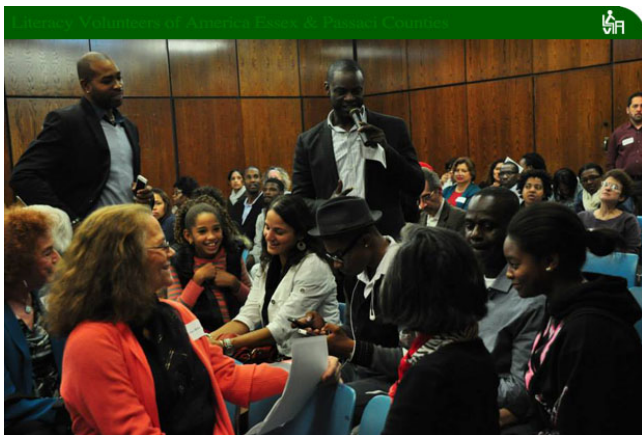




The Insider, the monthly newsletter of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, will keep you in the loop on all of the organization's upcoming events.



Lissent Nelson, gray shirt, seated second from right, listens as his family and friends express their pride in his literacy accomplishments. Lissent received LVA's Essex County Student of the Year award at last month's Annual Awards Ceremony.

The Insider

You didn't have to wait long to hear some pretty inspiring stories among the more than 100 people who attended the Annual Awards Ceremony of Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties, last month.

Take, for example, Olga Zarifyan. The Russian immigrant holds a master's degree in engineering from overseas but had to master English before finding academic work in the US. It was like starting from scratch but Olga, an LVA student at the Wayne Public Library, logged many hours with library tutors. She's now a substitute teacher at Passaic County Technical Institute, a public vocational high school in Wayne. And, according to Patricia Snader, one of her tutors along the way, Olga's training will soon enable her to become a teacher at any public high school in the US. Olga, who received an ESOL award that night, spoke only of her gratitude, not her accomplishments.

"I met here very kind people who helped me to learn English well," Olga told literacy students, tutors and advocates gathered at the East Orange Public Library. "These people are my real friends. Thank you so much."

We all know there are stories like Olga's, thanks to the students, tutors, board members, librarians and other administrators who work hard to promote LVA and adult literacy. But it's not until the annual awards ceremony unfolds each year that we get to hear some of them.

There was Ivan Pulgarin, a Colombian native and LVA student in Wayne, who told the crowd that volunteer tutors helped him integrate into the American community by teaching him English and helping him study for the US citizenship test that he passed two years ago. Ivan also received an ESOL award that night.

And let's not forget Lissent Nelson, a basic literacy student who came with a small support group of family members and friends who watched him receive the Essex County Student of the Year award. Lissent was recently matched with Jalaire Craver, named Essex County Tutor of the Year. She spoke of her new student's persistence.

"He seems to know what he wants, because he seems to come every week with an idea of what we should be learning," Jalaire said. "He also would like to have class every evening." The jury's still out on that one.

The event, dubbed "Success, Nothing Less," was hosted by Sally Rice, President of the Board of Directors of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties. It was held Oct. 21.

A full list of awards winners is posted on our website <http://www.lvanewark.org/lvaawardsandrec/>

And please check out our awards ceremony photo album on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.896885710322804.1073741828.395526257125421&type=1>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Mosammat Akter, left, one of LVA's newest US citizens, shows her citizenship certificate after a session with tutor Laura McLean.

In the News

To read the stories below, just copy and paste the link into an internet search.

The amazing results when you give prison inmates a liberal arts education.

Smithsonian Magazine's take on the Bard College program that brings college courses to inmates in some of the nation's toughest prisons. Less than 2-percent of inmates who leave prison with a college degree are re-arrested, studies show.

<http://bit.ly/1GRhIk3>

The economics of literacy: Why adult education matters.

Connecticut Mirror Op-Ed piece states that, by investing in adults, we are also investing in our children, since research shows that parents' educational attainment is the best indicator of economic mobility for their children.

<http://bit.ly/1wodogX>

Two billion people will speak functional English by 2020, the vast majority as a second language.

The Washington Post on English as the ever-growing bridge language.

wapo.st/1oSqKly

Webinars

Reading, Set, Write: NJALL webinar with the WE LEARN group, on equipping your student with tools to conquer the most difficult phase of writing - Getting started.

<http://bit.ly/1oOTFh3>

To attend Part 2, "Wrapping up the process," register here:

www.njall.org/

Getting to Know Us

Mosammat Akter, LVA student Laura McLean, tutor

From the moment she enrolled in Literacy Volunteers of America, there was never any question about Mosammat Akter's motivation. Her husband and sons, ages 12 and 15, were already US citizens. Mosammat, an LVA student from Bangladesh, wanted to enjoy the benefits of citizenship too.

So for almost a year, she and Laura McLean, a tutor in LVA's Essex & Passaic Counties organization, studied dozens of questions listed in a US government citizenship study guide.

The longest river in the United States - - the Missouri, not the Mississippi - - had to be committed to memory. So did the number of elected officials in the House of Representatives (435) and the year the US Constitution took effect (1789).

Then there are the speaking and reading portions of the exam. Test takers are asked to read a short passage to their examiner. Omit a "content word" - a word that gives the passage meaning, as in most nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs - and you fail. Pause for an extended period of time while reading and you fail. Make a pronunciation or intonation error that interferes with the meaning of the passage and, that's right, you fail.

"She had it down pat," Laura said of Mosammat and her year-long test preparation. "We drilled. We used a lot of conversation; she would ask me if I had children and what did I do. There was a lot of interpersonal connection. She knew more about the process than I did. Most Americans probably would flunk."

Mosammat works six days a week at a Dunkin' Donuts coffee shop, beginning at 6 a.m. She also raises two boys. Her study time is limited but she rarely misses a session with Laura, which takes place on Mosammat's only day off.

Despite her preparation, Mosammat said she was nervous when she sat with a citizenship examiner last September.

"She asked me six questions, I answered the six questions," Mosammat said. "Then the writing, then the reading. I don't know if I made a mistake but in the end, everything was good." Modestly put, she passed. Mosammat is a US citizen.

"My whole family is happy for me, my husband's family too" Mosammat said as she burst into a smile. "This is my life, my big day."

Mosammat said all the credit for her accomplishments go to her tutor. She spoke briefly to the *The Insider* on a recent weekday, then rushed off to try to get her brother and sister-in-law enrolled as LVA students. Laura McLean is recruiting too; she's trying to enlist two friends as tutors, including a recently retired ESL teacher.

"I'm getting a lot out of it," Laura said of tutoring. "I was determined when I retired not just to sit home. I thought 'What do I enjoy most?' I like to read. It's good to share that."

Researchers: Nagging parents with text messages to teach their Pre-K children to read produced early readers. Vox Media

The children of wealthy parents hear millions more words in their first years of life than the children of low-income ones. That creates a vocabulary gap that never really closes: poor children lag behind in literacy from their first day of school.

Researchers are looking at a low-cost way to help: sending three text messages a week to parents of pre-K students, at a cost of about \$1 per family. And they have some early evidence that this program, which suggests easy ways to help kids pick up literacy skills, can work.

Two researchers at Stanford University, Benjamin York and Susannah Loeb, recruited parents of pre-K students in San Francisco for the text message study. Parents who agreed to participate in the program received three text messages a week with specific suggestions about what they could do to help their children learn to read and succeed at school:

A control group received weekly text messages about kindergarten registration, required vaccinations, and other issues.

Parents who received the texts were more likely than parents in the control group to tell stories, point out words that begin with the same sound, look at pictures in a book, or play games and work puzzles with their children, the researchers found, according to research published this week in a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper. They also were more likely to ask questions of teachers about what their children were learning in pre-K and what they could do at home to supplement it.

The results showed up for children, too: children of parents who received the text messages scored higher at the end of the year on a test of letters and letter sounds than did children of parents in the control group.

The texts were more effective at getting parents to do specific activities, like point out letter sounds, than general ones, like read to their kids. That suggests that parents were receptive to specific guidance that breaks down a seemingly overwhelming task.

Full story: <http://bit.ly/1v3YDCR>

Based on this National Bureau of Economic Research study:
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w20659>

Free Origami Workshop

Check out our own Mary Kao, artist and LVA tutor and trainer, as she leads a workshop in origami, the Japanese art of paper folding. The single session class will be offered by the Bloomfield Public Library, Wednesday, Nov. 19 at 5 pm. Register here: <http://bit.ly/14g0pES>

Help us fight illiteracy

Thanks in large part to you, we were able to aid hundreds of students last year. Please continue your efforts to improve the lives of others by giving the gift of literacy. You can contribute through our website – <http://www.lvanewark.org/donate/olva/> - or by simply sending a check to our address above. All contributions are tax deductible. Thank you for joining us in the fight against illiteracy.



Erik Jacobson, of Montclair State University and New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) presented LVA tutors with a fascinating lecture on the state of illiteracy in New Jersey. List of upcoming tutor support workshops appears below.

Upcoming Events

Tutor Support Workshops

Please RSVP

“Preparing an Emergency Packet,” with Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo

Stephanie will demonstrate how to prepare a package of material to keep your student on course during the holidays, inclement weather and other absences.

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St., 2nd floor

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014, 2-3 pm

“Building Your Student’s Curriculum,” with Nancy Chiorazzi, Director of Educational Services, St. Francis Community Center,

Long Beach Twp, NJ

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St., 2nd floor

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tues. Dec. 2, 2014, 3:00-4:30 pm

“Grammar Basics for You and Your Student,” with Elizabeth Salerno

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St., 2nd floor

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tues. Dec. 9, 2014, 2:00-3:30 pm

Have an idea for a tutor support workshop? Just let us know. We'll work with you.