

The Literacy Letter

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From the Heart

Gratitude from an LVSC Student

I'm Masanori. I'm taking English lesson through LVSC.

My tutor Charlie teach me very kindly every time.

I came to the US one year and half ago due to my work.

But I'm not good at English. But I have to speak English at my work.

I was afraid to speak wrong English, so I couldn't improve my speaking skill.

For this reason I couldn't tell my opinion to my coworker and bosses.

I was stressful.

In this situation I got a chance to take English lesson with Charlie.

Charlie is so kind and he makes good mood for speaking English.

I wasn't afraid speaking English because he makes me comfortable.

I could practice to speak English.

Thanks to that, I'm getting better at speaking English at my working place.

I'm not afraid telling my opinion in English any more.

I appreciate Charlie teaching me English.

An Evening of Celebration and Appreciation LVSC's Annual Meeting and Recognition Night



LVSC Tutor of the Year Jennifer Kushinka (center) with LVSC's Susan Engelstein (l) and Aimee Lam (r).

Jennifer has always loved to read, so getting involved with LVSC was a natural fit. Jennifer is a dedicated tutor who has worked with six students from around the world. In addition to tutoring, she is an LVSC assessor and devoted supporter, always attending LVSC events with her sisters. Thank you, Jennifer.



LVSC Student of the Year, Maria Piños speaks, encouraged by Tutor Jim Cline.

Maria comes from Ecuador where she completed just five years of school. She's made tremendous progress in one short year working with her LVSC tutor: with her more advanced English skills, she has been able to upgrade her job. She is now so motivated that she has been studying to pass her GED, as well as studying to get her citizenship. Congratulations, Maria!



Spotlight Learning's Jackie Flamm (center) stands proudly with student award recipients, Haruka Claire Sargent Kishimoto (l) and Joana Gil Abreras (r).



Esengul Artis (center) is LVSC's first Student Ambassador. Her two daughters and tutor, Kathy England (far left), also pictured.

A native of Turkey, Esen represents LVSC's programs and students in the community. Esen speaks eloquently to large groups of people about the trials of struggling with English literacy and the benefit of LVSC's programs.



Thoughts from Martha Davis, LVSC Board President

The Annual Meeting & Recognition Night has become a tradition at Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County, as it gives us the opportunity to say THANK YOU to our tutors, students, assessors, volunteers, and friends for their gift of time to our organization.

This year's triumphant event was held on June 8th, where we shared in the food of different cultures, heard of struggles with the English language that turned into successes, rejoiced at goals that have been met, and where camaraderie and understanding knew no boundaries.

A brief time was devoted to business, where the Board of Directors approved the 2015 Annual Meeting Minutes, presented and approved the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year budget and introduced the slate of officers for the coming year that remained the same from the previous year.

The Presentation of Awards was my favorite part of the evening, as we recognized the exceptional effort and dedication of a tutor and a student. It was a happy and an emotional time for the student as she told of the fears and the trials she encountered before given the chance to work with her devoted tutor. The genuine gratitude for this opportunity and for LVSC's exceptional work toward others like her warmed our hearts and was followed by

thunderous applause of congratulations; applause that reached far beyond the cafeteria of the PeopleCare Center to all of our other hard-working students and caring tutors.

It is now my pleasure to share with you the names of the recipients of this year's awards:

LVSC Special Awards:

Tutor of the Year Award – Jennifer Kushinka

Student of the Year Award – Maria Piños

Student Ambassador – Esengul Artis

Spotlight Learning Awards:

Spotlight Learning Award of Appreciation –

Joana Gil Abreras from Spain

Spotlight Learning Scholar Award –

Haruka Claire Sargent Kishimoto from Japan

In looking back on this evening of celebration and good will, I cannot help but be reminded of the founder of our organization and of how proud she would be to know that over three decades we have endeavored to follow her vision to improve lives through literacy. Thank you, Alma Liotta.

Our Conversation Groups Are Thriving

LVSC Conversation Groups are enjoyed by participants and leaders alike. Here's what one Conversation Group leader, Sheila Mason, is saying, "I get so much from the group that I share my Wednesday afternoons with at the Franklin Township Library on DeMott Lane. Participants are from Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Japan, South Korea, Venezuela, Columbia and

Brazil and we speak English the entire time. They all come from various backgrounds and differ in the amount of time they have been in the United States. There is a common thread for everyone - they are nervous and self-conscious about speaking English which is understandable. But this group would wow you with their ability, enthusiasm and perseverance. I feel so



honored to share time with them and believe I get more from them than I can possibly give."

Notes from our Tutors

Thank you to our tutors for providing these great student updates.

- G. finished reading her first English book (*The 9 Lives of Alexander Baddenfield*) and is now reading a short book on George Washington! *Tutor, Lois*
- Each time we meet each other, E. seems more confident and louder when he responds to my questions,

and although he is a little hesitant to ask questions, he is sure to overcome it. *Tutor, Simon*

- J. and I have been working on answering the questions of what town, state, and country she lives in and where in China she used to live. *Tutor, Tara*
- Our time together is something we both look forward to. We are getting to know each other and learning from each

other. L. is a delightful young lady whose enthusiasm is infectious. *Tutor, Kathy*

- K. has gained a lot of confidence speaking, fostered by many assignments she was given to present her point of view on a variety of topics. She is very dedicated to her studies and an absolute joy to work with, readily absorbing lessons in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, pronunciation etc. *Tutor, Regina*

A Message from Aimee Lam, LVSC Executive Director



During my six months as Executive Director, I have noticed an incredibly positive energy coursing through our organization. Thanks to the coordination efforts of LVSC's Program & Events Manager, Susan Engelstein, and the dedication of our amazing volunteers, LVSC's programs are flourishing and serving more students today than at any other time in our 35-year history. In fact, on October 20th, a record number of volunteers completed their 15-hour training class becoming certified LVSC tutors. We welcome them and wish them success in working with their new students. We are offering 12 Conversation Groups in nine county libraries; attendance in some of these locations has been unprecedented, prompting the need to find larger rooms and additional group leaders – what a good problem to have! At the same time, we are running two concurrent U.S. Citizenship Preparation Classes and have a large cadre of volunteer assessors processing new students offsite and during weekend and evening hours.

Supporting 150 volunteers who serve 200 students weekly

generates a fair amount of office work. Susan and I are grateful to Maryann Strutzel, Sheila Mason, and Rosa Maria Merlo who have been helping with the many administrative tasks that come with a large volunteer program such as ours. Maryann is one of our newest tutors, Sheila is a Conversation Group leader, and Rosa is an LVSC student from Paraguay.

From the warmth felt at our Annual Meeting and Recognition Night in June to the smiling faces at our 5th Annual Fall Soiree at the Bridgewater library, our events have been well-attended and infused with enthusiasm. We are looking very forward to our newest event to be held in February, a Community Spelling Bee for adults. This one-of-a-kind event is going to be great fun for all involved – whether you would like to “bee” a speller, “bee” a sponsor, or “bee” an attendee, we hope to see you there.

Thank you to all who are contributing to this great momentum at LVSC. It is heartwarming to be surrounded by an openness to helping one another.

LVSC Board Appoints New Trustee



A graduate of Rutgers University Law School, Alexander G. Fisher, Esq., is a partner with Mauro, Savo, Camerino, Grant & Schalk, P.A. in Somerville.

In addition to being a talented attorney with expertise in Land Use and Redevelopment Law, Municipal Law, Construction Law, Landlord/Tenant Law, and Litigation in New Jersey, Alex is an avid storm chaser and photographer. Here's another interesting fact about Alex: he has traveled to 47 of the states in our great country, with plans to visit the remaining three – Oregon, Washington, and Alaska – in the very near future. Please join us in welcoming Alex.



High School Student Gives LVSC Website a New Look

We had the good fortune of working with a very talented summer intern this year: Aparna Calambur, a high school senior. Aparna spent more than 60 hours redesigning our website, making it easier to navigate and simpler to read. If you haven't seen our revamped website, please visit LiteracySomerset.org. You're certain to be impressed!



A Night at the Ballpark

Thank you to the **Somerset County Freeholders** for use of the County's community box at TD Bank Ballpark. LVSC students, tutors and their families, as well as staff and board members, greatly enjoyed America's pastime.

Would you like to financially support LVSC's programs? The easiest way to donate is online at literacysomerset.org. Or, you can mail a check payable to LVSC, 120 FINDERNE AVENUE-BOX 7, BRIDGEWATER, NJ 08807. If you'd like to make a long-term gift, please call us for more information about including LVSC in your will. Thank you!

Design for the newsletter provided by Jessica Ngo, freelance designer.

609.922.2848

✓ Upcoming Events

Let's Talk About Health - A Panel Discussion

Five local experts will talk about basic health issues and how to make decisions that are right for you and your family - perfect for tutors and students to attend together.

Tuesday, November 15, 2016, 7–9 pm
Hillsborough Library; registration required at SCLSNJ.ORG

Financial Literacy In-Service Workshop

Learn valuable tools that can be very helpful to your student – perfect for tutors and Conversation Group leaders.

Tuesday, November 29, 2016, 7–8:30 pm
PeopleCare Center Conference Room;
register at: lvscprograms@literacysomerset.org

Tutor Training

Winter session: January 25 – March 8
Spring session: April 24 – May 22

Tutor Club

Open to all Tutors and Conversation Group leaders
1st Thurs. of Every Month, 7–8:30 pm
PeopleCare Center Conference Room

Community Spelling Bee

Saturday, February 11, 2017, 2–5 pm
Hillsborough Library

2nd Annual Brunch & Silent Auction

Sunday, April 30, 2017
The Olde Mill Inn, Basking Ridge

LVSC Grant Funders, \$1,000+

July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

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New Jersey Community Investment Grant

LVSC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which relies on the community for financial support. We are grateful to each and every one of our donors.

Congratulations to 42 Newly Trained Tutors!

Spring 2016 Graduates •

Sue Baumann • Zimin Chai • Jeannie
Counsel • Carri Glasser • Kathy
Kuhblank • Sara Lombardo • Karen
McPherson • Stephanie Meister •
Rachel Ruggieri • Milloni Shah • Lois
Smith • Sally Sorbello • Leslie Young

Fall 2016 Graduates •

Tonisha Bacon • Wendy Bender •
Angela Bodino • Manoj Deb-Roy
• Jane Duncanson • Nancy Field •
Joanne Gagliardi • Cory Georgeson •
Stephanie Halpern • Diane Harper •
Lauren Hopf • Elizabeth Hutcheon •
Stephanie Koren • Galina Kurchuk •
Peter Lazzaro • Pam Maiolo •
Pragyan Mishra • Suzanne Murphy-
Clifford • Andrea Pesta • Lester
Pittenger • Sushmita Pradhan •
Nancy Schneider • Beth Shapiro •
Carmella Siems • Cathy Stevens •
Maryann Strutzel • Fran Swerida •
Karen VanRavenswaay • Walter Young



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5th Annual Soiree: The Magic of Literacy

What fun we had at LVSC's 5th Annual Soiree! Hosted with our incredible partners at the Somerset County Library System, we once again transformed the Bridgewater library into an after-hour party with delicious hors d'oeuvres, a wine bar, and desserts. A record crowd of 100 guests enjoyed the comedy-magic of Mike Spade, craft beer tasting by Flounder Brewing Co. of Hillsborough, and Tarot card readings by Madame Angela. Congratulations to student speaker Carolina Mancilla for her engaging speech. Thank you to all who made this event such a tremendous success.

LVSC thanks the generous 2016 soiree sponsors: Amboy Bank, Midwest Tape, ADESA NJ, Investors Bank, and the Weidel Community Partners Program.