



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



*It was another thought-provoking **Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors** this month, an informal video call in which tutors and tutor support specialist Catherine Angus share experiences & resources.*

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The Insider

Dear friends,

We were so pleased to learn that several of our students found full-time jobs in recent months, particularly during these unpredictable times. Included on the next page is a profile of one of those students, Fernanda, and we hope to share others soon.

You have to love the spirit of Dr. Jill Biden for using her powerful position to promote literacy. Dr. Biden, the only first lady to hold a full-time job while serving in the role, shared some inspiring words last month with educators at the National Summit on Adult Literacy in Washington, an event convened by the foundation of former first lady Barbara Bush.

“Mrs. Bush understood the incredible power of this platform,” Dr. Biden said. “She chose literacy because she wanted to help the most people possible. She believed that everything she was worried about — from homelessness to hunger and crime — could be tied back to literacy and education. And you know what? She was right.” <https://bit.ly/3kp31EX>

Did you know that November 8th was International Tongue Twister Day? Or that such a day exists? Neither did we. Well, for what it's worth, here's an entry from Houston Public Media where you and your friends, and possibly some students, can play with a few well known and not so well known challenging phrases like “*She sees cheese, Chop shops stock chops, and A pessimistic pest exists amidst us.*” Just for fun. (Hint: It helps to form a mental picture of the words as you try them, or so they say.) <https://bit.ly/3H7BsyP>

The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) just announced its eighth annual adult learner writing contest, one that offers cash prizes in five categories and the chance for students to have their work published in a magazine. It's a great opportunity and a confidence builder for adults who participate. Submissions are due March 18, 2022.

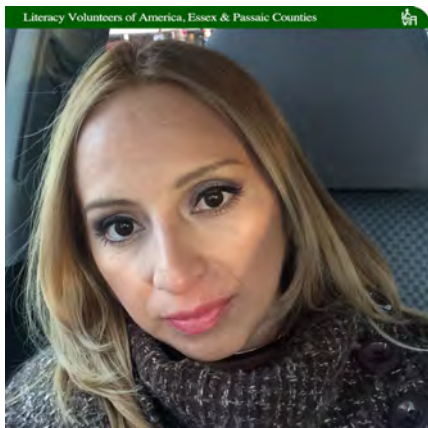
In the News

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

“**Learning another language.**” White Mountain Independent. (Opinion). <https://bit.ly/3H4LcK9>

“**3 science-backed methods to learn English by watching TV,**” Study International. <https://bit.ly/3ArcQz5>

“**Can you teach yourself another language?**” Chatham News + Record. <https://bit.ly/3Eay28g>



Fernanda, a student from Ecuador, recently found a full-time job as an assistant teacher in a local daycare center, a job that depends on her bilingual abilities.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Barbara Hathaway
Platform: Zoom
Tuesdays, 6 - 8 pm
January 11, 18, 25, February 1, & 8, 2022

Tutor Support Workshops

"Easy Guide for Working with Small Group,"
with Barbara Hathaway
Platform: Zoom
Tuesday, November 16, 2021
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"How Understanding Personality Can Improve Your Tutoring,"
with Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo
Platform: Google Meet
Tuesday, December 14, 2021
11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Monthly Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Catherine Angus
Tuesday, December 7, 2021
1 pm

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

Getting to Know Us

Fernanda, LVA student

Those early days, when Fernanda arrived in the states from South America, were among the hardest, even when held against the severity of the pandemic.

You see, there wasn't much opportunity to learn English in Chimborazo, the province in the central Ecuadorian Andes where Fernanda was raised with six siblings. So, she struggled.

"The first year was very, very difficult," Fernanda explained. "When I went to the doctor with the children, I didn't understand the doctor. Wherever I went, I didn't understand many people."

But that didn't last.

Not long after her 2012 arrival, she enrolled in an English class at a Kearny church, then another at a Kearny library, then one at LVA. Progress, naturally, followed.

"It's easier to speak with other people now," she noted. "I make calls, I make appointments, I am learning."

Tutor Olga Roberts described Fernanda as a good student who contributed to her online group class, despite a sometimes interfering work schedule. "She has improved," Olga noted.

Fernanda first worked a grueling overnight shift at a McDonald's restaurant, then, at her own home, babysat children for working parents. Last month, she was hired as a full-time assistant teacher at a daycare center and after-school program, a job that requires her to speak English and Spanish.

When she's not working or studying, Fernanda enjoys spending time with her daughter, age 17, and two sons, ages 15 and 3. Along the way, she found the time to earn a state driver's license.

She's also a cardio fitness and nutrition enthusiast who works out three or four times per week. She has her sights set on gaining a certificate as a personal trainer, as soon as the program she's investigating begins live classes again. "That's the next step," she laughed.

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>



Is accent in the mind of the listener?

Language Magazine

Stephen Krashen and Nooshan Ashtari discuss how perception can affect comprehension

October 18, 2021

Ashtari reported that intermediate and advanced students of English as a second language at a California university felt that many native speakers of English do not even make an attempt to understand their English, even though the speaker feels that what is said is grammatically accurate.

The students felt that when talking to a native speaker of English in the U.S., what they say is grammatically correct, but native speakers claim not to understand and ask them to repeat. This experience is discouraging: 80% stated that they would not try to start a conversation voluntarily with a native speaker for fear of not making themselves understood.

It could be the case that these reactions happen because the ESL students are, in fact, difficult to understand because of their accents. We suspect that this is not the case. In our experience, we have found that intermediate and advanced ESL students at the university level are rarely totally incomprehensible or even difficult to understand.

Why then did the ESL acquirers experience problems with the people they tried to interact with? Rubin (1992) provides an explanation. In his study, he played recordings of unaccented native-speaker English to subjects and showed them one of two pictures of adult males: one obviously Asian and one ... (cont.)

Reprinted from Language Magazine. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

<https://bit.ly/3D0PgsB>

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.)

Paul Schmitz, LVA tutor

He's taught painting, drawing, and printmaking to hundreds of young children and teens.



You'd think that would be enough to make a retired teacher stay retired. But Paul Schmitz keeps coming back.

Instead of running for his life at the sight of another class, the former Passaic County school art teacher jumped at the chance to become a volunteer literacy tutor in 2018, and today wants to add other students to his roster.

"It's better to have a small group that can work together," explained Paul, who currently has one student. "They're extremely supportive. No one is laughing or making fun of anyone else. And that's extremely helpful."

He should know. Paul led his first literacy group up in Harlem back in the 1970s and '80s. In more recent times, he's taught English to Cuban and Honduran refugees through the International Rescue Committee.

His motivation? Well, it's more than the fact that he's been "starved for company" since the lockdown, although that's part of it.

"Life's been easy for me," he explained. "I've never struggled for money. I have two wonderful children. I have had a pretty easy ride, relatively. So, I feel I should give back. I feel the responsibility of giving something back to the community."

Paul earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from Pratt Institute and a master of fine arts from Brooklyn College. He's an avid bicyclist and enjoys etching and engraving in his spare time.

Paul has led groups of up to four students at LVA but today is down to a single student, Dave, who works for the city of Newark. Together they work on a variety of materials and enjoy reviewing stories from *News in Levels*, which offers news stories written in three different levels of English, and *The Times in Plain English*.

Dave is interested in the world around him, is a pretty serious student, and does well in small groups, Paul said. "Dave is a good teacher," he added. "He's stern, sterner than I am. If someone doesn't show up for a lesson, he gets on them."