



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



Maxine McCormick, an education specialist for McGraw-Hill, described a five-step approach to help students go from low literacy to a fourth-grade reading level, during last month's tutor support workshop at the Bloomfield Public Library. We've invited Maxine back in July.

The Insider

Greetings LVA family and Friends of Literacy.

Providing exceptional services to students who struggle to speak, understand, read and write English is something LVA tutors do every week, all year long.

So it seems fitting this week, April 6-12, known around the world as National Volunteer Week, that we express our gratitude to those who make our team valuable.

Scores of LVA tutors give many hours of personal time each year to help others improve their lives through literacy. We thank you for your contributions. And there are others who contribute time to our cause. There are board members and workshop presenters. There are volunteers who take photos, hang LVA fliers around town and answer our office phones. We have volunteers who call tutors to collect their hours and others who help out around the office.

So, to all of our volunteers: Thank you! We're proud of you and the work you do, this week and every week. It's a pleasure to be on your team.

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It's finally on! After two snow cancellations, we are pleased to announce that "Using Lyrics as Text," a tutor support workshop with Amy Blake, will take place April 29th.

Amy, who is sometimes described as a "social action schoolteacher," will demonstrate how she uses song lyrics to teach reading and comprehension to her students.

If you've never experienced an hour-and-a-half presentation on reading, combined with lots of listening to socially-conscious folks songs, you might want to give "Lyrics" a try. It's sheer fun. Details on Page 3.

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In May, Elizabeth Salerno will show us how to develop a "Differentiated Curriculum," one based on the needs and desires of your students. The method is seen as a successful and practical way to engage students. Elizabeth, a retired public schoolteacher, is an education instructor at Bloomfield College and, for the last nine years, an LVA tutor.

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It's Test Time! Tutors, if you know your students have been called to take an annual exam, please help encourage them to make an appointment. Thank you.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Getting to Know Us

**Khedija, LVA student
Loretta D'Agnolo, tutor**

Khedija is an avid basic literacy student and a US citizen of eight years. Our students come from around the globe and some have endured difficult transitions in life. But Khedija's journey was exceptionally arduous, beginning as a child refugee who escaped one of the longest wars in African history.

Khedija was about 12 when she and her seven-year-old brother fled their home in Eritrea, which at the time was embroiled in a 30-year war of independence with Ethiopia.

Years earlier, her family had fled to the mountains after the Ethiopian army burned to the ground every home in their village, she said. The army's destruction of entire villages and the massacre of their residents was a tactic of the war, which lasted from 1961-1991, and meant to send a serious message to rebel sympathizers who favored Eritrean independence.

Women and children weren't spared; many were killed when Ethiopian troops fired on schools, churches, mosques and homes where they took refuge. Some youths suspected of supporting the rebels were executed in public by hanging. Some were strangled.

So Khedija's father, a farmer who raised cows and sheep, sent the two children to the Sudan with a larger group of safety-seekers. For seven days the siblings took turns: while one rode the camel their father rented for the trip, the other walked.

"We hid and we walked at night," Khedija told *the Insider*. "We didn't want to get bombed or something like that. It was tough."

The pair arrived safely in the Sudan where Khedija lived for years with her sister and other Eritrean exiles. She attended school, something she couldn't do much during the war.

But work was scarce. She applied for a job overseas and, at age 17, was sent to Saudi Arabia as a housekeeper.

It was a hard life for a teenager, she said, but she got to travel with the family. On a trip to the US, she applied for permission to remain. It was granted. She became a citizen in 2006.

She was fluent in Tigre and Tigrinya, the languages of Eritrea, as well as in Arabic. But Khedija needed help with English. Someone guided her to LVA's Essex County office and she was eventually matched with Loretta D'Agnolo.

Loretta is not Khedija's first tutor, but the relationship has lasted five years. "As an individual, her faith, her personal charm, and generosity continue to be an inspiration to me," Loretta wrote of Khedija, who lives in Montclair with her husband and daughter. "You can often find Khedija in the children's room of the Montclair Library, quizzing the children's librarians on appropriate children's authors she can read with her daughter, and library programs to encourage her daughter's active curiosity." The admiration is mutual.

"Loretta has helped me a lot," Khedija said of her LVA tutor. "If I can't make it one day, she says, 'What time is good for you the next day?'" She helps me all the time. I'm happy I found her."

In the News

In the past month, stories about the Common Core State Standards Initiative adopted by 47 states and Washington, DC have clearly dominated education-related news. What the Common Core initiative is, exactly, and why it's important to adult education, is not so clear. These links to National Public Radio stories and a US Department of Education report, might help.

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Q & A: A Crash Course on Common Core
A handy reference from National Public Radio
<http://www.npr.org/2014/03/18/291166780/q-a-a-crash-course-on-common-core>

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An Education Reporter Puts Himself To The (Standardized) Test.
National Public Radio reporter Cory Turner takes an 8th-grade literacy test linked to the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

<http://www.npr.org/2014/04/09/299073572/an-education-reporter-puts-himself-to-the-standardized-test>

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Fact Check: Clearing up 7 Common Core Claims
Public radio examines Common Core misconceptions
<http://wunc.org/post/fact-check-clearing-7-common-core-claims>

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For Common Core's place in adult education, see the section "Applicability of the Common Core to Adult Education" in this US Department of Education publication, "College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education."

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf>

'Immigrant Professional Integration' and 'Migration Policy Institute' examine underemployment among skilled US immigrants

A civil engineer parking cars for a living?

It could happen, in this economy, even to educated American-born workers. But underemployment is twice as prevalent among educated foreign-born workers in the US, according to Migration Policy Institute (MPI), an independent, non-partisan Washington think tank that analyses the movement of people around the world. Educated immigrants face greater obstacles to full employment than their American counterparts, MPI found. Among those obstacles is English literacy.

"Great English classes could bring a high-skilled immigrant from dishwasher back to doctor, and bring his bilingual-bicultural skills to patients who need them," Migration Policy Institute found in a recent study. "College-educated immigrants with low English skills are twice as likely to be underemployed."

Immigrant Professional Integration, or "IMPRINT," a national coalition of non-profit groups that helps skilled immigrants start American careers, released last week a text version of its March 26 webinar, *"Research Gems: What the Latest Findings Tell Us About Skilled Immigrant Success."* The report cites data from IMPRINT's research, as well as from the Migration Policy Institute and the Center for Labor Markets and Policy at Drexel University.

"The United States continues to be a beacon attracting immigrants from around the world," IMPRINT states. "Many of these are highly educated with in-demand skills."

The coalition said these immigrants come by a variety of means, including marriage to US citizens, winning the Diversity Visa lottery, direct investment, or being granted refugee or asylee status. They are authorized to stay in the US and work here.

"Yet for a surprising number, their American Dream is deferred by multiple challenges to rebuilding their careers in the US," the non-profit coalition reported. "The taxi driver who was a scientist 'back home;' the nanny earning poverty-level wages while her international nursing degree collects dust on her dresser."

Among the risk factors for underemployment among college-educated immigrants are having a foreign degree, coming from Latin America or Africa, and lacking English skills, IMPRINT reported. To view the full reports, check these websites.

<http://imprintproject.org/images/imprint%20march%202014%20research%20webinar%20-%20final.pdf>

www.migrationpolicy.org/



Tutor Lynn Lilore and students

Upcoming Events

Tutor Support Workshops

"Using Lyrics as Text" with Amy Blake

Social action teacher Amy Blake demonstrates how to use the lyrics of folk songs to teach students to read.

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesday, April 29, 2014
6:00-7:30 pm, The Library Theater

"A Differentiated Curriculum: Catered to your student's needs," with LVA's Elizabeth Salerno.

A guide to constructing a curriculum based on a student's needs

Bloomfield Public Library, 2nd Fl., Boardroom
May 14, 2014, 3:00-4:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

West Orange Public Library
46 Mt. Pleasant Ave
West Orange, NJ 07052
Wednesdays and Fridays, 1-4 pm
Apr 16, 23, 25, 30, May 7, 9, 2014

Clifton City Hall
900 Clifton Avenue
Clifton, NJ Clifton NJ 07013
Saturdays, 12-4 pm
May 3, 10, 17, 24, 2014