



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



"Learning English Together With Stories," a four-week workshop for LVA students and their Pre-K to 3rd grade children, is popular with both adults and children. The workshop is the brain child of Tara Murphy (right), an LVA tutor and school librarian.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family.

The numbers behind New Jersey's story of adults with low literacy skills are bleak.

More than one million New Jersey adults have low literacy skills, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. Roughly one in every four adults in Essex and Passaic Counties, or about 355,000 adults, is considered functionally illiterate.

Yet the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, which New Jersey implemented as a major part of its strategy to equip adults with the skills and abilities needed to find work and pursue careers, serves about 25,000 adults each year, a small fraction of those who need help.

These stark statistics were presented during "The State of Literacy in New Jersey," an informational meeting held last week for tutors and students. Cristhian Barcelos, the executive director of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, explained in the session why the numbers make our work so important. He also outlined ways tutors can help students comply with a new state regulation requiring them to double their hours of monthly instruction from 8-to-16 hours.

Methods include an increase, even a small one, in the time tutors meet with students once per week; more workshops offered to students; and the assignment of students to more than one tutor. The numbers cited above are available via a handout distributed at the event.

In the News

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

'116 Westfield HS students can speak 2 languages or more,' Westfield Patch. For the second consecutive year, Westfield HS had the highest number of students in the state awarded a Seal of Biliteracy. <http://bit.ly/2aK6L86>

'Comic books illustrate migrant workers' lives,' Addison County Independent. Project captures lives of migrant farm workers through comics. <http://bit.ly/2agSgI8>

'The Near Impossibility of Moving Up After Welfare,' The Atlantic. In the wake of welfare reform, unemployed people are pushed to quickly find work, any work. But too often those jobs lead nowhere. <http://theatlntc.tc/29PvkQ1>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Getting to Know Us

Maritza, LVA student

A new state rule that doubles the minimum monthly hours of English instruction for adult education students will likely present problems for some. Others, like Maritza, relish it.

Maritza, a child psychologist from Lima, Peru, meets with two separate LVA tutors for a total of four hours per week. She's attended ESL classes at Berkeley College in Newark, taken English conversation group classes in Montclair, and studied until 2:00 a.m.

She coordinates LVA's English-Spanish Language Exchange where students teach Spanish to tutors and tutors help students with English. She practices as a volunteer at a local food pantry and in the LVA office. It makes for a dizzying schedule but she doesn't complain.

"I want to improve my English," Maritza explained. "I need to feel part of this country. I'd like to understand the people. I want to help the people. I want to succeed."

Maritza moved to the U.S. a year ago with her husband, Esteban, who is also an LVA student, and two young daughters. Shortly after the girls enrolled in elementary school, they were told to switch to a school better equipped to handle their limited English skills.

"I was unhappy with this change because I knew the adaptation would be very hard for them," Maritza said. "I felt very frustrated because I could not speak with the teachers and I knew this was not right for my girls." So she learned English quickly. Maritza lobbied the Board of Education and the school principal, mostly via a long exchange of emails, until the change of schools was called off.

She plans to continue her studies until she's entirely fluent and can pass state exams to become a licensed psychologist.

"When I arrived here from Peru, I could understand nothing," Maritza said. "I did not know how to write or how to speak. I studied some English in my country but it was nothing like they spoke in America," she added. "Tomorrow I will have one year in this country and I know I have improved my English, but I also know I still have a long way to go."

Maritza, a child psychologist from Lima, Peru, has made great advances in English fluency through classes, conversation groups, and volunteer work.

Student Support Workshops

"Learning English Together With Stories," a workshop for LVA students and their children, Pre-K to 3rd grade, with Tara Murphy
Bloomfield Public Library, Children's Library
Mondays, July 25-August 15, 2016, 1:00-2:00 pm

"Resume Readiness for the Adult Learner"
with Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo
Bloomfield Public Library, 2nd fl Boardroom
Tuesday, September 13, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Bloomfield Public Library
Mondays & Wednesdays
September 12-28, 2016, 10:30 am-1:30 pm

Montclair Public Library
50 S. Fullerton Ave
Montclair, NJ 07042
Saturdays, October 1-29, 2016, 12:15-3:45 pm

Maplewood Memorial Library, Hilton Branch
1688 Springfield Ave
Maplewood, NJ 07040
Tuesdays and Thursdays,
October 6-25, 2016, 1:00-4:00 pm

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.



Tutor Rick Fairlamb never misses an opportunity to learn a new tip or technique from others. In his own words, "I just keep trying to get better."

Adult Literacy Holds the Key to Child Literacy

by Eileen Chepenik, Executive Director
Trident Literacy Association, North Charleston, SC

Reprinted from The Post and Courier; Opinion Editorials

One critical factor needs more attention in the conversation about the state of literacy in our community, and that is the role of parents, especially mothers. Generally speaking, the mother is the one who lays the foundation for her children's literacy development and educational success long before her children start school.

By talking, singing, playing with them and reading to them, she is the one who introduces and reinforces positive educational activities and instills a love of learning. When mothers can't read or when they have low literacy skills, this critical piece is missing, and her children are virtually set up for failure.

Research conducted by the National Institutes of Health concluded that "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income."

Another study determined, "If we want to improve children's opportunities for success, especially those living in poverty, one of the most powerful potential levers for change is not the children themselves, but rather the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the adults who surround them."

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

<http://bit.ly/29yQTjc>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Rick Fairlamb, LVA tutor

Rick Fairlamb was never a teacher, not formally, but you'd be hard-pressed to convince his students that their tutor, a lifelong learner himself, is anything less than a seasoned educator with a degree in compassion.

"My teacher supports me a lot," said one of his students, Abir, an asylum seeker from war-torn Syria. "He stays with me during bad situations. He calls me a superhero. He makes me strong."

Rick joined LVA in 2014, after retiring as the manager of a direct mail company. Since then he's been eager to learn any techniques he can to help his students of basic literacy and ESL. He rarely misses monthly tutor support workshops, which are designed to enhance the skills of literacy volunteers, and enjoys the lively discussions spawned by workshop presenters and participants. He is extremely introspective about his role as a tutor and something of a sponge when it comes to absorbing methods and practices that work for others.

A key strategy he's picked up from other tutors is the importance of setting a pace that's practical and promotes learning. "You have to set reasonable expectations for your students," Rick said. "You never stop learning."

His home away from home is the Bloomfield Public Library where he meets his students for 16 hours each month. While there, he takes the time to stop by the Essex County office to greet the staff with his friendly smile and update them on his students' progress.

As a volunteer, Rick's dedication and concern are unwavering. "It is heart wrenching," he said of the difficult challenges some students face. "If I could just pour my knowledge out of my head, my students would improve faster and have more opportunities."

He frequently measures his progress as a tutor, not entirely a surprise considering he was an economics major in college. "I constantly look for ways to keep lessons interesting for my students," he said. "I try to find reading material that captures my students' interests. Of course I have to find different material as each of my students has different tastes."

The task of improving adult literacy is a tough one but it becomes a little easier with the help of tutors like Rick, who enlisted in the educational campaign after reading in the Montclair Times about an LVA tutor training workshop. "I thought I could do it, but I knew it might be hard," he said of becoming a tutor. "I have never trained as a teacher, I just keep trying to get better."