



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



Thank you to Dr. Erik Jacobson for sharing his "Using Interactive Storytelling in the Classroom" workshop with us. The workshop provided practical examples that can be used for a number of classroom activities, including vocabulary development and classroom discussions.

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

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## *The Insider*

Greetings LVA family!

The month of February has brought us some winter weather, with snow sprinkling our streets. The magic of modern tools allows us to meet with and serve our students online and offline, making it easier on complex schedules and bad weather days. We are so grateful our tutors navigate the wonders and frustrations of technology with grace and a spirit of service to support all learners.

In this month's newsletter, we wanted to share with you Miriam's story. Originally from Guatemala, Miriam shares with us her journey as she migrated to the United States, seeking to help her family, as she witnessed the walls of her parents' house deteriorate with no resources to fix them. Through hard work she managed to help them get a house to last into their old age and provide them with safety and warmth.

We also applaud Sydnay, one of our many committed tutors who embarks on a journey with her students of mutual understanding, creating a supportive space that fosters growth in communication skills. From navigating emails to engaging with teachers, Sydnay has witnessed the practical impact of literacy on her students' daily lives. The classroom has transformed into a melting pot of stories, traditions, and cultures, breaking down barriers and nurturing newfound confidence.

Did you know February is celebrated as Mother Tongue Day by the United Nations? Read on to learn about the cognitive benefits of learning more than one language.

We Are Teachers compiled a list of 42 Black History Month activities for February (<https://bit.ly/48yLENg>). Their activity list includes gems such as: Virtually visiting the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, New York; learning about the first black president in the United States: Barack Obama; watching videos about Black history; and more.

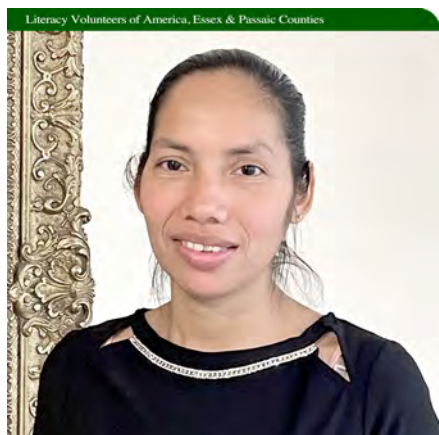
### *In the News*

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

**"Angeline Pompei Releases Rap Song to Teach Numbers and Simple Verbs to Adult English-Language Learners"** The News & Observer. <https://bit.ly/49l2rom>

**"Arabic Students of English Like Slang and Don't Care Much for Music: Bright AI Surveys English Language Learners Worldwide"** Globe Newswire. <https://bit.ly/49o6y38>

**"Black History Month book recommendations"** SJU Hawk News. <https://bit.ly/48kuxPb>



## Getting to Know Us

Miriam, LVA student

Miriam's story of perseverance and determination is one that many immigrants can relate to. Originally from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, she migrated to the United States in 2006 to help her parents fix up their home and support them in their old age. However, her journey to the United States was not an easy one. She faced many challenges along the way, including surviving three days in the desert.

Despite the challenges, Miriam's commitment to improving her life and the lives of her loved ones never wavered. She completed two levels of English studies at New Community Corporation (NCC) in Newark. She took computer classes before joining Literacy Volunteers of America to continue her English and GED learning with the support of dedicated tutors.

Learning English was not just about adapting to a new environment for Miriam, but it was a tool for survival. It allowed her to navigate public transport and communicate with doctors during her child's premature birth. As Miriam's four-year English learning journey progressed, she gained confidence. She improved her communication skills, allowing her to converse with her children's teachers about their progress in school and the areas where she could help them at home.

Miriam's success story goes beyond her personal achievements; it has transformed her family's life. Her father's insistence on education for his daughters, despite being illiterate himself, has paid off. Miriam's sacrifice and hard work have secured a safe and warm home for her parents and shattered societal norms that once discouraged women from pursuing education.

When asked about her future plans, Miriam expressed a desire to take the GED and pursue a career in physiotherapy. Her commitment to self-improvement and her belief in the power of education drive her to inspire others to invest in their own education for a lifetime of rewards. Miriam's journey proves that with determination, sacrifice, and the right support, individuals can break through language barriers and build a better life for themselves and their communities.

Miriam's story demonstrates that with hard work, dedication, and the right support, anyone can overcome challenges and reach their goals. Miriam encourages others to take that crucial step towards education, saying, "You may lose work hours or sleep, but you will gain much more by learning."

Originally from the department of Quetzaltenango in Guatemala, Miriam's journey to learning English in the United States is a story many immigrants will recognize. Miriam's path to the United States began in 2006. She migrated with the hope of supporting her parents in their old age.

## Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Wednesdays, 6 - 8 pm

March 6, 13, 20, 27, April 3, & 10, 2024

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (sponsored by LNJ)

Wednesdays, 9:30 - 11:30 am

May 15, 22, 29, June 5, 12, & 19, 2024

## Tutor Support Workshop

"Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills,"

with Carol Cochi, Ph.D.

Platform: Google Meet

Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 11 am - 12:30 pm

## Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Cheryl Locastro

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

Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 3 pm (General in-person 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>



### Happy Mother Language Day

**United Nations  
Washington D.C.  
February 21, 2024**

About 7,000 – that is how many languages people around the globe speak.

More than 350 – that is the number of “mother languages” in the United States, a number that includes Native North American tongues like Navajo, Dakota, Apache, and Cherokee.

Almost half of the world’s people speak at least two languages.

In the US, just one in five Americans are bilingual – but the number who speak a language other than English at home has tripled since 1980. Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese are the top five mother tongues in the US, after English.

Research finds significant cognitive and other benefits in learning and using a second language – even for older adults. The US Department of Education recently launched an initiative, “Being Bilingual is a Superpower,” which highlights benefits to students’ success, economic competitiveness, and global engagement.

The United Nations is one of the world’s largest employers of translators and other language professionals. And it of course is a hub for multilingual people – from diplomats who represent the UN’s 193 member states, to staff whose careers often depend on their ability to speak more than one language.

[...]

United Nations Information Centres around the world are among those working to ensure students, journalists, and others interested in the UN’s work can access what they need in the mother languages that are a vital way to connect people across borders, communities, and generations.

For the full story please copy and paste the following link on your browser: <https://bit.ly/3wumbau>

*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.)

**Sydney Eckerling, LVA Tutor**

Amid the vibrant tapestry of cultures and stories, Sydney, a dedicated tutor with Literacy Volunteers of America, weaves connections that go beyond the pages of textbooks. Her professional and personal journey paints a picture of commitment and passion for encouraging others through literacy.



Originally from Colorado, Sydney's background in teaching children and early childhood education forms the foundation of her expertise. Before making the cross-country move to New Jersey, she was immersed in the world of pre-k and elementary education. Sydney carries the torch of learning even in her personal life, now navigating the intricate landscape of English as a Second Language (ESL). This shift in perspective has unveiled the rich stories of her students' backgrounds, inviting her to explore the diverse paths that lead individuals to the literacy program.

Joining Literacy Volunteers of America a year ago, Sydney found joy in the collaborative learning experience with her four students. Together, they embarked on a journey of mutual understanding, creating a supportive space that fostered growth in communication skills. From navigating emails to engaging with teachers, Sydney witnessed the practical impact of literacy on her students' daily lives. The classroom transformed into a melting pot of stories, traditions, and cultures, breaking down barriers and nurturing newfound confidence.

Sydney emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the learning journey, underscoring her role as both a tutor and a fellow learner. This dynamic exchange enriches the students and Sydney, creating an environment where shared experiences contribute to a vibrant micro-community.

The challenges of virtual learning, particularly the technology barrier students face using their phones, haven't deterred Sydney. Instead, she balances the intricacies of modern education, recognizing that the rewards far surpass the obstacles. Witnessing progress and observing the practical application of literacy skills in her students' lives form the bedrock of Sydney's satisfaction.

Beyond the realm of education, Sydney offers a glimpse into her personal passions. A lover of photography and art, she finds solace in watercolor painting for leisure. Her family hikes, accompanied by two dogs, underscore her appreciation for the outdoors and the joy of shared moments.