



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



At Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors, a new feature of LVA begun last month, tutors are invited to bring resources to share with other tutors during an informal video call.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Dear friends,

Wait no longer, *Insight 2021*, the magazine of the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL), which publishes some of the best entries from the organization's Adult Learner Writing Contest, is available online.

We're thrilled that the work of several of our talented students and former students appears in the magazine, including non-fiction pieces by authors Georgina Jerez, Rosa Romero, and Nohra Colon, and a memoir by Martha Diaz. Congrats to all! You can download *Insight 2021* and read all of the authors' submissions via this link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_jiaXKsCbaMxWIRw\[SuQ9J49YtDQEV/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_jiaXKsCbaMxWIRw[SuQ9J49YtDQEV/view)

Don't miss the next **Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors**, an informal video call where tutors meet up to share experiences, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes. The call will be facilitated by LVA's tutor support specialist Catherine Angus, who will ensure information exchanged in the meetings is distributed to all tutors, including those who can't attend. So please, join us! <http://www.lvaep.org/workshops.html>

We're keeping our eyes on a development just across the river where 36 lawmakers have written to New York State Education Department Commissioner Betty Rosa, urging her to reconsider the department's mandate for all state-sponsored adult literacy classes to take place in person. The legislators want her to consider remote options due to the lingering COVID-19 crisis. You can follow too, at: <https://bit.ly/3uDDyAQ>

We hope that you continue to follow safe and healthy practices during these unusual times. To review state restrictions and advisories regarding the coronavirus, including the Delta variant, please refer to the state website: <https://covid19.nj.gov/>

In the News

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

"It's a Myth That Adults Can't Learn Languages as Easily as Kids – Benefits Multiply if Families Learn Together." Good News Network. <https://bit.ly/3ARVNMx>

"It can be challenging for immigrant families to navigate American schools. I know from experience." Chicago Chalkbeat. <https://bit.ly/2YwwQAL>

"The College of New Jersey students help adults attain a GED." The Trenton Daily. <https://bit.ly/3kh77VF>



Walter, a student from Guatemala, is the proud owner of a successful landscaping company and relies on English to communicate with most customers.

Getting to Know Us

Walter, LVA student

It's been more than a decade since Walter launched his landscaping company and, as the firm grew, so did the demand for good English skills.

"I only speak to two customers in Spanish," said Walter, a former bank cashier from Guatemala and the only English speaker in his current company.

"For me the problem is vocabulary," he said. "Now I speak English with my customers. But a lot of them are just, 'Hi, how are you' and that's it."

That's helpful, for casual chat, but it falls shy of the language skills needed to run a business, tasks like writing correspondence to attract new clients or completing complicated business forms. Practice time at home is also limited. "When I try to watch the news in English or put on a movie in English, my wife says, 'No, no, no, put it on in Spanish,' " he said, adding, "When she's happy, I'm happy."

So, after some 30 years in the U.S., Walter enrolled in ESOL classes where he enjoys good working relationships with his LVA volunteers.

"I think he recognized that for him to really continue to get ahead with his job, to promote his business, and to be able to find new customers, he's got to overcome that language barrier," said Paul Weissenberger, one of tutors who are helping Walter.

"Walter is extremely hard working," he added. "While working on his job he takes the time to come to class, completes his homework, and is very diligent. Just a great individual."

Walter, the youngest of three sons, was raised in Guatemala City. He completed high school there and attended two years of college, majoring in business, before moving to the U.S. Here, he and his wife raised two daughters, and they enjoy spending time with their three grandchildren.

He spent 18 years working as an employee of a landscaper, before accruing enough private clients to start his own firm.

"Running your own company is a lot of work but I'm proud of being a business owner," Walter said.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Catherine Mitch
Platform: Zoom

Tuesdays, 6 - 8 pm
October 19, 26, November 2, 9 & 16, 2021

Tutor Support Workshops

"Informal Assessment Strategies,"
with Diana Sefchik

Platform: Google Meet
Tuesday, October 19, 2021
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"Easy Guide for Working with Small Group,"
with Barbara Hathaway

Platform: Zoom
Tuesday, November 16, 2021
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors

Topic: **"Shared lesson bank on Google Drive"**
with Catherine Angus

Thursday, November 4, 2021
1 p.m.

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

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 by mailing us a check or through our website @:

<http://www.lvaep.org/donate.html>



Man overcomes illiteracy late in life to pen love letter to wife

The Asahi Shimbun

By Kenichi Shinozuka, Staff Writer, September 30, 2021

A man who went through most of his life unable to read or write worked tirelessly through night classes so he could one day write a love letter to his beloved wife.

But he never thought that his romantic gesture would be immortalized in a rakugo play.

Now that a traditional storyteller inspired by his tale has turned it into a nonfiction rakugo act, Tamotsu Nishihata, 85, hopes it will broaden public understanding about people who struggle with illiteracy.

Nishihata, who lives in Nara, dropped out of school after he was bullied in the second grade. He helped his family's charcoal business and began working away from home when he was 12.

Nishihata was afraid of answering the phone at a restaurant he worked because he could not write. Staff yelled at him whenever he failed to write down delivery orders.

"Some staff wrote them for me, but others moved away when the phone rang," he said. "I felt so miserable and quit the job."

He frequently changed jobs, but finally landed a gig in his 30s at a sushi restaurant that understood and sympathized with his challenges. (cont.)

Reprinted from The Asahi Shimbun. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

<https://bit.ly/3lfZQW7>

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.lvaen.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Dave Weston, LVA tutor

There's not many volunteer tutors who, fresh out of training, happily welcomed four students into their first group.

But Dave Weston reveled in it. In fact, he barely flinched when the group soon expanded to six adult learners.



"The more the merrier," he laughed, with a hint of the trademark humor he uses to put folks at ease. "I like the idea of having more people in class because they can help each other."

Dave may have entered the world of literacy tutoring without much experience but he's certainly no novice when it comes to educating adults. The now-retired attorney spent years managing, training, and supervising lawyers and is skilled at teaching groups both online and in person.

"That kind of paved the way for me having a certain comfort level for teaching students," he said of the experience.

One of six children, Dave was born in Pennsylvania and raised near Cherry Hill, NJ. He's married, has three daughters, and four grandchildren whom he enjoys caring for and spending time with. He earned undergrad and law degrees from Seton Hall University.

For Dave, the road to volunteerism followed a strategic search for a way to stay productive and mentally sharp following retirement. He even consulted his church's bishop who asked, "Did you ever think about becoming a tutor?"

And serving others is something of a tradition in his family, said Dave, who draws inspiration from his wife, who teaches math, and his daughters, who all work in hospitals.

"I said, 'You know what, I really think I'd like doing it, an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, to do something much more rewarding and, in my mind, more purposeful,' " he said of tutoring.

"Just the idea of giving back, so to speak, kind of really energized me," Dave added. "I tell (my students) I appreciate them because they teach me some things too."