



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



We are grateful to Professor Doug Allen from the University of Denver, who shared his knowledge on "Tutoring in a Cross Cultural Setting" with our tutors during this month's support workshops. The workshop focused on how communication and teaching expectations can vary across cultures – and the possible miscommunication and misunderstanding that can result.

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

November hints at the start of the holiday season, and with it and Thanksgiving on our tables, we want to start by saying how grateful we are for each and every one of you who forms part of the beating heart of our community at LVA.

It was so wonderful to see many of you as we gathered last month to celebrate the milestones and accomplishments of our students and tutors during our Annual Awards Ceremony. This is a reminder that small, determined efforts can create profound change in a world that often moves too fast for those on the margins.

Take the story of Jordan, volunteer board president for Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex and Passaic Counties (LVAEP). For years, Jordan has dedicated himself to helping others gain access to a skill so fundamental, it is often taken for granted: the ability to read. Yet for many adults, particularly immigrants and underserved populations, literacy remains a daunting challenge—and an urgent one.

Jordan's role is more than ceremonial. He spends countless hours strategizing with fellow board members, spearheading fundraising efforts, and advocating for resources to expand the reach of LVAEP. He understands that literacy is not just a technical skill but a bridge to opportunity and dignity.

For students like Julia, who is originally from the Dominican Republic and arrived in the U.S. with some knowledge of English but without proficiency, that bridge has made all the difference. Julia joined an English as a Second Language (ESL) program offered by LVAEP with the goal of continuously learning and improving herself and an understanding of the importance of speaking, understanding, and reading English as a U.S. citizen. Learning a new language as an adult can feel like standing at the base of a mountain, unsure of how to climb.

Enjoy the stories and resources in this month's newsletter, and thank you for supporting LVAEP.

Happy reading!

In the News

Copy and paste the highlighted website into an internet search bar to view the following stories.

"At 67, she was tired of hiding her illiteracy, so she did something about it. A local nonprofit helped change her life" News4. <https://bit.ly/4eOPVzy>

"6 New Books We Recommend This Week" New York Times. <https://bit.ly/4fPj8vs>



Getting to Know Us Julia, LVA student

Julia, a Dominican Republic native, has been steadily advancing her English language skills through the Literacy Volunteers of America program. Her journey to the United States began 14 years ago when her mother, after becoming a U.S. citizen, was finally able to sponsor Julia's immigration. Now a proud U.S. citizen herself, Julia resides in New Jersey, where she continues to work on mastering English to unlock new opportunities.

Julia's first encounter with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) came through a friend's suggestion. "I wrote a text asking when she planned to start learning English," Julia recalls. While her friend hasn't been able to attend, Julia eagerly joined classes at the Bloomfield Library. Before this, her access to English lessons had been limited to a library in the Bronx. Despite studying English as a young woman in the Dominican Republic, Julia struggled to practice speaking and listening. LVA offered a welcoming environment for her to develop these critical skills.

Learning English has always been essential to Julia, who began her studies knowing she would one day emigrate. Initially, her limited English restricted her job prospects to roles within the Spanish-speaking community. Now a homemaker, Julia dreams of using her growing English proficiency to re-enter the workforce and potentially start a home-based business. "I want to be ready for opportunities, especially as my husband approaches retirement," she explains.

Through dedication and the support of her LVA tutors, Julia has made remarkable progress. She has particularly improved her grammar but admits she still needs more practice with speaking and listening. "When teachers talk, sometimes I don't know what they said," Julia shares, laughing. "But they always help me understand and say what I need to."

Despite the challenges, Julia finds joy in learning. She cherishes her favorite book, the Bible, which deepens her spiritual knowledge. Education has been a lifelong passion for Julia, who studied fashion design and pastry-making in her home country. She dreams of continuing her education and building a future where she can contribute financially to her household.

When asked for advice to others learning English, Julia says, "Yes, you can. It takes effort and interest because English is the official language here, and we need it to navigate life."

Julia's story is a testament to the transformative power of education and resilience. With each lesson, she moves closer to her goal of fluency, proving that it's never too late to learn, grow, and create a brighter future.

Julia comes from the Dominican Republic. She had started studying English in her country because most of her family had migrated to the U.S., and she knew she would eventually do so. Learning in a context where one can't practice daily is different than being immersed, so she keeps trying to learn and practice.

Tutor Training Workshops

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)

Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm

Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28, & Feb. 4, 2025

Online Training, by TBD

Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)

Wednesdays, 6 to 8 pm

Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29, & Feb. 5, 2025

Tutor Support Workshops

"USA Learns-Access America: A FREE Resource to Support ESL Students," with Alisa Takeuchi

Platform: Google Meet

Friday, December 13, 2024, 3 pm - 4:30 pm

"Comparative Grammar," with Steven Reid

Platform: Google Meet

Wednesday, January 22, 2025, 11 am - 12:30 pm

Coffee Hour with Tutors

With Cheryl Locasto

Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 3pm (Themed online meeting)

<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.

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



How to Provide Adult Learners and Immigrant Women the Education They Need

Written by Ives Salomon-Fernandez, The Nonprofit Quarterly
October 3, 2024

I lead a college, Urban College of Boston, that educates students who are, in their majority, over the age of 30, nearly all of whom come from the lowest socioeconomic quintile. Many of our students are also immigrants or children of immigrants. Ninety percent are people of color—primarily Latinx, Black, and Asian American. Most are women. But all our students are united in their quest for a better life.

Most discourse on higher education focuses on younger, traditional students who can pause their lives for four years to attain a bachelor's degree. According to the nonprofit Educational Data Initiative, 60.7 percent of college students enrolled full-time.

But this system is not working. A third of college students drop out and do not complete a degree within six years. In the United States, there are nearly 37 million adults with some college but no credential, and that number is increasing.

The traditional vision a college student is out of date with today's reality—a reality in which many students may have spent years in the workforce before returning to college and are already parents. Our thinking on higher education must change.

The State of US Higher Education: Good News and Bad News

"[The education] system is not working. A third of college students drop out and do not complete a degree within six years...nearly 37 million adults."

While college has positive effects at the individual level, it also has macroeconomic benefits. Research demonstrates the significantly higher income that people with more education can expect to earn. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2022, individuals with a bachelor's degree had median weekly earnings of \$1,432 compared to \$853 for those with only a high school diploma. Postsecondary education is also positively associated with better health outcomes. In sum, an educated citizenry benefits society.

For the full story please copy and paste this link on your browser:
<https://bit.ly/3A3dx5b>

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.lvaep.org/students.html>

Getting to Know Us (cont.)

Jordan Fried, Board President

Jordan Fried's journey with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) began over 30 years ago as a tutor. Today, as the volunteer Board President, he reflects on a path defined by dedication and a passion for helping others achieve their potential.



Jordan, a seasoned professional with more than three decades of experience, is currently a Product Manager for Anti-Money Laundering Solutions at NICE Actimize in Hoboken, NJ. Beyond his career, he volunteers with organizations like Bridges Outreach to the Homeless, but his long-standing relationship with LVA holds a special place in his heart.

Jordan first joined LVA as a tutor for a Jamaican immigrant whose resilience and courage inspired him deeply. Despite limited formal education, the student excelled as a truck mechanic but sought literacy skills to advance his career. "I was struck by his motivation," Jordan recalls. This formative experience strengthened his commitment to LVA, and soon he joined the board, helping to stabilize its finances and expand its reach.

Over the years, Jordan has witnessed LVA's evolution from a small group in suburban Essex County to a robust organization serving Newark, Essex, and Passaic counties. Initially focused on one-on-one literacy tutoring, LVA expanded to meet the growing demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. "We no longer talk about whether we'll make it until tomorrow," Jordan says, proud of the organization's resilience and growth.

As board president, Jordan focuses on enhancing governance, financial sustainability, and strategic planning. He also works to develop board talent and ensure the organization adapts to its ever-changing ecosystem. "We need to align better to support the organization's goals while staying compliant and professional," he explains.

Jordan finds inspiration in LVA's annual awards ceremonies, where students share their transformational journeys. "It makes you feel really good," he says. This connection to people and their success continues to fuel his passion.

Jordan's story reflects the essence of LVA: resilience, growth, and an unwavering dedication to literacy as a foundation for opportunity. "I hope I've made a contribution," he concludes, proud of the thriving community he's helped build.

2024 Annual Awards Ceremony Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

At our Annual Awards Ceremony at the Bloomfield High School last month, students, tutors, instructors, and teachers were recognized for the time they'd devoted to their sessions and for their personal goals and achievements. Award winners came from programs and libraries in both counties, including programs with our partners at, Maplewood Public Library and the NCC- Adult Learning Center.



Students and tutors were awarded for their hours and personal achievements, including as Students of the Year from Essex and Passaic Counties, Peterson and Teresita. The Tutor of the Year from Essex County and President's Award winner was Hannah Beykirch and from Passaic County Tutor of the Year was Melissa Primiceri.

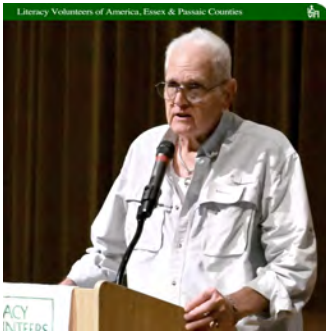


Building a sense of belonging and community can be challenging for those new to the country, even after years of living here. Part of the magic of LVAEP is the friendships that are forged among our students through their shared experience of learning English and navigating culture, work, and personal growth.



2024 Annual Awards Ceremony Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

Our tutors come from all walks of life, but they have a shared passion for supporting students in their literacy journeys. Some have personal connections to family who immigrated a generation or two ago, some are immigrants themselves, and all want to give back.



“I am often amazed at our students’ commitment to learning English while juggling work and family responsibilities. And they all know opportunities lie ahead as they improve their English. But it takes hard work and perseverance, and I admire each and every one of them,” – one tutor shared.

Our Students of the Year include Miriam Ruminez in Essex County, and Claudio Amaral in Passaic County.



Congratulations to all our students, tutors, instructors, teachers, and affiliate organizations!