



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



A ceremony aboard the Battleship New Jersey in Camden, New Jersey welcomed 34 new American citizens from 21 countries on Tuesday. (July 4)

Read more on this story about the upcoming changes to the U.S. citizenship test and its impact on test-takers with lower levels of English proficiency, on page 3.

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
Jorge Chavez	-Data Processing Coordinator jchavez@lvaep.org
Valeria Garrido	-Social Media & Newsletter Coordinator vgarrido@lvaep.org
Cheryl Locastro	-Tutor Support Specialist & ESOL Instructor clocastro@lvaep.org
Marisol Ramirez	-Student Coordinator mramirez@lvaep.org

The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

As we dive into the heart of summer, it's time to celebrate the joys and significance of July in the United States. From patriotic celebrations to summer vacations, this month brings a sense of excitement and adventure. And as always, we have inspiring stories to share with you.

Our first story introduces Summer Chen, one of our students who consistently works to improve her English skills. Originally from China, Summer is determined to enhance her language proficiency and open doors to employment opportunities.

In our second story, we'll introduce you to Eve Peterson, a dedicated literacy tutor who makes a profound difference in someone's life. Like many of our amazing tutors, Eve has graciously volunteered her time to teach a student from Guinea who had never experienced formal education before.

And for those of you teaching and learning this summer, *Check Out These Fun Summer Vocabulary Ideas for Your Adult ESL Classes*: <https://bit.ly/44HBOHE>

We also want to remind all our dedicated tutors that there are exciting opportunities for professional development year-round. As we believe in constantly honing our skills and expanding our knowledge, we encourage you to explore these valuable resources to enhance your tutoring techniques and broaden your impact.

And finally, don't forget to connect with us on social media for more valuable tips and resources.

Thank you for being part of our incredible journey. Your dedication and commitment to transforming lives through education is truly remarkable. Let's continue to make a difference together!

Wishing you a fantastic July filled with warmth, growth, and countless moments of inspiration.

In the News

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

"Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Holds First Statewide Convening on 'Some College, No Degree' Student Engagement Initiative." Insider NJ.
<https://bit.ly/3pNAx2L>

"Two new feel-good novels about bookstores celebrate the power of reading." NPR. <https://bit.ly/3XPutmM>

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties



Born and raised in China, Summer has been studying English for about four years. She continues to work on improving her vocabulary and looks forward to finding employment.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Tuesdays, 6 - 8:15 pm

August 8, 15, 22, 29, September 5, & 12, 2023

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Wednesdays, 6 - 8 pm

September 6, 13, 20, 27, October 4, & 11, 2023

Tutor Support Resources

Literacy Assistance Center

Under the section "English for Speakers of Other Languages Resources," the website offers lesson planning and reading resources.

Copy and paste this link into your favorite browser to access these free resources: <https://bit.ly/3NPnvp7>

Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, September 14, 2023 at 3pm (General in-person meeting)

Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 3pm (Themed in-person meeting)

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

Getting to Know Us

Summer, LVA student

Born and raised in China, Summer (Yan) Chan embarked on an incredible journey to the United States in the summer of 2018. Motivated by the necessity of learning a new language in a foreign land, Summer discovered the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) through a recommendation from the Millburn Library staff and thus began her pursuit of English proficiency.

Summer's dedication to mastering the language improved her skills significantly, enabling her to engage more meaningfully with others.

Amidst her studies, Summer found solace and inspiration within the pages of a book titled "Stories of Life and Death." The book, written by a New Zealand doctor, delves into tales from the ICU, providing profound insights into life and mortality. Although medical jargon posed a challenge, the translated version allowed her to grasp the essence of the narratives, prompting contemplation on the delicate balance between life-saving measures and compassionate end-of-life care.

Reflecting on her educational journey, Summer fondly recalls her college years when she pursued accounting in China. She shares that she finds that feeling happy is the most important accomplishment in her middle age.

Learning English opened doors to new cultural experiences and facilitated Summer's adjustment to life in America. One memorable moment was her first visit to an ESL class. Despite lacking a driver's license or a car, she relied on trains to attend lessons, showcasing her resourcefulness.

Summer is grateful for the guidance and encouragement from her tutors, who have been invaluable in navigating the challenges of language acquisition. Despite setbacks in memorizing new words, her perseverance and resilience have fueled her progress.

For aspiring students pursuing similar accomplishments, Summer offers heartfelt advice: remain patient and steadfast in your learning. She emphasizes the importance of relaxation and maintaining a positive attitude while undertaking the journey of English literacy.

Looking ahead, Summer's vision encompasses securing employment in her adopted homeland. She understands that language proficiency will play a significant role in achieving this goal and remains determined to continue honing her skills.

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>



"US citizenship test changes are coming, raising concerns for those with low English skills"

Associated Press

By Trisha Ahmed, July 5, 2023

The U.S. citizenship test is being updated, and some immigrants and advocates worry the changes will hurt test-takers with lower levels of English proficiency.

The naturalization test is one of the final steps toward citizenship — a months long process that requires legal permanent residency for years before applying.

Many are still shaken after former Republican President Donald Trump's administration changed the test in 2020, making it longer and more difficult to pass. Within months, Democratic President Joe Biden took office and signed an executive order aimed at eliminating barriers to citizenship. In that spirit, the citizenship test was changed back to its previous version, which was last updated in 2008.

In December, U.S. authorities said the test was due for an update after 15 years. The new version is expected late next year.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services proposes that the new test adds a speaking section to assess English skills. An officer would show photos of ordinary scenarios — like daily activities, weather or food — and ask the applicant to verbally describe the photos.

In the current test, an officer evaluates speaking ability during the naturalization interview by asking personal questions the applicant has already answered in the naturalization paperwork.

For the full story, copy and paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3O8XMNY>

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.lvae.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Eve Peterson, LVA Tutor

Living with her husband in Orange, Eve Peterson is a passionate advocate for education and community empowerment.

With a diverse professional background encompassing community activism, marketing, and consulting for nonprofits,

Eve's love for learning and helping others led her to volunteer with Literacy Volunteers of Essex and Passaic Counties in November 2019.



One of Eve's most memorable experiences was with her student, Marie. Marie arrived with no previous schooling and lacked the ability to read or write. Together, they embarked on a journey that continues to transform Marie's life. The joy and triumph were palpable the day Marie read her first sentence on her own - a monumental milestone!

However, teaching Marie English presented its challenges. Without any formal education, Marie struggled to comprehend and speak the language despite living in the States for a decade.

The journey towards literacy and English fluency as an adult in a foreign language demands patience and perseverance, and busy adults trying to earn a living often have little energy and time for homework. Eve recognized the need to make the lessons relevant to Marie's life and culture, generating text and using materials that resonated with her experiences.

Eve's dedication to teaching has transformed Marie's life and enriched her own. Through her experience with the literacy program, Eve has gained a profound understanding of cultural humility and the struggles faced by immigrants. She has delved deep into Guinea's rich heritage (where Marie is originally from), expanding her knowledge of West African culture, food, politics, and history, and they have built a wonderful relationship.

Eve enjoys travel, gardening, tai chi, swimming, hiking, paddling, yoga, reading, cooking, volunteering on political campaigns, taking in theater and museums, and spending time with friends and family, including her three grandnieces. And you may not know she also loves dancing!

Helping someone learn a new language from scratch, including a new alphabet and writing skills, takes a lot of effort and dedication. With her unwavering commitment, Eve is making a difference, one student at a time.