

# LITERACY MATTERS

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



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## HELPING YOUR STUDENT WITH THE N-400 APPLICATION

*(submitted by Umama Pasha)*

"I love the United States."  
 "I love living here."  
 "I want to vote."

These are just some of the reasons eligible clients offer when asked why they have decided to apply for citizenship. Since 2013, Literacy Nassau has been able to offer Advanced-level ESOL classes, free legal services, and assistance completing the N-400 application, thanks to a grant from the NYS Office for New Americans. This funding allows us to provide all of these services through our office, which is one of 28 state-wide Opportunity Centers. Since 2013, we have worked with over 300 clients to complete their citizenship applications, green card renewals and family-based petitions. Our goal is to continue helping those who are interested in becoming citizens so that they can vote, obtain better jobs, and continue to grow as active members of their communities.

This is where you come in. As you work with your students on improving their English skills, they might ask you immigration-based questions that you don't know the answers to. Politically, immigration is a hot topic, and many of our students may be struggling to find answers and information to keep themselves and members of their family safe. As a Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredited center, Literacy Nassau can offer the help your students need. In addition to completing N-400 applications and petitions, we also provide free citizenship classes taught by a few of our wonderful volunteers and workshops presented by United States Immigration & Citizenship Services (USCIS), the government entity that oversees lawful immigration in the United States.

If you or your student have a question about eligibility for naturalization or any immigration related question, please contact our office at (516)-867-3580 and speak to Umama Pasha (extension 17) or Karen Micciche (extension 11). Also, if your student is ready to file the N-400 application, please call us. We are happy to take that burden off your hands and can complete the application with your student, usually in a single session. We will make an appointment with you and/or your learner at your local library or at our office in Freeport.

To learn more, please join us at our upcoming workshop on the process of Naturalization presented by USCIS on Thursday, November 9th, at 11 A.M at our office in Freeport. To RSVP, please contact Kim Nau at 516-867-3580, extension 18.

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Each year, my family visits the Cranberry Festival in Wareham, MA. It is one of my favorite outdoor activities of the year, and this year, my daughter Haley was finally old enough to be curious about the process of cranberry harvesting. I was eager to share what I'd learned from years past, about wet vs. dry harvesting, about how carefully the growers have to handle the berries, and about how the rainfall for the season can impact the overall crop. She was fascinated, and I was struck by her thoughtful response. "Mommy," she said, "the cranberries need plenty of love throughout the year in order to grow into food for us to eat." I thought about her comment, and was reminded of our work with students here at Literacy Nassau. Our love, our patience, and the time we invest in lesson planning comes to fruition with every goal that our students attain successfully. And how lucky are we: our harvest happens not once a year, but over and over again, with each new skill learned and each new milestone reached. In this season of Thanksgiving, let us remember to count our blessings, and among them, to count our students.



The cranberry harvest in southern MA offered me the opportunity to share some knowledge with Haley - and for her to share some wisdom with me.

*Karen*

## **FIRST IMPRESSIONS: NEW STAFF REFLECTIONS**

*(submitted by Kelly Siry, Anne-Marie Poliviou, and Kate Quijano)*

*Kelly Siry:* I have been with Literacy Nassau for about a month. My short time here has been such a welcome change and incredibly rewarding. My background is in education. But I, like many others, became frustrated by public education because so often politics were coming before the needs of the students. Here at Literacy Nassau, it is the complete opposite. The staff literally bend over backwards to do what is best for their students and put human beings at the forefront of everything that they do. Working for an organization that values their students' needs truly warms my heart and makes coming to work every day such a joy. The biggest challenge I have faced is finding tutors to teach my small group classes. I wish I could shout it from the roof tops or hire a skywriter. There are so many people who want to learn to read, write and speak English; we need more tutors who are willing to teach our small groups of eager learners!

*Anne-Marie:* After only four quick months at Literacy Nassau I've been fortunate to work on the various stages of planning and executing some of our biggest events, including our Annual Wine Dinner, Bridge Event, Tutor Conference and the beginning of our 50th Anniversary celebrations! It's nice to become familiar with the names of our dedicated tutors and some faces too. I've enjoyed listening to Karen talk to our potential new volunteers at orientations about Literacy Nassau and then hear the awed reactions to the expanse of work that is done in our office and throughout Long Island. The most satisfaction comes from communicating with those potential volunteers and watching as they train and progress to become Literacy Nassau tutors. As my colleagues are cross training and taking on new regions I don't feel like the new kid on the block and welcome the lessons I receive every day about this great organization, the staff and the growing population it serves.

*Kate:* When I applied at Literacy Nassau, I walked into a small house serving as its office and thought how homey and comfortable it was. I expected a small, intimate organization working with Freeport students. I quickly learned that the staff and volunteers at Literacy Nassau serve a much larger, more diverse group of students from all over Nassau County and utilize the Public Library system for meeting locations. I was quickly impressed by the breadth of programs and services and the commitment and caring nature of the staff and volunteers.

I am enjoying getting to know everyone and becoming familiar with all the programs. I had so much fun teaching the Hicksville ONA class over the summer. It was so rewarding to see all my students' hard work displayed in their final projects and presentations. Each presentation was unique, just like my students. They supported each other along the way and made so much progress. Reorganizing files to prepare for the new region based caseloads was challenging as was transitioning students and tutors that I was just starting to get to know to someone else. But I truly look forward to learning about all of my new students and tutors and collaborating with all of the wonderful, supportive staff at Literacy Nassau that has helped me to feel so at home in this new role.

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

Literacy Nassau's not the only one celebrating! Warm wishes to the following tutors, born in November:



Susan Anton – Lorraine Bak – Gail Bauer – Ruth Bigman – Roselyn Botkin – Karel Bott – Steven Carbone – Kathleen Dendy – Diane Dubno – Diane Dwyer – Stefanie Edwards – Lita Friedman – Sandra Heiman – Audrey Hores – Charles Jencius – Joni Jones – Joanne Kassnove – Susan Kimmel – Jean Lavelle – Kathy Mahony – Christine Malenda – Deirdre McElhatton – Ceilann Neber – Mary Ann Neber – Carolyn Quenon – Teresa Rienzie – Martha Salzberg – Helen Schmidt – Peter Schwarz – Catherine Shubert – Adarsh Singla – Diane Ugelow – Van Vasiliades – Helen Westerman – Maryanne Williams-Pitman

## **COMMUNITY WORKSHOP CALENDAR**

Hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County, the following workshops are recommended for learners with an English level of 3 and up. Take a break from the library and come on down with your student(s). All sessions are offered free of charge and will provide interesting material to enhance your nutrition and overall well-being. This is a great way to practice English outside of your traditional 2-hour session while learning something new!

### **Physical Activity Workshop for our English Language Learners**

Tuesday, October 24th at 1:00pm at our office in Freeport  
To sign up contact, Kelly Siry at [Ksiry@literacynassau.org](mailto:Ksiry@literacynassau.org) or 516-867-3580, ext 21

### **Eating on a Better Budget for our English Language Learners**

Monday, November 6th at 8:00pm at our office in Freeport  
To sign up contact, Umama Pasha at [Upasha@literacynassau.org](mailto:Upasha@literacynassau.org) or 516-867-3580, ext 17

### **Blubber Burger for English Language Learners**

Wednesday, December 6th at 12pm at our office in Freeport  
To sign up contact, Cindy Cabrera at [Ccabrera@literacynassau.org](mailto:Ccabrera@literacynassau.org) or 516-867-3580, ext 15

The following workshop, brought to you by USCIS, is also available to you and your student(s) at no charge. A USCIS employee will present the process of Naturalization - from the application to the interview to the test itself - and will answer any questions related to immigration that you may have. Materials to practice for the citizenship test will be provided.

### **USCIS: The Naturalization Process**

Thursday, November 9th at 11:00am at our office in Freeport  
To sign up contact, Kim Nau at [Knau@literacynassau.org](mailto:Knau@literacynassau.org) or 516-867-3580, ext 18

## LITERACY FOR ALL

(submitted by Kim Nau)

When I first put feelers out to locate a child with dyslexia for my Orton-Gillingham (OG) practicum, I was shocked by the immediate response that I received. Within a few hours, at least a dozen parents desperately reached out to me for reading help for their children.

My first practicum was with a 76 year-old veteran and now I have the pleasure of working with a creative and smart eight-year old girl, Molly. She is dyslexic and in third grade but reading on a kindergarten level. Dyslexia is heredity and she has three cousins who also share her struggle.

It has been fun thinking back to when I taught elementary school and I have been able to use some old strategies from my classroom days and incorporate many new strategies that I have been learning in my OG coursework. To help Molly stay focused on each word, I have her put a cute topper on her pencil to point to each word as she reads them. She uses a Snapple bottle cap to tap out the sounds in new words. I have used a bag of glittery slime as a multisensory tool for her to learn how to properly form new cursive letters. She races a small car parallel to sentences to read with more fluency and automaticity.

Molly has allowed me to develop and explore my own creativity in this new venture in working with children. In the not-too-distant future, Literacy Nassau will have the opportunity to help entire families, both parents and children, by providing literacy for all.

## TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: SANDRA VILLATORO

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

Sandra Villatoro has been a one-to-one tutor with Literacy Nassau for the past year and half. She has diligently worked hard with her student, Emelina. When Emelina enrolled in our program she was a Low Beginner student. After a year of tutoring with Sandra, she went up to a Low Intermediate level.

Sandra is very passionate about the work we do here. She was the connection that opened up opportunities for her employees at PL Developments. Currently, that program is flourishing thanks the support of Sandra and her employer.

Sandra is a huge advocate for the immigrant community. We are so glad to have here at Literacy Nassau. Below we asked her some questions so you can get to know Sandra a bit more.

*Tell us a little about yourself.*

My name is Sandra Villatoro. I am from El Salvador. I have 3 children and a husband.

*Why did you volunteer with Literacy Nassau when there are many other volunteer opportunities you could have pursued?*

Literacy Nassau helps many people get more opportunities in this country. As an immigrant myself; I understand the difficulties people have in order to succeed. Learning English is vital tool in this country.

*Explain your experience throughout these past years with us.*

I have learned many new techniques teaching adults. Adults tend to be very eager to learn the language and have the motivation to succeed in life.

*What would you advise a new tutor who is just starting out with us?*

Remember helping other people is a satisfaction, not a responsibility that you are forced to take on. I believe tutors should enjoy helping others. Your student will see your passion, which will motivate them.

*Tell us about your current student. How are things going?*

My student, Emelina, maintains a balance between learning and family responsibilities. At times it may feel difficult or overwhelming but she is eager to open more doors to opportunity for herself and her family.

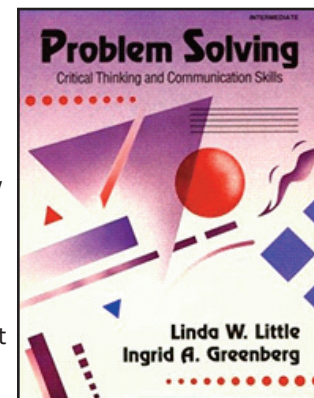
*What motivates you to keep on tutoring with us?*

Literacy Nassau is a great program that provides the training and support that any tutor might need, including teaching materials, lesson ideas, etc. Thanks to their support I am personally motivated to see where my student can go in her language learning journey.

## RESOURCE CENTER: PROBLEM SOLVING

(submitted by Sara Izquierdo)

When an experienced teacher and tutor tells me about a great resource they use, I listen! Problem Solving: Critical Thinking and Communication Skills was recently shared with me by one of our tutors, and I'm happy to share it with you. If you have students who are ready for some critical thinking and conversation, this is a book for you. It presents individual 'problems' that are extremely relatable for adult ESOL students. For instance, one problem finds a young man, who recently arrived in the United States, feeling lonely and wondering how to go about meeting people. There is a brief set-up of the problem offered as both a story and a picture. Then, there are corresponding exercises that go with the story, ranging from reading comprehension to writing. Additionally, there are a number of inference-based questions that go beyond the story, encouraging the students to discuss how the concepts presented in the story relate to their own lives. If you are looking for a way to get your students talking, and are seeking out topics that are universally engaging, give this book a try. You won't be disappointed! (Please note: You can buy the book on Amazon; it retails for about \$16. You can also check with your local library to see if they have a copy.)



Sandra Villatoro, this month's Spotlight Tutor.



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## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

*(submitted by Karen Micciche)*

We are thrilled to share that we received two very large grants this past month: \$35,000 from the Guru Krupa Foundation, and \$50,000 from the RTS Family Foundation.

As you may know, the Guru Krupa Foundation enabled us to launch an internship program this year. The success of the program included not only the extra sets of hands to help out as Office Assistants here at Literacy Nassau, but also included connecting interns with meaningful workshops to improve their employability in America. To date, six interns have completed the program and our newest class of four more have been working with us since September. This new grant for \$35,000 will enable us to run the program for another year. Thank you to Mr. Mukund Padmanabhan for your tremendous generosity!

The RTS Family Foundation has been a long-time supporter of Literacy Nassau. This year, their gift to us is twofold: \$35,000 to continue supporting our program operations, and a special gift of \$15,000 to support our capital fund. The capital fund will help us to relocate our administrative headquarters in 2018, enabling us to better serve children with dyslexia and our ever-widening population of adult learners. More information about the new capital fund will be available in our December issue of *Literacy Matters*. We are so grateful to the Santulli Family and the RTS Family Foundation for their continued support of our mission and their very special gift to our capital campaign. Thank you!

## A DAY OF BRIDGE

*(submitted by Anne-Marie Poliviou)*

Our annual Day of Bridge was held on Friday, September 15th at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y. It was a beautiful day and another well attended event sponsored by the John and Janet Kornreich Foundation. Close to 100 people were led by Aaron Silverstein from The Bridge School of Long Island for 3 hours of bridge play and lessons. This year's overall game winners received a casino excursion for four to Mohegan Sun on the Cross Sound Ferry's Sea Jet with \$300 worth of gift cards to dinner, the spa or a stay on the property.

Guests enjoyed breakfast while selecting their chance to win from a great number of raffle prizes, including Broadway tickets, an overnight spa stay, Mets tickets, a Coach bag, a Cape Cod trip, restaurant and salon gift cards and much more. After enjoying a catered lunch from Ben's Deli, Karen announced the winners.

Everyone took home a bag filled with great products from Burt's Bees, PopCorners, MAC Cosmetics, Nike and the Honest Company. Most importantly, we all succeeded in helping advance our goal of promoting Literacy Nassau and providing literacy to all. Warm thanks to John and Janet Kornreich for making this event possible and for their ongoing support of Literacy Nassau!



Our annual Day of Bridge was another grand success!