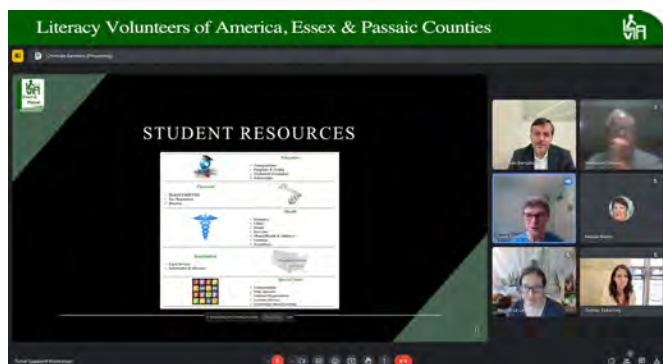




The Insider, the monthly newsletter of LVA Essex & Passaic Counties, will keep you in the loop on all the organization's upcoming events.



LVA's Executive Director, Cristhian Barcelos, presented during May's workshop on "LVA's Approach to Adult Education." This interactive workshop discussed the selected processes and steps taken to improve our students' learning experience while maximizing our tutors time, experience, and available resources.

Literacy Volunteers of America, Essex & Passaic Counties

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The Insider

Greetings LVA family!

As summer comes in strong, we are thrilled to bring you the latest edition of our newsletter, packed with inspiring stories, updates, and valuable resources to support our shared mission of promoting literacy and lifelong learning. We have some exciting features in this edition that we can't wait for you to explore.

First, we're delighted to introduce you to Beth, a dedicated volunteer whose passion and commitment to literacy are truly inspiring. In "Getting to Know Beth," you'll learn about her journey and the incredible impact she's making in our community.

Next, we share Ruthalsky's story, a testament to the transformative power of literacy. Ruthalsky's perseverance and determination have led to remarkable achievements, and we hope her story will inspire you as much as it has inspired us.

We also have an insightful article from Prism Reports, titled Educators Call for Better Support for Adult Literacy Programs. This piece sheds light on the current state of adult literacy education and the urgent need for enhanced support and resources for educators and learners alike.

And don't miss learning about health literacy from a top CVS medical officer, free adult classes on job training skills in Montclair, and the first research award presented by ProLiteracy.

Lastly, be sure to take advantage of upcoming professional development opportunities. Whether you're a volunteer, educator, or simply passionate about literacy, these events offer valuable skills and knowledge to help you make a greater impact.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to literacy. Together, we can make a difference, one word at a time.

In the News

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

"Top CVS medical officer ties shocking lack of 'health literacy' for 90 million Americans to crisis of 'mistrust'" Fortune. <https://bit.ly/3znTHR3>

"Free Adult Classes At Montclair High Will Teach Job Training Skills" Patch.com. <https://bit.ly/4cbbqtz>

"ProLiteracy Presents First Award for Adult Literacy Research" ProLiteracy. <https://bit.ly/3VUGhVL>



Getting to Know Us Ruthalsky, LVA student

Ruthalsky, hailing from Haiti, embarked on a transformative journey to the United States in July of last year. Armed with a ticket and a passport, he left behind the familiar rhythms of his homeland for the bustling, English-speaking streets of America.

Ruthalsky completed high school in Haiti and began his studies to become a doctor. However, upon arriving in the U.S., he quickly realized that mastering English was essential for navigating his new environment. His uncle's advice led him to the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), where he found the support, he needed to begin this daunting task.

His initial days in America were marked by the struggle to balance work, classes, and adapting to a new culture. "Living in an English-speaking country, it's important to know, to understand, and to speak English," he often reminded himself. His determination was palpable as he attended LVA classes, practiced with coworkers, and tackled the complexities of the English language.

Despite having a basic understanding of English from high school in Haiti, Ruthalsky found the nuances and idioms of the language challenging. "Some words make me feel stupid. I always have to say them slowly if I want someone to understand me," he admitted. Yet, he persisted, his tongue maneuvering through the unfamiliar sounds and structures, driven by a desire to improve.

Ruthalsky's first job in America was a significant milestone. Limited to saying "yes," "no," his address, and his number, he faced a humorous yet humbling experience when asked to spell his middle name, Rosetini. The person heard "Eutini," and it took Ruthalsky two days to notice the mistake. Such moments, while challenging, became steppingstones in his journey toward fluency.

The LVA program and its dedicated teachers played a crucial role in Ruthalsky's progress. They provided more than just language lessons helping him navigate obstacles both inside and outside the classroom. Balancing work and classes remained a persistent challenge, often leaving Ruthalsky too tired to fully engage in either.

Looking ahead, Ruthalsky dreams of speaking English naturally, earning his diploma, and building a good life with his girlfriend, who he hopes to marry. His advice to others facing similar struggles is simple: "Don't give up. Any kind of obstacle(s) you face, just fight them."

Ruthalsky's journey from Haiti to mastering English in America reminds us of that perseverance, community support, and access to education can make a difference.

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.lvaen.org/donate.html>

Ruthalsky came from what he likes to call "a little island in the Caribbean" – Haiti. While he had studied some English back home and was preparing to study to become a doctor, he realized he needed to master English to be able to build a good life in the U.S.

Professional Development Opportunities

"Teaching Adult Learners: Practices and Principles,"

By LINCS

Platform: Online Course
On-Demand

<https://courses.lincs.ed.gov/course/view.php?id=263>

"Teacher Training Plus"

By ProLiteracy

Platform: Recorded Webinar Series
On-Demand

<https://www.proliteracy.org/courses/teacher-training-plus/>

Coffee Hour with Tutors

with Cheryl Locastro

Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 3pm (General in-person meeting)

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

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



Educators are trying to bring the science of reading to adult education

Written by Julian Roberts-Grmela, PRISM
May 29, 2024

In Zoom class, Larissa Phillips drilled her student, who is in his sixties, on the digraph “ck.” In previous lessons, they’d already gone through several common digraphs—two-letter combinations that form one sound—like “sh,” “th,” and “ch.”

After explaining the concept, Phillips instructed the student to rehearse decoding different sounds for vowels and consonants before blending sounds, reviewing words, and then finally reading phrases. By the end, the student was reading complete sentences that used “ck” multiple times with ease like “I was too sick to check in at my job.”

“I’m hungry for this,” the student said, who declined to give his name out of privacy concerns.

The student said that he’d been trying to improve his reading since dropping out of school in the ninth grade. However, he said the New York City tutoring program offered through his union was catered around GED preparation, not the foundational reading skills that this student sought. It wasn’t until he found Phillips and her program, the Volunteer Literacy Project, that he started getting the reading help he needed.

This older gentleman is not alone in needing help improving basic reading skills. According to the most recent study by the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies in 2018, 17.6% of American adults struggle to read.

Amy Pickard, an assistant professor of adult literacy education at Indiana University Bloomington, said the one in five Americans who struggle with reading “have pretty serious difficulties using print literacy in their daily lives” and “as a means of communication.”

Phillips’ student wasn’t alone in his struggle to find adequate help with basic reading. Most federally funded adult education classes focus on workforce development, not basic literacy, according to Alisa Belzer, a professor of adult education at Rutgers University.

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

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.)

Beth Fuqua, LVA Tutor

Beth has always been passionate about education and helping others. With a background as a kindergarten teacher in Brooklyn and a history of volunteering, she has dedicated much of her life to supporting students and her community. She majored in Spanish in college, which equipped her to communicate with and understand students from diverse backgrounds.



Beth’s journey with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) began when a fellow volunteer tutor introduced her to the organization. Although the idea of working with ESL students through LVA intrigued her, commitments kept her from pursuing the training. However, the advent of Zoom training reignited her enthusiasm, and she jumped at the opportunity.

Beth started teaching with LVA in January 2023. Since then, she has worked with a variety of students, each with unique challenges. Currently, she tutors three students: two from West Africa and one born in the United States. One of her West African students never went to school but speaks English well after seven years in the U.S. Another has a fifth-grade education and a stronger grasp of English. Her American student, who initially struggled after a stroke, has shown remarkable progress.

Beth is particularly moved by her student from West Africa who shared a dramatic story of her journey to the United States. Despite immense challenges, she remains dedicated to learning. Beth admires her resilience and determination, noting how hard she works as a hair braider while still finding time to attend classes.

Beth’s approach to teaching is unique and engaging. She starts each class with a song, a practice that her students love. Over time, she has introduced more than fifty songs, providing cultural and historical context along with language lessons.

While Beth faces the occasional challenge of finding suitable materials and managing her time, the rewards far outweigh the difficulties. Witnessing her students’ progress and their heartfelt appreciation at the end of each class fills Beth with immense joy and satisfaction.

Beth’s dedication, creativity, and compassion make her an invaluable tutor at LVA. Her story underlines what we know is the amazing power of volunteering and the profound impact one person can have on the lives of others.