



*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 Steven Reid, Program Manager for Literacy Volunteers Charlottesville/Albemarle in Charlottesville, Virginia. During our September workshop, he supported our tutors in understanding what is causing the mispronunciation and what it takes to overcome it so they would be better equipped to support students.

### *The Insider*

Greetings LVA family!

As autumn settles in and the first chill begins to touch the air, our classrooms, libraries, and community spaces continue to glow with the warmth of learning. The start of a new season is always a time for reflection—and for us at LVAEP, it's a reminder of how powerful small, steady steps in learning can be.

This month, we celebrate two individuals whose stories beautifully capture the spirit of LVA. Arcelia is a professional who came to the United States determined to keep advancing in her career. Through dedication and courage, she is mastering English to express herself with confidence in professional settings and continue building the life she envisions for herself and her family. Her progress reflects what so many of our students' experience—the joy and challenge of finding their voice in a new language.

In our Staff Spotlight story, we turn our attention to Jorge. For more than a decade, Jorge has been a constant source of care and reliability as our Data Processing Coordinator, but his connection to LVA began much earlier—as a volunteer inspired by a desire to help others learn English. Today, he supports the organization's behind-the-scenes work that keeps everything running smoothly. His journey reminds us that the work of literacy is sustained by countless acts of generosity and purpose.

Our featured article this month, "The Literacy Crisis in America: How Low Reading Skills Affect Adults and the Economy", highlights the growing need for adult literacy programs nationwide. It's a reminder that the skills we nurture here are part of a much larger movement—one that changes lives, strengthens families, and builds more resilient communities.

As always, we extend heartfelt thanks to our tutors, students, and staff. Each of you helps write the ongoing story of LVA—one of learning, perseverance, and community.

### *In the News*

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

**"After education funding cuts, Texas churches expand English classes for some students."** WUNC. <https://bit.ly/4nKk5ZO>

**"Writing, Thinking, and Falling in Love in Another Language."** The Atlantic. <https://bit.ly/3KQ70jd>

**"Man learning to read at 66 encourages others: 'All you have to do is want to learn' "** WABI 5. <https://bit.ly/4o1dmeb>

### Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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## *Getting to Know Us* Arcelia, LVA student

Arcelia started learning English a little over a year ago and is looking forward to continued progress so she can grow in professional environments. She has a degree in Business Management she earned in Ecuador and encourages others to persevere in their learning journey.

When Arcelia moved to the United States from Ecuador two years ago, she brought with her a lifetime of determination, discipline, and a deep love for learning. In her home country, she had earned a university degree in Business Management and built a professional career in office administration. She had learned how to manage projects, lead teams, and balance competing priorities—skills that once defined her daily life. But when she arrived in a new country, she quickly realized that success here would require something more. “In the U.S.,” she says, “you really need English for everything.”

Arcelia’s journey to learning English began with curiosity and courage. One day, she searched for libraries near her home and decided to walk in and ask if they offered English classes. That moment of initiative led her to Literacy Volunteers of America of Essex and Passaic Counties (LVAEP), where she began taking lessons a little over a year ago. “I have always liked English,” she says. “But now I need to learn to communicate with my environment and to get a better job.”

For Arcelia, English is not just another subject—it’s the bridge to connection, opportunity, and belonging. Her progress has come through patience, persistence, and the guidance of her teachers. “The teachers have been very professional people,” she says, “and above all, they have had a lot of patience with all the students.”

Each class brings her a little closer to her goal: understanding more during English-only conversations, feeling less hesitant to speak, and finding comfort in the rhythm of a new language.

Still, balancing life, family, and study is not easy. Arcelia is a mother, and raising her son while adjusting to a new culture takes much of her time. There have been moments when she could not attend tutorials as regularly as she hoped, but she never lost focus. “Being consistent is the key to learning,” she explains. “If you stop, everything gets delayed.”

She recalls with pride her accomplishments—graduating from college, building a life in a new country, and raising her son with love and perseverance. And while her father’s passing was one of the hardest moments of her life, she found the strength to move forward with the support of her family.

Her advice to others is clear and heartfelt: “Organize your time and dedicate a few hours to studying the language. Keep reading, listening, and practicing constantly.” Arcelia’s dream is to work again in a professional office environment, fully using her education and experience. “Learning English,” she says, “opens doors in this country that offers so many opportunities.”

### Tutor Training Workshops

**Online Training**, by Jo Krish  
Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)  
Tuesdays, 6 to 8 pm  
Oct. 21, and 28, 2025

**Online Training**, by Barb Hathaway  
Platform: Zoom (*sponsored by LNJ*)  
Wednesdays and Mondays, 6 to 8 pm  
Nov. 5, 10, 12, 17 and 19, 2025

### Tutor Support Workshops

**"USA Learns,"** with Alisa Takeuchi  
Platform: Google Meet  
Thursday, November 13, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

**"Tips & Tricks: Reading Skills,"** with Barbara Trueger  
Platform: Google Meet  
Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

**Tutor Study Circle**  
Facilitator: Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 3pm  
(Themed online meeting)

*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>



### Adult education programs face federal funding cuts; advocates lobby lawmakers for help

WJLA News, October 9, 2025  
Written by: Jade Lawson

WASHINGTON, D.C. (7News) — Inside the Academy of Hope, an adult public charter school in Washington, D.C., is a morning class of adults taking turns reading.

The academy — which provides free programs to D.C. residents over the age of 18 — offers GED, CNA college and career services among other programs to help adults either obtain higher education or get skills to re-enter the workforce.

"What drives our adult learners back to school are two reasons that they come back. It's they couldn't help the child with their homework, and they came back to get the skills that they needed to be able to do that. But ultimately, it ends up being an economic reason," Leicester Johnson, the CEO for the Academy of Hope told 7News.

Programs like this are at risk as the Trump administration continues to chip away at the Department of Education funding.

According to the 2026 FY budget proposed by the Trump administration -- \$729 million would be cut from adult education programs. Citing that only 43% of participants had any measurable skills.

However, according to Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE), 90% of individuals in adult ed programs with the goal of obtaining a GED have achieved the goal, and 47% pursue community college.

54% of U.S. adults have a literacy level below a 6th-grade, according to the National Literacy Institute. [...]

"When you think about nationally, there are 36 million adults in this country who are struggling with basic reading, writing and math skills, and what that means for them to be able to provide for their families, their families get jobs. We need that funding to stay in place," she added.

For the full study please copy and paste this link on your browser: <https://bit.ly/475Tr6z>

*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.lvae.org/students.html>*

### Staff Spotlight Jorge Chavez, Data Processing Coord.

For more than a decade, Jorge has been a steady presence at Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties. Since 2014, he has served as Data Processing Coordinator—but his journey began with a simple desire to help.



"I started as a volunteer," Jorge recalls. "It was always my desire to help others learn English, even though I didn't have experience teaching. What impressed me about LVA was not only that they helped students improve their English, but that they also trained volunteer tutors and gave them the tools they needed to succeed. And I loved meeting students from all over the world."

Over the years, Jorge has watched countless students and tutors grow—sometimes in ways that changed the course of their lives. He remembers one tutor, Bob Bounczek, who began teaching in 2004 at the Passaic Public Library and whose ability to bring real-life topics into class kept students coming back week after week, even during the pandemic. "Bob didn't stop teaching during COVID-19," Jorge says with admiration. "Students' feedback was always very high."

He also recalls a student from Colombia who arrived in the U.S. in 2015. "She was shy at first, a mother of two, but she worked hard," he says. "After volunteering in our office, her confidence grew. She eventually applied to volunteer with the United Nations—and later earned a paid position there."

Jorge has also seen how small changes can lead to big insights. "When students paid nothing for classes, their attendance was often low," he explains. "But after LVA introduced a modest annual registration fee, attendance and engagement went up. It showed me how much students value what they invest in."

Through every shift—whether in data, technology, or teaching models—Jorge's commitment to LVA's mission has remained unwavering. "More than a job, this is my passion," he says. "Everything we do is because we want our tutors and students to succeed. Their success is our success."

The most rewarding part of his work is seeing shy students find their voices. "At our annual awards ceremony, when they stand and speak in English—it's the best feeling," he says.

Once shy himself, Jorge understands what it means to be encouraged. "My teachers never gave up on me," he recalls. "They pushed me gently to grow. Now I try to do the same—for every student willing to learn."