



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



*Tutor Ann Moore nailed it last month in a stimulating support workshop she offered on "Taking the Mystery out of Lesson Plans."*

### *The Insider*

Greetings LVA Family,

Kudos to New Jersey's public libraries, which are always at the cutting edge of offering new and innovative programs that benefit the public. The Paterson Public Library is no exception. Beginning early this year, the Paterson library will offer reentry services to ex-prison offenders including classes to help dropouts earn high school diplomas, job services through social workers, and referrals to social service agencies. The initiative, part of the "Fresh Start" program, which also is offered in Newark, Trenton, Long Branch, Atlantic City, and Cumberland County, is funded with a \$628,744 two-year federal grant. A Paterson Press story outlines the program here:

<https://nj.com/3beXax1>

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development announced last month that 14 libraries and library systems would share \$1,128,273 in grant funding through the Community Library Adult Literacy and Career Pathway program. The funds will be used by libraries to provide basic literacy courses, English language learner courses, and job search assistance. Recipients include the Maplewood Memorial Library, which will receive \$81,636, and the Newark Public Library at \$94,923. The full list of recipients can be viewed on the state website: <https://bit.ly/2vSlusn>

Always thankful for the volunteers who keep our organization running, including tutor and recent workshop presenter Ann Moore, and newsletter profile writer Janet Donohue.

### *In the News*

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

**"Why Focusing On Adult Learning Builds A School Culture Where Students Thrive,"** KQED News, <https://bit.ly/30Y2bdz>

**"New Report Explores The Global State Of Adult Education,"** Forbes, <https://bit.ly/2O6Ra3w>

**"Author Alby Lee Lewis shares story of lifelong struggle with reading,"** Daily Herald, <https://bit.ly/38N0a3E7>

**"United Nations Identifies 'Alarming' Crisis in Education: 258 Million Kids Not in School,"** Education Week, <https://bit.ly/2RU1EEJ>

**"9 ways to learn a language without leaving the country — or the couch,"** Mashable, <https://bit.ly/2GoZejZ>

#### 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 Nohra, LVA student by Janet Donohue*

The desire to learn English and explore broader opportunities in the United States prompted Nohra Colon to emigrate from her native Colombia when she was 25.

It was not an easy decision, however. Nohra had grown up in Cali and felt safe there. She had been working since age 18 in a textile factory. But the shifts changed weekly and the likelihood of moving on to a better life seemed remote.

"I can't do this anymore," she told her mother. "I know there is no future for me in this country."

In the U.S. she found work in a factory and, through a friend from her job, a welcoming church. One of its congregants, a gentleman who had grown up in Puerto Rico, is now her husband of 36 years.

Nohra worked for a short time after their son was born. When the couple had a second child, they agreed that she would stay home with the children. The three especially enjoyed watching children's TV shows together. "I watched Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," she recalled. "I loved Mr. Rogers! And so, did my son and daughter. He was easy to understand."

Once her children approached the end of high school, Nohra was ready to rejoin the workforce. She worked briefly in a daycare center and then set her sights on becoming a home health aide. She studied for the licensing exam, took the test in English, passed it, and now works in the field.

As an LVA student for the past two years, Nohra has significantly improved her literacy skills. "I found out about the program one day when I came to the Bloomfield Public Library to check out a book to learn English," she said. Volunteer tutors Karen Cardell and Ann Moore have helped her advance quickly through several levels. "It is a very good program with many good people," she says.

Nohra has shown great perseverance when it comes to reaching her goals. For example, she took the test for a driver's license five times before she succeeded. She tried learning English online, but recognized the downside of limited speaking practice. At LVA, she benefits from the class interaction with other literacy students, as well as grammar and vocabulary lessons.

*In two years Nohra, a Colombia native and LVA student, has quickly advanced through several levels of ESOL instruction.*

## **Tutor Training Workshops**

**Bloomfield Public Library**  
-by Mary O'Connor  
90 Broad Street  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Tuesdays, 10:00 am-1:00 pm  
February 25, March 3, 10, 17, 24, & 31, 2020

**Clifton Memorial Library, Allwood Branch**  
-by Darnelle Richardson  
44 Lyall Road  
Clifton, NJ 07012  
Saturdays, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm  
April 4, 11, 18, 25, May 2, & 9, 2020

## **Tutor Support Workshops**

**"Mediation and Conflict Resolution,"**  
with Cindy Castañeda & Christopher Castro  
Bloomfield Public Library  
90 Broad Street, Library Theater  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Tuesday, March 10, 2020, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

**"Cultural Sensitivity and Reducing Microaggressions,"**  
with Diane Giachetti  
Bloomfield Public Library  
90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor Boardroom  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Thursday, March 26, 2020, 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.lvanewark.org/donatetolva/> or by mailing us a check.*



## “At national literacy summit, state education chiefs warn of reading stagnation”

*LA School Report*

By Kevin Mahnken, February 3, 2020

Reading instruction in American schools is so rife with poor curriculum and pedagogical dogma that a prominent academic likened it to “the equivalent of chemistry departments teaching alchemy.”

“We’ve had about 130 years of bad practice,” David Steiner, director of the Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins University, told the audience at a national literacy summit in Washington, D.C., last week.

With high-ranking education officials from 13 states in attendance, alongside advocates, journalists and leaders from literacy research groups, the roundtable discussion addressed the causes — from poorly prepared teachers to inadequate guidance on curriculum — of the well-documented stagnation in reading achievement across the United States.

The day-long conclave, hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers, focused above all on a dilemma that has received more press coverage in recent years: Despite the fact that cognitive scientists have agreed for decades on the best way to prepare young children to read, millions of students are still taught using outmoded or debunked methods with no scientific justification.

The effects have been greeted by many as cause for alarm. A sobering morning presentation by National Center for Education Statistics Commissioner James Woodworth showed that ...

*Reprinted from LA School Report. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:*  
<https://bit.ly/2uiGIEI>

*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

Catherine Cullar, LVA tutor  
 by Janet Donohue

Soon after Catherine Cullar signed up for membership in AARP, she checked out the organization’s website listing of volunteer opportunities. She had long known that, once she had the time, she would look for a way to contribute to the advancement of adult literacy. Reading about LVA, she discovered an ideal program for her to accomplish that.



Catherine has been an LVA literacy tutor for four years and is now working with her fifth student. Students come to LVA seeking to improve their literacy skills for a variety of personal and professional reasons. Catherine’s tutoring helped one to pass the U.S. citizenship test and another to obtain a real estate license. Two other students wanted to work on their resumes.

“If a student comes to me with a specific goal, I try to prioritize that,” she said. Whatever the goal, Catherine always includes vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation exercises in her lessons.

“All of my students have been very nice and work hard to improve,” she said. “Very often they know the material but lack confidence. That’s why positive feedback is critical. Some move forward quicker than others but as long as they are moving forward, I’m happy.”

Catherine became passionate about adult literacy during an early post-college job at a preparatory business school. Most of the students either were ESL learners or had not finished high school. “They were committed to their goals and a great population to work with,” she recalled.

A Brandeis University graduate who majored in sociology and psychology, she decided to return to school for teaching credits. After completing 12 credits, she became a teacher at the prep school.

Following years at home raising her children, Catherine returned to the workforce as an administrator in the non-profit sector. For the past 20 years she’s worked for the American Federation for Aging Research, which supports early-career scientists who conduct research on the biology of aging.

For LVA she typically tutors twice a week, prioritizing her commitment and trying never to cancel. “I want students to know that their time is important to me,” she said. “When I retire, I would like to give more time to LVA.”