

The Literacy Letter

The Mimi Ruch Memorial Literacy Office
120 Finderne Ave - Box #7, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

www.literacysomerset.org • 908.725.5430
email: lvscprograms@literacysomerset.org

Literacy Challenges

LVSC Tutor and Student Describe the Journey

When he agreed to be the student speaker at LVSC's 2015 signature fundraising event, Jonathan knew he was in for a challenge. But Jonathan is no stranger to challenges as we would soon learn from Ilene, Jonathan's LVSC tutor of two years. Addressing Jonathan directly, Ilene spoke to the room:

In the course of our time together, you have arrived for tutoring driving an uncooperative car, riding a bike, or walking more than an hour each way in bitter cold. You have come despite car accidents, long, late-shifts at work, no shifts at work. Every single time you get knocked down, you pick yourself up and start again. You have this marvelous resiliency and never lose sight of your goals.

Jonathan then took to the podium with Ilene at his side. Overcome by nerves and emotion, Jonathan began to speak

haltingly. When he paused to compose himself, an LVSC Board member offered a glass of water. When, feeling unsure Jonathan faltered, a guest shouted, "You've got this Jonathan!" And he did. Jonathan persevered and read these words:

Through the Adult Literacy Program I have been able to defeat many of my fears. I used to be afraid to read in front of an audience, in front of anybody really! Obviously I'm here now reading and reading out loud to all of you.

Before, I didn't want to read aloud because I didn't want people to doubt my abilities or my intelligence because of my reading. Now I am also more confident in myself. I know I can accomplish my life goals...First I want to achieve completing my high school diploma, and I am now enrolled in a program to conquer this task. The Adult Literacy Program helped me to find this program and enroll in it...

Jonathan received a standing ovation.



LVSC's Literacy Lounge held in March featured dinner, dancing, a large silent auction, Community Champion Award presentation to the Billian Family Charitable Foundation, and a performance by comedy headliner, Jane Condon. We are grateful to all who made our second annual signature event such a success: the Lounge committee, attendees, and silent auction donors. A special thank you to our event sponsors: Amboy Bank, Midwest Tape, PSE&G, and Quest Diagnostics. Thank you also to Versatile Printing Applications for sponsoring the printing of our invitations and to Jessica Ngo, graphic designer, for donating her time and immense creativity. Plans are already underway for our next signature event, so stay tuned! Hope to see you there.

Tutors, Care to Share?

Are you and your student working on a goal you'd like to share? We are always looking to showcase the great work you are doing so please email us at: lvscprograms@literacysomerset.org.

Auto Donations

Donate your used automobile and get a tax deduction! It's quick and easy, and LVSC will receive a financial contribution as a result of your donation. To learn more, please call the LVSC office at (908) 725-5430.



Thoughts from Martha Davis, LVSC Board President

Dear Friends of LVSC,

Thank YOU! Really, where do I start to thank everyone who made our current fiscal year a success?

The March Literacy Lounge fundraiser, at Soriano's Parkside in Bridgewater, brought out many of our loyal supporters whose generosity we deeply appreciate, as it allows Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County (LVSC) to continue to help the many who seek our services. As it is each year, the highlight of the evening is the student speaker and this year was no exception. Jonathan Donaldson, a Basic English learner, made hearts beat a bit faster as he shared stories of his struggles, his doubts and that of his step-by-step successes, including his testimonial on how our work inspires him and boosts his determination to reach his goal for a better life. The laborious building of the bridge that spans between illiteracy and becoming functionally literate requires patience and understanding, and Jonathan's tutor, Ilene Millman, a retired speech pathologist and a specialist in learning disabilities is a fine example of this. Caring and compassion reflects in the dedication of all of our tutors, as it empowers learners and inspires hope. Thank you, Ilene. During the course of the evening we recognized the ongoing support of the Billian Family Charitable Foundation, with the 'Community Champion Award,' which was accepted by Mr. Brad Higginbottom, a notable resident of Bound Brook and a personal friend of the Atlanta based Billian Family.

As you read this Newsletter, you will find that we strive to offer more communication and greater transparency on the work that we do to keep you better informed and interested. You will notice that we have expanded some of our programs to include U. S. Citizenship Preparation, more 'Award Winning' English Conversation Groups, and an article on resources and information for tutors written by Lauren Randolph, a volunteer and recently retired university International and ESL program director. I think these programs and resources are terrific, and we appreciate that our tutors and volunteers give so much of themselves by volunteering and being of service to others.

So really, where do I start my thank you? I believe it is with the LVSC Board of Trustees, who deeply care about our organization and are highly engaged concerning its future. Thanks to Jay Muldoon, our Executive Director and his staff, LVSC is running smoothly while positioned upward. And a special thank you to our tutors, students, assessors and volunteers who are invaluable to LVSC – we could not do our job without you. And last, but certainly not least, thank you to the many people that find LVSC a worthwhile and valuable nonprofit to support. Please know that regardless of the size of your donation, you are our partner in helping to promote better lives and healthier communities in Somerset County.

On behalf of all of us at LVSC, I would like to invite you to our Annual Meeting on Monday, June 8th at the PeopleCare Center, with fun beginning at 7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Please join us for an evening of camaraderie, good food, and in the celebration of closing a successful fiscal year and welcoming a new one with opportunities to ensure robust growth. Thank you.

Warmest regards,

Martha Davis, Board President

Notes from our Tutors

Look at the life-changing literacy goals that our tutors and students have achieved!

- N. has begun an ESL Reading and Writing class at RVCC. Much of our work has been in support of this. In September we read, reviewed, and discussed the course syllabus as well as the class policies. We worked on paragraph organization and writing for journal entries and descriptive writing.
- We finished the novel we have been reading together for nearly a year and discussed the surprise ending.
- D. feels more confident emailing her daughter's teachers.
- We are reading a book together and are about 25% done. The book compares Latin America's institutions to those of the US.
- C. is very diligent, has a strong work ethic, and he really wants to get better week to week. I always stress to him that the tutoring session is a safe place where he can ask me about difficult situations that arise at work with respect to his English, and how he can better navigate those situations in the future.
- We took a break from working and went to lunch at Burger King so C. could feel comfortable buying lunch. We spent over two hours going over conversations that could occur.

Leaving a Legacy



When Mimi Ruch died unexpectedly in 2008, LVSC lost a dedicated volunteer. Mimi had tutored for eight years and was always willing to volunteer for multiple shifts during our month-long gift wrapping fundraiser at Borders. What LVSC didn't know was that Mimi had named our organization in her will. Mimi's foresight made a significant impact on LVSC. Her generous bequest has been supplementing our fundraising efforts, keeping us fiscally sound, and giving us the ability to focus on our programs, tutors, and students. In Mimi's honor the LVSC office was named the "Mimi Ruch Memorial Literacy Office" in 2010.

Fast forward five years when a former tutor recently called the office. We were honored to learn that she was working on her will with her attorney and plans to leave a portion of her estate to LVSC. Like Mimi's bequest, her gift will be priceless to our organization. We are grateful to both women.

While many do not like to think about their mortality, having a will is critical. It ensures that what you leave behind (your bank account, your possessions, and your life's work) is directed as you choose. Including your favorite charity in your will is easy and costs nothing during your lifetime. For more information, please call the LVSC office at (908) 725-5430.

Honoring the Memory of Joanne Wawrzyniak

Joanne taught in the Bridgewater Raritan Regional School District for 35 years and was a coordinator of the QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning for 20 years. She was an avid reader, and enjoyed quilting and playing with her granddaughter. When she passed away earlier this year, her family requested that memorial gifts be made to LVSC in Joanne's

memory. While Joanne was not involved directly with LVSC, the family felt that giving to an education-related organization was an apt and meaningful gesture. We thank the family for thinking of us in their time of sadness and hope they know that their generosity is going a long way in providing local adults with literacy instruction.

Tutoring Corner *For and About Tutors*

By Lauren Randolph

Excuse me, could you repeat that please?

No doubt your learners who are non-native speakers of English are familiar with that phrase whether they are striving to understand a native speaker or be understood themselves. For an English language learner, pronunciation can be bewildering and frustrating. As a tutor, you may share this view!

Rest assured – teaching English pronunciation can be a fun and rewarding experience! To start, it is important to know that English pronunciation is usually divided into two areas. The first area consists of the *sounds of English* (the vowels and the consonants – also known as segmentals). The second area of English pronunciation is the *rhythm (or music) of English* (word stress, sentence stress, thought groups, and intonation – also known as suprasegmentals).

Since recent studies have confirmed that the *rhythm of English* tends to cause more communication interference than the *sounds of English*, let's start by looking at **word stress** in English. If a learner fails to recognize a stress pattern in learning a new word, it is very likely that the learner will not be able to understand the spoken word or produce the word correctly.

Consider the following scenario of a learner asking her teacher for advice:

Student: Mrs. Stiebel, can you help me with comedy?

Teacher: Comedy?

Student: Yes, comedy is big problem.

Teacher: I don't quite follow.

Student: (Patiently) Problem – this is worry.

Teacher: Yes, a worry. Um... you mean you have a problem with comedy on TV?

Student: TV? (Trying again) The boss put me on department comedy. Everybody on comedy, all the time argue.

Teacher: Oh, you mean committee!

Student: Yes, what I told you, comedy.

(Source: Gilbert, Judy B. *Teaching Pronunciation Using the Prosody Pyramid* Cambridge University Press 2008)

In teaching pronunciation, it is helpful to include listening discrimination (can the learner distinguish between different sounds, stress patterns, etc?) and speaking (can the learner produce the sounds, stress patterns, etc?). There are two basic steps to introducing word stress to your learners and some suggested listening and speaking activities for reinforcement. Step One is to introduce your learners to the concept of the syllable. They need to know that a syllable is a part of a word and each syllable has a vowel sound. Step Two is to introduce your learners to the concept of syllable stress. Make sure your learners know that any word with two or more syllables has one syllable that is stressed or stronger (the stressed syllable sounds louder and slower). For helpful listening and speaking activities that you can use with your student, please go to www.literacysomerset.org and click on the "Tutor Resources" under the "Resources" tab. There you will find a worksheet and related activities, as well as a wonderful list of websites.

Third Annual Soiree

A "Spooktacular" Success

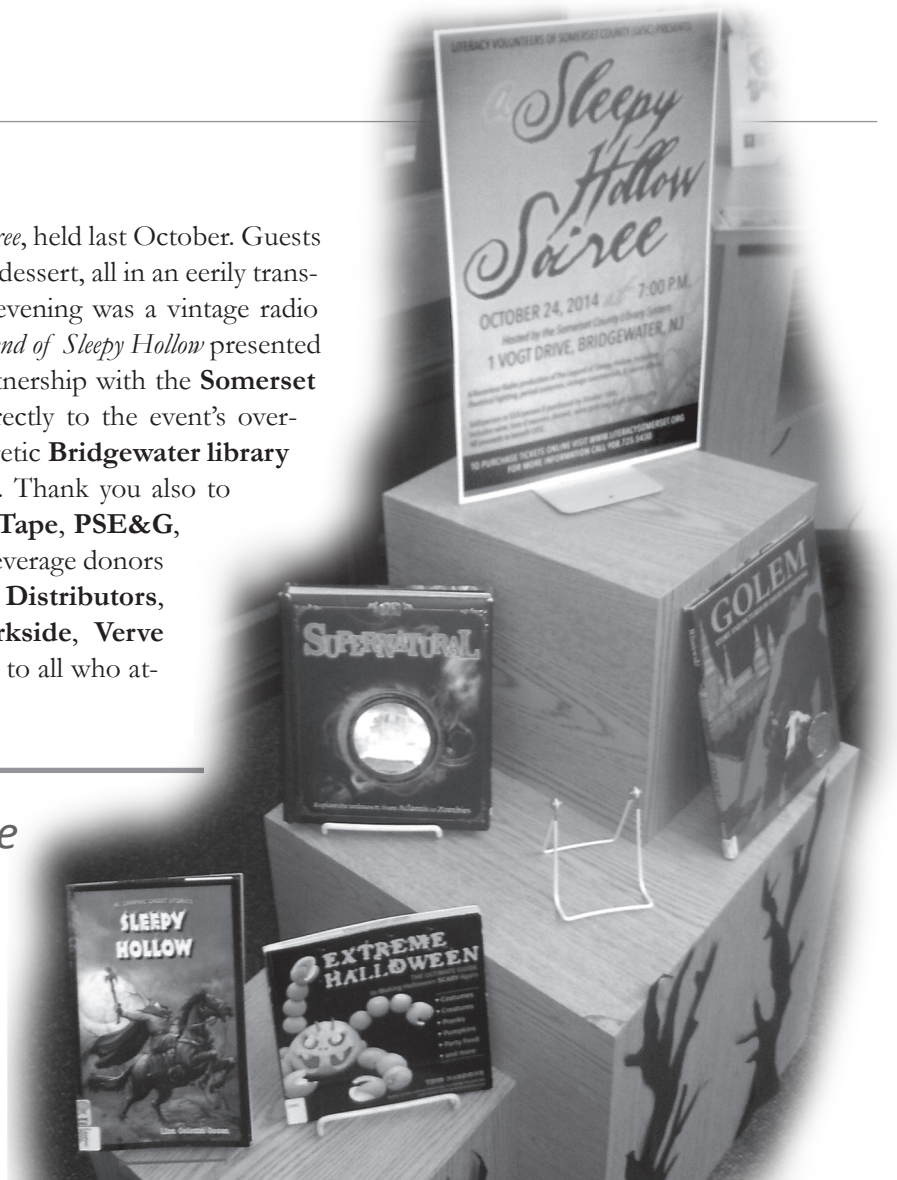
Nearly 80 supporters attended *A Sleepy Hollow Soiree*, held last October. Guests relaxed while enjoying a wine bar, appetizers, and dessert, all in an eerily transformed Bridgewater library. A highlight of the evening was a vintage radio show production of Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* presented by Raconteur Radio. We are grateful for our partnership with the **Somerset County Library System** which contributed directly to the event's overwhelming success, and to the dedicated and energetic **Bridgewater library employees** who helped plan and run the event. Thank you also to our sponsors **Brother International, Midwest Tape, PSE&G,** and **The PeopleCare Center**; to our food and beverage donors **Belden Barns, Brian Muldoon, MRB Bakery Distributors, Rodney Strong Vineyards, Soriano's at Parkside, Verve Restaurant, Wegmans,** and **Weis Markets**; and to all who attended this popular event!

Mark your calendar now for the

Fourth Annual Soiree

at the Manville Library

Friday, October 16, 2015



Would you like to support LVSC's programs?

Gifts of any size can work together to make a BIG impact!

Complete and return this form in the enclosed envelope with a check payable to LVSC. You can also make a donation online at www.literacysomerset.org.

\$10

Gifts of \$10 from just 10 people will help us recruit a new class of tutors.

\$25

Gifts of \$25 from 12 people will purchase materials for a US Citizenship Preparation Class.

\$50

Gifts of \$50 from 3 people will support a new 12-week Conversation Group.

\$100

Gifts of \$100 from 10 people will pay for a year of website expenses.

Matching Gifts

If you and/or your spouse are associated with a company that has a matching gift program, your gift could be doubled or tripled. Please enclose a matching gift form from your Office of Human Resources.

Name: _____ Donation Amount: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

LVSC Expands Program Offering



New US citizens are sworn in.

By Jay Muldoon

Since our founding in 1981 we have been recruiting and training volunteer tutors who work with their students to help them improve their literacy skills and achieve work, family and life goals. As Somerset County has become more diverse, the number of English for Speakers of Other Languages students has greatly increased. LVSC has met this challenge by expanding our ESL services. This year LVSC has expanded the number of locations where we offer English Conversation Groups. In April we started a Conversation Group at the Manville Library which is being led by Mike Aslett. The group at Manville is the fifth Conversation Group led by LVSC tutors and joins our ongoing groups at Bridgewater, Bound Brook, Hillsborough, and Somerville library branches. Our Conversation Groups are regarded as a “model program” and LVSC was recognized with the Outstanding Affili-

ate Achievement award from Literacy New Jersey at the annual conference in November. LVSC greatly appreciates our dedicated and talented volunteer Conversation Group leaders: Dan Colodner (Hillsborough), Allison Caulfield & Karen Brown (Bound Brook), Ken Strahs (Bridgewater) and Phil Armenio (Somerville).

This year LVSC was proud to add US Citizenship Preparation to our course offerings. Literacy New Jersey received a Literacy Innovations grant for the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development to provide training and funding to Literacy Volunteers affiliates in NJ. The Literacy Innovations grant enables us to increase student instruction hours by offering programs like US Citizenship Preparation. The grant provided funding to train tutors to teach US Citizenship Preparation. The goal of the class is to give students knowledge and practice so they can successfully pass the citizenship test and interview. In March, 2104 LVSC presented our first US Citizenship Preparation class to a group of nine eager and committed students at the Manville Library. I had the pleasure of co-teaching this eight session class with LVSC tutor, Carmine La Marca.

Many of the students have been in the US for many years and their home countries included Costa Rica, Columbia, Peru,

and Macedonia. Their enthusiasm was contagious and their desire to become US citizens truly inspiring. As teacher Carmine remarked, “It gave me great satisfaction to help these people go through the American citizenship process. Every time they said the *Pledge of Allegiance* together, I was honored to be in their presence.” Students appreciated learning about American history and gaining confidence speaking English. LVSC is currently offering another Citizenship Preparation class in conjunction with the United Methodist Church of Bound Brook being taught by LVSC tutors Kate Jerris and Judy Rothberg. Plans are being made to offer a third class in October at the Manville Library and at other locations in 2016.

The Citizenship Preparation course is a wonderful opportunity for LVSC to help many of our students achieve their goal of becoming a US citizen. Please contact the office at (908) 725-5430 if you are interested in being trained to teach US Citizenship Preparation or to lead an English Conversation Group. Both are very rewarding experiences.

Funding News

A heartfelt thank you to our recent corporate and foundation funders for grants and donations:

- Ashland Inc.
- Billian Family Charitable Foundation
- E.A. Boniakowski Agency
- The Fred C. Rummel Foundation
- Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
- The Lowell Johnson Foundation
- Macy's
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity
- Pheasant Hill Foundation
- Provident Bank Foundation
- PSE&G Foundation
- Somerset Savings Bank
- Somerville Elks
- Valiance Partners
- Walmart – Manville Store

Shout-Outs

- Thank you to tutors **Pat Dedert** and **Cheri Stead** who submit their tutoring hours to their employers for a Volunteer Grant. To date **Exxon** and **Verizon** have generously donated \$1,750 to LVSC in recognition of Pat and Cheri's volunteer hours. Many employers have similar Volunteer Grant programs; simply ask your Human Resources Department and your valued volunteer time may qualify LVSC for funding.
- We appreciate our dedicated **gift**

wrappers who braved weather and parking lot congestion to help gift wrap for donations at Barnes & Noble during the holiday season.

- Thank you to the **Sturms** for directing money to LVSC through **Thrivent Choice**.
- We were sorry to hear that our friends at the **Central New Jersey Reading Association** disbanded. We are grateful for their longstanding support and their final donation, and wish them well as many members begin new chapters in their lives.

Congratulations to 36 Newly Trained Volunteer Tutors!

Fall 2014 Graduates

Ravi Aditham
Mike Aslett
Maria Cutie
Eleanor Demirkaya
Paul DiGasbarro
Nancy Duffy
Ray Durac
Lisa Elwood
Lorna Fletcher
Neil Friedman
Jodi Kaplan
Barbara Reynolds
Marlon Rojas
Janice Ro
Judy Rothberg
Charlie Smith
Cheri Stead
Kathryn Swingle
Sabine Weimann
Tamara Westmark

Winter 2015 Graduates

Natalia Black
Seleta Bright
Neil Cammarano
Ruth Furbee
Sarah Graf
Norman Greenberg
Pat Hendricks
Lydia Masterson
Rintu Sarah Mathew
Davy Morales
Vishvesh Oza
Jennifer St. Pierre
Andrea Swykowski
Mala Herzberg
Mildred Breyer
Lora Prag

✓ Save the Date

Fall Tutor Training

Do you know someone who would like to be an LVSC tutor? Our next tutor training workshop begins in October. Please contact the office for more information.

Networking Event at Verve

Join John Hadley, master networker and career coach, for a fun and informative speed networking session

June 24, 2015

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Delicious light fare from Verve. Cash bar available.

Verve Restaurant (upstairs lounge)
18 East Main Street
Somerville, NJ 08876

\$20 Workshop Fee payable by credit card at www.literacysomerset.org or by check to LVSC, 120 FINDERNE Avenue, #7, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Fourth Annual Soiree

Friday, October 16, 2015

New Location: Manville Library



**Literacy Volunteers
of Somerset County**

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Phil Armenio, *Vice President*
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609.922.2848.

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getvpa.com.

Spring Cleaning!

Spring is just about over: have you cleaned your closets? Through Carecycle Inc., LVSC raises thousands of dollars every year by placing clothing donation bins throughout the community. The more clothing donated, the more money Carecycle donates to LVSC's programs. Please consider dropping your used clothing in one of our bins in the following locations:

- Manville: Chester House - North Main Street
- Bridgewater: Twin City Markets - East Main Street & FINDERNE Avenue
- Bound Brook: ShopRite – West Union Avenue
- Watchung: Sears – Route 22 & Terrill Road