wide her entire life. Known primarily as the founder of the widely recognized, celebrated and highly valued Literacy Volunteers of America, Ruth's life story is one of an educator from day one.

Her passion for books and for teaching have taken her to places near and far but it has also always brought her back to what one may well consider the driving question of her life story: How to reach those in need of literacy education? As she talks about the course of her life, one hears over and over again how this drive led her to become an innovator of literacy pedagogy and to keep her ear trained on changing needs of people, from those incarcerated to those who speak different languages.

To listen to Ruth's oral history is to hear how a problem-solving curiosity proves as vital a guide to social change as does a mindful heart. Other elements are having a knack for placing one's faith in community and for building unlikely networks of volunteers. These elements and so many more in Ruth's life all constellate around her concern for humanity and for peace.

Hers is a life lived fully through teaching literacy as about more than learning words. To Ruth, it is the stories that count. Stories open us to one another, and, eventually, in her view, move us across boundaries of difference to humanity's inner pulse of care and community.

Hers is a story of a life lived fully in this world for nearly one hundred years now, where, as she puts it, age is "but a number" and the real concern is what you do to make change happen in this world now. Ruth continues to tutor, to golf, and to explore interest in art. Recognized with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, she continues to seek ways to build and reshape the literacy program she began so many decades ago.

For the additional details on the life and work that inspired Ruth's journey, please visit ProLiteracy's website: <https://bit.ly/3GYjZtG> and view the original article from Women's Hall of Fame here: <https://bit.ly/3Twwglit>

*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.)

#### Hannah Beykirch, LVA Tutor

Hannah Beykirch, an editorial assistant at an educational publishing company, has discovered a profound calling as a tutor with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Her teaching journey began in March 2023, driven by a desire for community involvement and a curiosity about the transformative power of education.



With a Bachelor's in English from Brooklyn College, Hannah's commitment to literacy education extends beyond textbooks and grammar exercises. Currently teaching three adult students, she is drawn to LVA's abundant resources and the robust support system for both tutors and learners.

Denise, a standout student, arrived with minimal literacy skills but exuded determination. A successful entrepreneur in Jamaica, Denise now focuses on her own education, radiating joy with each triumph and supporting fellow students.

Hannah's teaching extends beyond language acquisition to cultural exchange. An impactful moment involved Marie, a student navigating grief after losing two family members. Their sessions dissolved language and cultural barriers, revealing the delicate balance of communication.

Viewing herself as a fellow learner, Hannah tailors lessons to individual needs, finding joy in the reciprocal relationship with her students. Navigating varying proficiency levels presents challenges, but the rewards are immeasurable—seeing a student's excitement at mastering a new skill is the heart of her teaching.

Fanta, her newest student, recently asked for help sending a text message—a seemingly routine task but a significant milestone in language acquisition. The sheer happiness in Fanta's eyes exemplifies the impact literacy has on confidence and accomplishment.

Hannah's passion for teaching extends beyond her role as a tutor. She revels in reading and occasionally writing poetry, finding in it a means to reconnect with the beauty of language. Poetry, for her, serves as a reminder of the profound gift it is to forge connections through shared words.

In the heart of Essex and Passaic Counties, Hannah's story becomes an ode to the enduring power of literacy—a force that touches many lives, fosters connections, and bridges gaps. Her dedication echoes in the voices of those who once struggled to be heard, now resonating with newfound confidence thanks to her commitment.