



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



Student Martha Diaz (right), shown with her tutor, Mary O'Connor, had her short story published in the NJALL magazine "Insight 2019". Congrats, Martha! Photo courtesy of NJALL.

The Insider

Greetings LVA Family,

Hot off the press is "Insight 2019", the latest edition of the NJALL magazine that publishes the works of all winners of the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Learner Writing Contest. We're proud of all the authors, including our own Sara Chekouh, who earned a second-place award in poetry for "My Kitchen, My Home", Martha Diaz, the second-place fiction winner for her short story "A Man and His Violin", and Clifford Henry, who has won several writing contest awards in past years and this year received an honorable contest mention for his fictional story "A Young Boy's Dream". You can view their work here, in the Insight 2019 magazine: <https://bit.ly/2LSjwxK>

Speaking of student writers, "The Change Agent", NJALL's biannual newsletter for and by adult learners that focuses on different topics each time, is looking for writers. The deadline is November 1 for articles on the upcoming census and the 2020 election. More info can be found here: <https://bit.ly/31Xak0w>

We regret the cancellation of last month's tutor support, "Teaching Struggling Readers", which was due to circumstances beyond our control. But the good news is that we're working hard to get the session back on the calendar and bring about plenty additional workshops that attract your interest. Hope you plan to attend this month's workshop, "Teaching Non-Fiction Reading" by Erik Jacobson. He never disappoints. Details can be found on the following page of this newsletter. Remember, workshops are open to all in the adult literacy community, not just to LVA members.

In the News

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

'Train your brain to think in English', Voice of America
<https://bit.ly/2k3W4T6>

'How do we measure language literacy?' BBC News
<https://bbc.in/2lAFdaL>

'The "Friends Effect" on learning the English language'
Mental Floss <https://bit.ly/2nXfOJO>

'Eight Words With Double Meanings That Show How
Odd The English Language Can Be', 2Oceans Vibe News
<https://bit.ly/2lQQRyc>

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

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Getting to Know Us

Milton, LVA student

Milton studies English the way he cuts his clients' hair: with razor sharp precision and focus. Milton works more than 40 hours each week as a highly skilled barber. And, in his spare time, he's a fitness buff.

But his number one priority these days is found neither in the salon nor the gym but at the Bloomfield Public Library where Milton spends long hours every week studying with two separate tutors in his dogged pursuit of English literacy.

In fact, for Milton, who left high school with a diploma despite reading at an elementary school level, the LVA program is something of a second chance.

"I didn't pay attention when I was in high school," said Milton. "But I know how important language is now." It can be crucial in terms of career choices, especially for Milton, a tradesman who would like to attend college, study business, then open his own barber shop.

Learning to read did not come easily to Milton. He spent his childhood in Jamaica and, when he moved to the U.S. at age 13, he struggled to learn what his teachers called "American English". Because of his heavy Jamaican accent, he was placed in special education classes.

He didn't fare well there but that's old news. Today, Milton shows a unique and unwavering passion to learn, as an adult student and he plans to take advantage of all help offered him. He attributes some of his work ethic to his grandmother, who is now 101 years old. "My grandma was very influential in my life," Milton said. "She taught me how to push myself."

New influences in Milton's life are his LVA tutors, Gina Biglin and Abby Kane. Gina, he says, shows great patience as she teaches him how to break down words and better understand what he's reading. Abby has helped Milton how to express himself, which he said opens a lot of avenues and helps him better understand what's going on in the world.

"My tutors put a lot of effort into helping me and I am in LVA to learn," he explained.

Milton, a student from Jamaica, is a skilled barber who wants to improve his literacy skills, attend college, study business, and open his own barbershop.

Tutor Training Workshops

Maplewood Memorial Library, Hilton Branch
- by Carolyn Van Doren
1688 Springfield Ave,
Maplewood, NJ 07040
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 am-12:00 pm
Oct. 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, & 31, 2019

Bloomfield Public Library
-by Mary O'Connor
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ, 07003
Tuesdays, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
November 5, 12, 19, 26, & December 3, & 10, 2019

Tutor Support Workshops

"Understanding Students' Barriers,"
with Cristhian Barcelos
with Erik Jacobson
Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 1:00-2:30 pm

"Easy Guide for Working with Small Groups,"
with Barbara Hathaway and Nancy Lama
Bloomfield Public Library
90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Thursday, November 14, 2019, 1:00-2:30 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.lvane Newark.org/donatotlva/> or by mailing us a check.



“Juan Soto is a very quick learner. Just listen to his English.”

The Washington Post

By Jesse Dougherty, October 4, 2019

When Soto got to the Nationals’ Dominican Academy in 2015, the expectations were clear: Here is a password to Rosetta Stone, the language-learning software. Do one hour a day, five days a week, and in a few years, you’ll be able to have conversations in English. The 16-year-old Soto ripped through the entire program in one season. He stayed up late, staring at his computer screen, repeating phrases under his breath. Dipuglia said that no Latin American player has ever finished the course faster than Soto. No player has really come close.

Juan Soto paused mid-sentence, stared into the tablecloth in front of him and motioned with his hands as if he were opening and closing a Slinky. He couldn’t think of a word. It was somewhere in his brain, somewhere in all those Rosetta Stone lessons, somewhere in all the conversations he has had with teammates since he was signed by the Washington Nationals in 2015.

He looked to his left, to interpreter Octavio Martinez, to see if he could help come up with it. Then two reporters asked: “Range?”

“Range! Range!” Soto said, pointing in their direction, as baseball players do to recognize a job well done.

Soto, 20, grew up speaking Spanish in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. When he’s on the field, when he’s crushing home runs, when he’s posting numbers that few ever have at his age, it’s easy to forget how young he is.

Reprinted from The Washington Post. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

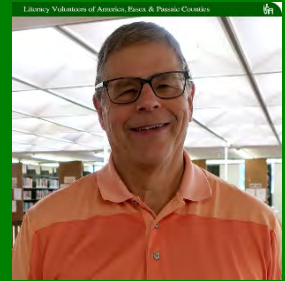
<https://wapo.st/2Vhctll>

Learning a new culture is more than studying a language. Tutoring is more than learning techniques. Our “Resources” webpage covers everything from legal matters, health care, & scholarships for immigrants, to professional development for tutors. Give us a look @: <http://www.lvaep.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Steve Pranis, LVA tutor

Like many retirees, Steve Pranis was eager to start the next chapter of his life. Sure, he could have found something more closely related to his field – computer technology and sales – which he’d done in the Albany, NY area for 40 years.



But that’s what retirement is for: Trying new adventures.

For Steve that was going to be something more personal, more rewarding.

“I always felt I was somebody who liked to teach but it was never my profession,” Steve said. He’d had plenty of opportunities to observe trade, given that both his wife and his mother were educators.

He learned about LVA from a neighbor who tutors. Soon, after an 18-hour training course last year, Steve met with his first students and threw himself into tutoring.

“I really love what I am doing,” Steve said. “I know that every student learns differently and every student has different needs. When I prep, I prep for each student. I ask myself, how is this one going to learn it?”

His students are diverse; they include a factory worker from Haiti and an architect with a graduate degree from the Dominican Republic. Some students need more vocal prompts, or additional time, than others. No two students are exactly alike so Steve spends quite a bit of his teaching time, studying them.

“Just listening and watching you can see what they understand and how they want to learn,” Steve explained. “Every class I take notes on things I realize we need to focus on the next week or two. I take the notes home and figure out how I am going to teach that.”

Outside of tutoring, Steve is an avid reader; a fan of fiction novelist James Paterson. He’s a former soccer coach who still makes time to play the game once or twice a week, and he enjoys traveling and spending time with his granddaughter. He left upstate New York for our area three years ago and doesn’t know many folks here. So, if you see Steve in the Bloomfield Public Library, be sure to say hello and welcome him to LVA.

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

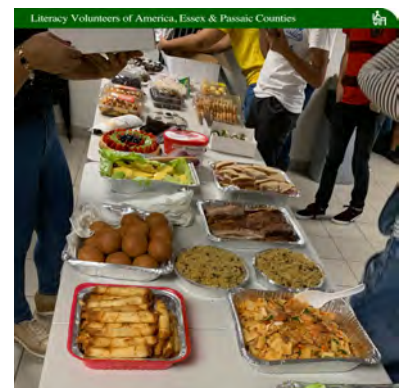
The first shock wave Juan felt upon his arrival from Quito, Ecuador came from Mother Nature, the first of many struggles to come. "I arrived in the in the winter and it was so cold that day," he recalled. "I only had \$20 in my pocket. I had borrowed money so that I could pay for my plane ticket to come here. Everything was so new to me it was very shocking." But Juan stuck it out and, after seven years of hard work, in which he took on every job he could find, from restaurant dishwasher to bakery bread deliverer to warehouse fork lift operator, his plight as well as his English have improved. He has a girlfriend, they have a child, and he can vote, having aced his U.S. citizenship test last year.

For 10 weeks, Juan joined dozens of other students in ESOL classes at Berkeley College in Newark, in a joint pilot program run by the school, the Sussex Educational Foundation, and Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. The students completed classes in three levels – beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

"Learning English has helped me in so many ways," said Juan, a student in Tiffany Brown's advanced class. "It has given me better opportunities, the ability to become a citizen and a better life for myself and my family."

His struggles with the weather, jobs, and life in a new country are common stories shared among immigrant students in the Berkeley program. But, by far, their greatest struggle is learning English. Vanessa, a young student from Haiti who also completed the advanced class, had no problem learning English grammar but struggled with pronunciation, particularly in her entry level job at Dunkin' Donuts where impatient customers threatened to call her manager when she didn't fully understand their orders. "The first two weeks were very difficult for me," she said. "I realized that everyone has different accents and pronunciations so it was very tough for me to understand." Vanessa eventually found a better paying job and hopes to become a doctor.

Pamela, who was a banker in Sao Paolo, Brazil, gave a presentation to her class on the lives of immigrants. "I wanted to talk about the challenges of being an immigrant but I also wanted to encourage everyone to keep working hard and never give up on your goals," she said.



Adult Literacy & Community Library Partnership Pilot Program Hilton Branch, Maplewood Memorial Library

The campaign to learn English is easier for some adult students than for others. Esra, for example, an ESL student at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library, has no problem conversing in English on her job as a babysitter.

“Thanks to my English classes it’s been easy for her to communicate with the kids and their parents as well as with the people in her community,” said Eidy Urena, Esra’s teacher in an intermediate ESL class at the Hilton Branch of the Maplewood Memorial Library.

Esra’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 earn a nationally recognized certification, ServeSafe, which in turn can help enhance their chances of finding employment. Funds were granted to libraries throughout NJ, including the Maplewood Memorial Library, which works with LVA to offer intensive ESL classes at its Hilton Branch.

Another student in the Maplewood program is Yue, who arrived in the U.S. from China two years ago, and doesn’t see much improvement in her own ability to speak English. “My English is bad,” she states simply. But where Yue sees little or no progress, Glenda Wills, her beginner level ESL teacher, sees the glass as half-full.

“The shock and joy in her face when she received her first 100% on her English weekly skill checkup test was a moment to remember,” said Glenda.



Passaic Public Library and LVA Partnership

Through a partnership with the Passaic Public Library, ESL classes are taught to students like Patty, who was a teacher in Lima, Peru, but works a warehouse assembly line job in the states. The job's a challenge; Patty recently arrived in class with a bandaged upper arm, the result of a warehouse work accident. When asked about her work by Jalair Craver, her ESL teacher at the Reid Memorial Branch of the Passaic Public Library, Patty simply lifts her shirt to show the lumbar back brace she sports.

Like Patty, most of the students in the program share goals of finding safer and better paying jobs and helping their children in school. Altagracia, a single mother from the Dominican Republic, would love to guide her teenage son through his school assignments but her level of English language fluency is a barrier. That, along with a job change, was her motivation for enrolling in classes at the Passaic Public Library.

“Her determination and willingness to learn will help her to accomplish her goals in very little time,” said her teacher, Grizzly Matias. “She is a perfect example that when someone wants something and works hard for it, they can achieve it.”

Many of the students left behind families, or some family members, in their native countries, another part of the struggle to adapt to their new lives. “It was a big change because, on the one hand, I left one part of my family in Mexico, such as my brothers and my parents,” said Arias, an ESL student who traveled to the U.S. with only his wife and daughter. “But on the other hand, I realized that this country is great. It gives you the tools to success.”

