



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



Thank you to all the incredible students, tutors, teachers, and other volunteers that helped us carry out our mission of adult literacy during an extremely demanding year.

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Greetings LVA family,

We want to thank you all for facing the daunting task of making the transition from in-person learning to remote instruction during what can only be described as one of the most challenging years of our lives. By all accounts you came through with remarkable determination and energy.

As restrictions begin to ease, we urge you to continue to meet safely. You can obtain information on New Jersey's reopening here: <https://covid19.nj.gov/>

It is with sadness, but best wishes for the future, that we say goodbye to Debbie Graham, our education coordinator for nearly eight years. Debbie, who kept track of tutors' hours, arranged support workshops, and helped match tutors with students, among other responsibilities, left last month in order to spend more time with her family. The good news is that she remains with LVA as a volunteer so we won't lose all of her institutional knowledge and experience. It's been great working with you Debbie. Bonne chance!

Why is English so fouled up? No one really knows. A reader of The San Diego Union-Tribune provides for an interesting column by questioning why so many verbs in English are appended to the word "up"? Her list, and it's only partial, includes more than 100 verbs – everything from act to clean to drum, fold, follow, gang, hang, hold, lawyer, make, open, pass, run, settle, and many more. You can read up on her query here: <http://bit.ly/344XELx>

Just a reminder that the deadline for the NJALL Adult Learner Writing Contest 2021 is March 26, 2021. The contest offers cash prizes in five categories as well as the chance to be published in the organization's annual magazine. The submissions we've read so far look awesome. Good luck to all the contestants. For more information, check: <http://www.njall.org/news-925899.html>

NJALL also offers two scholarships for students who plan to attend college or another accredited post-secondary institution. For more info, please check: <https://files.constantcontact.com/2333e31b001/c398a7eb-91b8-4d1a-9f55-18a3a701099f.pdf>

In the News

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

"Pokot elders show it is never too late to learn." The Star.
<http://bit.ly/2O6dQ7g>



Haeckel, a literacy student from Brazil, is determined to become fluent in English and, according to his tutors, his progress is impressive.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Barbara Hathaway
Platform: Zoom
Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm
May 4th, 11, 18, 25, & June 1, 2021

Tutor Support Workshops

"Teaching Reading Comprehension Skills Through Effective Questioning," with Catherine Mitch
Platform: Google Meet
Wednesday, April 21, 2021
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

"Access and use issues of online platforms, websites, and apps that support your objectives,"
with Catherine Angus
Platform: Google Meet
Wednesday, May 5, 2021
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Additional information @:

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

Getting to Know Us

Haeckel, LVA student

There are studies galore that show that immigrants who learn English enjoy higher earnings, greater social assimilation, heck, even better mental health.

But there are other advantages too, like matters of personal pride and greater self-determination. Statistical studies may gloss over those benefits, or skip them altogether, but to a fiercely independent literacy student like Haeckel, they're everything.

"I am here right now, learning as fast as I can, because I can't bother a lot of other people to help," explained Haeckel, a native of the Brazilian state of Bahia. "For example, to go to the doctor. Or to file my income tax, which I have to do right now. I don't like to ask people to do that for me. I think I have to try to do things like that by myself."

So it's no wonder that Haeckel enrolled in LVA's literacy program two years ago, almost as soon as he arrived in the states with his wife, Alejandra, who is also a literacy student, and their teenage son.

He began by taking literacy classes at the Passaic Public Library; today he studies remotely with two volunteer tutors.

One of those tutors, Jaspreet Kaur, described him as a very serious student and a fast learner. "There are very few times when I have to repeat whatever I teach him," she said. "He is supportive and patient with his classmates."

The other, tutor Chris Wallerstein, said "He's hard-working and diligent and it's great to see him progress. He's an absolute pleasure to work with."

Back in Brazil, Haeckel earned a bachelor's degree and spent years working both as the stage director and the technical director at Teatro Castro Alves, one of Bahia state's largest and most prestigious performance theaters, home of the Bahia Symphony Orchestra.

Here he works at a local airport, a job he relishes in part for the opportunities it provides to practice English with employees who come from all over the world. Haeckel said he would not have been able to obtain the job, had it not been for the help of the literacy program and its tutors.

"They help me so much," Haeckel said of his tutors. "We talk about everything ... anything I want to know they try to help me."

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.



“I spent the past year documenting how COVID devastated communities. As an immigrant and Latina, it took a toll.”

“I’ve spent months documenting how national problems played out in Virginia and reporting the barriers to language accessibility in COVID information.”

Richmond Times-Dispatch

By Sabrina Moreno
March 6, 2021

Every day for almost a year, I’ve wondered if the next time I report an increase in COVID-19 deaths, one of them will include my parents. In Virginia, Latinos in their age range are twice as likely to die compared to other groups.

Throughout the state, Latinos had double the number of infections of white residents when accounting for population. Nationally, they bear triple the risk of being hospitalized.

I’ve stared at these statistics for more than 11 months: how Hispanic women had the most job losses. How immigrants faced the deepest cuts in the economic downturn. How nearly one in three Latinos know a family member or friend who’s gotten sick.

Then I thought about how many looked like me.

In some states, we lost entire generations. We lost our abuelitas. We lost a fabric of who we were. (cont.)

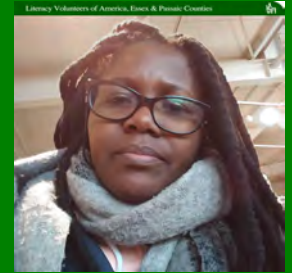
Reprinted from Richmond Times-Dispatch News. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <http://bit.ly/38lbnx>

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.)

Dofi Kuvodu, LVA tutor

Tutor Dofi Kuvodu approached her first students last year with careful anticipation, eager to create an environment that was warm and welcoming, and where no one feared speaking.



It wasn’t that long ago, after all, that Dofi sat in their places, on the other side of the library table, or Zoom screen in this case, as a literacy student just anxious to fit in.

“First I want to help,” said Dofi, who was born and raised in southern Togo, West Africa, where the official language is French and Ewé is widely spoken. “I know how it feels not to be part of the community, to come from somewhere and you are not familiar.”

Her sessions stress conversation and both students and tutor learn. “Seeing somebody accepting your help makes me feel good,” she said. “And at the same time, you are learning about them, their cultures, their other lives and getting a chance to experience other people’s experiences.”

It’s rare for a literacy student to become a tutor but, if you know Dofi, her progress should come as no surprise. She’s friendly, outgoing, and quick to start a conversation. She’s also serious about education – she’s studying for a master’s degree in educational technology – and developed good study habits early, thanks to an aunt who raised Dofi and her siblings in Lomé, Togo’s capital. The matriarch, lovingly called “Mamy T”, took the children on library visits, made sure that they did their homework at night, and had them read to her, and take dictation from her, every morning before school.

Dofi, who studied English in high school, moved to the U.S. in 2011 and quickly enrolled in a conversation group at the East Orange Public Library. Eventually, her level of English literacy surpassed that of the group but she stayed on to help other students. She completed LVA’s online tutor training workshop late last year.

She works as a substitute teacher and spends her limited free time on a Togolese non-profit she helped to create, “Dofi’s DREAM”, which collects and sends books by the barrel-full to sparsely-supplied libraries in Togo. “When I came here, I saw books, sometimes free, sometimes in the garbage,” explained Dofi. “It’s like they don’t need them so I thought ‘Let me do something’. I will collect them and I will take those books and send them back.”