



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



*Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo led volunteers in a discussion of the four basic personality styles and how they influence our effectiveness as tutors in a tutor support workshop last month.*

### *The Insider*

Greetings LVA Family,

Albertine began her study of English at high school in her hometown of N'Djamena, the capital of the central African nation of Chad. But she found few opportunities to practice there and felt her skills were slowly fading. "To learn English, I need to practice," said Albertine, who enrolled in an ESL class at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library, a state funded program coordinated by the library and LVA. "But if nobody speaks with me in English, that's a problem. But here, I don't have a choice. This class is helpful for me. I practice a lot." Albertine was one of dozens of students who completed classes last month at Berkeley College in Newark, and the public libraries of Maplewood, Montclair, Passaic, and Paterson. The programs and their graduates are profiled later in this newsletter.

Please join us as we celebrate students who have worked hard to achieve literacy and the tutors and others who have helped them. Our Annual Awards Ceremony is likely the one chance we'll get this year to meet all those who help make Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties, function as an organization. This year's event will take place at the East Orange Public Library on Tuesday, October 17, from 6-8 pm. There will be light refreshments and parking is available in the library lot. Families and friends are invited; just let us know whether you plan to attend and how many guests you'll bring.

Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo gave an informative presentation on how your personality can affect your success as a tutor during last month's tutor support workshop. This month Dr. Erik Jacobson of Montclair State University, will offer a workshop on "Writing Prompts for the Classroom."

### *In the News*

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

**'Research shows Spanish speakers take longer to learn English. Why?'** NPR. <https://goo.gl/2qkiWz>

**'NJ adult literacy programs focus on better-educated children and stronger workforce.'** mycentraljersey.com. <https://goo.gl/wMS7gg>

**'Phillies say Spanish translator is clutch for the team.'** The (Allentown) Morning Call. <https://goo.gl/EbDpk7>

**'Google's new headphones can translate foreign languages in real time,'** UK Finance. <https://goo.gl/9kXsq7>

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

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

195 Gregory Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Passaic, NJ 07055  
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*For Julio, LVA Essex & Passaic Counties' oldest ESOL student, age is no obstacle to learning. He is shown here with his daughter, LVA staffer Marisol Ramirez.*

## Tutor Training Workshops

**Hilton Branch, Maplewood Memorial Library**  
-by Mary O'Connor  
1688 Springfield Avenue  
Maplewood, NJ 07040  
Mondays and Thursdays, 1:00-4:00 pm  
October 23, 26, 30, November 2, 6, & 9, 2017

**West Orange Public Library**  
-by Darnelle Richardson  
46 Mount Pleasant Avenue  
West Orange, NJ 07052  
Mondays, Nov 6, 13, 20, 27 and  
Thursday, November 30, 2017, 6:00-9:00 pm

## Tutor Support Workshops

**"Writing Prompts for the Classroom"**  
with Erik Jacobson  
Bloomfield Public Library  
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Tuesday, October 17, 2017, 1:00-2:30 pm

**Teaching with Technology (Not just for Millennials)**  
with Emily Frisch  
Bloomfield Public Library  
2nd Floor Boardroom  
Thursday, November 9, 2017, 1:00-2:30 pm

## Getting to Know Us

### Julio, LVA student

At age 73, Julio is the oldest student enrolled in our ESOL program. And probably the best-dressed. Often seen at the Bloomfield Public Library, garbed in a button-down vest, tie, and his trademark small-brim Fedora hat, he is the picture of style and poise.

But he wasn't always so, at least not according to family lore, which depicts him as a something of a quick-tempered child who was protective of his family.

One story his family likes to share took place when Julio was only nine years old. As he read a comic book at a store in his native Guayaquil, Ecuador, he saw a man trying to look up the dress of his older sister. Julio grabbed a broomstick, whacked the man hard across the knee and ran off, said his daughter, Marisol Ramirez, an employee in LVA's Essex County office.

The story didn't end there. The man, who turned out to be a plainclothes federal police officer, returned to the comic book store for a week, accompanied by several police friends, in search of an aggressive kid who left him with a limp.

Julio managed to evade arrest, in part thanks to a large family that shielded him. Julio was one of 13 children. His mother, an entrepreneur who owned two stores in a major city market, now a historic site, was considered a business pioneer. With his family's encouragement, Julio went on to study law and become a criminal attorney in Guayaquil, where he aggressively defended clients accused of robbery, forgery, drug trafficking, and other crimes.

About three decades ago, Julio's life completely changed when he began to study the Bible. Three years later, he became a Jehovah's Witness. "When I started to read the Bible, the word got into my heart and my aggressive personality was changing day by day," Julio explained. A year ago, he decided to study English, after more than two decades in the U.S. "I became an LVA student at 72 because, as a Jehovah's Witness, we have to talk to people about the Bible," he said. "The people I met on the street spoke English." Julio was recently named Essex County's Student of the Year. He said he plans to continue his studies and sees age as a blessing, not an impediment to learning.

"I feel like I won the lottery," he said.

***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.*



### “At 46, this Philly woman learned to read - and then published a book.”

*The Inquirer (Philadelphia)*

By Kristen A. Graham, Staff Writer, September 14, 2017

At age 46, Wanda Steward was illiterate, and much of the world was a mystery to her.

At age 47, Steward is an author whose charming children’s story was read by actor Idris Elba as part of a global literacy campaign. “It’s a miracle,” said Steward, of Southwest Philadelphia.

Steward always struggled in school. She tried hard, but reading did not come naturally to her. She tried to escape attention, never volunteering in class, but teachers would call on her eventually, and classmates were cruel. “That took a toll on me — I didn’t forget it,” said Steward.

She showed up and did her work, typically scraping by with Ds every year — at Ferguson, McKinley, and Penn Treaty schools, and then at Kensington High. But by the time she had her first child at 18 and dropped out because she had no one to watch her baby, Steward still could not read.

Illiteracy complicated everything: How much water do you add to the mix when one of your children wants a birthday cake? What does that bill say? How much medicine do you give the child who has a fever?

“I would just put medicine in the cup, and give it to the baby and just pray that I did it right,” said Steward, who has five children.

Enter Pong-Pong, the chicken whose continuing adventures helped her kids, and now her five grandchildren, feel a little more secure.

Reprinted from *The Inquirer (Philadelphia)*. For full story, paste the following link into an Internet search: <https://goo.gl/bzbiE7>

*Learning a new culture is more than studying a language. Tutoring is more than learning techniques. Our ‘Resources’ page covers everything from legal matters, health care, & scholarships for immigrants, to professional development for tutors. Give us a look @:*

<http://www.lvaen.org/students.html>

### Getting to Know Us

#### Divya Usatu, LVA tutor

As an assistant district attorney, Divya Usatu helped some of society’s most vulnerable residents, empowering them with the full protection of the law.

As a tutor, she empowers people again, this time with literacy.



“Once LVA students feel more empowered, they are better committed,” said Divya, a tutor for three years.

Volunteers have played an important role in adult literacy, often delivering services to low literacy students who have few other affordable options. It’s a role that Divya had eyed for years; but her work schedule at the busy Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office made volunteering difficult.

But two life-altering events made Divya take another look at her demanding career. First came the sudden death of her sister and, a month later, the birth of her daughter.

“I went back to work as an ADA for a short amount of time and realized I wanted to stay home with my daughter,” she said. “I loved it, I was able to stay home and I felt fortunate.”

Divya said she was hesitant to join an LVA tutor training workshop, finding the prospect of working with adults a bit daunting, given her schedule. But she dove in, completed training and was quickly assigned a student from Bangladesh.

The student was a recent arrival in the U.S., a woman who traveled on the first flight of her life, bringing along two sons but regrettably leaving behind a daughter and granddaughter. Divya decided to proceed slowly. “I started with more of a culture exchange, concentrating on getting to know her,” she explained. “I wanted to know about where she came from, her religion, culture and how I could interact with her. Once she felt most comfortable about what she was familiar with, she was more receptive and I eased into teaching.”

Divya and her current student, Sara, from Morocco, have worked together for more than a year. She said she’s watched Sara grow from an isolated young woman to one who shines with confidence as her command of English improves.

“I love it,” Divya said. “I hope I will be able to continue to do this for a long time.”



### *Adult Literacy & Community Library Partnership Pilot Program*

*Like many immigrants, Nurya faces language barriers that affect almost every aspect of her life. But Nurya, who'd returned to school in her native Turkey to earn a college history degree, after dropping out 10 years earlier, is accustomed to overcoming barriers.*

*"Now that I'm in the states, I feel hopeful about learning English, because I know if you insist on succeeding in life, no obstacles are going to stop you," said Nurya, a student in Lidya Mikhail's ESL class at the Passaic Public Library.*

*Nurya's class was offered through the Adult Literacy and Community Library Partnership, a state pilot grant program that aims to create direct partnerships between local libraries and adult literacy service providers. Together, libraries and literacy organizations provide training or language instruction that help New Jersey residents increase their Adult Basic Education and language proficiency skills in order to enhance their chances of finding employment outside of the low-skilled job market. Funds were granted to libraries throughout the state, including Maplewood, Passaic, and Paterson, which work with LVA to offer intensive ESL classes. The program is now in its second year. One round of classes in Maplewood, Passaic, and Paterson ended in September and new classes began last week.*

*Li Hang was already fluent in English when he enrolled in Leslie Gersho's advanced ESL class at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library. As the owner of a South Orange restaurant, he said he wanted to improve his grammar for professional reasons and found the class rewarding. "It helped me a lot," the south China native said. "Every day I have to read a lot of statements and business papers and sometimes I have to ask people what this or that means. I don't want to bother people all the time."*

*Grawilda, a student from Dominican Republic, hopes to spend more time studying English now that her youngest child is enrolled in school. She also seeks to grow her small business, preparing and selling healthy meals, from four to 20 weekly clients. "Three months ago, I decided to give one of my passions a try," said Grawilda, a student in Jalaire Craver's class at the Southside Branch of the Paterson Public Library. "Eating healthy is something we do at home, and I really enjoy making the meals."*



## Sussex Educational Foundation, Berkeley College, & LVA Essex and Passaic Counties Adult Education Program

Dozens of students completed ESOL classes last month at Berkeley College in Newark, in a joint program run by the school, the Sussex Educational Foundation, and Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. Adults attended classes for 10 weeks offered at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels.

They include the former manager of a design magazine in Ecuador, a Peruvian native who started a taxi business, and a sales associate from Senegal who earned a degree in international trade. Here are a few snapshots of Berkeley students provided by their instructors:

Jorge is the eldest of seven brothers raised in a small town in Colombia. He left home at age 16, seeking a job in the fashion industry in Bogota, the nation's capital, and, over time, worked many jobs in the fashion design field. In Ecuador he landed a position as manager of a design magazine, a job he held until an earthquake led to the magazine's closure. "Jorge came to class every day eager to learn so that he can get a job in the fashion industry," said his teacher, Maureen Cooper.

Roxana moved to the U.S. from Peru at age 18 but, during her years as a housekeeper, a factory worker, a stay-at-home-mom, and, recently, as the co-owner of a taxi company, managed to get by without becoming fluent in English. "Now that her children are older, Roxana has the chance to go after her dreams," said her instructor, Roxanne Peterson. "The first step for her was to learn English."

Nydeye came to the states from Senegal about a year ago. She began taking ESL classes earlier this year in order to better understand English speakers and obtain employment, said her teacher, Darnelle Richardson. She found work as a sales associate at a major Manhattan department store in late August. "As a sales associate, she interacts with shoppers all day long, and has no problem understanding them," Darnelle said. "In class Nydeye portrayed good leadership skills. When the class is given team assignments, she always takes charge and works harmoniously with her team members."

