



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

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties



Ellen Rooney Martin is our new coordinator for recruitment and training. Ellen is a former journalist and a frequent contributor to The Insider.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family,

We are both pleased and, frankly, humbled by the recognition and awards received over the past month by Literacy New Jersey and the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL). At its annual conference last month, Literacy New Jersey granted LVA Essex & Passaic Counties the Alice M. Leppert Award for Outstanding Affiliate for our Student ID and Resources Program, which is described in greater detail on Page 4 of this newsletter.

NJALL recognized Mary Kao, an LVA tutor, trainer, and workshop presenter, as Teacher of the Year, at the organization's annual conference last week. In addition, our students fared well in the NJALL Learner Writing Contest and will see their work published next year in the organization's magazine. You can see photos of the award winners, and descriptions of their prizes, on Page 5.

Alas, it is with sadness that we say goodbye to our colleague, Russell Ben Ali, coordinator of our recruitment and training program since July 2013. Russell is retiring as a staffer but will remain a volunteer and a coordinator for LVA's English-Spanish Language Exchange, our bilingual conversation group.

At the same time, it is a privilege to welcome Ellen Rooney Martin to our staff as the new recruitment and training coordinator. Ellen is a volunteer tutor and, in recent months, a frequent contributor to *The Insider*. She has a journalism background and brings her infectious smile and warm personality to our office.

The tutor support group will meet Tuesday, May 22nd, 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.

'Illiteracy often unseen, very real problem, Greater Cleveland groups say,' The News-Herald, <https://bit.ly/2KVM1YP>

'Everyday objects pose a daunting challenge for illiterate adults in Pearson's latest 'Project Literacy' Campaign,' Ad Age, <https://bit.ly/2G8Tlwk>

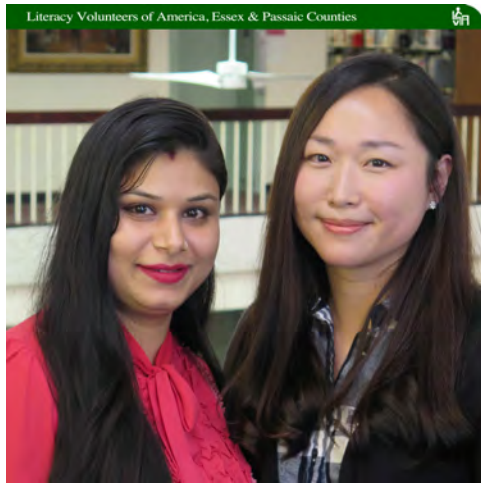
'Why is New York condoning illiteracy?' Opinion Section, New York Times Opinion Section, <https://nyti.ms/2GUDciz>

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
(973) 470-0039

Cristhian Barcelos	-Executive Director cbarcelos@lvaep.org
Jorge Chavez	-Data Processing Coordinator jchavez@lvaep.org
Debbie Graham	-Education Coordinator dgraham@lvaep.org
Ellen Martin	-Recruitment & Training Coordinator emartin@lvaep.org
Mary O'Connor	-Trainer & Tutor Support Specialist moconnor@lvaep.org
Marisol Ramirez	-Student Coordinator mramirez@lvaep.org



You can find more than English lessons at the local library. LVA students Seung Hui ("Erin") and Gurpreet found friendship and the chance to become published authors.

Getting to Know Us

Seung Hui ("Erin") and Gurpreet, LVA students

When Seung Hui and Gurpreet came to Literacy Volunteers of America to improve their English, they learned more than a new language. They learned the value of making new friends in a new country.

Once complete strangers, Seung Hui, a South Korea native whose nickname is "Erin," and Gurpreet, from India, now refer to each other as sisters, after about a year of studying together with tutor Charles Bateman. They go to movies together, to a coffee shop together, and study over the phone together.

"In LVA, I met a real friend," said Erin. "She is so nice. She is like my little sister. We have the same tutor and the same assignments. We talk to each other and help each other a lot."

Now the friends have done something else together: They've each won prizes in the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning writing contest, awards that come with cash prizes and the chance to be published in the NJALL annual magazine.

Gurpreet won the first-place award in the non-fiction category while Erin earned first-place for memoir writing and second-place for non-fiction.

Neither could have achieved such success without each other's support and encouragement, they explained. "When I started my writing, it was so childish," Gurpreet said. "I took some tips from her. She held my hand over the phone."

And, the ladies have more in common than their love for each other and love of writing. Both left their native countries to follow husbands who relocated for their careers. Both husbands work in Manhattan, leaving both women home all day with plenty of time to study English, write, and enjoy each other's company. "We are in the same situation," Erin said. "We have busy husbands, but are not busy wives."

In their native countries, Gurpreet worked as a nurse and Erin was an elementary school teacher. Each hope to work in the U.S., with the help of their lessons at LVA, which they'll likely test out of, sooner or later, since each is an advanced student. However, they added, "We will continue our friendship long after we finish the program."

Tutor Support Workshops

"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

Tutor Training Workshops

Montclair Public Library
-by Mary Kao
50 South Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042
Saturdays, 12:15-3:45 pm
September 8, 15, 22, 29, & October 6, 2018

Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00- 3:00 pm
October 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, & 18, 2018

West Orange Public Library -by Mary Kao
46 Mount Pleasant Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052
Wednesday 6:00 - 9:00 pm
October 10, 17, 24, 31, November 7, & 14, 2018

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.



“Casting aside shame and stigma, adults tackle struggle with illiteracy.”

National Public Radio

By Melissa Block, NPR, April 26, 2018

Our series "Take A Number" looks at problems around the world — and the people trying to solve them — through the lens of a single number.

At the tiny public library in Winterport, Maine, 43-year-old Robert Hartmann bends over *The Little Engine That Could* and slowly sounds out the first line.

"Ch-chug, right?" he asks his volunteer tutor, Sandy DeLuck. "Yup," she encourages him. He presses on: "Puh-puff ... puff ... puff. Ding ... ding-dong?"

Hartmann is burly, with five facial piercings, his arms inked with tattoos. This is his second session with DeLuck. He reads at about a first-grade level.

He is one of the 35 million U.S. adults whose reading skills are below a fourth-grade level.

Thirty-five million — or 1 in 6 U.S. adults.

Nationwide, adult illiteracy has proved an intractable problem, linked to stubborn societal issues such as poverty and failing schools. In fact, US adult literacy rates are no better than they were 25 years ago.

In Maine, the small nonprofit Literacy Volunteers of Bangor is among the programs trying to chip away at that daunting statistic by helping people like Hartmann improve their literacy — and, eventually, their lives.

Reprinted from The Telegraph (London). For full story, paste the following link into an Internet search: <https://n.pr/2I6DP7b>

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

Nancy Pisciotta, LVA tutor
by Ellen Rooney Martin

LVA tutor Nancy Pisciotta is a true unsung hero. Without any additional instruction, she figured out the right way to help her visually impaired student, Ana, succeed with ESL. Ana's speedy rise from a low-beginner to a high beginner ESL student in just one year brought Nancy into the spotlight as a tutor.



Nancy grew up in Nutley and earned an associate degree before deciding she couldn't wait to earn money to buy clothes and a car. She had her first job at 20 as a service rep for Bell Telephone. After marrying her high school boyfriend, she spent 10 years raising their three kids in Scotch Plains, NJ

In 1988, while the kids were in school, Nancy went back to school herself to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Kean University. She went on to teach in West Orange for 24 years, focusing on language arts for first and second graders who had scored below the national average on standardized tests. "I loved teaching reading to kids," she said.

After retiring from teaching, Nancy thought she might tutor children in her spare time. Her interest in teaching was sparked again while visiting her granddaughter's school for Grandparent's Day.

"In retirement, I missed reaching people in a meaningful way," Nancy said. At the Children's Library at the Bloomfield Public Library she asked if any children needed tutoring. The librarian told her about LVA. Within a month, she signed up for tutor training workshops and got tips about working with adults. What she didn't know was anything about teaching someone who was visually impaired. Her student Ana was not comfortable speaking English. But Ana needed to learn English if she wanted to speak to her daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

Nancy made special accommodations to help Ana see the work in class by using a magnifier and Google images on her iPad to help with vocabulary and comprehension. Ana's success has helped Nancy too. "I always walk away from here on my tutoring day feeling good," she said.

2018 Alice M. Leppert Award for Outstanding Affiliate Achievement Literacy New Jersey

Our "Student ID and Resources Program," is a two-part project, the first of which aims to provide each student with photo identification. Our photo ID card, which comes with the student's name and home address embossed on the front, and the name of his or her tutor, and day, time, and library of their meeting affixed to the back with a sticker, will be issued to every student in our tutoring program by the end of July 2018. The cards are similar to the municipal IDs granted to immigrants in about a dozen New Jersey municipalities, regardless of immigration status, and may give some students their first identification card in the U.S.

The second part of the project, our Resources program, identifies institutions around the state where students can find everything from low cost public health, dental, eye care, and mental health clinics to food pantries, legal immigration services, transportation, scholarships, education and housing help. The information, which is contained on our web pages - <http://www.lvaep.org/students.html> - is available in 103 language.

In consideration of the pilot project, which was developed by our executive director, Cristhian Barcelos, Literacy New Jersey presented LVA Essex & Passaic with the 2018 Alice M. Leppert Award for Outstanding Affiliate Achievement at Literacy NJ's annual conference at The College of New Jersey on April 21, 2018. LVA was fortunate enough to receive the award at least twice before – in 2015 and 1993.



New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning Teacher of the Year

The NJALL Teacher of the Year award went to our own Mary Kao, an LVA tutor for 17 years, as well as a trainer, a workshop presenter and, at times, a recruiter. She is one of our longest serving tutors and, at age 75, displays the enthusiasm of a rookie teacher. Mary learned the importance of literacy as a child. Her mother could speak four languages but couldn't read or write in any because she was taken out of school at an early age by a father who believed that girls should learn to cook, sew, and maintain a household, rather than attend school.



New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning Learner Writing Contest 2017

Winners of NJALL's Learner Writing Contest 2017 were announced at the organization's annual ceremony on May 11, 2018. The contest comes with cash prizes and the opportunity to be published in the NJALL annual literary magazine, "Insight." The following LVA Essex & Passaic Counties students were recognized in the contest for these works:

Ligia Avendano Alvarez



A painful early marriage behind her, Ligia writes about moving to the United States with her young son in "**Remembrance of Yesterday**." Visiting a local mall a few days after her arrival, she ran into an old friend, with the happiest possible outcome including a renewed friendship and an eventual marriage to the friend's brother. She **won a special mention in the memoir category**.

Gurpreet Bhatia



Gurpreet remembers her mother praying at the shocking attack on Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani girl shot by the Taliban in 2012. It caused her to wonder what was wrong with educating young girls and allowing them to watch tv and listen to music. "**A Young Living Legend**," by Gurpreet **won first place non-fiction**.

Karima Ejjoulali



One night, Karima woke up to silence at 1 a.m., while her husband slept peacefully beside her. She was consumed with loneliness. She longed to share a cup of coffee with her parents every evening, missed her friends and the life she knew in Morocco. Everything was new, but the stirring of her unborn baby restores her hope in "**A Little Star**," which **won special mention-memoir**.

Clifford Henry



A boy dreams of being Superman and growing up to be a doctor, but first wants to join the football team in Clifford's story "**The Little Superman**." There are some tense moments in this tale of love and determination as a father and coach worry about the boy after practice. The story **won first place-fiction**.

Seung Hui Kim



Every kid can remember something their mother said over and over, many might recall: Did you do your homework? Seung remembers hearing "Seung Hui, come here and eat this!" She wrote beautifully about food, sacrifice and love in her memoir: "**Yes, I'd love to Have Some More, Mom**" which was awarded first place.

Getting a book receipt at the library detailing her savings of \$20 that day borrowing books, moved Seung thinking about the power of books in her life in "**How I Became A Library Enthusiast**." With her library card in hand, she has access to a world of books, which she wrote about and **won second-place for non-fiction**.

Damian Wilson



Wondering what it would be like to be sixteen again, Damian wrote "**Sixteen**" about growing up in Jamaica and not going to a regular high school. Instead she attended a job training center and went to work as a babysitter. She wrote about being sixteen again as an American high school student in this charming memoir that **won an special mention in the memoir category**.

