



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

The Insider

Greetings LVA family,

We hope you had a joyous and safe Thanksgiving and wish you much happiness in the coming holiday season.

An organization is only as good as its workers and the heart of our team is surely our volunteers and students. This week we celebrated both, in our first virtual membership meeting, for their roles in getting us through an extremely difficult year. They did everything they could to keep their sessions going during the pandemic, communicating with one another through online video platforms, telephone chats and texts, and even mailing and returning assignments through the postal service.

Karen Cardell, who encouraged her students to write to improve their English, which led to several of them being published online, was named Tutor of the Year, one of two such annual awards. "I can't do the work I do without my students," said Karen, who briefly joined the meeting while simultaneously tutoring a group of students online. "They make everything wonderful as it is. They really make it worthwhile."

Nohra Colon, one of Karen's students and a prolific writer who saw her essays published on NJALL web pages, was named our Student of the Year for Essex County. "I want to say thank you, Karen, thank you everybody, because this is a very good program," Nohra told meeting attendees.

Randy Budros, who was also cited as a Tutor of the Year, and Quanhy Ha, the Passaic County Student of the Year, were unable to attend.

Sally Rice, president of our Board of Trustees, noted the strong bonds students and tutors form, often leading to long-term friendships. Her colleagues, board members Jordan Fried, Kathy Mollica, and Harsh Parikh, were reelected to three-year terms while a new member, Christina Berwick, was appointed. Her bio, as well as those of other board members, can be found on our website: <http://www.lvaep.org/our-team.html>

In other matters, the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) will accept submissions until Mar. 26, 2021 for the 2021 Adult Learners Writing Contest it sponsors. Cash prizes will be offered in five categories - fiction, non-fiction, memoir, poetry, and photography - while winning submissions will be published in the organization's online magazine. For more information, contact NJALL at: njallmail@gmail.com

In the News

"12 Common Mistakes Made By Teachers of English-Language Learners," EdWeek. <https://bit.ly/2Jvy1IP>

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties



Tutors were treated to another informative workshop last month, "Writing Prompts for the Classroom," by Dr. Erik Jacobson, a coordinator of the NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Costa Rican native Carolina is persistent about reaching her goals, whether it be improving her English or finding steady employment in an economic downturn.

Tutor Training Workshops

To Be Announced

Tutor Support Workshops

"Building Vocabulary Through Stories,"

with Mary O'Connor

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

"Easy Guide for Working With Small Groups,"

with Barbara Hathaway

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

"Get to Know Your Students on a Personal Level,"

with Diana Sefchik

Platform: Zoom

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

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

Getting to Know Us

Carolina, LVA student

During gloomy moments of the pandemic, Carolina tries to think of joyful times, like the childhood years she spent playing in trees with her sisters in Costa Rica and picking mangoes, tangerines, and oranges on her family's land.

As kids they shared fresh bread and hot coffee with their grandmother, a family tradition, as they heard stories passed down from generations. And they rode horses trained by their father, a professional horse handler.

So, of course, she feels for today's children, many of them quarantined at home due to the pandemic. "They are in a very, very bad moment," said Carolina, a literacy student who, similarly, is forced to meet remotely with tutors due to social distance restrictions that have changed the face of education this year. "You need to spend time with other kids. It is good for your personality and development."

Carolina earned a business degree, with a concentration in sales and marketing from the Latin University of Costa Rica at Heredia, the nation's largest private university. She followed her boyfriend to the U.S. several years ago and married him. Since then, it's been something of a learning experience.

"I came here and started all over again," she said. "When you come from another country, you are changing your life and you start again."

A bright spot has been her English language classes where she's made real progress, even during the health crisis.

Employment wise, she found a job at a local dry cleaner but was laid off in the early days of the pandemic, when many businesses closed. They encouraged her to return when conditions improved but, as Carolina put it, "I am not a person to sit around."

"I applied at another company and I got it," she said. "I work for a laboratory, Aerotek, in data entry."

She landed her new position in May and has held onto it. Her goal is to find work in marketing, the field she studied and prepared for. And, if you know Carolina, you know the smart money is on her getting there.

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.



“Lost in Translation: How language barriers can add anguish and complicate care for COVID-19 patients who don’t speak English”

Chicago Tribune

By Laura Rodriguez Presa and Alison Bowen
November 15, 2020

Even though Rodolfo Reyes' partner died of COVID-19 complications more than six months ago, he still buys her flowers almost every day.

Her remains are in a small off-white urn on the kitchen counter he turned into an altar. It is surrounded by some of her favorite red and white roses, and votive candles.

“I think about her every single day, and I still can’t believe she is gone forever,” said Reyes in Spanish as he stared into the distance while sitting on a chair in the small dining room of the Little Village basement apartment he once shared with his life partner.

Reyes promised her family that he would take care of her until her last breath. And he did, but he couldn’t save her from the deadly virus that has taken the lives of more than a million people across the globe.

But his deepest pain, he said, is knowing that she died alone, unable to communicate with him, or anyone for that matter.

Maria Isabel Alfaro was 50. She did not speak English, and before her death, she shared the anguish and desperation she felt because she wasn’t able to understand or communicate with the medical staff, Reyes said. *(cont.)*

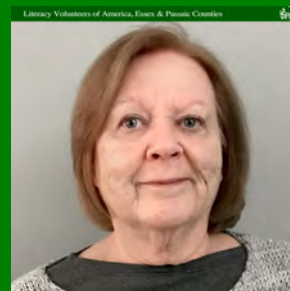
Reprinted from The Chicago Tribune. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3qd6wF6>

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.lvaenp.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

JoAnn Katzban, LVA tutor

Things went smoothly, at least at first, for JoAnn Katzban, a career attorney who, in her retirement, dove into the world of adult literacy.



She’d trained as a volunteer tutor, shaken off initial jitters of teaching English to absolute beginners, and fine-tuned her lesson plans to incorporate discussions of news items, local holidays, as well as the students’ traditions and cultures back home.

Then, suddenly, everything changed.

“When we hit the pandemic, I thought, ‘What do we do now?’” said JoAnn, who joined LVA about a year ago. Her students were beginning to ask the same.

So she opted to move her lessons to Facebook video calls, a portal that she was familiar with.

But there were other obstacles, for sure, like adjustments in meeting days and times as students’ work schedules changed, and even illnesses when students were afflicted by the coronavirus.

“It was a learning experience for me but now it is as easy as can be,” explained JoAnn, adding that her two students became fast friends during classes and are both eager to learn. “One student will be taking her citizenship test next year; another is very invested in using her English all the time. It is truly inspiring.”

The Milwaukee native earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology, a masters in urban planning, a law degree from Seton Hall University Law School and she has decades of experience as a practicing attorney.

In her spare time, JoAnn is a voracious reader, with a penchant for biographical and socio-political non-fiction. And she’s an avid gardener. Her backyard boasts of lively liatris plants, balloon flowers, stargazer lilies – pretty much anything with a pink or purple hue that blooms in summer.

“And, of course, roses,” she said. “Who doesn’t love roses? All things you can do during the pandemic. A lot of heavy pruning got done this year.”