



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



Maritza Chang, an ESOL student from Lima, Peru, and coordinator of LVA's English-Spanish Language Exchange, is our Student of the Year for Essex County. Congratulations, Maritza!

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family.

It was standing room only at our Annual Awards Ceremony at the East Orange Public Library where a couple of hundred people gathered last month to celebrate the achievements of our students, tutors, teachers, and supporting cast of literacy advocates. In all more than 300 students and tutors were honored for their hard work and commitment to adult education.

Perhaps Essex County Student of the Year Maritza Chang said it best that night when she explained the difficulty students face when trying to learn a new language as an adult.

"I'm here today because I am like you, I have dreams, I have goals, I have a family, and especially I want to learn," Maritza told the crowd gathered in the library's East Orange Room as she accepted her award. "Trying to learn when you are a child is totally different from when you are an adult. Some people would tell you that it is difficult, and it can be, but it isn't impossible because you want to learn and that will be your engine." Photos of the event, and more from our award winners, appear on Pages 4 and 5 of this e-newsletter.

Thank you, Catherine Mitch of Literacy New Jersey-Mercer County, for last month's inspiring workshop presentation on "Overcoming the Fear Factor in Writing" for adult students.

We were fortunate to have students who placed well in last year's NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest, with four LVA students winning awards in several categories, including first place prizes for memoir writing and fiction. NJALL is now accepting entries for its 2017 contest and we urge our tutors to encourage their students to enter. Winners receive cash prizes and the opportunity to have their work published in the organization's magazine. Details can be found at www.njall.org

In the News

To view the following stories, copy and paste the highlighted website into an internet search bar.

"Hiding in plain sight: The adult literacy crisis," The Washington Post <https://goo.gl/PQgjpM>

"10 Assumptions to rethink about English-Language Learners," Education Week <https://goo.gl/p5uGk3>

"After Nearly 2 Decades, Californians revisit ban on Bilingual Education," NPR on California's Proposition 58 <https://goo.gl/rYbuvj>

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
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Percy, a graduate of LVA's advanced-level ESL class at Berkeley College in Newark, attributes his English improvement in part to a chance find on a bus.

Tutor Support Workshops

"Strategies for New Readers,"

with Perrine Robinson-Geller

Bloomfield Public Library, 2nd floor Boardroom
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesday, November 15, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

"Shaping the Future of Adult Education,"

with Cristhian Barcelos

Bloomfield Public Library, 2nd floor Boardroom
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Thursday, December 15, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Bloomfield Public Library

By Nina Peyser

Bloomfield Public Library

Mondays & Thursdays, 1:00-4:00 pm

November 17, 21, 28, December 1, 5, & 8, 2016

Free Webinar

"Bringing Classroom Content to Your Students' Mobile Devices"

Presenter: Nell Eckersley, Literacy Assistance
November 17, 2016; 3:00-4:00 pm
NJALL: www.njall.org

Getting to Know Us

Percy, LVA student

Percy is no stranger to hard work. He started laboring on his family farm in Chiclayo, Peru, when he was a youngster. He worked in the rice fields in the morning and attended school in the afternoon. "It was difficult," Percy said. "I was supposed to just study, but when you see your family struggling, you have to help out."

Percy and his brother picked and washed mangoes to truck to town and sell at the market, along with the family's rice.

After Percy finished high school, the family left the farm and moved to Lima. They set out for a 14-hour journey by bus with only the clothes they could carry in a few small boxes.

Percy quickly found work and this time was the sole supporter of his family. "I had been working since I was young, so supporting my family wasn't difficult," Percy said.

In 2008, Percy moved to the U.S. "Coming to the U.S. was really hard," he said. "I left a 9-year-old son in Peru, but I wanted to leave my country to get a better job. When I came to this country, I came full of hopes and dreams for the welfare of my family."

At first he washed cars during an extremely cold winter. But he knew there must be something better.

One day, he boarded the bus to work and on the seat next to him was an English grammar book. "I tried reading the book," he said, "because I never knew anything about English. I only spoke Spanish. Thank God I found that book and started reading and gaining knowledge."

American television also was helpful. "I try to memorize how to pronounce words. I practice every day," he said.

We met Percy at Berkeley College in Newark where he was studying English through LVA. He recently graduated from Berkeley's advanced-level class. Percy has now found a steady job as a welder. His prospective boss said, "You have one week to learn. If you can do it, the job is yours." Percy stated, "I now have the job."

He still helps out his parents in Peru and his son who is now studying computers in college. "I am sure I can do more things," Percy said. "First of all, I would like to learn more English to have a better career. That is my dream. I think I can do it," Percy said.

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.



Karen Kirk, Tutor of the Year for Essex County, is a talented educator and artist whose students were also honored at this year's Annual Awards Ceremony.

How the digital age changes literacy education

by Chandra Johnson, Deseret News

In most U.S. schools, it used to be that children were expected to arrive at kindergarten ready to read — mastering the alphabet and beginning to sound words out on their own.

But if a child arrives at school with just their ABCs and 123s, it might not be enough, says University of Nevada literacy professor Diane Barone.

“It creates a double disadvantage for kids if the home doesn’t have a lot of books in it and they don’t have computers or internet access,” Barone said. “It’s hard if they don’t see a lot of technology before they come to school because other kids have seen it since they were 2 or 3. It’s worrisome.”

Literacy used to mean the ability to read and write, but in recent years, that term has become an umbrella for reading, writing and digital skills that run the gamut from typing to intuitively understanding how to interact with both computers and other devices, as well as an early grasp that everything online must be vetted.

“We now have a new definition of literacy where we’re trying to bring the ideas of digital literacy and print literacy together,” said Julie Todaro, president of the American Library Association.

Today, a child who arrives in class ready to read might actually be considered “behind” if they don’t also know how to interact with tablet or computer activities teachers increasingly employ in classrooms.

Reprinted from the Deseret News. For full story, copy and paste the following link into an Internet search: <https://goo.gl/C3PT2y>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Karen Kirk, LVA tutor

Karen Kirk, Tutor of the Year for Essex County, is not only a dedicated LVA tutor, but also a talented stained glass artist. She tutors two students separately for 16 hours per month, and still finds time to pursue her hobby, creating works for display and sale.

Karen has been with LVA since 2011. Prior to joining the LVA family, she taught elementary school in Belleville for 40 years. “I taught generations of students. I had some students come back to me as parents, which was a lot of fun. I also taught alongside young teachers who at one time were my students. I just loved it,” she said. Karen has remained friends with a lot of her students on social media. She recently learned that one of her favorite students just joined the army and will soon be deployed to Iraq.

When asked why she left her post after a successful 40 year run, she thought about it and sighed, “I guess I finally got tired of marking papers at night and dealing with bureaucracy,” she said. “I felt it was time to walk away. There were other things I wanted to do like volunteer for LVA. I had looked into it the year before I retired and realized I didn’t have the time to put into it like I wanted.”

Karen has helped a steady stream of LVA students since she began her tenure with us. Because of their outstanding accomplishments, both of her current students received awards at LVA’s recent Annual Awards Ceremony. “Tutoring is very rewarding,” Karen said. “I admire the hard work my students put into reaching their goals.”

While her students attended the awards ceremony, Karen had to miss it for the first time since joining LVA. The day before, she’d learned that her first grandchild was born at 4 a.m. and she jumped in her car and drove to Philadelphia to be by her daughter’s side. Even then, she took the time to call us and express her regrets for missing the ceremony.

Karen spends her down time in her stained glass home studio creating sun catchers, small lamps and other custom orders. Most customers learn of her work by word of mouth, or find her via Facebook, but she also displays her art publicly, from time to time, as she did recently in an exhibition at the Montclair Women’s Club.

“People send me photographs of their dogs and I make a replica in glass,” she said. Alongside her glasscutter, copper foil, and soldering iron, Karen keeps a first aid box handy. “I go through at least one Band-Aid per day,” she laughed.

2016 Annual Awards Ceremony

More than 300 students and tutors were honored at our Annual Awards Ceremony, held last month at the East Orange Public Library. It was a night of beautiful acceptance speeches and heartfelt acknowledgements from students whose lives have been improved through literacy and the tutors who helped them. Here's some of what was seen and heard.



Bin Lin Wei, an ESOL student from Essex County, told the crowd she felt comfortable speaking English publicly when, only a few years ago, the thought of speaking privately with a store clerk in English terrified her. She remembered an experience at a state Motor Vehicle Commission office, where a worker asked her to sign a form on a "pad," a word she didn't understand. "The lady said to me 'Can you please sign quickly, there are many people behind you.' I was very embarrassed."



Tutor Sherri Smith encouraged students to remain positive, something she said has helped her students, Magaly and Maria, to advance their language skills. "Whatever questions they are asked in English, they're able to respond back," she explained. "If they have a sick child at home they're able to call the hospital or call the doctor's office and say that we have a sick child and we need someone as soon as possible."



2016 Annual Awards Ceremony (cont)

More from our annual awards ceremony at the East Orange Public Library last month.



Abir, a student from Syria, had kind words for her tutor, Rick Fairlamb, who was unable to attend the ceremony. "I am able to speak to you today because of him," she said. "He is more a father than a teacher and he has been with me every step of the way. He has been my number one fan and my support. I'm grateful for all his time and patience."



Tutor Alethea Jones said "With this opportunity, I realize I found my passion with teaching ESL. Like they say, when you find your passion you don't feel like you're working. And I don't feel like I'm working." She also pointed out Mary O'Connor, the LVA trainer and support specialist who led Alethea's tutor training workshop. "I want to thank you for all the cool things you taught us in class, and how to fold up those ShopRite bags," Alethea added.



Congratulations to All!