



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



LVA's Mary O'Connor (above, left) was named Teacher of the Year by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning. NJALL board member Josette Peterson (above, right) presented the award at the association's annual meeting last month.

The Insider

Mary O'Connor

Mary O'Connor spent more than four decades in high school education. She taught English and theology to high school students and worked as a high school principal. So when it came time to retire, some 43 years later, she was ready for a change.

She wanted to teach adults; teach them to read and write.

"The last 10 years before I retired I had been thinking about literacy," said Mary, a tutor, trainer, workshop presenter and office volunteer for Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. "It sounded like the perfect match."

We agree. And we're not alone.

Last month, Mary was named "Teacher of the Year" by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL), a leading state proponent for adult education.

"Mary is happy to share her knowledge and love of the English language with others," said Josette Peterson, the NJALL board member who presented Mary with the "Teacher of the Year Award" at the association's 24th annual conference at Brookdale Community College. "She gives herself completely to the task and no task is too small for her."

Sally Rice, President of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties Board of Directors, said "She's been a great teacher for LVA and we are very glad to see her work recognized by NJALL in this manner,"

Mary, a Bloomfield resident, began tutoring students in a program run by the Bloomfield Public Library. Nearly four years ago, she joined LVA, which has an office and runs a separate program at the same location.

Since then Mary has tutored 11 LVA students. She's also advised tutors on teaching techniques, lesson planning, useful books and web sites, and led our first tutor support workshops.

"And somehow she finds time to help us in the office," said Cristhian Barcelos, LVA's executive director, who called Mary "one of the most dedicated participants within our program."

Of the accolades, Mary remains modest.

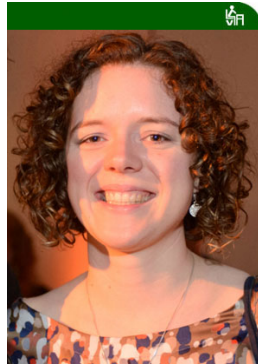
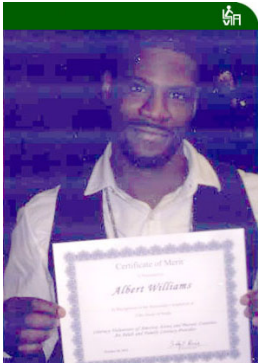
"I've gotten far more out of teaching, and the people I've taught, than I think I've ever given," she said. "If you truly love what you do, in the end that's a reward in and of itself."

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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LVA student Albert Williams & LVA tutor Kelly Ebbels

Getting to Know Us

Albert Williams, LVA student, and Carolina Sanchez, tutor

"My name is Al."

That was the Language Experience Story penned in 2011 by Albert Williams, (photo far left).

"I wasn't used to writing about myself," Albert said, when asked about the story. So he and his tutor, Carolina Sanchez, got to work on putting his thoughts to paper. "Carolina told me 'Anything you can say, you can write.' Every time she says that to me, I just keep it going."

That was evident three months ago, when Carolina gave Albert a similar writing assignment. Jot down a few of your thoughts, she told him, and she left him to his work. When she returned minutes later, Albert barely looked up.

"He was writing and kept on writing," Carolina said in a success story offered about her student. She said she asked him to read what he wrote and, later, to give more details. And he did. "He told me it was the first time he had ever written anything independently," Carolina said.

Moments like these are sometimes taken for granted but, for adults who struggle to learn to read and write, they can be incredible confidence builders.

In the US, some 36 million adults have low literacy skills, according to data provided by the US Department of Education. In Essex and Passaic Counties, more than one-in-four adults struggle with basic literacy. They're unable to read to their children, write a note to a teacher or complete a job application.

Albert plans to earn a GED. As a young man, when he dropped out of a Newark high school, he said he was often discouraged by others, told "you can't do this or you can't do that."

"That's what happened to me all my life," added Albert, a father of three who still lives in Newark. "That's when I got into the LVA tutoring program. It made me feel that I could believe in myself."

Kelly Ebbels

Nice work by Montclair Times Community Editor Kelly Ebbels, (photo above, right), who is also an LVA tutor.

Last month Kelly won New Jersey Press Association awards in three contest categories: Reporting and Writing, Responsible Journalism and Photography.

Then, on May 1, Kelly received a 2014 New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma Ambassador Award, for a series of stories she wrote on mental health, following the suicide of a Montclair teenager. Kelly visited jails, boarding homes and Newark Penn Station in order to learn more about the state of mental health in New Jersey, the Montclair Times reported. The Council was created to combat mental health stigma and create a better mental health system.

Kelly wrote about an upcoming LVA workshop for the paper, then attended the workshop and became a tutor in February.

In the News

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

- - -

Millburn district, parents puzzle over Common Core tests

<http://www.northjersey.com/news/education/district-parents-puzzle-over-common-core-tests-1.1015884>

- - -

Senior citizens in a Chicago retirement community teach English to Brazilian teenagers in a unique web chat program

http://jezebel.com/brazilian-teens-learn-english-by-video-chatting-with-ol-1574475921?utm_campaign=socialflow_jezebel_facebook&utm_source=jezebel_facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

- - -

ESL Teachers in Common-Core Era Need Different Prep, Paper Argues

A new paper argues that, as public schools move headlong into teaching new, more rigorous standards in reading, math, and science, English-as-a-second-language teachers must become more involved in the central enterprise of teaching and supporting academic content for ELL students than has traditionally been the case.

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2014/04/esl_teachers_in_common-core_er.html

Help us Stay in Touch

Recently changed your contact information – your home or email address or phone number, or know a student who has? Please let us know so we can stay in touch.

Free Webinars

Check out these free NJALL webinars this month. Register online:

http://www.njall.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=88

May 19th, 2:00 PM- 3:00 PM (EST)

From Learner Stories to Language Lessons: An Introduction to the "Learners' Lives as Curriculum" Framework

Presenter: Maricel G. Santos, San Francisco State University

This interactive webinar aims to help adult ESL teachers understand and develop language lessons that grow out of the experiences, interests, and needs of their ESL learners. Participants will be introduced to Gail Weinstein's Learners' Lives as Curriculum framework and the relevant research findings that demonstrate the role of learner stories in language acquisition and community building in the classroom. Participants will have the opportunity to see or discuss examples of model language lessons that use the LLC framework, tips for finding/gathering learner stories, and design their own stories-based literacy lesson. Participants will also be invited to join a network of teachers who are committed to making "learners' lives" the center of the language learning experience

May 27th, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (EST)

Adult Learners and 21st Century Technology: What Kinds of Skills Should We Be Developing?

Presenter: Erik Jacobson, Montclair State University

Adult literacy and basic education classes have always prepared learners to use reading and writing classes in their everyday lives. How has technology changed that? This webinar will focus on the kinds of skills people need to work with 21st century technology. The presenter will review research that helps move us beyond the basics of logging on and towards an understanding of the kinds of analytical and critical thinking that technology use supports and demands. Participants will be invited to share their own technology histories as a means of looking for larger trends in learning and instruction.

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From the NJALL Archives:

"Supporting Volunteer Tutors and Instructors in Adult Basic Education."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZqBjnSOEvE>



Amy Blake leads last month's tutor support workshop, "Using Lyrics as Text."

Upcoming Events

Tutor Support Workshops

Please RSVP

"Getting Started: It's Not as Hard as You Think," with Mary O'Connor

Mary, a retired school teacher, LVA tutor and trainer, will cover the basics of getting started as a tutor, from that first introductory phone call to effective lesson planning.

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Wednesday, June 4, 2014
2nd floor Boardroom
3:00-4:30 and 6:00-7:30 pm

"Reading Across the Curriculum" with Maxine McCormick

Maxine, a McGraw Hill reading specialist, will demonstrate how to apply reading techniques to different academic fields, including civics.

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesday, July 22, 2014
2nd floor Boardroom
3:00-4:30 and 6:00-7:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshop

Clifton City Hall
900 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013
Saturdays, 12-4 pm
September 6, 13, 20, 27, 2014