



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



*Reduced or eliminated during the quarantine: Work commutes, pants dry cleaning bill, and long LVA staff meetings (above), thanks to Zoom time limits. Stay safe, everyone.*

### Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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## *The Insider*

Greetings LVA Family,

When student Georgina Jerez recalls Easter's past, cheerful images come to mind. There were chocolate eggs collected in baskets, and parents who brought their children to church, or sometimes even to the beach in her native Ecuador. Last month, the images were starkly different.

"At this Easter Time, several families have lost one or more loved ones, and never more will they return back to see them," the LVA student wrote in an essay entitled "Easter Week".

The essay was posted online <https://bit.ly/2SYr98Z> by the New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning on its pages, "NJALL Adult Learner Writing in the Time of ..." dedicated to student writings about the life during the pandemic. The site also includes essays by Rosa Romero and Nohra Colon who, like Georgina, study with tutor Karen Cardell.

"For some people like me, who knows what can happen if we don't help stop this epidemic right now?" Rosa wrote in "The Epidemic". "We are not only worried if we're going to have money to provide food for our families, we are concerned the most because we can lose our lives at any time!" <https://bit.ly/3fy9bng>

In "Priorities in Quarantine," Norha wrote "The quarantine has been a time for people to reflect and learn about: What is Life? What is freedom?" The most important thing to remember is that this life is so fragile." <https://bit.ly/3fCkUBf>

It's a fragile time, to be sure, but we can all stay connected with a simple telephone call or text, as well as with the help of online platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, Google Hangouts, FaceTime, and a host of others. For sites on distance learning, see our web page: <http://www.lvaep.org/distance-learning.html>

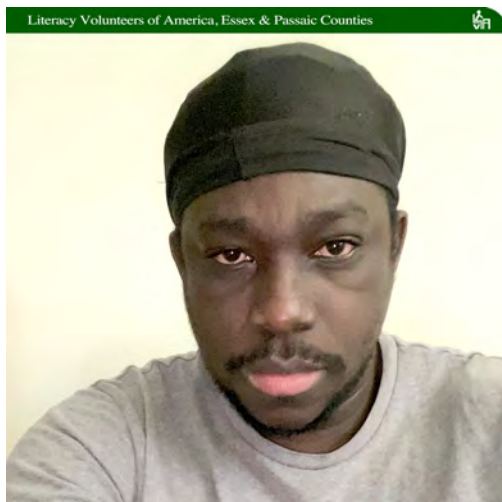
## *In the News*

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

"Ten strategies for teaching English language learners online", Education Week. <https://bit.ly/2YyNiy7>

"Literacy center helps students adjust to online learning", Midland Reporter. <https://bit.ly/3feWyNO>

"Local adult literacy program goes virtual to continue helping students", mrt.com. <https://bit.ly/2z8uE5q>



*Peter, a literacy student from Jamaica, is determined to make the best of his opportunity to study, whether it takes place in the library or at a distance.*

## Upcoming and Archived Webinars

### ProLiteracy

#### “Distance Learning: Ideas From the Field”

Friday, May 22, 2020, 2:00-3:00 pm  
<https://bit.ly/2SWaEtZ>

Sixth in a series of webinars hosted by ProLiteracy, to help literacy program administrators, tutors, and teachers convert their instruction to distance learning.

#### NJALL Virtual Mini-Conference Spring 2020

In lieu of an annual conference this year, The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning will offer a series of webinars and other virtual events.

#### “Transitioning to the New Reality of Adult Education” A Panel Discussion

Thursday, June 4, 2020  
3:00-4:15 pm  
<https://bit.ly/2YW3oC6>

## Getting to Know Us

### Peter, LVA student

One of the best opportunities in life is often that elusive second chance, particularly if you weren't ready for the first. Through his volunteer literacy tutors, Peter, a literacy student from Jamaica, has found one, and he's anxious for a redo.

“If I had only taken school seriously,” said Peter, as he reflected on his early education in the Caribbean. “I had the opportunity to go to school, but I was too young and didn't take it seriously. I want to try it over this time and get it right,” he said.

And, that he has done. “When I started with my tutor, I didn't know the sounds of letters. Now I know the sounds and am able to put the letters together to make words,” Peter said.

Peter first walked through the doors of the Bloomfield Library, straight to the LVA office, after hearing about the program from his mother. “When I came in to register, I was really excited about the opportunity to better myself,” Peter said. “I wanted to improve my life. I wanted to help my daughter. I wanted to get a better job.”

Peter works with his tutor, Michele, every Saturday and has continued tutoring sessions with the same enthusiasm since distance learning began in March.

“Peter is excellent and has tried very hard,” Michele said. “He is learning quickly,” she said.

In his down time, this devoted dad observes his daughter's online classes or just kicks back into the roots of his Jamaican culture. It is not unusual to find Peter in his kitchen singing along to “One Love,” his favorite Bob Marley song, and cooking up a dish of rice and peas, jerk chicken, or peas with oxtails. Because his mom worked, Peter had to learn to cook for himself.

Today, his learning is focused on literacy, an effort on which he has plenty of support.

“Before, I was not able to read but I am on my way now,” Peter said. “I have a lot more to learn. I am so happy to have found LVA. It is helping me a lot.”

*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.*



## “A 56-year-old finally learned to read and write because of a coronavirus lockdown”

*National Public Radio  
Stories of Life in a Changing World*

By Sushmita Pathak, April 25, 2020

All his life, 56-year-old Pratap Singh Bora has been sticking his thumb in ink to sign documents. He didn't go to school when he was a kid. Little did he know that he would learn to write his first words at a coronavirus lockdown center during a global pandemic.

Bora is a construction laborer working in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand. He was returning to his native Nepal in late March when India announced a three-week coronavirus lockdown (the lockdown has since been extended to May 3). The government shut off public transport and sealed borders. Like tens of millions of migrant laborers across India, Bora was stuck.

On April 10, Indian authorities housed Bora and dozens of other stranded migrants in a school converted into a relief camp in the town of Tanakpur along the India-Nepal border. India has set up more than 20,000 camps across the country to provide food and shelter to poor people affected by the lockdown.

But at the Tanakpur relief camp, residents get something extra: an opportunity to learn. It's one of 10 centers in Uttarakhand's Champawat district where authorities are running literacy programs for illiterate migrant workers. About 200 inhabitants are learning to read and write for the first time, says Ramesh Chandra Purohit, chief education officer for Champawat district.

*Reprinted from National Public Radio. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:*

<https://n.pr/2zSRe2p>

*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

### Gery Gil, LVA tutor

Her love of teaching and helping others has led Gery Gill to spend four decades as an educator in four different countries, in three continents. That same passion also brought her to Literacy Volunteers of America where she shares her experience and enthusiasm with both students and tutors.



“After 37 years of teaching and now being retired, I have the time to volunteer more,” said Gery, a volunteer tutor of students and workshop presenter for tutors. “This is a time to commit myself to something I really love. I call ESOL my first love.”

Gery's entry into the world of ESOL came through a chance assignment by an administrator.

“I got into ESOL because my first teaching position was in Weehawken, New Jersey,” she explained. “My maiden name is Lomaestro. There were two teachers on their way to retiring. Because I was Italian, my principal assumed I spoke Spanish. There was quite an influx of Spanish speakers coming into our school.”

Gery's first teaching job outside of the United States was at the American School in Zaragoza, Spain, a town between Madrid and Barcelona. Her love for Spain began after she travelled throughout the country for two consecutive summers.

“Spanish is very similar to Italian,” Gery explained, adding that knowing Spanish “helped me to be able to better communicate with the parents of my students. If you have never learned another language, you do not understand the joys and frustration of mastering it,” said Gery, who has also taught ESOL in Saudi Arabia and Italy.

Gery's first student at LVA was Sushila, a woman who'd never had the opportunity to attend school in her native Nepal. Gery also tutors Milton, a young man from Jamaica. “She is the best,” Milton said. “I have learned so much from her.”

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Gery and Milton work together through distance learning techniques. “The fact that tutors are still willing to reach out to their students in not only an instructional way, but a personal way, is extremely touching,” Gery said. “Volunteering is a way of giving back. For everything we have, it is now our chance to share it with others. We are paying it forward.”



## *LVA in the Times of COVID-19*

We're all doing our best to adjust to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic but, let's be honest, it's new territory for most of us. So, of course, we expect to encounter some bumps in the road and obstacles, no matter what distance learning platforms we use, but we'll get through them. Here's a few tips, words of inspiration, and photos offered by our tutors:

"Honestly, I've really struggled with the technology but my students seem patient and eager to improve," said tutor Diane Masucci, who supplements her reading and writing worksheet assignments with YouTube music. "I just learned that, if I ask a student to explain a new word, for example "survivor", it opens up the conversation beyond my own experiences and forces the student to struggle for the words they need. I can coach them but it's more effective to engage peer to peer conversations."

In a crisis that's seen some students lose their jobs or work in risky health environments, a little patience and kindness go a long way. They can also help our sessions. "I make sure to ask questions about their families and their health, jobs, and activities of late, so as to elicit active conversation and keep us connected," said tutor Karen Cardell.

Tutor Tova Narrett, on her student's work during an exercise on 'emotions': "For making a sentence with the word "jealous", she had '*My daughter is jealous when I hug the dog*,'" Tova wrote. "She did great again."

Tutor Peter Filaci: "I had another Zoom meeting with my students yesterday and they all seem to be doing well and staying positive. Just trying to keep calm and carry on."

