



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

The Insider

Greetings LVA family.

For tutors who seek advice on how to best help their students to learn and advance, we have good news. Mary O'Connor, an LVA tutor and trainer, has been named "Tutor Support Specialist" for LVA Essex and Passaic Counties. Mary is a retired school teacher and principal who was named Teacher of the Year in 2014 by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning. She will be available for calls Thursday afternoons in the Bloomfield office as of July 1.

Our master trainer, Nina Peyser, offered an inspiring workshop last month on "Pronunciation and Accent Reduction." Those who attended the tutor support workshop brought in small hand mirrors so they could observe their mouth and tongue positions as they tried to make a variety of sounds that students sometimes struggle with. It was unlike any other support workshop we've offered and was well-received by our tutors. Thank you, Nina!

Congratulations to Cristhian Barcelos, the executive director of LVA Essex and Passaic Counties, who on July 1 became president of the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning. NJALL is a professional association that encourages growth and development of lifelong learning and lifelong learners in New Jersey. We wish Cristhian much success in his leadership roles of both organizations.

In the News

To view the following stories, copy and paste the highlighted websites into an internet search

"Diegnan Bill to Promote Bi-Literacy Among NJ Students Advanced by Assembly" – tapinto.net

A bi-partisan bill that would establish a "State Seal of Biliteracy" to honor New Jersey high school students who achieve literacy in one or more world languages, in addition to English, was approved by the state assembly. The bill was sent to the state senate for consideration and referred to the Senate Education Committee. <http://bit.ly/1J2O6so>

"Raising graduation rates with questionable quick fixes" - NPR.

With high school graduation rates at an all-time high, NPR's education team digs into the statistics and shows the picture is more complicated than it seems. <http://n.pr/1I1itPs>

"The truth about America's graduation rate"
NPR slide show. <http://apps.npr.org/grad-rates/>



Nina Peyser, who trains tutors and trainers for LVA, presented an instructive workshop last month on "Pronunciation and Accent Reduction."

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Esther, who never attended school while growing up in Nigeria, passed the US citizenship test last May, after a few months of work with tutor Anita Lutolf.

Tutor Training Workshops Please spread the word!

South Orange Public Library
65 Scotland Road, South Orange, NJ 07079
Saturdays, 12:15 – 4:45 pm
September 12, 19, 26, October 3, 2015

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
2nd fl Boardroom
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
September 22, 24, 29, October 1, 6, 8, 2015

Clifton Public Library
292 Piaget Ave, Clifton, NJ 07011
Community Room A
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:30 am – 1:30 pm
October 5, 7, 14, 19, 21, 26, 2015

Montclair Public Library
50 South Fullerton Ave, Montclair, NJ 07042
Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
October 19, 21, 26, 28, November 2, 4, 2015

“Never make fun of someone who speaks broken English. It means they know another language.”
– H. Jackson Brown Jr.

Getting to Know Us

**Esther, LVA student
Anita Lutolf, tutor**

Esther spent her childhood on her family's farm in Nigeria, laboring long hours each day to cultivate cassava, yams, beans and peanuts. She also helped her parents sell and trade goods at the market. That left little time for a formal education; in fact, it left her none.

“We didn't go to school,” Esther said. “Our parents got us to farm, every day, every day. That's what my family did. We farmed. We traded.”

Esther eventually left the farm and, as an adult with five children to support, started her own restaurant. She spoke what she describes as “broken English” but had neither learned to read or write in Nigeria or in her first 11 years in the US.

In late 2014 she enrolled as a basic literacy student in LVA and soon set her sights on becoming a U.S. citizen. She took the citizenship test last March, after only a few months of study, but failed. When she became eligible to retake the test six weeks later, there was never a question about whether or not she'd try again.

“Why should I give up?” she asked. “I want to be a citizen. I like America. I love America. I did not want to give up.”

She passed the test in May, on her second attempt, and after only about five months of work with her tutor, Anita Lutolf.

“She was so excited,” Anita said. “I don't think I've seen anyone so happy in my life. I felt elated. I was very happy for her.”

The two meet at least 8 hours per month in a local library and Esther also completes work at home. Currently, they use material from “Reading Comprehension,” a book of vocabulary, word puzzles, stories and other exercises.

They're both thrilled with Esther's progress and see a bright future ahead. “I am so glad I came here,” Esther said.

Tutor's Tip

When it comes to tutoring multiple students in a small group, tutor Mary O'Connor recommends we think of ways that students can collaborate and compete, as they do in group games. For free printable worksheets and lesson plans for tutors, she recommends www.busyteacher.org/

Literacy opens a wide door to life. Help us keep that door open with your donation!

Thanks in large part to you, we are able to aid hundreds of students each 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/donatetolva/> or by mailing us a check.

Sussex Educational Foundation, Berkeley College, & LVA Essex and Passaic Counties Adult Education Pilot Program

In a 3rd floor classroom in Clifton, adult English language learners find a daily dose of inspiration and advice posted to the white board at the front of class.

"Practice, practice, practice," said Victoria, as she reads the quote written by her instructor, Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo, on the final day of her intermediate level ESL class at Berkeley College. Obvious, perhaps, but for students who often do not speak English at home or work, practice is not so easy to get.

"This class is good because everyone speaks to me in English, so I understand more," said Victoria, a writer from Colombia who, four nights each week, takes two buses from her Bloomfield home to Berkeley College in Clifton. The commute can include an hour's wait in Paterson if a bus connection is missed.

The new program of beginner, intermediate and advanced level ESL classes, is a joint effort between host Berkeley College, Sussex Educational Foundation and Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex and Passaic Counties. Classes were offered two hours per night, Monday through Thursday, for 10 weeks from April to June, and a new round of classes started this week.

Rita, an intermediate level student who also lives in Bloomfield, said she knew no English when she emigrated from Gujurat, India. *"Zero,"* she said. *"Little by little, I learned. But I need to learn more, that's why I came here. Stephanie is very good; she explains everything."*

The final day of class is festive. Students have cooked or purchased foods that are popular in their home countries, and all are laid out buffet style with a label that describes each delicacy. The dishes include 'Chrusciki' from Poland, 'Mangu' from the Dominican Republic and 'Khaman' from India. Between the potluck dinner, photo sessions and socializing in English, students discuss their transitions to the United States and their goals.

In the six months since she came from Belarus, Ludmila, of West Milford, said she passed her motor vehicle test in English and plans to become a medical assistant. *"For the first three or four months, I didn't understand much,"* Ludmila said. *"But then I started to listen to American TV programs, like News 12, and I started to understand."*

Manal, of Garfield, wants to become fluent in English in part so she can help people understand the crisis at home in Syria, which has been crippled by a brutal civil war since 2011. *"I need to talk to everybody here, the American people, ministers, everyone, and say we must stop the war in Syria,"* Manal said.

