



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



Groups have more fun! Just ask Mary O'Connor, shown here with a small group she tutors at the Bloomfield Public Library. From left, Mariana, Ligia, Mary, Maritza and Esteban.

The Insider

Happy New Year LVA family! We wish you a happy and healthy 2016, one of peace and compassion.

It's a wrap! We just wrapped up another great, 10-week ESL class, this time in partnership with the Paterson Public Library. Congrats to the grads (photos Page 3). We'll offer similar courses with Passaic Public Library starting January 11, and with Berkeley College-Newark on April 11.

Last chance: The final deadline to enter NJALL's 2016 Learner Writing Contest is January 11. Five categories, cash prizes, winning entries published. Does it get any better? Details at www.njall.org

Professional development: What can programs do to develop the capacity and confidence of new or less-experienced instructors? Find out in this *free webinar*: "Introduction to the Adult Education Teacher Induction Toolkit," via LINC (Literacy Information and Communication System), and JSI Research and Training Institute. Tues., Jan. 26, 2016, 2:00-3:15 pm. Additional info at: <http://bit.ly/1MTXIXZ>

In the News

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

"Immigrants need more than 'survival English' to succeed," Newsday OpEd Opinion

There's a big gap between learning enough English to survive in the U.S. and what most immigrants need - learning enough to excel, according to this Newsday opinion piece writer. The key to change is funding and, since more funds are not likely to come to adult ESL programs, monies already allocated should be spent more strategically, requiring higher standards from existing literacy programs. <http://nwsdy.li/1S4jCzQ>

"The Schools Taking in Syrian Refugees,"

The Atlantic

Some communities have welcomed those searching for a home and set up systems to help them rebuild. <http://theatlntc/1RifhZQ>

"Four common challenges that stymie adult learners' progress," The Examiner

Story focuses on setting realistic expectations for adult learners in literacy programs, given the time constraints and other challenges adult learners face. <http://exm.nr/1TxVpz9>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Legally-blind since birth, Debbie Bloomer learned to communicate in English, Spanish, and Braille. She's an inspiration to her students, such as Emmanuel, shown here.

Tutor Support Workshops

Please RSVP

“Grammar Basics for You and Your Student”

with Elizabeth Salerno

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tuesday, January 19, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

“Pronunciation and Accent Reduction”

with Nina Peyser

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Thursday, February 25, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Please spread the word!

Montclair Public Library

50 South Fullerton Ave, Montclair, NJ 07042

Saturdays, 12:15-4:45 pm

January 30, February 6, 13, 20, 2016

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Mondays and Thursdays, 10:15 am-1:15 pm

March 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 2016

Getting to Know Us

Debbie Bloomer, LVA tutor, Bloomfield

Learning to speak, read, or write a new language requires determination, patience and understanding, both from adult learners and instructors. Perhaps no one knows this better than Debbie Bloomer.

Legally blind since birth, Debbie has learned to communicate effectively in English, Spanish, and Braille. She joined Literacy Volunteers of America four years ago and brought with her decades of experience in helping students overcome obstacles to learning.

She earned a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling and spent her career teaching Braille and other adaptive skills to students from preschool through 12th grade, as well as vocational skills to adults. “My interest in helping people developed when I was working summer jobs,” she said. “I supervised a group of sight impaired children.”

Debbie has retired but never really stopped teaching. In her first volunteer assignment following retirement, she taught an ESL class at the Bloomfield Public Library.

“I found that the people were accepting,” Debbie said. “Maybe when people have their own challenges, there is a special bond or understanding that occurs.”

When LVA moved to the Bloomfield Public Library, Debbie took the training to become a tutor. It meant juggling her tutoring schedule with her many other activities but why not? She'd worked with adults before and she still enjoyed teaching. So, with a few modifications, she was off and running. “One of the things that goes with being visually impaired is that you have to do a little more preparation,” Debbie noted.

That includes making minor adjustments, such as having two copies of the same material, one for herself and another for her student, and creating worksheets in large print. She also translates material from Braille and employs speech recognition software.

“Sometimes I look up free worksheets on the internet and other times I create my own,” she said. “It depends upon what I am teaching.” Debbie is a big fan of the Challenger series and highly recommends it for adult learners.

Through her many years of experience, Debbie developed a mantra: “With a little bit of planning and very few adaptations, someone who is visually impaired can easily become a student or a tutor,” she 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.

Paterson Public Library

10-week program of ESOL classes A partnership with Literacy Volunteers of America

Reynalda vows to achieve in retirement something she never had the opportunity to do as a worker with two jobs and three children to raise: She's determined to become fluent in English.

One warm evening last month, the recently-retired Paterson woman joined more than a dozen classmates for the final session of an ESL program at the Paterson Public Library. The classes, held four nights each week for 10 weeks, were offered in a partnership between the library and LVA. They drew students from the Paterson area and beyond, immigrants from countries as near as Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and as far as Jordan, Turkey and Syria - a reflection of the city's population, one of the nation's most diverse.

Students shared a potluck dinner of pupusa, yuca, pernil, pasta, plantains, and salads, among other dishes, as they listened to words of encouragement from ESL teacher Geannette Garcia, Paterson Public Library director Cindy Czesak, and Cristhian Barcelos, executive director of LVA Essex and Passaic Counties.

And they shared their stories.

Reynalda, for instance, arrived from Huamuxtitlán, Mexico, more than two decades ago. She was determined to earn enough money to establish a home in the U.S. so she could bring her children - two boys, then 9 and 16 years old, and a girl, age 17 - from Mexico. It didn't take long but she remembers the period as one of the loneliest of her life; she was on her own in a foreign country and unable to communicate in English.

"It was so difficult," Reynalda recalled. "I'm crying for one year. One year, crying every day. My kids came one year later."

In the meantime, she worked as a house cleaner and department store worker. She also enrolled in English classes. She took additional classes from time to time but affordable courses like those offered in Paterson, are not always available at night or on weekends.

Her children were not as enthusiastic about starting school, fearing their lack of English would make them stand out. She enrolled them the day after they arrived.

"I said, 'You go to school, you'll learn English,'" she recalled. Reynalda and her two eldest children were particularly strict with her youngest son, who was just starting elementary school. They helped him daily to study vocabulary and grammar. He went on to graduate from St. Peter's College in Jersey City.

"He's finished," she said. "I'm very proud. I'm retired now, a U.S. citizen. I'm looking for a school all the time."

Others said they enrolled in the program to advance their careers or prepare them to enter a U.S. school.

Luis, from San Francisco, Dominican Republic, said he wants to better understand customers on his job in a Paterson barbershop. Mustafa, from Amman, Jordan, works in a food market but wants to go to college and become an engineer. Jose, a model from Venezuela, is awaiting working papers; he enrolled to practice conversation skills.

Maritza, a school bus driver from Marazan, El Salvador, and Reynalda's daughter-in-law, said she joined the class to work on her grammar and prepare to take the GED. "I would like to go to college and become a social worker" said the Paterson mother of two girls.

"It's never too late."

