



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



Know which English language sounds are most difficult to make for students from Poland, Korea or the Pacific Islands? All covered in Nina Peyser's wonderful "Pronunciation" workshop.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family.

Literacy student Clifford Henry never considered himself much of a fiction writer. He mostly writes about growing up in the rural south. But last month, after learning that his piece "Confused Young Man" won first place in the fiction category of the 2016 New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning (NJALL) Learner Writing Contest, he's already planning a second story. "Oh man, that's a blessing," Clifford, a 36-year military reserve member who has served in Iraq and Guantanamo, Cuba, said of the award, which comes with a cash prize and an opportunity to be published online. Congratulations to Clifford and our other student winners – Fernanda Contreras, Beralia Briceno and Carl Miller (a pen name). Photos and excerpts on Page 4.

The 2016 NJALL Scholarship application is now available online. Two scholarships will be awarded to candidates who obtained a NJ high school diploma by attending a NJ adult education program and have been accepted by an accredited post-secondary institution. Application and supporting materials due by April 30, 2016; details at www.njall.org

In the News

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

"Native tribe fights to save their language"

Aljazeera: UNESCO estimates that more than 6,000 languages will go into extinction if no efforts are made to preserve them. On a Northern California reservation, tribal elders are struggling to save their language by teaching children Hupa, a complicated ancient Native American language that, until recently, was given up for dead. <http://bit.ly/1L9uQBo>

"Are new language preferences dictated by a learner's gender?" Toronto Star

Survey of a million language learners finds differences in the languages men and women choose to study. <http://on.thestar.com/1TY0vs0>

"Hightstown: Literacy New Jersey tutoring program is life-changing for local woman," Packet Media Group/ centraljersey.com

A Mercer County woman from Ecuador enrolls in a literacy program and overcomes depression, related to her inability to communicate in English, helps her children with homework and wins an NJALL writing contest award. <http://bit.ly/1QF145x>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Nunu, who survived infant abandonment and two civil wars in Liberia, has a GED, U.S. citizenship and an attentive LVA tutor, Fred Liss, shown above. She plans to become a nurse.

Tutor Support Workshops

Presenters and ideas wanted!

“Tips & Techniques for Encouraging New Writers” has been postponed until June 2016

“Recovering the Lost Tools of Phonics”

with Tracey Williams

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Thursday, April 7, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

“Grammar Basics for You and Your Student – Part 2”

with Elizabeth Salerno

Bloomfield Public Library

90 Broad St, 2nd floor Boardroom

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Thursday, May 12, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Please spread the word!

YMCA of Montclair, Geyer Family Branch

159 Glenridge Avenue

Montclair, NJ 07079

New evening workshop: Wednesdays, 6:00-8:30 pm

April 20-June 1, 2016

Getting to Know Us

Nunu, LVA student

Born on the eve of one of Africa's worst civil wars; Nunu was abandoned and placed in a bin, left to the good will of any stranger that might come to her aid.

“A woman was passing by and saw a basket on a window sill,” Nunu, 28, an LVA student, said of her modest beginnings in Monrovia, Liberia. “That is how she took me.”

Nunu would eventually learn she was one of 11 children. She met her father when she was 10 years old but opted to remain with the woman who found her, unofficially her foster mom, until she was 20. Her childhood education was limited.

“I had some schooling in the village but I had to do farm work,” Nunu said. “She didn't have money to send me to school.”

Nunu came to the U.S. nine years ago; her transition has been anything but easy. She had difficulty understanding American English, which differs from what she calls the “broken English” she learned at home, and it led to her social isolation. She worked a series of menial jobs, often holding down more than one at a time, while getting very little sleep at her father's crowded East Orange home, which she shared with 10 others. She eventually moved to her own apartment in Newark with an older sister.

“She went from changing bed pans to distributing medication,” said her tutor, Fred Liss. “She says whatever holds her back, she will get through it. She is a tough cookie.”

Since her arrival in the U.S., Nunu has earned her GED, become a U.S. citizen, obtained a driver's license, and made advancements on her job. She started as a home health aide and, after months of study, passed an exam that led to her current job - dispensing medication at a mental health facility.

Nunu plans to attend community college and become a registered nurse. “I really want to be the first one in my family to go to college,” she said. “LVA has helped me a lot. My tutor and I work on writing and spelling. I can read much better. If you don't have an education, you don't have anything.”

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.



Being a Teenager is Hard Enough Without Having to Learn English as a Second Language

By Chin Lu

Reprinted from vice.com; Feb. 22, 2016

Shortly after my family relocated from Taipei, Taiwan, to Modesto, California, an older boy groped me on the middle school bus. I ignored him until I felt his sticky fingers touching my legs, bare in denim shorts. I tried to blink the reality away, but his hands were still there, creeping further up. I squeezed my knees together, and with my arms, I pushed down my backpack on my thighs as hard as I could, creating a physical shield between him and me. Internally, I was searching for the words I could use to stop him—***stop touching me, get off***—but all I had in my English repertoire were things like, "The restaurant is on the left side of this street. I like to bike and swim. How about you?"

By the time we reached campus, I was exhausted from maintaining the tense posture. I didn't report what happened to the teachers, both because I lacked the language to describe the incident and because I was so terrified that I never dared to look at the boy's face.

I can't prove I was singled out as an easy target due to my poor English, but statistics show it's not uncommon among immigrants in school. A [2007 survey](#) from schools in Massachusetts showed that 49 percent of middle school English-learning students were verbally bullied. Twenty-eight percent were physically bullied, compared to 21 percent of native English-speaking students.

Reprinted from VICE Media. For full story, copy and past the website below into a Google search.

<http://bit.ly/1PT52I7>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Fred Liss, LVA tutor

Fred Liss came to Literacy Volunteers of America with tons of international experience, starting from his days as a college student in England to those spent inspecting refugee camps during the breakup of Yugoslavia.

"The conditions were appalling," Fred said of the camps, which he inspected for non-governmental organizations in the 1990s. He said he found unsanitary conditions, little running water, crumbling walls and barbed wire fences, he added.

He continued his work in Eastern bloc countries as an editor and writer for Life Magazine in Ljubljana, Slovenia. There, he interviewed President Clinton, as well as the U.S. ambassador to Slovenia, and others in political power.

Catching up with Fred is no easy task but we managed to chat with the LVA tutor between his sessions at the Bloomfield Public Library.

On any given day or evening, you can find him at a table there, engaged with one of his four students. "Reading and writing are crucial to success," Fred said of his work as a volunteer. "I feel very strongly about that."

He likely always has. Even as a young man, Fred tutored at-risk kids from Newark. "I came from a family that taught me the values of community and giving back," he said.

Fred has traveling in his blood, and to LVA's good fortune, he settled in Essex County area, where he first joined LVA in 2006.

As a young man, he studied English and sociology in the U.S. and later attended school in England.

He spent nine years as an ESL teacher, working overseas at Berlitz and American Waldorf schools. "I was fascinated by the culture. I felt a connection with the people. Working with Slovenia's Muslim community was incredibly eye opening," Fred said.

After his return to the United States, Fred connected with LVA. "I feel giving back to the community that one lives in is very important," he said. His students are from diverse backgrounds, but the one commonality they share is their fondness for their tutor. "It is gratifying to share their experiences with them," Fred said. "I go home happy."

2016 New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Adult Learner Writing Contest

We're so proud of our students, and their tutors, for their hard work and encouragement in the NJALL writing contest. Four of our students will take home awards but all entrants are winners. Here are the four:

Carl Miller

One of our students wrote under a pen name, 'Carl Miller.' In a touching personal story, 'Rising Above,' he wrote about being neglected by his mother, who had 14 children and never registered him for school. He slept in the damp basement of an uncle's home, at times went days without food and once was beaten for stealing a can of corn from his uncle's cabinet. "I know that every child has the right to an education, but I missed out due to my mother," the basic literacy student wrote. "I somehow taught myself to read and write, at least enough to get by." The story won the first-place memoir prize.



Clifford Henry

Clifford is a basic literacy student in Essex County. His first attempt at writing fiction brought him the contest's first place award in the fiction category. The story, 'Confused Young Man,' depicts the sometimes-violent troubles that a son's drug abuse causes himself and his family. "I think it's great," said Clifford, an Army Reserve member whose 36 years in the military included stints in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. "For someone to write something and get recognized by someone reading it, that's great. That's very great."

Fernanda Contreras

In 'A Christmas Letter,' Fernanda described a mother's painful six-year separation from her child. "If you want to see me, you can see the moon because we are under the same moon," the ESOL student wrote. "If you want to feel me, you can feel your heart. If you want to kiss me, I send my kisses in the wind." The entry won second prize for poetry.



Beralia Briceno

Beralia told of growing up in Danli, Honduras, where she swam in a small ravine, raced through spacious fields, smelled wild flowers, and ate mangos, guavas and oranges in the trees she loved to climb with her sister. She laments that her daughter will not experience the same in Newark. 'Childhood Memories,' Beralia's story, won the third-place memoir award. "I was very impressed with the good news," the ESOL student said of her prize. "I really liked my childhood memories. I was very happy."

