



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



Antonio Brugnoli, the education manager for Project Literacy of Greater Bergen County, offered some useful ideas and activities for conversation groups in a workshop this month.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family,

Here's a unique opportunity for anyone interested in learning more about using 'sequential art' to help develop literacy skills. Dr. Erik Jacobson, a Montclair State University professor and former president of the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning, will offer a free mini-conference on the use of graphic novels, comics, and manga in the classroom. The event takes place at Montclair State University on Saturday, May 19, from 1-5 pm.

More info: <https://events.time.ly/gfp1f0l?event=9141781>
Pre-registration required at: <http://bit.ly/2pihyu3>

The Center for Law and Public Policy (CLASP) and other organizations that advocate for children and families, are taking a position against a citizenship question scheduled to appear on 2020 census forms. The organization states that the question, which will ask residents if they are U.S. citizens, will inevitably lead to an undercount of poor, immigrant, and minority children, a group that has historically been underrepresented by the census, which counts U.S. residents every 10 years. You can read CLASP's position on the census question here: <https://bit.ly/2GX0KRO>

We had the good fortune of learning from two excellent tutor support workshop presenters this month: Mary O'Connor, LVA's tutor support specialist, on "Getting Started With Your Students," and Antonio Brugnoli, education manager for Project Literacy of Greater Bergen County, on "Activities for English Conversation Groups." Thank you to both.

The tutor support group will meet Tuesday, April 24th, 12:30-2:00 pm, at Park United Methodist Church, 12 Park St, in Bloomfield.

In the News

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

'How are 1 in 10 people living in the same county as Penn State 'functionally illiterate'? Centre Daily Times
<https://goo.gl/Dn31YA>

'Reading, Writing Without Computer Proficiency is Illiteracy,' UNESCO. <https://bit.ly/2GRm3TI>

'How hard is it to learn to write by hand as an adult?' The Guardian. <https://bit.ly/2JAnurw>

'English proficiency has significant impact on home ownership.' The Urban Institute. <https://bit.ly/2uF5N6G>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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

195 Gregory Avenue, 2nd Floor, Passaic, NJ 07055
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Marisol Ramirez -Student Coordinator
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Edilma, a former professor of business in her native Colombia, brings a passion for learning and a gift of humor to her tutoring sessions.

Tutor Training Workshops

Park United Methodist Church

By Carolyn Van Doren
12 Park Street, Mission House
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00–3:00 pm
April 23, 25, 30, May 2, 7, & 9, 2018

Tutor Support Workshops

"Strategies for Teaching Decoding and Word Analysis Skills to Adult Literacy Students - Part 2,"

with Nora Devine
Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Monday, May 7, 2018, 1:00-2:30 pm

"Teaching Vocabulary with Pictures," with Mary Kao

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 1:00-2:30 pm

Getting to Know Us

Edilma, LVA student

By Ellen Rooney Martin

If you think business teachers are mundane, predictable, or occasionally dull, you likely never met Professor Edilma. It's normal for this Colombian native to burst into a classroom with both barrels blaring, her demeanor full of energy, humor, and totally unscripted.

It's possible that the wit she's come to be known for came from years of jostling with siblings, of which there was no shortage in her family of five brothers and four sisters. Of them all, she is the only one who went to college, and she earned a degree in business from the University of Medellin. She didn't stop there either. She traveled to the nation's capital, Bogota, and earned a Master's Degree in Business.

Edilma became a professor and taught business for 15 years, encouraging students along the way to focus on critical thinking rather than the tedious memorization of pages from their textbooks. She worked in business as well taught it, managing a funeral home for 16 years, after working her way up from secretary.

She eventually made her way to the U.S. and married. It was her husband who persuaded her to enroll in literacy classes in 2014.

"LVA changed my life a lot because I found the opportunity to have beautiful teachers," Edilma said. "They have varied backgrounds. It's amazing."

Edilma spends eight hours a week with her tutors.

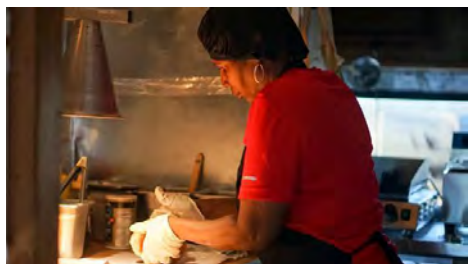
"She's very enthusiastic," said Joanne Marren, one of Edilma's tutors. "She basically wants to know everything. She often asks me questions that I don't have an answer for."

From pronunciation to grammar, Edilma wants to understand everything perfectly, Joanne said. "She's really a special student." Joanne added. And she definitely has a sense of humor. She laughs all the time."

Edilma also studies daily on her own and, overall, feels pretty good about her progress. "I love it," she said in a moment of reflection, a break in an interview consumed with smiles, comedic yarns, and laughter. "I am living my dream."

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.



“How learning to read helped this woman open her own restaurant,” *The Advertiser*

By Megan Wyatt, mbwyatt@theadvertiser.com

One of the newest restaurants in Lafayette is far from fancy.

It's inside of an old 1988 motorhome in a gas station parking lot on University Avenue. But in that repurposed RV, you'll find Sandra Matheson, whose unassuming eats are well worth the calories and whose inspirational story proves it's never too late to pursue your dream.

'I was so angry for so long'

Matheson, 55, struggled with anger and shame for much of her life. She spent decades in school — both as a student and as an employee — and didn't know how to read or write. Still, Matheson somehow made it to 12th grade in New Orleans.

Teachers and administrators turned a blind eye to her academic struggles, even having other students take tests for her so she could continue playing sports, according to Matheson. "They seen I had a problem, and they seen I had a struggle, but they wanted me to run track, play basketball, do all these things," she says. "And I didn't realize it at the time, but they were cheating me out of an education. And I was so angry for so long."

She held onto that anger through the years, especially as a single mom raising three children on modest paychecks from the same school system she felt had failed her. Matheson struggled in the school cafeteria where she worked. But she wasn't alone. "There were a lot of us who didn't know those menus — who couldn't read those menus," Matheson says. "It's embarrassing. But I'd bring my menu home. I'd make a copy of it and study that menu and get it down pat. It's embarrassing."

For complete story: <https://bit.ly/2vbtYtA>

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

Mary Kao

It struck painfully close to home for Mary Kao, when an elderly Egyptian woman pleaded with her for help in learning English.

It reminded Mary of her own mother, who could speak Ningbo, the dialect of her native region of China, and English, Hindi, and Urdu, the languages of India, where she'd raised Mary.

But her mother couldn't read or write in any language because she was pulled out of school early by her father.



"He figured a girl in the Chinese transition should marry, become a good wife, be a good cook, know how to sew, and be a good homemaker," Mary said of her maternal grandfather. "I'm so for literacy because my mother was denied an education by her parents, who said it was not necessary for a girl to study in school. Life was tough for her because she was illiterate."

As for the Egyptian woman, a client in Mary's hairstyling trade, she also found life harsh in a country where she was functionally illiterate. Mary found help for the woman at LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, which had an office at Seton Hall University.

That was 2001. Since then, Mary has gone on to become an advocate for adult literacy. She's been an LVA tutor for 17 years, one of our longest serving volunteers, and was once named LVA Educator of the Year. She's a trainer who coaches beginning tutors and even recruits a few. And she's a workshop presenter with a specialty in teaching literacy through photographs. In workshops, she emphasizes that tutoring needn't be costly and shows tutors how she accesses thousands of photos, and laminates materials, for a few dollars a year through the Learning Resource Center in East Orange, a professional development center run by the state.

In her spare time, Mary teaches origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, which she learned as a child.

Her tutoring is extremely visual, and, at 75 years young, she has the enthusiasm of a new trainee. "I found that being a tutor has helped me become more aware of language, of writing, and how to express myself," she said. "I love it. I love it."

Adult Literacy & Community Library Partnership Pilot Program

When Dieuseul walked into an English class at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library, he expected to learn a few phrases and improve his grammar. But the factory worker from Port-au-Prince, Haiti said he left with an overall feeling of confidence.

“I can write, I can speak, I have better pronunciation,” said Dieuseul, a student in instructor Leslie Gersho’s first level ESOL class. “It was a good experience,” he added. “And the teacher, she’s really cool.”

Dieuseul’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. This round of classes in ended in March and new classes began this month.

The following are short profiles of our students, as provided by their teachers.

In Haiti, Michelle studied odontology, the study of tooth structure and disease, for five years and earned her degree in the field. She worked as a dentist for two years before moving to the U.S. She hopes to find a job as a dental hygienist eventually but, for now, works as a packer in a factory while studying English at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library. “She understands that she must improve her English skills if she wants to become a hygienist,” said Leslie Gersho, who is also Michelle’s instructor. “She’s a pleasure to have in class,” added Leslie, while noting Michelle’s perfect attendance and good grasp of new material.

Michelle was equally appreciative. “The teacher is very good,” she said. “I didn’t want the class to finish.”



Adult Literacy & Community Library Partnership Pilot Program (cont.)

The students represent a kaleidoscope of countries where they'd worked in varied professions. Like Michelle, the dentist, many had studied their crafts for years, including an electrical engineer from the Sudan, a professional artist from Shanghai, China who specializes in oil painting, and a woman from the Dominican Republic who earned a degree in medicine and aims to become a U.S. doctor. Most are not yet able to work in their professions, not until they achieve English fluency. And they're working on it.

Claribel, 28, arrived from the Dominican Republic three months ago and enrolled in the ESOL class at the Passaic Public Library. "She came to the United States for the same reason most immigrants do—to have a better life," said her teacher, Grizzly Matias. "She wants to help her parents and in return, give them back the same support they have given her." Claribel earned a general medical degree in the Dominican Republic and her goals are to pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) and obtain a physician's license. "I want to be able to offer my services to those who need it, like I did back in my country," Claribel said

Abdelrahman came to the U.S. from the Sudan about five months ago, to join his wife and children who had already immigrated to Paterson. "Not one to sit idle he has a job as a machinist and is taking English classes," Maureen Cooper, his teacher at the Southside Branch of the Paterson Public Library, wrote in a short profile.

"It isn't easy for anyone to juggle work, family and night classes but Abdelrahman and his wife manage to do it skillfully," Maureen said. "Abdelrahman leaves for work early and comes home to pick up the children from school. He waits until his wife comes home from her job and he races to class usually with his homework done and a smile on his face."

The family is working hard to establish a life for themselves in the U.S. Abdelrahman's proficiency in English has greatly improved, Maureen said, adding that she has no doubt that he will find a job that utilizes his degree in electrical engineering. "His dream is simple, that his children have a good life," Maureen said.

