



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 great to see Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo again last month, when the career coach and former tutor led the workshop "How Understanding Personality Can Improve Your Tutoring."

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Dear friends,

It has been a pleasure to work with Mary O'Connor, a retired teacher and school principal who for years served as our tutor support specialist, providing help and information to volunteers who found themselves with questions or issues in their roles as tutors. Mary, our first tutor support specialist since the position was created, retired last month but, thankfully, will continue working with us as a trainer and volunteer tutor. We wish you all the best, Mary, and hope that you find plenty of worthwhile activities to fill your time, now that things are finally reopening.

Tutors with questions and concerns can still find help through the newest member of our team, tutor support specialist Catherine Angus. She has years of experience as an ESL teacher and an advocate for immigrants and students in Canada and the U.S. Please join us in welcoming Catherine to our team, which you can learn more about on our website: <http://www.lvaep.org/our-team.html>

Here's a useful item for a tutor's tool kit: Voice of America's *Learning English*, a daily broadcast aimed at English language learners, which features slow speakers and limited vocabulary. Last month's broadcasts featured everything from the plight of aging farmers in China to the struggle to obtain COVID vaccines in Africa. <https://bit.ly/3xqSyCt>

Ever consider keeping a journal in order to help learn a new language, whether that language be English or any other? Now you're probably thinking, 'I don't keep a diary in my native tongue, why attempt one in a foreign language'? Well, a journal needn't be nearly as personal as a high school diary and studies show that foreign language journals help improve vocabulary, reading and writing abilities, and understanding of everyday language. Here's a story on a recent study on journals: <https://bit.ly/3xqSyCt> and advice from Babbel on how to get started: <https://bit.ly/3uVokcK>

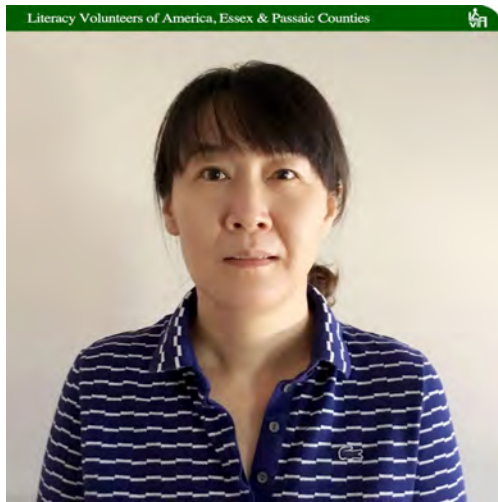
In the News

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

"In the Heights Knows the Second-Generation American's Dilemma." The Atlantic. <https://bit.ly/3uVMV6P>

"The six most effective instructional strategies for English language learners, according to teachers." Education Week. <https://bit.ly/3A5KRDr>

"Study shows second language learning can happen quickly." News.ku.edu. <https://bit.ly/3qw6NDu>



Summer, a student from China, is nervous about her pronunciation skills but made it through a half-hour telephone interview in English with few problems.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by Barbara Hathaway
Platform: Zoom
Tuesdays, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
August 3, 10, 17, 24, & 31, 2021

Webinars

ProLiteracy and EdTech Center

Distance Education Strategies & Solutions
Webinar features experienced educators who share best practices and discuss your distance learning questions.
Platform: Zoom
Friday, July 23, 2021, 1:00-2:00 pm
<https://www.proliteracy.org/webinars>

NJALL

The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning offers a series of webinars that are archived online, on everything from vocabulary instruction for English language learners to transitioning to the new reality of adult education, among others. The webinars are available to all via:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDWUWANSq56e9imd02lr61g>

Getting to Know Us

Summer, LVA student

It takes small steps to reach great distances, or so the saying goes, for demanding goals like language learning.

And Summer, an accountant from the industrial city of Tangshan in northern China, has taken her share of steep and difficult steps.

There were frustrating encounters with supermarket staff who didn't understand her heavily-accented English. And she was lost while listening to her literacy program classmates whose Creole French accents she found hypnotic but undecipherable.

"That's why it's a hard life in America," she said of her language struggles. "When my English gets better maybe I can get a job and do everything myself. Now, even the easiest thing for me is hard."

There's also pressure from relatives back home who are concerned about her safety, given media reports of attacks against Asian-Americans.

"My family are worried about me and ask me to come back," she said. "They say America is not nice to Asians. But actually everyone is nice, everyone is friendly."

Back in her virtual classes, Summer finds that she can now converse with her classmates. And that's progress.

"Now we can speak and understand each other," she said.

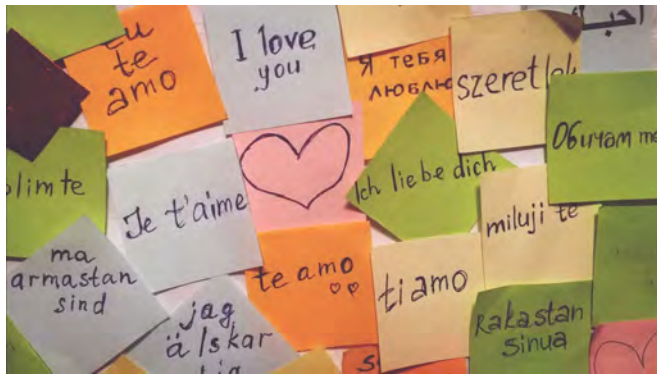
Diane Masucci, one of Summer's two tutors, described her as curious, caring, and bright. "Her questions often help me to understand the similarities between American and Chinese families who need to work hard to feed, clothe and educate their families," Diane said. "Her English skills improve weekly. She is a pleasure to teach."

Summer is anxious to reconnect with her tutors and classmates, in person this time, as they'd done before the pandemic forced her classes to go virtual.

"Even though the online class is very convenient, I'm looking forward to going back to the library," Summer explained. "People need to be social. I want to be social."

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.lvaen.org/donate.html> or by mailing us a check.



“I’m Willing to Fight for It.” Learning a Second Language as an Adult.”

National Public Radio Short Wave program

By Olga Khazan, June 4, 2021

Becoming fluent in a second language is difficult. But for adults, is it impossible?

Science says no.

Short Wave hosts Maddie Sofia and Emily Kwong dissect the "critical period hypothesis," a theory which linguists have been debating for decades — with the help of Sarah Frances Phillips, a Ph.D. student in the linguistics department at New York University. We explore where the theory comes from, how it applies to second-language acquisition, and what it means for Emily's efforts to learn Mandarin Chinese as an adult.

We are publishing a special episode in the Short Wave feed on Sunday, June 20th — all about Emily's journey to reclaim her heritage language at age 30 and unpack why she never learned Mandarin Chinese in the first place.

This upcoming episode is part of the *Where We Come From* series, featuring stories from immigrant communities of color across generations, in honor of Immigrant Heritage Month. Find more stories here. (cont.)

Reprinted from NPR’s Short Wave program. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar:

<https://n.pr/3A88hbh>

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.)

Mary Kao, LVA tutor

Mary Kao never had to look far for the inspiration to help others improve their lives through literacy. Her motivation began at home with a parent who could speak several languages but could neither read nor write.



“I got into literacy because of my mother,” said Mary, who’s taught dozens of students and trained hundreds of tutors over the last 20 years earning, along the way, teacher and educator of the year awards from NJALL and LVA.

“She never had an opportunity to go to school,” Mary added. “Her father didn’t think she needed a formal education and so she was illiterate all her life. That diminished her.”

Her parents, from mainland China, raised Mary in India where she learned languages outside of her parents’ Chinese dialect. As an adult, she settled in the U.S. and learned first-hand the struggles of new immigrants.

“So I am very sympathetic to people who come from other countries and can’t speak English,” Mary explained.

Mary is also an artist who for decades has taught origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, and other forms of art in Essex and Middlesex County public schools, senior citizen centers, and through museum artist-in-residency grants. She currently teaches greeting card making and flower arranging at an independent senior citizen living center in Maplewood.

At LVA tutors describe her trainings as inspirational and her lesson plans for students are infused with art as vocabulary and writing prompt aids. As she nears 80, she only wants to help more. “It’s hard to say to me you have to stop because I enjoy it so much,” she explained.

Mary is also a hairstylist who worked through much of the pandemic simply by moving outdoors. Similarly, she began working with students by phone. No problem, she said.

“Whatever comes my way, I accept and say okay, new challenge,” she said. “How to deal with this? This has been my attitude with all of life.

“Too many people as they get older get so stuck in their ways,” Mary added. “And they’re not flexible. And I said to myself I do not want to be like that. I am old but I can be young in spirit, I can be young in my thinking.”