



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



Literacy leaders around the state have graciously led our tutor support workshops for more than two years. Last month Elizabeth Salerno showed us grammar basics for students and tutors.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family.

Thanks for your support: We've been fortunate to receive tons of support from teachers, tutors and literacy advocates around the state who volunteer to lead our monthly tutor support workshops. We owe a special thanks to all those who give up their time to share their skills with our tutors, most recently to Elizabeth Salerno who led a wonderful workshop last month on "Grammar Basics for You and Your Students." Upcoming support workshops include next week's "Pronunciation and Accent Reduction," with Nina Peyser, and "Tips & Techniques for Encouraging New Writers" in March with Perrine Robinson-Geller. Details on Page 3.

It's in the details: We're working out the fine details for an ESL conversation group through Montclair schools, and ESL classes through Berkeley College in Newark. We're still recruiting students and teachers for Berkeley College, as well as other programs we're planning, so if you know any, please send them our way.

Groups have more fun: Our focus at LVA Essex and Passaic Counties is on small group instruction: It's often easier for tutors, in that students tend to work together and help and encourage one another, and it allows us to serve more adults who are waiting for help. If you're a working tutor, even a seasoned one, and would like to sit in on a single tutor training session that covers group instruction, just let us know.

In the News

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

"Does the Term 'English-Language Learner' Carry a Negative Connotation?" - Education Week

Students at a Mass. charter school think so and file a petition with the government to substitute a term that values the other languages and cultures that students come from.

<http://bit.ly/1PNaJnV>

"Scoring change helps more adults secure GEDs" - Gainesville Times

Passing grade drops five points, making test shorter, and retroactive to 2014. Around the country, some students who failed the test are now told that they passed.

<http://bit.ly/23Sfwig>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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We focus on group instruction at LVA E&P with help from tutors like Mary O'Connor, our Tutor Support Specialist, and students like Mariana, Ligia, Maritza and Esteban.

Tutor Support Workshops

Please RSVP

"Pronunciation and Accent Reduction" with Nina Peyser

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Thursday, February 18, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

"Tips & Techniques for Encouraging New Writers,"

with Perrine Robinson-Geller

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tuesday, March 15, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Please spread the word!

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

Mariana, Ligia, Maritza and Esteban, LVA students

Different countries. Different backgrounds. One big family. Every Wednesday, the conference room at the Bloomfield Public Library resonates with sounds of laughter and lots of talking. Tutor Mary O'Connor is teaching her group of four students, Mariana, Ligia, Maritza, and Esteban, who come together each week to hone their English skills.

Mariana, who has been studying with Mary for five years, has been in the U.S. for nine. In her native Ecuador, she raised her son who is now a student at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark. She's raising a second child and recently started an organic cleaning business, "Magic Hands Touch." The company has 16 employees and, with the help of a Newark community organization, is about to launch a company website. Mary has offered Mariana literacy support all through the process. "Miss Mary teaches me very well," Mariana said. "I can communicate better."

Ligia, second to join Mary's group, arrived in the U.S. 11 years ago from Ecuador. She's a former accountant and, now, a stay-at-home mom with a four-year-old daughter. She'll soon have to navigate the public school system and, for that, the group provides good preparation. "I like to practice speaking English and I have nice people to practice it with," she said.

Maritza and Esteban emigrated from Peru 6 months ago. They are the most recent members of Mary's group and are also members of LVA's English-Spanish language exchange. Maritza, a child psychologist in Peru, is working to improve her English in order to study at a U.S. university and attain a license to practice psychology. "I know it will be difficult," Maritza said, "I have to work very hard for that." Esteban, a former hypnotherapist in his country, now works as a machine operator. He aspires to improve his English to resume his hypnotherapy practice. "Working in a group is a great feature," he said. "Maritza and I like to be together and I find it interesting to learn from other people. We speak in English about our countries."

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/donatotolva/> or by mailing us a check.



"Being an Immigrant Is Now Even Harder,"

The Daily Beast

An immigrant's life in a new country is not easy. It's like learning to live all over again. But lately the Syrian refugee crisis has made the path to a new life even rockier.

When I came to the United States from Turkey as an international student 13 years ago, it was because there were limited educational and professional opportunities for women at home. Though I had two degrees, there was no appropriate Ph.D. program for me in Turkey. I was lucky enough to receive a scholarship that covered my tuition in a Ph.D. program and a small teaching assistant salary in the U.S., and I was eager to join my many friends who were studying abroad, and to grow from the diversity and different cultures in the states.

I cannot compare my status then with that of today's Syrian refugees, but even under my different circumstances, the transition from one culture to another was hard and I didn't always feel welcome. Not speaking English fluently and not understanding American culture were the greatest early challenges I faced, with outcomes occasionally funny but often disheartening and cruel. To earn my scholarship, I was ironically assigned to teach public speaking while I was barely able to craft a sentence in English. I was beyond embarrassed to be in front of the students.

When I first arrived in the United States, I was very lonely and found it difficult to make connections,,,

Reprinted from The Daily Beast. For full story, copy and paste the URL below into a Google search.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/01/31/being-an-immigrant-is-now-even-harder.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Mary O'Connor, LVA tutor

Mary O'Connor wears a variety of hats at Literacy Volunteers, the most recent being on staff part time as Tutor Support Specialist. Mary began her relationship with LVA many years ago when the office was at Caldwell College as a tutor and an office volunteer. The staff appreciated that they could faithfully depend on her to accomplish the arduous task of calling tutors to report their monthly hours. When asked how she went from tutoring two students and an office volunteer to being a tutor trainer, workshop presenter, Tutor Support Specialist, and currently tutoring 6 students, Mary said with her usual good nature, "I opened my big mouth."

Mary is a big proponent of teaching small groups of students. Currently she has a group of four students, all with varied backgrounds and abilities. She stated her educational philosophy, which is, "If you can teach one student, it is just as easy and in some ways easier to teach small groups. You can utilize the interactions among students to move the lesson along." And along they move with gesturing and laughter, which one could easily mistake for a party game of charades. One aspect that cannot be mistaken is that learning is always taking place. Under that warm smile, a serious taskmaster resides. Mary taught in an all girls' high school for 34 years and also worked as an administrator for six years.

Upon her "official" retirement, Mary wanted to have the opportunity to work with adults and through Volunteer Match, she found LVA. "And," she said, "the rest is history." Her desire to work with adults stemmed from her immigrant Italian father and his experience learning English as a second language. Mary said, "I like teaching people from other countries or Americans who got short changed." Along with her group, she also tutors individuals whose native tongue is English but for various reasons can neither read nor write. In 2014 Mary was awarded "Teacher of the Year" by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning, the largest adult education association in the state.

As Tutor Support Specialist, Mary is always on call to help tutors with any situations they may encounter. She counsels tutors over the phone, at the Bloomfield library, and makes her tutoring sessions readily available for interested observers. Mary emphasizes that one does not need a background in education to become a successful tutor. "You need a background in dedication," she said. When asked why she will continue to tutor into the foreseeable future, Mary said, "Tutoring is an affirmation that I am still involved in education. It is a big part of who I am."