

# The Literacy Letter

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## A Student's Story – Meet Jes

Student Jes and Tutor Norm have been meeting for weekly tutoring sessions in the Bridgewater library for one year. They are making remarkable progress. Along with 12 other students and 11 tutors, Jes and Norm recently submitted a writing piece for LVSC's 35th anniversary commemorative book, *Changing Lives Through Literacy*. Norm turned the exercise into a writing lesson and helped Jes to refine her piece:

*I have been in the United States for 14 years. I was born in Peru, and came to the United States for a better future, and I realized that I needed to study English. I am married, and I have 2 children. A boy who is 9 years old and is autistic.*

*I also have a 3 month old baby girl. It is difficult in this country if you do not speak English, so I decided to learn to speak English for a better future, and to get a good job. So I decided to apply to be in an LVSC class to learn English. LVSC got me my tutor Norm. Norm is an excellent person who helps me learn English as a second language. I think of him as a father to me, and I thank G-d for putting me with Norm. Norm has patience with me, and always tries to help. My goal is to learn English well and study nursing. LVSC has changed my life. I've learned more English as a second language. Before I could not communicate with people in English, and now I understand a little more.*

## LVSC Celebrates 35 Years of Service

On April 10th, a full room of supporters gathered to celebrate LVSC's 35th anniversary and growing garden of literacy programs. Thank you to all who made our *Garden of Literacy Brunch and Silent Auction* such a huge success! It was a nice opportunity to spend a relaxing afternoon eating delicious food, enjoying each other's company, and hearing from tutors and students, while supporting an important cause.

LVSC thanks the *Garden of Literacy* sponsors: **Amboy Bank, PeopleCare Center for Nonprofits, PSEG, and Quest Diagnostics**. Congratulations to Wegmans Bridgewater for being honored with LVSC's *Community Champion Award* and to Jay Muldoon, recipient of the *Outstanding Service Award*.



Want to see more pictures? Turn to page 4.



## Thoughts from Martha Davis, LVSC Board President

As our 2015-2016 Fiscal Year is nearing its end, I reflect upon LVSC's good fortune with a deep sense of humility for the continued caring support of *The Billian Family Charitable Foundation, The Lowell F. Johnson Family Foundation, The United Way of Northern New Jersey, The Pheasant Hill Foundation, The Fred C. Rummel Foundation, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, the Gannett Foundation, Ullmann Family Foundation, individual donors*, and our new patrons, the *Investors Savings Bank Charitable Foundation* and the *M&T Charitable Foundation*. Because of the generosity of these wonderful contributors, we have the means to keep our doors open to meet the demands for our services.

It goes without saying, that our organization's biggest assets are our tutors, assessors, and volunteers who give so willingly of their time and talent, and our students who work hard to attain their goal for a better life; they, in turn, enrich our lives by sharing their culture and their dreams. They are the success stories we want to share with the communities. I am grateful to the leaders of our growing Conversation Groups, the multi-faceted Citizenship Preparation classes and the popular Tutor Club.

To help with the bottom line of our financials, we organize two fundraisers during each Fiscal Year. Last year's Fall Soiree at the Bridgewater Library and the Garden of Literacy Brunch at the Grain House on April 10th were successful and fun, thanks to those who participated and generously showed their support.

An unexpected surprise during this Fiscal Year came with the resignation of our Executive Director, Jay Muldoon, who wanted to make a career change. During his tenure, Jay reinforced the stability and the growth of LVSC and left its infrastructure in solid shape for his successor to build on, new Executive Director, Aimee Lam. Aimee is again someone with a long LVSC history, who completed tutor training in 1999, tutored for 2 years, and served as an active Board member for 9 years including 2 years as Board President. For the last 6 years she has worked on grant writing, fundraising and communications for several small non-profits, including LVSC.

I never tire to sing the praises of our Board of Directors, whose impassioned commitment to our organization has played an invaluable role in all aspects of LVSC's function. With the Board's continued vigilance, LVSC is sure to rise to the challenges of an ever-changing landscape in the non-profit world, while preserving LVSC's legacy as a kaleidoscope that encompasses the diversity and beauty of many cultures.

Our next social event will be the June 8th Annual Meeting. I look forward to an amicable evening of camaraderie, good food and just plain fun. See you there!

### Notes from our Tutors

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

- F. enrolled in a twice a week ESL class at Raritan Valley Community College. He's now interested in becoming an X-ray technician.
- E. is understanding more of the rhythm of a conversation. He and his tutor practice by clapping out the rhythm with the words they speak. It keeps his sentences steady and confident.
- G. has obtained a public library card and borrowed her first book. In the

Dominican Republic, books could not be removed from the library.

- D. is pregnant and due in late June. With her tutor, she made a list of 20 questions to ask the doctor - and then they role played her appointment. They made a list of baby items for her registry and visited the site online.
- Y. wrote a composition about when she stayed home from school as a child, because she was ill.
- F. is very proud of the fact that he's been in the U.S. since February and feels he speaks and understands English much

better than a friend who's been here for two years. He credits the LVSC program.

- J. teaches her tutor a new word in Chinese at the end of every session. This is a great way for J. to illustrate a sense of reciprocity and confidence.
- T. got a full time job via an employment agency. She applied online for the position and then met with the agency twice at two different locations before she was hired.
- D. and her tutor stopped meeting regularly. When they get together now, it is just as friends, catching up on life.



Carol is a long-time tutor whose Basic Literacy student, Shery, is working to improve her reading level. Carol wrote a picture book, "The Happy Garden," specifically for Shery, utilizing only the words that Shery can read and the concepts that Shery can understand. Congratulations to both Carol and Shery on this beautiful accomplishment.

# A Message from Aimee Lam, LVSC Executive Director



Since the first meeting with my literacy student many years ago, I have always held a special place in my heart for LVSC and its mission. Maybe it's the fact that my grandparents are immigrants who learned English as a Second Language (ESL), or the fact that I've always loved to read and can't imagine a life without books, or the fact that the work we do is so empowering and enriching. Either way, one can well imagine that I am excited and honored to have been chosen by the LVSC Board to be the new Executive Director. I am proud to work in a place where volunteers devote their time and talents, and students work with determination to improve their lives.

To say that our staff is small would be an understatement. We are two people – Susan Engelstein and I - managing four programs and 175 volunteers, serving 350 students every year. Susan is an incredible asset to LVSC and I would like to thank her for agreeing to expand her role as our Program and Events Manager. Coincidentally, Susan and I both completed the same LVSC tutor training class 17 years ago; while neither of us recalls meeting the other, we found both of our names on a class roster dated May 1999!

My goal in these first few months on the job was to ensure a smooth transition. We are lucky to have had Jay Muldoon as our previous Executive Director; among many accomplishments, he expanded our relationship with the supportive Somerset County Library System, grew the number of Conversation Groups from three to 11, implemented U.S. Citizenship Preparation classes as one of our program offerings, and formed a partnership with Spotlight Learning to deliver ESL classes. As a result, complementing our cornerstone tutoring program we now have a rich service offering which helps our students more quickly acquire English Literacy skills. My goal moving forward is to build upon these service offerings while ensuring that we have the funding necessary to support our tutors and students.

I have enjoyed getting to meet many of our tutors, students, volunteers, and supporters at various functions and look forward to meeting more of you in the future. Please feel free to introduce yourself and reach out with thoughts or suggestions. I can be contacted in the office at (908) 725-5430 or [alam@literacysomerset.org](mailto:alam@literacysomerset.org).

## Tutoring Corner *For and About Tutors*

### Ask the Expert...

**Jackie Flamm, experienced LVSC tutor, ESL teacher/teacher trainer, and author**  
**Excerpts from the *How's It Going?* session held on April 28th.**

*I am about to meet my student for the first time and I am really nervous! What if I do something wrong?*

Relax. You won't do anything wrong. Nothing you do will cause harm! As soon as you meet your student and start talking, you'll be fine and if some activity you are doing feels like it isn't working, change it.

*My student doesn't get any practice speaking English outside of our weekly meetings. What can I do?*

Here's one possibility. Encourage your student to watch a TV sitcom. Ask beginning students to write down five English words they recognize. This forces them to listen carefully. Intermediate students can write down 10 words, and more advanced students can describe the plot at your next tutoring session.

*My student and I are having difficulty setting a goal. What can I do?*

Work with your student to answer this question: I want to learn English in order to \_\_\_\_\_. Remember to start small. You want to set doable, reachable goals. "Improving my pronunciation" is a long-term goal. "Being understood when I make a hairdresser's appointment" or "reading my child's homework assignment" are short-term, achievable goals.

*My student has trouble with certain vowel sounds. Why is that?*

Many of the sounds in English do not exist in other languages. For example, Spanish has five vowel sounds; English has at least 14. Learning a little bit about your student's native language will give you a good idea about how to predict why, where, and how there might be difficulties. This knowledge will help you to plan appropriate lessons. It will also clearly demonstrate to your student that you



are interested in his/her cultural identity, and it's a great way to relate to your student and create trust, a necessary element in order for learning to take place.

*My student is a very beginner—where do I start?*

Conversation is a series of questions and answers -- and that is a great place to start. Write down five questions and answers -- a few facts about your student-- and create a custom-made, relevant dialogue. Practice reading this dialogue together, taking turns asking the questions and giving the answers.

The most important piece of advice from the expert? Have fun!

# Celebrating 35 Years

Pictures continued from page 1



## Tutor Club

Once trained, tutors are matched with students and “sent into the world” to tutor. What seems straightforward during tutor training may be not so easy in real life. Where to turn for support? Calls to the LVSC office are always welcomed, but talking to fellow tutors might be even better! An engaged group of new tutors, led by tutor Natalia Black, formed a “tutor club” last summer. Today, Tutor Club provides tutoring support, camaraderie, mentorship, and an opportunity to exchange resources and engage in interactive conversation with fellow tutors. Tutor Club is open to all tutors, new and seasoned, and starting this fall will be held monthly. Each session will include time to pose general questions and seek advice, discussion led by an “expert” on a pre-announced Topic of the Month (such as Basic Literacy or working with very beginner ESL students), and time to socialize. Tutors, please see the back page for dates and times, and stay tuned for more information.

## Would you like to support some of the great programs featured in this newsletter?

The easiest way to donate is online at [www.literacysomerset.org](http://www.literacysomerset.org). Or you can complete and return this form in the enclosed envelope with a **check made payable to LVSC**. Thank you for your support!

*Enclosed is my gift of:*

☐ \$50

☐ \$100

☐ \$150

☐ \$250

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Yes!** My employer or my spouse's employer has a **Matching Gifts Program**. I've enclosed a matching gift form from Human Resources.

☐ **Yes!** I want to make a **Recurring Gift**. Please send me information about making a monthly donation.

☐ **Yes!** I want to make a **Long-Term Gift**. Please send me information about including LVSC in my will.

**Name & Telephone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

LVSC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Literacy Volunteers  
of Somerset County

# Welcome New Citizens

***Struggling with English literacy skills makes the naturalization process overwhelming***

Did you know that LVSC offers free U.S. Citizenship Preparation Classes? A true partnership, classes take place in local libraries, are taught by LVSC volunteers, and are funded by community groups. Five LVSC tutors have completed the training required to teach a Citizenship Preparation class and have taught at least one session, if not more: Allison Caulfield, Kate Jerrie, Carmine LaMarca, Jay Muldoon, and Judy Rothberg. The course takes place during an 8-week period and includes a review of the citizenship process, study of the 100 civics questions and vocabulary, and practice with the English needed to do well during the interview. Library staff in both the Manville and Bound Brook libraries have been promoting the program and registering students. With financial donations from the ***Friends of the Bound Brook Library*** and the ***Peapack-Gladstone Woman's Club*** we are able to provide stu-



*Congratulations to new U.S. Citizens: Fabiola (l) and Irene (r).*

dents with instructional materials needed for the course. Students are incredibly grateful for this free class and consistently provide positive feedback. And, at least five participants have become new U.S. citizens! Thank you to all who make this life-changing program possible.

## LVSC Teams Up to Offer a Financial Literacy Foundations Workshop

In partnership with Magyar Bank and the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC), LVSC offered a Financial Literacy Foundations Workshop on May 11th at the Hillsborough Library. Maqsood Mamawala, facilitator, assured attendees that if they were “stressed out” by money, they were not alone. Anggy Agudelo, Magyar Bank Community Relations Specialist, and Sharon Clark, CJHRC Executive Director, presented introductory topics such as creating and using a budget, avoiding scams, understanding credit scores, and setting financial goals. Ma-mawala then shared online websites that offer interactive basic money management tools. Hillsborough business librarian, Cathy Briant, closed the workshop by sharing a comprehensive list of resources for those in need of a basic understanding of money management. Cathy reminded participants that library resources are free, including computer use and online access. LVSC will be holding an in-service workshop to share financial literacy tools and resources with tutors and Conversation



*Pictured (l to r) Anggy Agudelo-Magyar Bank, Maqsood Mamawala-facilitator, Laura Wetzel & Sharon Clark-CJHRC.*

Group leaders; in the meantime, financial literacy materials can be obtained by calling the LVSC office.

*Funding for this workshop was generously provided by the **Fred C. Rummel Foundation**, the **Gannett Foundation**, **MagyarBank Charitable Foundation**, and the **United Way of Northern New Jersey Women's Leadership Council**.*

## Help Wanted

At LVSC, there are so many ways to get involved. Please call the LVSC office for more information on any of the following opportunities:

- Become a tutor or recruit a tutor
- Lead a Conversation Group
- Teach a U.S. Citizenship Preparation class
- Train to be a student assessor
- Join a Special Events Committee
- Assist with mailings and light office work
- Photograph an event
- Volunteer to gift wrap at Barnes & Noble during the holiday season

## Clothing for a Cause

Did you know you can support LVSC by donating your used clothing? Through Carecycle Inc., LVSC raises thousands of dollars every year by placing clothing donation bins throughout the community. Please consider dropping your used clothing in one of our bins in **Manville at the Chester House** (North Main Street) or in **Bound Brook at ShopRite** (West Union Avenue).

## ✓ Save the Date

### Annual Meeting & Recognition Night

Wednesday, June 8, 2016, 7 – 9pm

PeopleCare Center Cafeteria, 120 Funderne Avenue in Bridgewater  
RSVP to (908) 725-5430 or  
info@literacysomerset.org

### Tutor Club

Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016, 7 – 8:30pm

1st Thurs. of every month thereafter, Oct. - May  
7 – 8:30pm  
PeopleCare Center Conference Room

### Fall Tutor Training

Thursdays, Sept. 22 - Oct. 20, 2016,  
6 – 9 pm

PeopleCare Center  
Register at [www.literacysomerset.org](http://www.literacysomerset.org)

### Fifth Annual Fall Soiree

Friday, October 7, 2016, 7 – 11pm  
Bridgewater Library



**Literacy Volunteers  
of Somerset County**

### Board

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Helene Venizelos

#### Staff

Aimee Lam, *Executive Director*  
Susan Engelstein,  
*Program and Events Manager*

## Congratulations to 34 Newly Trained Tutors!

### Fall 2015 Graduates

Deborah Bort  
Doreen Camardi  
Meagan Crawford  
Becky Creswell  
Phyllis Fineberg  
Amy Gole  
Anita Hall-Kane  
Dawn Johnson  
Jo Khare Lojun  
Jamie McFadden  
Kimberly Richards  
Silvia Sorace  
Marian Zeldin

### Winter 2016 Graduates

Jennifer Acan  
Angel Antonio  
Matthew Barbosa  
Jennifer Bradshaw  
Bridget Buzzoni  
Kathleen Cavanaugh  
Ella Copoulos  
Michael DeMatos  
Loan Dinh  
Catriona Duncanson  
Pat Emanuele  
Jill Gordon  
Agnes Irizarry  
Tara Jethwani  
Arkor Kolubah  
James McCloud  
Linda Pollard  
Deborah Stuart  
Karen Tenenbaum  
Velma Williams-Gates  
Kate Zinnikas



Community Partner

LVSC is proud to have been awarded a 3-year grant from the United Way of Northern New Jersey. Funding was awarded after a comprehensive and rigorous review of our services and fiscal practices. We are honored by the seal of approval and grateful for the financial support.



## LVSC: Transforming Lives AND Libraries!

Every year LVSC works with the Somerset County Library System to transform the Bridgewater library for the Fall Soiree. Last year's Night at the Library was a big hit! Don't miss this year's event – mark your calendar now for October 7, 2016.

LVSC thanks the 2015 soiree sponsors: **Amboy Bank, Brother International, Midwest Tape and ADESA New Jersey.**

### 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.