



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



Nora Devine, LVA's former coordinator of education, demonstrates practical techniques to use when teaching struggling adult readers. The tutor support workshop was held January 9 at the Bloomfield Public Library.

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## Happy New Year from *The Insider*

The newsletter of  
Literacy Volunteers of America,  
Essex & Passaic Counties

The New Year is already three weeks old but we hope it's not too late to wish you, our LVA family, a safe, happy and healthy 2014. We hope you look back on all that went well last year, and treasure those moments and relationships, and we hope more good times are headed your way. Happy New Year!

*"Maybe this year, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives, not looking for flaws, but looking for potential."*

*Ellen Goodman, Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, 1980*

## Tutor Support Workshops

Nora Devine, LVA's former coordinator of education, led 20 tutors in a superb hands-on support workshop, "Strategies for Working With Struggling Readers," on January 9 at the Bloomfield Public Library.

Nora, who is enrolled in a master's degree program and plans to become a reading specialist, demonstrated useful teaching techniques for working with struggling readers, including building phonemic awareness, multisensory decoding strategy, the VAKT Method for learning sight words and strategies for teaching fluency and developing vocabulary.

If you missed the session, no worries. We'll try to repeat it later this winter. In the meantime, Nora left us with helpful websites to explore:

[www.gcflearnfree.org](http://www.gcflearnfree.org)  
[www.newsinlevels.com](http://www.newsinlevels.com)  
[www.proliteracyednet.org](http://www.proliteracyednet.org)  
[www.cdiponline.org](http://www.cdiponline.org)  
[www.marshalladulthoodeducation.org](http://www.marshalladulthoodeducation.org)

Support workshops are designed to provide teaching tools, tips and networking opportunities for our tutors. Please contact us if there is something you'd like to see or present in a workshop.



## Getting to Know Us

### Heather,\* LVA student

There are many things to admire about Heather,\* and tenacity is one. When she began working with tutor Patricia Runkle, she could read only a few sight words. She's pressed on, despite serious health challenges, to sharpen her decoding skills. Recently, she called Patricia and proudly reported that she had read some of the words in a newspaper advertisement. "They were much more difficult than the words she's been learning in her lessons, and they took more effort to read," Patricia said. "And she did it."

Congratulations, Heather\* and keep up the good work!

*\*Not her real name*

### Dashamir, LVA student

"When I think about my students I am so very proud of them," wrote LVA tutor Alexandria Tom. "Dashamir for his determination, drive and willingness to take risks/commit. We use index cards and, according to his son, Dashamir puts all of the index cards up on the wall and practices each night after work. He does not give up!"

### Sarita, LVA trainer, on NSP program

Sarita Wilson has trained volunteers to become LVA tutors all over Essex and Passaic Counties. Last month she drew a new assignment – she was asked to train inmates at Northern State Prison to become volunteer tutors. They would then use LVA techniques to help other inmates become better readers and writers.

The joint program between the medium-security Newark prison and LVA Essex & Passaic Counties is not new. But it was Sarita's first experience with it, and she came away impressed.

"They were very highly motivated," Sarita said of the 17 men who volunteered and completed each day of the weeklong training.

"They asked a lot of questions, relevant questions," she added. "They want to be able to help people with the skills they have."

In the end, one inmate offered her the only gift he could come up with – his breakfast box of cereal.

"I was touched," Sarita said of the gift. "Very, very touched."

## Using Lyrics As Text

**Don't miss our next tutor support workshop.**

**Amy Blake**, an Essex County schoolteacher who uses song lyrics to teach reading and writing to students, is the guest presenter for our second January tutor support workshop.

Ms. Blake's presentation, "**Using Lyrics as Text: An 'Out of the Box' Method for Teaching Reading and Comprehension**," will be given Tuesday, Jan. 21, from 6-7:30 pm, at The Library Theater, Bloomfield Public Library.

While she works mostly with children, Ms. Blake says the same song lyrics she uses in her classes can be used to teach reading and comprehension to anyone, including adult learners served by LVA.

Included for all who attend will be a free "Lyrics as Text" information guide. Some of the lyrics are offered by songwriters who are interested in education and thrilled that Ms. Blake uses their musical works as teaching tools.

In addition, she'll recommend several illustrated books that can be used to help adults learn through pictures. Please RSVP to [lvaessex@verizon.net](mailto:lvaessex@verizon.net) if you'd like to attend.

Don't forget to visit our Facebook page @

<https://www.facebook.com/LVAEssexPassaicCounty>

for up-to-date info on LVA events

Want to share a story about your student's progress? Email it to Russell at [lvaessex@verizon.net](mailto:lvaessex@verizon.net)

## Getting to Know Us (cont.)

### Laura Williams, tutor, and Corine, student

Laura is one of LVA's youngest tutors. She first approached us in 2011, while still a junior at Verona High School. By the time she completed tutor training the following year, she'd already taught reading and writing to Chinatown immigrants through a New York City-based literacy project.

"It sparked my interest in teaching English," Laura, 19, said of her Sunday sessions in Chinatown. "I just wanted to help people, talk to other people, see their perspectives and help them through any difficulties they were having, especially literacy-wise."

She met Corine, her third LVA student, last fall. Learning wasn't limited to a table at the local library. Corine, from Paris, France, learned about Halloween while carving pumpkins at Laura's home. They played word games over Thanksgiving dinner.

"Corine really liked English, that's how we kind of blossomed," said Laura. "She liked the accent, liked listening to it, she showed a passion for it."

Corine recently returned to Paris. Laura continues her work with LVA and has a new student. She also attends County College of Morris, tutors grade school children in English, math, history and science and gives trombone lessons. She was a high school jazz band member for four years, after all.

She plans to meet Corine again; this time she'll be the language student. "She invited me to Paris," Laura said.



LVA student Corine (left) and tutor Laura Williams carving Halloween pumpkins.

*"No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting."*

*Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, English writer  
(May 15, 1689 – 21 August 21, 1762)*

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### Upcoming TUTOR TRAINING WORKSHOP

The next tutor training workshop series will be held at the Bloomfield Public Library, Tuesdays and Fridays, 10:15 am-1:15 pm, on March 11, 14, 18, 21, 25, 2014.

Know someone who might make a good tutor?  
Refer them to us:

website [www.lvanewark.org](http://www.lvanewark.org)  
Bloomfield office  
[lvaessex@verizon.net](mailto:lvaessex@verizon.net)  
or  
(973) 566-6200, ext. 217.

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*"Outside of a dog a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."*  
*Groucho Marx*



Laura (left) and Corine play "Guess the Word" (aka 'Sticky Head Game,' 'Who Am I' and others) over Thanksgiving dinner.



Above: Student and teacher enjoy a Skype guitar lesson

## Investing In New Jersey's Adult Learners

### Needs Analysis and Recommendations Regarding the State of Adult Literacy Education in New Jersey

**Erik Jacobson, Montclair State University, author and principal investigator.**

Now a year old, it's still one of the most comprehensive reports ever completed on the state of adult literacy education in New Jersey. It reveals that 17% of New Jersey adults lack Basic Prose Literacy skills. Roughly 28% of adults in Essex County, and 26% of adults in Passaic County lack basic literacy skills. Many have not completed high school; the effects are shown below.

34% of those without a high school diploma are not in the workforce. Those who are employed earn about half of the State's median income. 20% of those without a HS diploma live in poverty

About 100-120 hours of instruction are needed for adults to progress a grade-level but, due to funding cuts, many have no access to programs.

To view the total report, Google the report title or copy and paste the following link into a URL:

[http://lvnj.org/sites/default/files/investing\\_in\\_new\\_jerseys\\_adult\\_learners\\_approved\\_final\\_for\\_distribution.pdf](http://lvnj.org/sites/default/files/investing_in_new_jerseys_adult_learners_approved_final_for_distribution.pdf)

## The Skype's the limit!

**By Sarita and Ted Wilson, LVA tutors**

Our two students, a lovely Russian couple, recently moved. Between the difficulty of traveling during cold weather and the now-longer distance to meet, it appeared that our tutoring sessions would have to stop. That's when Skype came to the rescue and brought us back together!

We have found Skype to be an amazing interactive tool to tutor our students. Oh, and did we mention that it is FREE? Of course there are some points to be aware of if/when teaching with Skype. Obviously, both you and your student(s) must have a computer, laptop, Ipad, or Smartphone (i.e., equipped with webcam, camera and microphone). You, the tutor, also may need to be a lot more organized and willing to email materials in advance of a lesson. You will also likely prepare talking points and email exercises or files to share in advance of each lesson. As with any teaching session, the more prepared you are, the better your lessons and time spent together.

During our first Skype session, it did feel awkward to "see" each other, but that feeling disappeared within a few minutes and was replaced with the same warmth of interaction as seeing our students in person. We also weren't stressed out from driving, traffic, and parking! Since that first session, our students and we are much more relaxed and focused on the lessons. We have found Skype to be excellent for speaking activities (new vocabulary, grammar, pronunciations, and conversations, to mention a few). We can even hold a notepad close to the camera and they can read the large letters. We are starting to expand Skype use for reading activities, esp. when we email short reading lessons or exercises ahead of time. We also encourage writing (and computer literacy) activities by exchanging emails.

You might think that teaching and learning this way may be difficult. However, we have observed that it allows our students to still see our body language, and it allows us, the tutors, to see if they are still "getting it" (talking) or if they are really confused.

Our students and we have found this to be a creative alternative way to learn English, and the webcam brings in the visual aspect to make it more interactive. Our Skype lessons are generally twice a week and last 90 minutes for each session. Once a week lessons of three hours can be a "weakly" session, while shorter but more frequent get-togethers, esp. in their own homes and at mutually convenient times, can make a new language a more frequent integration into our students' lives.