



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



"Comprehension Strategies in Adult Literacy Instruction" was another super informative workshop presented last month by Erik Jacobson of Montclair State University and NJALL.

The Insider

Dear friends,

We were reminded last week, during National Library Week, a time to celebrate our libraries, of just how much these institutions are doing to provide services during the pandemic, when state restrictions have forced them to keep their doors closed. Even in these unusual times, your local libraries have arranged book pickups up and drop offs, hosted virtual concerts, book clubs, cooking clubs, and writing clubs. They've held online seminars on science and sessions on understanding and monitoring medications, anything to remain helpful. Please show your support for your local library, as we await its reopening, by exploring these wonderful events.

If you've experienced difficulty receiving accurate health information on the coronavirus and obtaining an appointment for a vaccine, imagine what it would be like if you were not fluent in English. In a heartwarming story and video by 18 News in Ohio, Maria Rodriguez describes the barriers that illiterate adults face in the wake of the pandemic. Maria, who did not become fluent in English until she was in her 50s, is a volunteer who helps adults with low literacy skills obtain reliable information about coronavirus vaccines and get vaccinated. Her clinic is in Cleveland where an estimated 66% of adults are functionally illiterate, according to the story which cites research from Case Western Reserve University. Here's a link to **"Inside the vaccine clinic where immigrants aren't deserted."** <https://bit.ly/2P1dCTZ>

For local information on the coronavirus and vaccine availability, please use the state's website: <https://covid19.nj.gov>

Yes, our next online tutor training workshop starts on May 4th. Thanks for asking! So, if you know anyone who might be willing to share the gift of literacy with adults who need their help, please point them in our direction. With your help our students have done extremely well, finding employment in some cases as a barista, a nurse, a phlebotomist, and as entrepreneurs. So, your help goes a long way. Details on our tutor training are listed on page 2 and can be viewed on our website at: <http://www.lvaep.org/workshops.html>

In the News

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

"English as a Second Language tutor Linda Merritt learns from her adult students." The Gazette. <https://bit.ly/3uJb14M>

Literacy Volunteers of America Essex & Passaic Counties

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Yeisy, a literacy student from Colombia, is a fan of remote instruction, due to her busy job, and it's helped her become a fluent speaker.

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

Yeisy, LVA student

Remote instruction. It's the bane of students and teachers who consider it a poor substitute for in-person learning, even a poster child for the pandemic.

But not everyone's a hater.

Yeisy, for instance, a Colombian-born literacy student, says in-person classes would be a hardship right now due to her demanding job as an employment recruiter. "In this moment it's easier for me because of my work," Yeisy said of her online sessions with a tutor. "My schedule in my job is really, really hard."

Distance learning got off to a rocky start last year but it didn't take long to see that it has advantages that extend beyond protection from the coronavirus. With no commute time or costs, casual dress and homey environment, some students prefer it.

Yeisy's one of them. As restrictions ease, unemployment falls, and people return to work, she's as busy as ever finding candidates for jobs.

Yeisy, "pronounced 'Jáy-cee' "like JC Penney," as she says with a laugh, was an assistant engineer back in her hometown of Barranquilla on the Caribbean coast. She arrived in the states 12 years ago, following in the footsteps of her younger brother and U.S. citizen father.

She's a good-humored, single mother of three and a U.S. citizen who, when it comes to speaking English, is fearless.

"Nothing is embarrassing for me," laughed Yeisy. "A lot of Latinos have a problem, sometimes they're shy to speak. Because the other people maybe laugh at you when you speak. But honestly, my personality is ... I don't care."

Last year, just before the pandemic forced libraries to close, she enrolled in LVA and has since formed a great working relationship with her tutor, Antonia Vaccaro. They meet two hours each week via Zoom and work on vocabulary, conversation, and grammar.

Yeisy also watches movies in English and even listens to music in English, with one exception: salsa. "I love salsa," she said. "My hobby is dance and, in the pandemic, my little daughter, Isabella, dances salsa with me. Two or three times a week we dance salsa."

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.



“Inside the vaccine clinic where immigrants aren’t deserted”

“They will be the one who bags our groceries in the store. They are the ones who deliver your Uber Eats. They are the ones maintaining your house.”

The Associated Press

via 13 News Now
April 3, 2021

RICHMOND, Va. — In the 15 years that followed the 8,641-mile journey from Chennai, India, she still leaned in a little closer. Maybe asked someone to repeat their question just once more or turned toward her son to make sure she understood the words of a second language she began learning at age 55.

Maliswari Saravanabhavudu, 70, had made peace with that hurdle. Then the pandemic unfurled and made her age a liability.

Reading English and navigating technology became central to accessing COVID-19 information, signing up for a vaccine and receiving email links to book an appointment.

As a retired office assistant at a state-run electricity company, she knew her way around a computer. It's how she spent hours entertained by celebrity interviews on YouTube and searching for online sewing classes in between juggling grandkids and that night's dinner.

This was different. When Virginia dropped eligibility ... (cont.)

Reprinted from *The Associated Press* via 13 News Now. For full story, paste the following link into your favorite web browser address bar: <https://bit.ly/3d3FNX3>

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.)

Paul Weissenberger, LVA tutor

As the coronavirus swept the nation last year, educators scrambled to deliver remotely the services they'd traditionally brought to the classroom.

It was a stressful time, particularly for a crew of recently-trained literacy tutors – tutors who'd barely set foot in a classroom.



“I knew we were no longer meeting in person,” recalled Paul Weissenberger, a tutor who'd met his first ESOL students just one month before the big shutdown. “But I had never even heard of Zoom before.”

All in all, it was a tough time for the Long Island native. A family member was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer, hospitalized, then moved in with Paul and his wife for hospice care. Two adult sons moved in as well, returning from their work and school locations to sit out the pandemic back home.

Despite the challenges, Paul rarely missed a lesson.

“It's really been a great feeling of satisfaction to be able to help each of them in their own distinct ways,” he said. “I genuinely love the experience.”

Mary Kao, a trainer who provided instruction to Paul and other future tutors, remembers him as good-natured with a wonderful attitude. “He was a good positive influence for the others in the group,” Mary said. “I bet he is a good tutor.”

Paul is a graduate of the University at Albany and a career banker. He recently started a new position, developing relationships with, and lending money to, telecommunication companies around the country.

He's a fitness enthusiast who has run half-marathons and other races. He also possesses a green thumb. In fact, he plants about as many shrubs and trees as his yard will accommodate. His plantings include a pawpaw tree, and a line of fig trees that the squirrels unfortunately have discovered.

“They're keeping an eye on their ripeness,” Paul sighed. “It's been a battle.”