

# LITERACY MATTERS

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



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## Our Staff Team

Karen Micciche, Executive Director  
 Anne-Marie Poliviou, Executive Assistant  
 Renae Katz, Bookkeeper  
 Kim Nau, Regional Director  
 Cindy Cabrera, Regional Director  
 Kelly Siry, Regional Director  
 Digna Johnson, Workforce Development  
 Umama Pasha, Program Director  
 Sara Izquierdo, Jr. Literacy Specialist  
 Rebecca Figueras, Jr. Literacy Specialist  
 Kate Quijano, Jr. Literacy Specialist

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## FIXER UPPER

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

One of my favorite cable network shows is Fixer Upper. The hosts of the show, Chip and Joanna Gaines, own both a construction and design company. Their goal is to help clients find their dream home, but it comes with a catch: the homes to choose from are roughed up but have tremendous potential. In thirty minute segments, Chip and Joanna transform inefficient, unsightly homes into masterpieces. This "quick fix" speaks to today's culture of instant gratification; it's why I - and so many others - enjoy these kinds of shows.

Fixer Upper doesn't mirror real life, though. Needs change over time. My perfect house right now would be for just myself and my husband - but what happens if five years from now, we have three children or an extended family member needs to move in with us? My perfect home would look a lot different then.

In 2010, Literacy Nassau looked a lot like the show Fixer Upper. We were ranked the lowest of all adult education programs in New York State, and with funding being based on benchmarks, we were in definite need of an overhaul. That's when Karen was hired, and her first call to action was to clean house. She hired a solid team of Literacy Specialists who would prove to be great for the organization, and they all got to work on mining through

extremely large 1:1 caseloads of tutors and students. Once that was done, Literacy Nassau was humming like a well-oiled machine, only to learn there would be more change on the horizon.

In 2014, the waiting list for services had grown far beyond any measures of new tutor recruitment. We knew we had to find a more efficient way to operate, and with that, SGI was born. From 2014-2015, we developed a pipeline of services for our students utilizing all of our funding sources, and created a new way to capitalize on the skills of our licensed teachers as volunteers. By recycling tutors from one session to the next and placing intermediate students into small groups, we were able to solve several key problems. From that discovery, we developed the role of Program Director. Ocaria DiMango, Umama Pasha, and Kim Nau each took on a specific program (SGI, SGIB, and Next Chapter Book Clubs), and at the time, this was a very practical way to divide up the skills of our staff to meet the needs of our community.

However, the community continued to grow, and the staff began to slowly change, and of course we were all rocked by the unprecedented gift of \$1 million from John and Janet Kornreich, empowering our team to find a new way to tackle the issue of dyslexia and other learning disabilities for our students.

(continued on page 2)

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Now that the kids are back to school, we've finally settled back into a rhythm at home. The end of summer is so hard for me: the anxiety I feel is wretched! I hate not knowing what the year will bring.

This year, my nervous energy was compounded by the changes in the office. There are 3 new faces at Literacy Nassau. We're transitioning over to a new process of case management, I'm working with a 9-year old for my practicum, and we're planning a myriad of celebrations for our 50th anniversary. It is a year of new experiences, so to have established some sense of rhythm in my house is critical to my own sense of well-being.

I was recently told, "Without change, there would be no butterflies." That's a calming thought which offers great perspective. I look at my growing girls and despite their constant growth and change, I can still see the beauty and wonder they experience in a single moment: like our day trip to pick apples, or going roller skating for the first time, or bringing home a picture they painted at school. My staff is abuzz with enthusiasm from having new folks join our team, and when I take a moment to really drink it in, it's actually quite refreshing - and not so scary at all.



Pictures capture a single moment in an ever-changing life. Above, my girls pose with my husband just before racing off to pick the early apples of the season.

*Karen*

## FIXER UPPER (CONT'D.)

So again, we were put in a position where more change was necessary. Now, coupled with the celebration of our 50th anniversary, we find ourselves restructuring once more.

You will notice that Kim, Kelly Siry (introduced on page 3) and myself are now filling the role of Regional Directors. This gives us the capacity to oversee all programs within a given region; for example, I am responsible for the Eastern Nassau/Western Suffolk region. All students who receive services from us - from ELL to NCBC to SGI and more! - in Eastern Nassau/Western Suffolk are within my purview. I am responsible for making sure the tutors have the resources they need, students have the support they need, and the community is educated about the programs we offer within their local libraries. This model of having multiple Regional Directors works for us now because we are not putting all our "eggs" in one basket, like we were when each Program Director was responsible for just one program. This model gives us the opportunity to continue growing, knowing that we can always hire additional Regional Directors if any one caseload becomes too large to manage.

Our Junior Literacy Specialists are still serving in the same capacity as before, with one assigned to each region. Sara Izquierdo will be assisting Kim Nau with the mid-Nassau region, Rebecca Figueras will be working with Kelly in the Western region, and I will be working with Kate Quijano to serve Eastern Nassau and Western Suffolk. Our Guru Krupa interns are able to assist with this effort too, by working on data entry and clerical help for each region as well.

Just like with a dream house, changes are always necessary, which is why Literacy Nassau continues to remain dynamic and flexible. Stay tuned for more news as we continue to find solutions to make Literacy Nassau a dream come true for those we serve!

## LITERACY NASSAU'S ANNUAL TUTOR CONFERENCE

*(submitted by Umama Pasha)*

We are excited to be hosting Literacy Nassau's 3rd Annual Tutor Conference at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock in Manhasset on Saturday, October 14th, from 9am-2pm. If you have never had the opportunity to attend the tutor conference, we hope you do so this year!

The annual tutor conference is a day full of professional development courses led by Literacy Nassau staff. The goal is to provide you with information and strategies that will further your knowledge of teaching the English Language, facilitating a book or writing club, or working with a learning disabled student. The hour long presentations are open to tutors of all programs and range from technology and the workforce to dyslexia and lesson planning.

This year's keynote speaker, PK Sanieski, is particularly interesting because she is supervising Karen and Kim as they complete their Orton Gillingham training. PK is their "Training Fellow," and she will offer tremendous insight and a formal introduction to Orton Gillingham during the keynote session at lunchtime.

Workshops will include a live dyslexia simulation, a First Time Homebuyers Workshop, a session explaining workforce development options for your student, several Tutor Roundtable sessions, and more. Our vendors supporting this event include Pearson Education, TD Bank, the US Department of Labor, USCIS, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the New York State Office for New Americans.

This year's conference also marks our 50th year of service to Nassau County, and will be an important one to attend, because Karen Micciche will be unveiling her vision for the future of Literacy Nassau. Registration packets will be mailed out shortly, so keep an eye on your mailbox! You can also learn more about the event on our website: [www.literacynassau.org](http://www.literacynassau.org). If you have further questions about this upcoming event, please feel free to contact your Literacy Specialist.

## HICKSVILLE CAREER CENTER

*(submitted by Kim Nau)*

I recently had the pleasure of taking our office interns on a field trip to the Hicksville One Stop Career Center. The center provides a wealth of resources for job seekers that I never even knew existed. I thought it would be helpful to share what I've discovered in case you, or your student, are looking for gainful employment.

The Career Center has knowledgeable staff that can assist individuals in the job seeking process. You can make an appointment to meet with a career counselor and create a detailed job search plan. They have a myriad of career workshops to assist with: interview skills, resume preparation, networking, salary negotiations, and much more.

Computer skills are a major factor in increasing employability and if your student is not computer literate, he/she can attend a workshop that helps adults acquire and/or update their computer skills. They can also access the Career Center's computers to search the internet for jobs or use their fax/copy machines at no cost.

One of the most fascinating things I learned is that they created an app called Interview Stream. It enables you to learn how to interview confidently by practicing interviewing from your mobile device. You can upload your practice interview and a career counselor will offer constructive feedback. You can learn more at [nysdol.interviewstream.com](http://nysdol.interviewstream.com).

The Career Center hosts job fairs and also maintains an up-to-date job bank with listings for the private sector and civil service jobs. They are located at 301 W. Old Country Road in Hicksville or visit their website at [www.thewp.org](http://www.thewp.org). If you or your student are looking for a new job, it is worth a visit!



Last year's Tutor Conference hosted almost 100 tutors for a day filled with information and best practices.



## WELCOME: KELLY SIRY, REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Our team is pleased to welcome Kelly Siry as our newest Regional Director. She believes the magnitude of teaching someone to read is great because it gives that person the ability to shape his or her life in countless ways.

As an educator, Kelly spent the past ten years imparting knowledge on young people in both public and private school settings. "I have come to understand that it takes a strong collaboration between teachers and parents to educate a child. In my experience, many parents wish that they could help their child but they themselves have difficulty reading, writing, or understanding the English language. This is one of the many reasons I was inspired to join the Literacy Nassau team."

Having prepared for a career in education at St. John's University, Kelly received a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. In December, 2012 she received a Master of Science in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Touro College.

Kelly is excited to meet the Literacy Nassau community and is eager to help those in need throughout the western Nassau region, where she will be serving as the Regional Director. Feel free to reach out and welcome Kelly to our team via e-mail at [ksiry@literacy-nassau.org](mailto:ksiry@literacy-nassau.org)!



### SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

These past few months have been so busy programatically, and this would not be possible without the financial support of our sponsors. In recent months, we have received grants from the following corporate and private foundations. We are so grateful for their ongoing generosity and support!

**Manhasset Community Fund** - Their gift of \$2,000 is enabling us to start a new Next Chapter Book Club in New Hyde Park.

**Greentree Good Neighbor Fund** - Part of the Manhasset Community Fund, this gift of \$9,000 will support our work with SGIB in the Town of North Hempstead.

**TD Charitable Foundation** - A recent gift of \$5,000 is helping us develop our workplace specific classes, connecting ELL students with employment all over Long Island.

**Linda Ross-Harrington Foundation** - Their gift of \$2,500 will help us continue our work with English Language Learners in the town of Bay Shore.

**Assemblymember Michaëlle Solages** - A budget allocation of \$10,000 will enable us to launch quarterly ICE and immigration workshops in the Elmont and Valley Stream areas.

## TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: TERESA BENEDETTO

*(submitted by Sara Izquierdo)*

Teresa Benedetto made an instant impression on me when I received her voicemail describing the first meeting she had with her student. She was excited, had many wonderful ideas, and really seemed to enjoy working with her new learner. After speaking with her today I realized that she brings the same enthusiasm to all aspects of her busy life.

As an avid reader, Teresa will read almost anything except magazines and romance novels. Her favorite author is Alexander McCall Smith, author of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. Teresa was so inspired by the series that it prompted her to take a trip to Africa! She visited Botswana, Zambia and South Africa, saw Victoria Falls and even rode an elephant. Besides Africa, her adventurous spirit has taken her all over the world including Europe and the Middle East. She shared her love of travel with her granddaughter when she took her to Italy for her 16th birthday.

Through Adult Education classes, Teresa has had the pleasure of visiting many museums throughout the Tri-State area (her favorite is the Metropolitan Museum of Art), and learning to play the piano. Her piano classes provide a calm break in her hectic life. She is also a member of the Red Hat Society and volunteers for elections.

Teresa still manages to find time to meet with her student weekly. Years ago, Teresa had a neighbor who had managed to work and support a family, but never learned to read. She saw the transformation in him when he finally did learn to read, and recognized what a difference it made in his life. Because Teresa loves to read, she also knows how much reading has enhanced her life. For these reasons, when she heard about Literacy Nassau and what our tutors can accomplish, she knew she wanted to devote time to this organization.

Teresa has been meeting with her learner for less than a year, but her student greets her with a kiss and is making progress. Although it can be frustrating at times that her student doesn't speak English outside the classroom, Teresa persists with a positive attitude and a smile!

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Literacy Nassau's not the only one celebrating a birthday! We wish a warm Happy Birthday to the following tutors, born in October:

Mary-Joan Albiston - Catherine Antioco - Angella Broderick - Ann Cullen - Joanne DePaula - Joshua Diamond - Judy Douenias - Sheryll Dorf - Rhonnie Fischman - Cindy Florman - Alison Frankel - Lori Freeman - Rosemary Fuchs - Richard Gabriele - Jennifer Goodwin - Joanne Hackert - Marsha Herman - Sakina Husain - Sarah Jairam - Carol Keating - Jeff Konzet - Laura Longo - Catherine Lo Presti - Ada Marcus - Maura Martinez - Louise Nachshen - Antoinette Nardo - Steven Reale - Elizabeth Reilly - Gwynn Riordan - Marcy Rollman - Gene Sanders - Olga Scileppi - Philip Scotto - Scott Shelofsky - Andrea Snyder - Irma Souveroff - Diane Tully - Donna White - Thomas A. Williams





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## **NYIC RESPONDS TO THE REPEAL OF DACA**

*(reprinted with permission from the New York Immigration Coalition)*

On September 5th, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) led a 4,000-person rally at Foley Square where 13 people were arrested in a civil disobedience at the Manhattan entrance of the Brooklyn Bridge. Thousands of New Yorkers held "I pledge to protect immigrant New York" signs and chanted "immigrants are welcome here", sending a direct message to the Administration that immigrants are here to stay. Speakers included: DACA-Recipients, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, Public Advocate Tish James, New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer, RWDSU, 32BJ and others.

The rally was a response to the Trump administration's decision to phase out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects over 800,000 young people, who were brought to the United States as children, from deportation.

Earlier that day, NYIC hosted a press conference with business leaders and elected officials, slamming the repeal.

"Donald Trump's decision to end DACA means that September 5th will be remembered as a dark day in our nation's history," said Steven Choi, executive director of the NYIC. "America will not be safer or richer by depriving nearly one million young people of their liberty, tearing away 700,000 workers from our labor force or robbing the U.S. economy of \$460 billion in GDP. This is a senseless and self-defeating act which flies in the face of the principles that truly make America great: opportunity and justice for all."

DACA is an important economic development tool for the nation, providing educational and job opportunities previously unavailable to nearly 1 million young people; 65% of DACA recipients are currently in school, and of those, 70% are currently working.

New York State protects one of the largest DACA populations in the U.S.. Repealing DACA will significantly harm the local economy as DACA recipients contribute nearly \$2.6 billion to New York's annual GDP. 91% of DACA recipients are employed nationwide.

"New York City's business community will urge Congress to act quickly to provide Dreamers, their families and their employers with assurance that America will not turn its back on them, making legalization of their status the first step in comprehensive immigration reform that is essential to the economic future of this country," said Kathryn S. Wylde, CEO of the Partnership for NYC.

"This is about the heart and soul of America — who we are, what we believe, and how we treat young people. Every Dreamer should know that we are prepared to fight. We will always stand up for what's right," NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer said.

Attorney General Schneiderman said, "President Trump's decision to end the DACA program would be cruel, gratuitous, and devastating to tens of thousands of New Yorkers—and I will sue to protect them. Dreamers are Americans in every way. They played by the rules. They pay their taxes. And they've earned the right to stay in the only home they have ever known. More than 40,000 New Yorkers are protected under DACA. They pay more than \$140 million in state and local taxes. They are vital members of our community. The poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty—written by the descendant of early Jewish immigrants—promises this nation will "lift its lamp" for the huddled masses. New York will never break that promise. And neither will my office."