



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



Education districts around the country are studying outdoor classrooms, due to the coronavirus. That's familiar ground for Will Williams and his students, Robert and Rajpattie, above.

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The Insider

Greetings friends. We hope you are safe and healthy.

Well it's been months since the health crisis of a lifetime first changed the way we live and work. We're proud, and a bit amazed, to learn how you've adapted and continue to work to improve literacy for adults. Here's a snapshot of what some of our students and tutors are doing during the pandemic:

Georgina Jerez: With the arrival of the crisis this ESOL student from Ecuador began writing like her survival depended on it, covering everything from the effect of the novel coronavirus on families to social injustice, in a series of memoirs published online by the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL). You can read the author's latest work by pasting the following link into an internet search. <https://bit.ly/3a3ojXr>

Will Williams: For more than a month, tutor Will Williams and students Rajpattie, from Guyana, and Robert, from Jamaica, have met outdoors in a Bloomfield park (see adjacent photo) when remote learning wasn't always an option. It's a carefully-crafted weekly affair, Will said, with everyone wearing face masks and practicing social distancing.

And it has its issues: Besides the physical distance factor, you can't see speakers form their words, due to the masks. Still, his students were more than ready for a change. "Rajpattie kept asking me 'When's the library going to open, when are we going to be able to go back in'," said Will. "Robert was kind of eager to get back into a classroom setting as well."

Pamela: This literacy student from Guyana rifled through the entire NJ driver's manual during the quarantine, in preparation for the written exam, according to her tutor, Lynn Bentkowski. And she's ready. "Pamela is a superstar," Lynn said. "She's accomplished so much these last couple of months."

On another subject, friends, we have many students awaiting help during the pandemic. Please accept an additional student into your group and help improve someone's life.

In the News

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

"Literacy skills critical, particularly in age of COID-19,"
The Robesonian, <https://bit.ly/3gzA0aK>

"Improving literacy in the United States," Center for American Progress. <https://ampr.gs/3gxEwH1>



Robert's strong work ethic and passion for learning have led to his success as a student. "The progress that he has made is unbelievable," said his tutor, Will Williams.

Tutor Support Workshops

"Making Distance Learning More Engaging,"

with Ann Moore

Platform: Zoom

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"Laughter is the Best Teacher,"

with Lisa Batitto

Platform: Zoom

Thursday, September 24, 2020

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"Helping Students Overcome Their Fear of Speaking,"

with Abby Kane

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Barbara Hathaway

Platform: Zoom

Thursdays 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

October 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29, 2020

Additional info: <http://www.lvae.org/workshops.html>

Getting to Know Us

Robert, LVA student

Robert arrived in the states a few years ago, a man in a new country seeking a new start. And he brought with him a new passion: a quest for literacy.

"When I came to America, I could not sound a letter. I could not write my name," said Robert. These days, reading and understanding new words is more an obsession than a hobby, and it's one that leaves time for little else.

"When I go to work, anytime I get a break, I study," he said. "Since I have started with my tutor, Will, I hardly sleep. I try and read whatever I can, wherever I go."

Robert works in housekeeping at a local hospital, where he recently won a "Best Worker" award. The prize came as a surprise to no one, particularly his tutor, Will Williams.

"Robert's tenacity and persistence as a student show in the reading progress he has made," said Will, who described Robert's progress as 'unbelievable'. "Every week when he comes into a tutoring session, he has mastered a new concept or skill."

A strong work ethic is Robert's key to his success. Raised in humble surroundings in a farming town in Jamaica, Robert and his 10 siblings did not have the opportunity to attend school. Instead, they worked in the fields picking corn, peas, and bananas. His mother, with children in tow, would then take the crops to the market for sale to the villagers. Looking back at his childhood, Robert has happy memories. "It was special being surrounded by people who loved me," he said.

In March 2014, Robert joined his sister in the U.S. He found work in a restaurant the very next month and later, during an interview for the hospital job, he was hired on the spot. Since then, his work ethic has impressed folks from his job to LVA, the literacy program he enrolled in less than a year ago.

"Every week when he comes into a tutoring session, he has mastered a new concept or skill," Will said. "This progress can only be attributed to his hard work and sincere desire to improve his literacy. He has taken full control of his learning, which I fully admire."

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/donate/olva/> or by mailing us a check.



“Kids translate when parents speak only Spanish, a vital service during pandemic”

Tampa Bay Times

By Juan Carlos Chavez, July 27, 2020

Speaking a language different than English is a strength and a blessing for the diversity of this country.

Twelve-year-old Lianet Ramírez remembers the first weeks of March when news reports about COVID-19 started coming quickly and often. The recommendations for stopping the spread of the disease were mostly in English.

Not knowing what “novel coronavirus” meant, Lianet used data and flyers she found on the internet to explain to her parents what she had read about the pandemic. Often, Lianet said, she had to describe words such as “ventilator” using examples everyone in her home could understand.

“Sometimes, I feel like a teacher, but I like it,” Lianet said. Her passion for reading and her communication skills make her think she might be a good school teacher. “It is something I want to do when I become an adult.”

Lianet didn’t know English when she arrived from Cuba with her parents, René Ramirez Jr., 44, and Janet Ramirez, 34, in the summer of 2018. But at Rodgers Middle School in Riverview, she learned fast, determined to study and make new friends. Another motivation was the need to help her family. She translated instructions to obtain a driver’s license for her dad, looked for health insurance for her grandparents, René, 70, and Anicia, 69; ...

Reprinted from Tampa Bay Times. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

<https://bit.ly/39ZeDNz>

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.)

Christina Rahhal, LVA tutor

With some volunteers, it’s only a matter of time.

And Christina Rahhal had none, none to spare that is, not even the two hours per week required to tutor an immigrant or struggling native English speaker, as a volunteer.



Her days were consumed by TAG Online, the full-service web development firm where she’s worked for more than 20 years, rising to her current position of vice president of operations. And, outside of her regular gig, she coordinated seminars for an internationally-known production company that specializes in wellness care.

So when she learned of an opportunity to be trained as a volunteer tutor, and possibly change someone’s life by teaching them to read, write, and speak English, she knew something had to go.

“I found out about the LVA from the Montclair group on Facebook and said I can definitely do this,” Christina remembered.

So she left her second post and freed up some time.

Christina’s first LVA student is Hilal, a woman from Turkey.

“It’s been great, I find her passion for learning English inspiring, she really wants to be able to communicate in English,” Christina said of the experience.

Perhaps due to her experience in the wellness industry, Christina brings a stress-free ambiance to her tutoring sessions.

She knows they do not have to be too serious, in order to get her point across, and wants to make sure both student and tutor find happiness in the encounters.

She came to tutoring with tons of work and volunteer experience. As an environmental science and photography student at the State University of New York at Purchase, she volunteered at a women’s alternative health clinic. After college, she worked in the Office of the Mayor of New York who, at the time, was Rudy Giuliani. She also sold advertising space for a magazine.