



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



We're always looking for volunteer tutors and paid teachers. Please check our schedule on Page 2 and help spread the word. Above: A recent class of new tutors from a Montclair training.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family.

Assessing Students: If you've ever wanted to track your students' progress in order to become a more effective tutor or teacher, this may be for you. The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Professional Development Center is offering tutors and teachers a free six-hour, online professional development course on "Formative Assessment." The course will "explore strategies for conducting informal, ongoing assessments of your adult education students' progress and use the information to adjust your teaching to ensure that all students learn." It's offered from June 6-27, 2016 with a registration deadline of May 31. More info at <http://rpdcl.weebly.com/>

WIOA Report: After months of anticipation, New Jersey released a draft report late last month, "Combined State Plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2016," which promises to dramatically change the standard of adult education in NJ. The report, for example, states that performance accountability measures for adult education programs will focus primarily on employment outcomes, not on basic skills. And that's not all. There's plenty more in this 300-plus page report. <http://bit.ly/1Uqo8Kf>

In the News

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

"NJ foreign language teachers reach students with immersion," New Jersey 101.5

Spanish class today is not how you remember it. Across New Jersey, foreign language teachers are giving their lesson plans complete makeovers, aimed at having students actually absorb target languages. The key, educators say, is immersing students in the language. <http://bit.ly/1p10WzO>

"Illiterate U.S. man learns to read; immediately pens love letter to wife," - Stuff.co/

A 56-year-old man learns to read through a Detroit Public Library program and immediately writes a love letter to his wife, who supported him through his struggles with literacy. <http://bit.ly/1RZwJwO>

"From Illiterate Child Bride to Famous Novelist,"

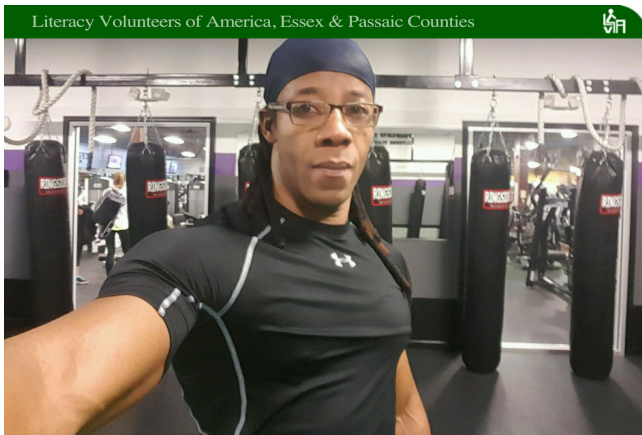
- **Al Jazeera.** Girl removed from primary school to be a child bride to a man in his 40s, then returned to father's house in disgrace, becomes one of Nigeria's best-known writers. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu has written nine novels and is the only Hausa-language author whose work has been translated into English. <http://bit.ly/1SLTvLU>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
(973) 566-6200, ext. 217 or 225

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Mickeal Belombe, a Cameroon native, is an LVA student as well as a fitness entrepreneur who once oversaw the exercise and health regimen of the First Lady of Senegal.

Tutor Support Workshops

Presenters and ideas wanted!

“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 07042

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

April 20-June 1, 2016

Maplewood Memorial Library

51 Baker Street, Maplewood, NJ 07040

Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:15 am – 1:15 pm

May 2-18, 2016

Getting to Know Us

Mickeal Belombe, LVA student

At the Passaic Public Library, where he attends classes nearly every day, Mickeal Belombe is an avid student of the English language. But in the fitness world, where he once worked as the personal trainer of Senegal’s first lady, there’s little doubt: Mickeal is a master teacher.

“In Africa, a lot of the women have diabetes,” said Mickeal, whose reputation as the owner, trainer and operator of a Curves franchise in Senegal led the future first lady to approach him for advice. He continues to counsel her via telephone and text messages. “I wanted to create some exercises for all women.”

Mickeal recently sold his Senegal gym and moved to the United States with his wife, a respected newspaper foreign correspondent. He easily attracted clients as a personal trainer willing to work all types of schedules at a 24-hour Bergen County fitness center. Communicating with customers was more of a challenge than finding them.

“When I first came to the United States, I knew ‘Hi,’ ‘Hello,’ and then I was finished,” he said of his language difficulties before enrolling in LVA classes. “I can now speak and write English,” he added.

This is Mickeal’s second 10-week session at the Passaic library and he soon plans to attend LVA’s ESL program at Berkeley College in Newark, four days each week.

He first became interested in fitness in his native Cameroon, where he played soccer, enjoyed running and practiced all forms of martial arts.

When Mickeal is not taking English classes you can find him at the gym teaching “Slim Cardio,” a fast-paced fitness and martial arts program that he developed.

Asked if he plans to open his own franchise, the entrepreneur replied, “I will take my time because I want to learn English well. Over time, I’ll see.”

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.



Sister Patricia O'Donnell, above with student, is one of our first Catholic sisters to volunteer as a tutor.

The Surprising Lack of Data About Literacy

Educators' Understanding Is Nuanced And Information-Deprived
By Scott Gordon

Reprinted from Wisconsin Public Radio.

In many ways, campaigns to improve literacy are more sophisticated than ever. Nonprofits, K-12 and adult continuing educational systems, and government agencies have gone far beyond a literate-illiterate dichotomy in their day-to-day work, expanding the scope of literacy and applying programs focused on issues like health and technology. At the local level, literacy programs around the U.S. strive to adapt to the changing needs of populations they serve, especially in communities' home to growing numbers of immigrants and refugees.

Yet educators struggle with a lack of detailed empirical data about adult literacy rates on state and local levels. Searching for a county-by-county breakdown of adult literacy rates leads to a federally sponsored research project named the National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Its data was gathered in 2003, and no similar nationwide survey has been conducted since.

More than a decade later, adult literacy organizations are left working with a lot of information that's outdated or cursory. This issue has worried people in the literacy field for a long time. Even the U.S. Census Bureau's FAQ plainly states: "No, we have not collected data on literacy for many years."

For full story, put web address below into a Google search.

<http://www.wpr.org/surprising-lack-data-about-literacy>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Sister Patricia O'Donnell, LVA tutor

Call it good luck, karma or whatever you choose, but Patricia O'Donnell's arrival at LVA Essex and Passaic Counties was truly a blessing.

Patricia, a Catholic sister of the Dominican Order since 1957, has been an enthusiastic volunteer ESL tutor since last year, meeting her student every week at the Bloomfield Public Library. She spent a career teaching English in grammar, middle and high schools, and credits her student's enthusiasm with making the transition to adult education a nearly seamless one.

"My student is very eager to learn," Sister Patricia said. "She is progressing nicely."

As difficult as it is at times to find dedicated volunteers, Sister Patricia came with a bonus: She joined with a colleague, close friend Sister Catherine Reilly. They are our first pair of sisters from the Dominican Order to work as literacy volunteers.

"She is a prayerful good sister and a fun person to be with," said Sister Catherine, who commutes each week with Patricia from Caldwell to Bloomfield where both tutor. "You are always comfortable in her company."

Once she earned a master's degree in pastoral ministry, Sister Patricia led scripture study classes, prepared parents for the baptism of their infants and helped anyone seeking to join the Catholic Church through the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program.

She retired in 2013, then volunteered at a health care center and tutored students at the Academy of St. Dominic in Caldwell. The Sisters of St. Dominic have a special commitment to education at all levels, especially to those who are in need.

Sister Patricia learned about LVA from a Catholic nun who also is a former teacher and an LVA tutor in Central Jersey. With great interest, Sister Patricia went online and found the number for the LVA Essex and Passaic Counties' office. She called, left a message, and within a month began training. Now, for us, that was a blessing.