



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



English-Spanish Language Exchange planning committee shares a Peruvian meal after our NJALL presentation. Members are from U.S., Peru, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Sweden..

### *The Insider*

Greetings LVA Family.

Effective July 1, 2016, the New Jersey Department of Labor, while enacting a federal plan to prepare a better-educated and skilled workforce, will require all participants in adult educational programs to reach a minimum of 16 hours per month.

We're working hard to find creative solutions that will meet the new requirement without burdening our volunteers. Students will be offered classes, workshops, and the chance to have two tutors instead of just one. All of these initiatives will both increase the students' monthly hours and improve their literacy skills. In the meantime, we encourage you to start thinking of increasing the time you spend with your students by as much as possible. In the end, an increase of hours for your students will mean they'll reach their goals faster and more efficiently! Thank you.

A special thank you goes to Tracey Williams, who traveled from Maryland to give an excellent lecture on "The Lost Tools of Phonics" for our April tutor support workshop.

We had a blast at last month's New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) annual conference. Attended some great workshops, networked with other literacy advocates, and our English-Spanish Language Exchange members got to give a presentation on their work. It was a good day.

### *In the News*

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

**'Dick Adams' personal fight for adult literacy.'**

The Australian House of Representatives member had to get over his illiteracy before becoming MP. ABC:  
<http://ab.co/1VRhIKk>

**'Newspaper aids literacy.'** The story behind the 'Easy English Times.' Napa Valley Register:  
<http://bit.ly/1TyHZ4u>

**'Literacy New Jersey helps adults become U.S. citizens.'** my Central Jersey.com story by Jessica Tomkins. <http://mycj.co/1rr6Pg3>

**'New Jersey migrant children face new barrier: school.'** Asbury Park Press: <http://on.app.com/1Oo5FqC>

#### Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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(973) 566-6200, ext. 217 or 225

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Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties



*Barry Batts, a student of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, won the first-place memoir award in the 2016 NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest for "Rising Above."*

## Tutor Support Workshops

*Presenters and ideas wanted!*

### **"Grammar Basics for You and Your Student – Part 2"**

**with Elizabeth Salerno**

Bloomfield Public Library  
90 Broad St, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Boardroom  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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

### **"Resume Readiness for the Adult Learner"**

with Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo

Bloomfield Public Library  
90 Broad Street, Library Theater  
(below the Children's Library)  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Tuesday, June 14, 2016, 2:00-3:30 pm

## Tutor Training Workshops

Please spread the word!

**Bloomfield Public Library**

90 Broad Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Boardroom  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Mondays & Wednesdays, Sep. 12-28, 2016  
10:30 am – 1:30 pm

## Getting to Know Us

### Barry Batts, LVA student

It's hard to read the story of Barry Batts' childhood and come away dry-eyed.

In a compelling narrative, Barry writes of being a frightened kid, forced to sleep on a damp basement floor in his uncle's home and forbidden by his mother to ever attend school. He describes, in graphic detail, of going days without food, only to be punished for stealing a can of corn from his uncle's stocked food cabinet.

In his award-winning memoir, "Rising Above," LVA Essex & Passaic student Barry Batts wrote unwaveringly about a childhood of disturbing neglect and abuse, and how he overcame it. His story won the first-place prize in the memoir category of the 2016 New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) Adult Learner Writing Contest and is scheduled to be published by the organization. He was one of four LVA, Essex & Passaic Counties students to win awards in the contest.

"At first I was stunned, I was in amazement," Barry said of his award. "Me, how could I do that? Somebody read something I wrote and thought it was good. I cried. I cried. Hearing this, good news, something for me, it lifted me up. I do matter. And maybe I can make a difference."

One of 14 children, Barry never received the formal education other children got; his mother refused to enroll him in school. But Barry's story doesn't end there. He overcame obstacles that no one should face, especially not a child. He managed to teach himself the rudiments of reading and writing and, at age 50, he came to LVA to learn more. At 55, he's an author.

"Since winning the award, he has a fire in him to write more," said his tutor, Valerie Miller, who describes the tutor-student relationship as special. "I was very lucky when I was matched with Barry. He's bright, thoughtful, and brings a lot to our sessions."

Barry described Valerie as "a gift." "She's the one who said 'You gotta have courage.' "Valerie said 'Your story's one that people need to hear,'" Barry said. "And she encouraged me to do it. And I'm so thankful."

***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.*



*Abby Kane (right) with her student, Silvy, whom she is helping to write a resume.*

## The trials and triumphs of learning to read in a second language

Deputy Web Editor Anooch Chakelian and Sub-editor Yo Zushi share their stories of learning to read in Armenian and English.

*Reprinted from the New Statesman*

Anooch Chakelian on learning Armenian

Even as a child, I had an inkling that Sunday morning was culturally held to be the laziest part of the week. But for me, it always marked the highest-pressure situation a five-year-old could ever experience. Because Armenian school started at 10:30am. And I hadn't done my homework. I had never done my homework.

Every Sunday would be the same. I would wake up/be woken up. I'd drag myself downstairs/my parents would coax me downstairs with the promise of a thrilling breakfast cereal, maybe, or something exciting (Stevie Nicks, David Bowie – George Michael's *Careless Whisper*, if I was lucky) on the hifi.

I'd have to forgo my important weekly digest of *The Funday Times*. My father would lay out my pencil, exercise book and Armenian school textbook on the table, and each week – with tears, unfinished cereal and a growing suspicion about the provenance of the languages of the Caucasus – I would cram in all knowledge of my ancestors against the clock.

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

<http://bit.ly/279zman>

## Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Abby Kane, LVA tutor

Abby Kane was a psychologist in private practice and Director of Psychological Counseling at Bloomfield College. That she arrived in our office just a few months after retirement, to sign up for training as an LVA tutor, is our good fortune. "I did not want to be a complete and total bum," she explained in her usual good natured manner.

Abby was quickly matched with an ESL student from Albania. "Engjell was so much fun," Abby said. "He had a very outgoing personality and we found out ways to communicate despite the obvious language barrier."

Engjell introduced Abby to "Interchange English for International Communication," a multi-level course for adults and young adults that incorporates conversation and grammar. Abby still uses the method today.

Abby's second student, Bhavana, was from India and together they shared the joy of cooking Indian food. "I love to cook and I love Indian food. It was the perfect marriage," Abby said.

Abby follows the lead of students. "With all of my students, we work on what they have on their plate. Along with my lesson plan, we approach the task at hand on any given day."

Abby recently helped one ESL student, Amarilis, pass the test to become a licensed real estate broker, in six weeks of vigorous preparation, immersing themselves in Amarilis' textbook and building her real estate vocabulary.

Abby said, "Passing the real estate test really helped to build up Amarilis' self confidence."

Abby is equally pleased with Silvy, another ESL student. Together, they are working on Silvy's resume and are hoping employment will soon follow.

Abby has been an LVA volunteer tutor for more than 4 years and has no plans in the near future to stop. She has tried other places to volunteer but keeps her connection to LVA strong. Abby said, "At LVA we feel valued and get lots of tutor support."

**"Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it.**

**The time will pass anyway."**

Earl Nightingale