



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



Bethany Blankenbeckler gave great insight on the reading needs of literacy students during a tutor support workshop last month. Details on this month's workshop appear on next page.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family,

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), a national non-profit organization working on policy solutions for low-income families, has issued two thought-provoking reports on the effects of the Trump Administration's immigration policy on young children and its impact on early care and education, including recommendations for educators. You can read the reports via this link: <https://goo.gl/77BvH9>

Welcome to spring! And another possible snowstorm. For the record, the March tutor support workshop on Wednesday will go on as scheduled, as long as the Bloomfield Public Library is open. Please call before traveling. Details on Page 2.

We're offering new ESOL classes with our partners at Berkeley College in Newark, Maplewood Memorial Library at the Hilton Branch, the Passaic Public Library, and the Paterson Public Library, beginning the week of April 9. For full schedule see our calendar: <http://www.lvaep.org/our-services.html>

Every year the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning awards college scholarships to adults who earn a New Jersey high school diploma by attending a NJ adult education program to prepare for a High School Equivalency/GED examination and have been accepted by an accredited post-secondary education institution. The scholarship provides up to \$750 per semester for full-time enrollment, \$1,500 per year and \$6,000 in total. The award is pro-rated for part-time enrollment and, for the first time, the organization has added an additional \$500 award upon completion of an Associate's Degree and \$1,000 at completion of a Bachelor's Degree. Applications must be postmarked by April 30, 2018. More details at www.njall.org

In the News

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

"11 American presidents who mastered second languages," Business Insider <https://goo.gl/63JA5u>

"Enriching Academic Vocabulary: Strategies for Teaching Tier Two Words to E.L.L. Students," New York Times <https://goo.gl/x8jYDq>

"Seven quirky side effects of learning a foreign language," Study Breaks <https://goo.gl/XhsBvo>

"Six reasons why everyone should learn Español," The Independent <https://goo.gl/YJ9Fp3>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Sausan, the recent recipient of LVA's Student of the Year award for Passaic County, fled her native Syria after a number of close calls in the war-torn country.

Getting to Know Us

Sausan, LVA student

Today, Sausan lives a very comfortable life in New Jersey, with three children all flourishing in notable universities. But memories of her old life, in war-torn Syria, and her family's close encounters with danger, still haunt her.

Only a few years ago two of her children narrowly escaped death on their way to high school in Damascus. Sausan (pronounced "Susan") spoke of a bomb that exploded on a local bridge seconds after two of her children had crossed in a taxi headed to school that morning.

"One minute after they crossed a bridge, a big explosion happened behind them," Sausan recalled. "I thought the kids were dead. The driver could not call; he had no phone service. We spent 30 minutes in a hysterical situation. A lot of students were killed by that explosion."

Sausan also painfully recalls incidents of mortar attacks, bombings, and a gun battle between police and rebels outside her home. "We started to think that we needed to move. Our city was not safe anymore."

In 2012, Sausan fled Syria with her daughter, Dana, 16, and son, Zuhair, 15. She had to leave behind her eldest daughter, Judy, so that she could finish her senior year of high school. Judy stayed behind with Sausan's husband and both joined the family in the United States the following year.

Since her arrival in the United States, Sausan found LVA and quickly enrolled in conversation classes in Passaic. She has met with her tutors for as many as 10 hours per week and she volunteers in the LVA office twice a week. With that kind of record, it is no surprise that Sausan won LVA's "Student of the Year Award" for Passaic County last year.

"LVA changed my life," Sausan said. "I am able to communicate with people and not just say 'Hi' and bye.'" And that's not all. In her quest to speak English like a native, Sausan has joined a book club and plans to join a writer's group.

"I know my children are going to marry people who will not speak Arabic," she explained. "It's very important to me to be able to speak to them."

Tutor Support Workshop

"Activities for English Conversation Groups,"

With Antonio A. Brugnoli
Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Wednesday, March 21, 2018, 1:00-2:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Clifton Public Library

by Darnelle Richardson
292 Piaget Avenue
Clifton, NJ 07011
Saturdays, 1:00-4:15 pm
April 7, 14, 28, May 5 & 12, 2018

Park United Methodist Church

By Carolyn Van Doren
12 Park Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00-3:00 pm
March 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, & 29, 2018

Next Tutor Support Group meeting:

Tuesday, March 27, 2018, 12:30-2:00 pm
Park United Methodist Church, 12 Park St, Bloomfield, NJ

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.



“The slippery grammar of spoken vs written English.”

The Conversation

By Andreea S. Calude

March 14, 2018

My grammar checker and I are on a break. Due to irreconcilable differences, we are no longer on speaking terms.

It all started when it became dead set on putting commas before every single “which”. Despite all the angry underlining, “this is a habit which seems prevalent” does not need a comma before “which”. Take it from me, I am a linguist.

This is just one of many challenging cases where grammar is slippery and hard to pin down. To make matters worse, it appears that the grammar we use while speaking is slightly different to the grammar we use while writing. Speech and writing seem similar enough – so much so that for centuries, people (linguists included) were blind to the differences.

There’s issues to consider

Let me give you an example. Take sentences like “there is X” and “there are X”. You may have been taught that “there is” occurs with singular entities because “is” is the present singular form of “to be” – as in “there is milk in the fridge” or “there is a storm coming”

It turns out that spoken English favors “there is” and “there’s” over “there are”, regardless of what follows the verb: “there is five bucks on the counter” or “there’s five cars all fighting for that Number 10 spot”.

Reprinted from The Conversation, Inc. For full story, paste the following link into an Internet search: <https://goo.gl/8Sfd4K>

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

Joan Scher, LVA tutor

By Melissa Moore

At 12 years running, Joan Scher is one of the longest serving volunteer tutors on LVA Essex & Passaic Counties roster.



Joan’s first students were learning English as a Second Language but, over time, Joan discovered that

her real specialty is working with adults who never learned to read. This makes sense given Joan’s professional background. Joan majored in sociology at Rutgers, earned a teaching certificate, and then a master’s degree in curriculum and teaching from Columbia University.

She taught fifth-grade in Caldwell, before taking time off to raise her son, and later got her certification as a special education teacher from Montclair State University. She worked as a special education teacher in Verona for 20 years, with students in K-4 grades. “I found that special ed students could be creative and talented in many ways. One girl who is autistic could not express verbally what she read, but she could draw pictures to express her emotions.”

Of course, Joan works differently with adult students at LVA but her professional experience has helped her to be creative as a tutor, using technology in innovative ways and helping to find a student’s own strengths and interests.

Joan has been working with Clifford at LVA since 2012. Clifford was almost a non-reader when he began tutoring with Joan. Joan had Clifford select pictures as story prompts and encouraged him to speak a story into his phone. Clifford would copy that text into his laptop and bring it to Joan for them to make corrections together. Clifford’s writing won a first-place prize for fiction in a contest sponsored by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning and his work has been published in *Journeys Near and Far*, a collection of memoirs and poetry.

A life-long learner, Joan takes classes in political science and literature, and draws abstract art on the computer. Joan has also painted on canvas but prefers creating digitally where she can create multiple versions and variations of images. Joan also enjoys traveling, particularly to New Orleans, where she visits family and takes advantage of the local music, food, and art.