

Reading. For Life.



### LITERACY NASSAU

Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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## NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

(by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)

April is National Volunteer Month. We appreciate all the hard work our volunteers do throughout the year for our adult students. We have recently brought back in-person In-Service Trainings (ISTs) to support our tutors and to give them a chance to meet with other tutors and to share ideas and best practices.

Izzy conducted a training for our Basic Literacy (BL) tutors to review Orton-Gillingham methodology, the components of the lesson plan, and strategies to make basic content interesting for adult learners. It was a great opportunity for BL tutors to meet and share updates about their students and get ideas from each other. She also had several ELL tutors who joined her presentation to cross-train and learn more about our BL program and to pick up some reading strategies that may be able to support their students as they learn English.

I led a workshop on Infusing Conversation in the ELL Classroom. I enjoyed meeting with tutors, hearing about techniques they have used to increase conversation in their classes, and progress students have made. We engaged in a few model activities: pulling a discussion prompt from a cup and taking turns answering open ended questions, playing "Four Corners" where students have to respond to a prompt by standing in a corner

of the room labeled either, "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", or "strongly disagree." Then participants were asked to explain why they chose that answer and to respond to others who had a different response.

We also played "Table-top Twitter," where participants have a "silent conversation" by walking around from one chart paper to another where a statement has been written on each and participants write a short response ("tweet") to the original statement or to someone else's comment. This is a nice way to get everyone engaged, give people time to think through their responses without being "on the spot" and to give a little rehearsal before following up with a discussion about what they learned from the activity and a share out of the responses. We were able to discuss how to modify activities to match students' ability levels and interests as well as how important it is to spend time building a classroom culture of safety and respect so that students are comfortable sharing and discussing.

As part of our celebration of National Volunteer Month, our April ISTs will focus on highlighting some of the best practices of our volunteer tutors. We will offer a day for ELL level 1 and 2 tutors to meet and for

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## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone!

Spring has sprung! All of a sudden, we've been able to enjoy days with nice weather, an extra hour of sunshine, and the spring fever that goes along with the rush of a season of growth. For me, that's been compounded by the completion of the first draft of my Fellow application to the Orton-Gillingham Academy. It's amazing; after all these years, I'm finally almost finished. The weight that's been lifted off my shoulders is monumental.

To celebrate the season and this great accomplishment, my family and I recently took a day trip out east. We walked on the beach, had a big breakfast at our favorite greasy spoon diner, visited a bookstore, and went to the outlets. It was a timely reminder of how important it is to pause and be grateful when things are good! This month, I encourage you all to celebrate a recent win with your loved ones. You'll be surprised at how energizing it can be to just relax.

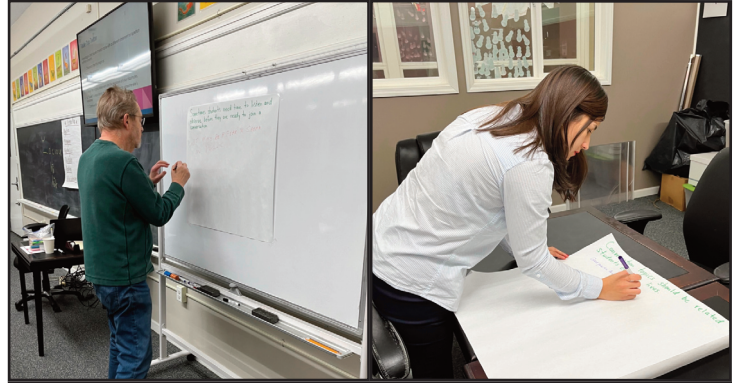


Karen ☺

## NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH (CONTINUED)

a panel of tutors to present to them and lead discussion of strategies and curriculum specific to beginning adult ELL students. We will have a second date with the same format for level 3 and 4 tutors to discuss more advanced concepts and prepare students for when they are ready to “graduate” from Literacy Nassau and move on to more advanced programs. We will also offer a day for Basic Literacy tutors and NCBC facilitators to meet, discuss their students, materials, and progress monitoring, and to share ideas with other tutors.

We hope you will be able to join us at an upcoming IST to celebrate National Volunteer Month and to network with other tutors.



Our dedicated tutors engaged in some model activities during a recent IST.

## OUR EPIC NIGHT

*(submitted by Martha Kovel, NCBC Tutor)*



I became a Literacy Nassau volunteer 7 or 8 years ago, starting as a backup facilitator in a Jot It Down group in New Hyde Park. With loads of encouragement and the promise of a terrific co-facilitator, I started with a new group at a Panera in Merrick. I met Mary Greenfield on an October night, and we became fast friends. We, along with a third co-facilitator, RuthAnn Kennedy, met with a group of developmentally challenged adults every week, reading books and magazines together, playing word games, reading menus, cookbooks, maps, etc. We even met the groups favorite local weatherman from News12 one night, thus beginning a unit on weather. Unfortunately, the pandemic shut us, like everyone else, down.

It was time for a new volunteer endeavor, especially one essential during the pandemic. Mary, still a close and regular contact, introduced me to Soup to Nuts, a soup kitchen in Freeport, where we each volunteer several times a week. We anxiously awaited a beginning with a new Literacy group. Fast forward, an opportunity was presented with EPIC Nassau day habilitation program. EPIC had apparently unsuccessfully attempted to launch a reading group sometime in their past. The idea that we were willing and eager to push in to the program was welcomed. We have been a regular part of their program now for two years. Joan Strach, who we met at the Soup Kitchen, became our third co-facilitator.

This group consists of individuals who, because of their history of seizure coupled with other health and physical issues, present us with challenges that we were previously unfamiliar with. An EPIC staff member must be in the room with us at all times because the risk of seizure is great. We have experienced petit mal seizures in individuals sitting next to us. We have experienced great set backs when our group members have recently had grand mal seizures. Most of our members live in group homes or with adult siblings. They age between early twenties to late seventies, so finding age-appropriate and interesting reading material has been an adventure. Historically, these individuals have lived in closed-in worlds with little outside experience. Animals are not part of their world; parents are no longer in their daily lives. Our group has little interest in sports, or history, or science, but they do love music. We have read every book we can find on musicians that matches their varying reading and cognitive levels. We read lyrics, we listen to music, we watch music videos. When we read a book including cookies, Mary bakes cookies. We read about the Statue of Liberty; I gave them the foam crowns. Concrete experience makes the reading less abstract.

Being a Literacy Nassau volunteer at EPIC has been such a rewarding experience in itself. EPIC decided to honor the three of us with a Leadership Award at their annual gala on March 8, 2024. Expressions of appreciation were given by both organizations. We are thrilled at the opportunity to do what we love, sharing the joy of reading and the places and social interactions to which the sharing can take you.



## EPIC Long Island Leadership Award

**Martha Kovel, Mary Greenfield, and Joan Strach**  
**Literacy Nassau**

*Since 2022, this trio of volunteers from Literacy Nassau have brought the love of reading – and so much more, to a group of adults at the EPIC Long Island Day Habilitation program in East Meadow. It has been observed that the reading group has not only enhanced the individuals' literacy skills, but has increased their self-confidence, self-reliance, and patience. The group, which the participants have named, the EPIC Readers, has empowered them to project their voices, learn new words, and communicate appreciation and excitement for their weekly gatherings.*

## CLASS SPOTLIGHT: WESTBURY LEVEL 1

*(submitted by Kate Quijano, Senior Program Director)*

I had the pleasure of visiting our Westbury level 1 class on a rainy and March evening. I arrived early and as I sat in my car hoping for a break in the rain, I assumed that we would have poor attendance due to the weather. I was pleasantly surprised that 13 students showed up to class. I commended the class and their tutor Julie, who shared that she texts the whole class each night of class to remind them and asks them to confirm who will be in attendance that night. What a great, effective idea, Julie!

The night of my visit, the class also had a nutrition presentation delivered by Connie from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Students were engaged in conversation and got a lot of useful information about "My Plate" which describes how much fruit, vegetables, and meat we should all eat a day and about exercise. Connie shared great ideas on free forms of exercise: shopping, walking your dogs, hiking in a national park, or vacuuming your house. She gave everyone a chance to share how they exercise. Connie, who was herself an English Language Learner, shared this information with the students and gave some anecdotes of ways she practiced learning English. She was clearly prepared for this level 1 class with visuals and picture support and sent them home with information translated into several different languages. (Students in this class speak five different languages.)

I enjoyed the presentation and the opportunity to see the interaction between the presenter, the tutor, and the students. Class visits always highlight the hard work that all of our volunteers do everyday and all the effort our students put into learning English, even coming out in the pouring rain. Connie wrapped up the evening with a game where students had to tell us their first name and a fruit that begins with the first letter of their first name, then tell us their last name and a vegetable that begins with the first letter of their last name. I have to admit, I secretly said to myself, "That's much too hard for level 1 students; this isn't going to go well." But Connie and the students proved me wrong! She modeled the activity with her name, asked Julie to go first so they had a second model, and then supported each student as they took their turns. She gave hints about fruits and vegetables they could choose from, encouraged them to support each other, allowed them to give the name of the fruit or vegetable in another language, and had them look up photos on the internet. This encouraged conversation amongst the students, comparisons of names of fruits and vegetables in different languages, and vocabulary growth for everyone as well as a lot of smiles and laughter. Students left talking about how much they enjoyed the presentation and of course had to mention to me that they love Julie and are so appreciative of the time she volunteers to teach them.



**APRIL IS NATIONAL  
VOLUNTEER MONTH!**



**THANK YOU TO OUR TUTORS WHO  
SELFLESSLY GIVE THEIR TIME, KNOWLEDGE,  
AND COMPASSION TO THEIR STUDENTS!**



**Warm Birthday Wishes to our tutors  
celebrating in April!**

Kami-Leigh Agard – Mary Alibrandi – Zeba Ansari  
Marty Baicker – Nancy Benchimol – Nancy Bob – Judy Caputo  
Adrienne Carlton – Jennifer Cestaro – Kathleen Coleman  
Eileen D'Antonio – Margaret Dudley – Lisa Evans  
Wendy Fast – Anita Faulding – Madalyn Fernbach  
Barbara Fritz – Jennifer Gabriele – Lana Glass – Mary Greco  
Kelsey Greene – Michele Haber – Florence Harff  
Michael Hauser – Kathleen Jeacoma – Kristen Johnson  
Dolores Joseph – Keon Karimababy – Lorri Klonsky  
Audrey Korman – Carmelinda Kurtzberg – Jean Lesser  
Carol Markman – Susan Mazur – India McClain – Antonia Obara  
Carol Padovani – Josephine Palazzolo – Jean Pascale  
Maureen Peraza – Amy Perlmutter – Terese Pizza  
Jane Quinton – Susan Rosenberg – Stephen Salyk  
Carol Schrafel – Vasu Shah – Ann Silverberg  
Margaret Tigue – Debbie Uckele – Virginia Walsh  
Fran Weiss – Joan Whiteside – Jessica Zamora



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**This is what a learning disabled child often has to contend with when attempting to read a book.**

**If you've ever wanted to help a child with dyslexia learn to read, now is the time. In August, you can begin your training with us to become an Associate Level Orton-Gillingham Tutor.**

For more information on the program requirements please visit our website at [www.literacynassau.org](http://www.literacynassau.org) or email [kmicciche@literacynassau.org](mailto:kmicciche@literacynassau.org).

**Spots are limited. Accepting applications now!**






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