



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



Marisol Ramirez, above, is LVA Essex & Passaic Counties' new Coordinator of Students. A teacher of ESL, math and computer programs, Marisol will match students with tutors at LVA. Read more about her on Page 2.

The Insider

Happy Holidays, LVA family and friends! And, while we're at it, Happy Anniversary! This is the 13th edition and one-year anniversary of *The Insider*, your e-newsletter here at Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. A year ago, when we first "went to press," we wanted to create a publication that would help us stay connected to one another, as well as to the larger literacy community to which we belong. We hope we're on the right track; we still have tons to learn. We love your feedback; please keep it coming. And if there's anything you'd like to see in the newsletter, or there's something you'd like to write, just holler.

* * *

Have a student who likes to write, and shows some skill at it? Then this might be for you. NJALL, the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning, plans to publish in spring 2015 a magazine that features the writing of adult learners. NJALL also will give certificates and cash prizes to the best submissions. Submissions must be original and represent the work of the writer, not the work of tutors or teachers, and sent to njallmail@gmail.com by Feb 6, 2015. Questions may be directed to the same email address.

* * *

A special thank you goes to Nancy Chiorazzi, the Ocean County literacy program director who presented our tutor support workshop last week on 'Building Your Students' Curriculum.' Nancy drove a couple of hundred miles from her office and back in some pretty lousy weather in order to help us become better tutors. Thank you Nancy! Your efforts are much appreciated.

Help Us Fight Illiteracy

"Giving Tuesday," which took place Dec. 2, marks the start of the charitable holiday giving season for non-profits around the country. Like many other organizations, we rely on the generosity of donors like you to make ends meet in the face of shrinking funds from other sources. Please remember LVA Essex & Passaic Counties in your end-year, charitable contributions. All gifts are tax-deductible. Your efforts help improve the lives of others by offering them the gift of literacy. We can't do it without you. You can contribute via our website – <http://www.lvanewark.org/donatetolva/> - or by simply sending a check to our address, which is listed in the staff box to the left. Thank you for joining us in the fight against illiteracy.

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
cristhian_barcelos@verizon.net
Russell Ben Ali -Recruitment & Training Coordinator
lvasessex@verizon.net
Jorge Chavez -Data Processing
Debbie Graham -Education Coordinator
lvanewark@verizon.net
Marisol Ramirez -Student Coordinator
lvapassaic@verizon.net



Tutor Bea Boyle, left, and student, Julia Baragone, right, with her recently earned US citizenship certificate. The two put in long hours together before Julia passed the exam with ease last September.

In the News

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

From illiteracy to his first book of poetry

For the first 50 years of his life, Ralph "Ike" Eikange couldn't read. With the help of a library adult literacy program, he learned to read and write and even found a publisher for his book of poems, "A Journey From Illiteracy to Poetry."

http://www.contracostatimes.com/concord/ci_26922017/concord-mans-journey-from-illiteracy-writing-poetry

I'd like to be deported: A day in immigration court - A Pacific Standard magazine writer is stunned by what he witnesses in immigration court as he listens in on a handful of the government's 375,000 pending cases.

<http://www.psmag.com/navigation/politics-and-law/id-like-deported-day-immigration-court-post-isabel-south-padre-island-92166/>

Immigrants reconsider futures as Atlantic City casinos shut - When four casinos closed within a year, nearly 8,000 people lost jobs, including many immigrant workers who helped shape Atlantic City's casino industry but now struggle to find work.

http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/business/immigrants-reconsider-futures-as-casinos-shut/article_c8ab458a-78f8-11e4-879f-7bc43d4dcb75.html

Getting to Know Us

Marisol Ramirez. Coordinator of Students

Please help us welcome to our team Marisol Ramirez, our new Coordinator of Students. Marisol is an educator who has taught ESL, math and computer programs at institutions such as Essex County College and New Community Corporation, one of the nation's largest community development corporations. She hails from Guayaquil, Ecuador, where she was an architect, and enjoys visiting museums with her family in her spare time.

Julia Baragone, LVA student Bea Boyle, tutor

Taking the test for US citizenship can be a harrowing experience for any student of English. It may take hours and hours of study before a candidate is ready. It can end in a few minutes, with a few questions from a test examiner who gives a nod of approval or turns a candidate away.

When a literacy student takes the exam, test anxiety may be shared, not only among the student and family members, but with the tutor the student has spent weeks preparing with. And so it was with Bea Boyle when her student, Julia Baragone, took the test last September.

"I was waiting for her to call," Bea said. "It was getting late and I was getting very nervous. I couldn't even leave the house."

Turns out there wasn't much to worry about. "I passed it and it was easy for me," said Julia, the former owner of a sports clothing manufacturing company in Lima, Peru, and one of LVA's newest US citizens. "The first thing I did was call 'Miss Bea.' I felt so happy."

It's not easy to gain an appointment to take the test in New Jersey, with its vast number of immigrants who seek to become naturalized citizens. Of the 654,949 people who became citizens last year, 75-percent came from only 10 states, including New Jersey. The New York-Northern New Jersey metropolitan area is the nation's leading area for all citizenship test takers.

So it was important that Julia pass the test on her first attempt. In preparation Bea said that she tried to give Julia more material than the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, which administers the test, makes available in its prep booklets and CDs.

"I wanted to give her a good history background so the information she was given would make sense," Bea said. "We worked very hard."

The test may be done but Julia's still at work, focusing now on grammar, pronunciation and idioms with her tutor. She's a full-time student at Essex County College, now in her final week of a certificate program in massage therapy and bodywork. She's grateful for the help that Bea has given, she said, and has no plans to discontinue their sessions.

"To learn a language takes practice," Julia said.

The civics test native-born Americans flunked — but immigrants passed

From time to time, stories surface about the complexity of the US citizenship exam, stories that question whether immigrants who hope to become citizens are asked to learn more about US civics than native-born US citizens know.

In a Washington Post story, the writer cited a detailed study that said that many native-born US citizens would fail the exam. The research that the newspaper cited was conducted by the Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The center took the basic civic literacy test (see some questions below) that immigrants must pass in order to become American citizens and gave the test to US-born residents.

About 97.5 percent of immigrants taking the test passed, according to a report issued by the center. One in three US-born residents failed, based on a standard of getting six out of 10 questions correct. If the pass rate had been 7 out of 10, a full half of those taking the test would have flunked, the report said. The trouble was most acute in questions about the U.S. constitution and current political life. Full story: <http://wapo.st/131ekyj>

The Study, by the Center for the Study of the American Dream, shows the questions Americans typically get wrong. Here's the full study:

<http://bit.ly/1AgUDwH> ... and some sample questions:

Question	% US-born respondents that answered correctly
How many amendments does the Constitution have?	7%
When was the Constitution written?	9%
The House of Representatives has how many voting members?	16%
What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?	18%
Who was President during World War One?	21%
Who is the Chief Justice of the United States?	26%
We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?	29%
How many U.S. Senators are there?	36%
Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?	37%
Who is the Governor of your state now?	38%



More than one student at a time? No problem! Tom Conlon, a Passaic Public Library ESL teacher and LVA tutor and trainer, has done it for years. Above, Tom poses with recent grads of the 10-week Passaic Public Library ESL program.

Upcoming Events

Tutor Support Workshops

Please RSVP

“Comprehension Strategies for New Readers” with Perrine Robinson Geller.

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
2nd fl Boardroom

Wednesday, January 14, 2015, 1:00-3:00 pm

“How to Form Collaborative Tutor Study Groups” with Nora Devine

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003,
2nd fl Boardroom

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Montclair Public Library
50 South Fullerton Ave, Montclair, NJ 07042
Saturdays, 12:15-4:45 pm
January 17, 24, 31, February 7, 2015

We Wish You A Warm And Joyous
Holiday Season And A Happy New
Year!!

See You In 2015!