



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



Student Qingling, whose profile appears on Page 2, is a gifted artist whose paintings have been shown around the world, including in the Leiden, Netherlands museum above.

The Insider

Dear friends,

For years Jay Blades harbored a humiliating secret: He couldn't read beyond a 3rd-grade level.

Blades, the host of the popular BBC furniture restoration show, *The Repair Shop*, recently told the network that he'd struggled with school classes as a child and, as an adult, once asked a total stranger to read him an important letter he'd received from the hospital.

Now he's gone public about his reading difficulties and will present a one-hour BBC documentary, *Jay Blades: Learning to Read at 51*, in which he is taught to read by a literacy group.

"Learning to read is going to be the toughest challenge for me," Blades told the BBC. "I'd love this film to inspire the millions of other adults in the same situation as me." Here's a link to Blades' interesting story: <https://bit.ly/3jxZYhE>

Ever wonder how to explain to students English idioms like "Go for broke", "To take a stab at something", "Hit it out of the park", or "On the double"? Well, Voice of America's *Learning English* program makes it easy, as well as quick. In a series called *English in a Minute* the international news site, which uses current events to teach English at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, takes on some of our most common idioms and explains each in slowly-spoken English in only a minute. You can review the series through the following link: <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/z/3619>

We hope that you continue to stay safe and healthy during these unusual times. To review state restrictions and advisories regarding the coronavirus, including the surging 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.

"Lost in translation: Americans are falling behind in foreign language learning." The Michigan Daily. <https://bit.ly/3iw5Ecx>

"The most commonly spoken foreign languages spoken in each state." 246 Wall St. <https://bit.ly/3vzkvoi>

"Learning A New Language? These Are The Best Free Apps Out There." The Travel. <https://bit.ly/3AqmMql>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Literacy student Qingling, an artist from China who teaches sketching to children and teens in the U.S., is studying for her U.S. citizenship test.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, Trainer TBA

Platform: Zoom

Tuesdays, 6 - 8 pm

October 19, 26, November 2, 9 & 12, 2021

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom

Tuesdays, 6 - 8 pm

January 11, 18, 25, February 1, & 8, 2022

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

November 16, 2021

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Getting to Know Us

Qingling, LVA student

With masterful strokes of the brush, artist Qingling illustrates the delicate strength found in the backs and shoulders of a generation of female factory workers, women caught up in the economic migration from rural China to urban sweatshops.

The faces of the subjects in *Background*, her series of oil paintings, are not shown in these illustrations; only their backs are visible as the women go about their mundane and joy-less tasks.

"It is very hard to talk about my paintings in English," said Qingling, an LVA literacy student, adding that her approach is meant to show the distance between the neglected factory workers and society. "I feel everyone has distance. Your friends, your mother, your father, older people have a distance. I paint the backs to show that distance."

She went on to say "That was my idea when I started to paint this series of works many years ago. At the beginning, I painted *Background* with female workers in the factory. Later, I came to the United States. Not limited to workers, I drew different female backs, different identities, different races, and different ages."

Qingling's paintings, as seen on her website <http://guoqingling.com>, have been exhibited in art galleries and museums in cities from Shanghai to New York, including Shenzhen, London, Paris, Singapore, Dusseldorf, Bangkok, and Leiden, the Netherlands.

She graduated from the Shanghai Theatre Academy and later worked as a fashion magazine page designer. She arrived in New York in 2016, traveling with her son, now 11, and husband Xiaofei Li, an award-winning filmmaker and artist. They eventually settled in Livingston where Qingling teaches sketching at the Livingston Chinese School.

Qingling enrolled in our program four years ago and attended ESL classes in Maplewood. She currently meets weekly with two tutors.

"She smiles and makes jokes in English which I find impressive," said Harry Moskowitz, one of her tutors, who is helping Qingling prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. "She writes down new words and she studies them. She is a wonderful person."

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>



'Free' college isn't enough: Adults struggle to finish degrees, even with financial aid.

The Hechinger Report

By Laura Pappano, August 5, 2021

"Adults may have jobs, child care concerns, questions about past credits, loan defaults, even anxiety about returning to school. There is a complexity to adult learners."

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — As it did for a lot of people, the pandemic gave Kara Reilly time to think.

"My turning moment was when I was shut down and I had 11 weeks to sit around," said Reilly, 49, a hairdresser in Louisville, Kentucky, whose salon closed early in the pandemic. Seeing that "things could literally end in a split moment" pushed her to revisit an old goal: going to college, maybe to become a high school English teacher.

Then, on June 8 of this year, Jefferson Community & Technical College announced a "Jump-Start Grant" offering a year's free tuition for new students 25 and older in the region.

A week later, 344 students had applied. By month's end, there were 665 (including Reilly), which was more than double the college's June 2019 applications.

"Free college" or "promise" programs have long focused on recent high school grads. But now a convergence of factors — a dwindling pool of traditional-age students, (cont.)

Reprinted from The Hechinger Report. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3xpBIZj>

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.)

Diana Fennelly, LVA tutor

That first encounter was borderline surreal, an introduction between student and tutor in a deserted outdoor library courtyard, on a frosty December afternoon during the pandemic.



For his part, the student wanted to explain in-person, and out of earshot of other students, the unusual circumstances that forced him to leave school as a child, leading to his inability to read as an adult.

For Diana Fennelly, a recently-trained literacy tutor, it was an opportunity to connect with a student in his comfort zone. So she grabbed her winter coat and headed out the door.

"We sat on the benches and there was like no one out, either because of the cold or because of the fact that it was COVID," she recalled. "And he took a bus. It was like an hour and a half to get to me."

Subsequent meetings took place online but that first frigid effort speaks volumes about the determination of literacy students and the volunteers that help them.

She now has three students from Jamaica, Guyana, and Mali, all of whom read at different levels and have different goals, some of them dire. But Diana considers their needs and what they have in common when devising her lesson plans.

"So what do they need to function and get where they need to go?" she asked. "To earn more money, to have some dignity, to pass a newspaper on a stand and see a picture and want to know what (the story's) about? That's it in a nutshell."

Diana's a Brooklyn native who earned a bachelor's degree from Boston College. She has worked in undergraduate recruiting, sold insurance, and served as the president of the board of trustees at COPE Center Inc., a behavioral health non-profit that specializes in the treatment of alcoholism, opioid addiction, and other substance use.

She is married and has an adult son. In her free time, Diana enjoys walking her two Labrador retrievers, reads avidly, and exercises using the barre method, a type of hybrid fitness that combines ballet-inspired moves with elements of Pilates, dance, yoga and strength training.