



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



"Laughter is the best teacher" was the perfect description for Lisa Batiito's engaging tutor support workshop last month. Lisa, shown above in the top left corner, is featured in our Page 3 profile.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Greetings LVA family.

September was National Literacy Month and, in case you missed the staggering statistics in news accounts, here are two:

One in five U.S. adults has low literacy skills. And 43% of adults with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty, according to the National Institute of Literacy. That's before 2020, when the coronavirus threw 88-114 million people into extreme poverty around the globe, according to the World Bank.

That's why we focus on adults with the lowest levels of literacy, students who were deemed not advanced enough for other programs and had nowhere else to turn. Literacy has the power to lift people out of poverty and help them get more out of life. And, with your help, our students have done well.

So well that student writers Georgina, Nohra, Milton, Ali, Carol, Luciana, Rizwana and others have seen their essays and memoirs published online recently. Anelsi just got her U.S. citizenship. Student Cristina, and other new citizens like her, are about to vote in the U.S. for the first time. Walter, who arrived from Guatemala two years ago, started his own landscaping company and just wrote his first business letter.

So thank you! Your help has made a world of difference to many adults and their families. And please continue to work with students in these lowest levels, in small groups that help them establish networks, stay motivated and connected through peer support, and help us improve the lives of more families.

You'll find tons of new material in the latest Adult Literacy Education (ALE) Research Journal, produced twice each year by ProLiteracy. The newest issue includes everything from the personal narratives of adult students and teachers to research on technology for adult education. <https://bit.ly/30Mb1uS>

In addition to a rise in poverty, the pandemic sadly has led to a catastrophic rise in illiteracy, according to this World Literacy Foundation release: <https://prn.to/2GKelje>

In the News

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

"Low literacy levels among U.S. adults could be costing the economy \$2.2 trillion a year," Forbes.
<https://bit.ly/3jLiHed>

"For parents and students with limited English, virtual learning presents numerous hurdles," Color Lines.
<https://bit.ly/3jJV331>



Serhad, a student from Turkey, has lived in no less than seven countries and studied the languages and cultures of each during decades of travel.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Catherine Mitch

Platform: Zoom

Tuesdays, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

November 10, 17, 24, & December 1, 2020

Tutor Support Workshops

"Helping Students Overcome Their Fear of Speaking,"

with Abby Kane

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"Writing Prompts for the Classroom,"

with Dr. Erik Jacobson

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

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

Getting to Know Us

Serhad, LVA student

Little did Serhad know that studying acting in college would pay dividends later in life. Back then, at Yildiz University in Istanbul, Serhad studied mechanical engineering to make a living, and acting to make a life.

"We mostly studied pantomime and body language," said Serhad. The techniques he practiced, with their similarities to the total physical response method of language learning, may have made it easier for Serhad to become multilingual. While Serhad's love for culture opened doors for him to learn different languages and lifestyles, his family's frequent travels pushed him through them. "Every four or five years we moved to another town because my father was a judge," Serhad said. "If you are a judge, you are like an officer in the army and you move when you are told to move."

Born in Artvin, Turkey, near the Georgian border, Serhad has lived in Russia, Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain. His travels include five years in Siberia and another 10 in Moscow. "I really like Russian culture," he said. "I learned not only an additional language; I also learned another culture."

In fact, he moved to Russia in 1994, only three years after the Soviet Union dissolved. "That was during a very big change in Russian culture," said Serhad who, as an acting student, made sure he attended as much Russian theater as he could.

Serhad moved to the United States in 2018 and settled in New Jersey. Shortly after arriving, he was searching on the internet to find a way to learn yet another language: English. "I saw the Literacy Volunteers of America website and after that went to the Bloomfield Library to register for classes," Serhad said. "I wanted to take their intensive, in-person classes but the coronavirus hit."

But another door opened when Jorge Chavez, an LVA student coordinator, paired him with Bob and Lisa, two tutors with very different styles. "They are good tutors," Serhad said. "I am so satisfied."

You can tell by the delight in his voice, and the confidence he exudes when speaking of the life he's established for himself, his wife, and two daughters in Montclair, that his last move may be one of his best yet. On that, Serhad is not acting.

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.lvaep.org/donate.html> or by mailing us a check.



“The secret to learning any new language may be your motivation”

EdSurge

By Rebecca Koenig, September 10, 2020

If you want to effortlessly become an expert in a new language, you’re probably too late. That’s an opportunity largely reserved for children.

And yet, adults regularly set out to study a second (or third, or fourth) language. They embark on the difficult journey for different reasons. Some want to gain better job prospects, others seek to socialize in new circles, while still others just want an educational way to entertain themselves.

Research is revealing that these reasons may influence how far someone is able to travel toward proficiency. So programs intended to make that process easier and faster are tapping into the science of motivation to improve their methods. That includes the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, which helps members of the military gain proficiency in new languages in as little time as nine months.

“Without that intrinsic personal motivation, it’s hard to reach the levels we expect and hope,” says Parandeh Kia, associate provost for educational technology at the institute. “Achievement is not comparable.”

Of course, not everyone has access to an intensive, in-person training program run by the U.S. government. But technology-enabled tools that aim to deliver language instruction at scale are also building incentives into their systems to help learners (*cont*)

Reprinted from EdSurge. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3nyA1cq>

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.lva.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Lisa Batitto LVA tutor

Attend a single Lisa Batitto literacy session and you’re likely to leave singing her praises. At the very least, you’ll be singing.

That’s because Lisa, who joined LVA as a volunteer tutor five months ago, is a huge advocate of using pop song lyrics to teach English to adults.



“I like to take the class and tie popular song into it,” explained Lisa, who uses the verses to teach grammar, vocabulary, idioms, and culture to Serhad, a student from Turkey, and Erika from Ecuador.

“We went through the song lyrics and both students started singing a beautiful duet,” she said of one particular tune. “They balance each other out really well.”

While singing your way through class may seem peculiar to some, the use of song lyrics has long been lauded by academics who find that it helps maintain student interest, and is useful in teaching grammar, vocabulary, and culture. Lisa uses “Tune Into English” - www.tuneintoenglish.com - for its selection of songs and exercises for students

Through song lyrics, Lisa’s students have learned idioms like “Holding my breath” from the Katy Perry tune, “Roar,” and reviewed the provocative double-negative “We don’t need no education” from Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall.” Serhad and Erika even enjoy imitating song stylists as unique as Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, and Janis Joplin.

“It’s because they’re having a good time and they’re laughing that they tend to remember,” Lisa told a group of volunteers who attended a recent tutor support workshop she presented, “Laughter is the Best Teacher”.

Lisa, who earned a bachelor’s degree in communications and TESL and TEFL certificates, has worked as a public relations manager for both the Montclair Art Museum and the Newark Museum.

She recalled her own school days when, at times, she struggled through lessons that were less than inspirational.

“But then other times you think of a lesson where the teacher had you so engaged that you couldn’t wait to go to class again,” Lisa said. “And that’s the kind of energy I try to bring into my lessons with my students.”