



LITERACY MATTERS

JANUARY 2016

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



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NYS OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS GRANT RENEWED

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

On November 23, 2015, we received an e-mail stating that the New York State Office for New Americans was awarding Literacy Nassau a new grant for \$175,000 per year. This three-year contract will enable us to continue offering higher level ELL students classroom based instruction, supplemental workshops, field trips, and more, and will also enable us to continue offering citizenship preparation classes, legal assistance, and assistance with applications to USCIS for citizenship and adjustment of status for permanent residents.

The project begins on January 1, 2016, and we are excited about many of the changes in the new funding cycle. First and foremost, the new benchmark is that we will serve 60 students per quarter (40 in the summer) for 100 hours each. This is based on research that shows that most English Language Learners prefer to get a large amount of English instruction concentrated into a short period of time. Classes will continue to be held twice a week, but we will introduce Saturday Extra Help sessions to help students get as much instruction as possible.

Another big change is that we will be hosting two different types of entrepreneurial seminars instead of only one. In partnership with the EAP at Hofstra University, we will host a Starting Your Own Business seminar (which will be

open to the public) in January and also in the summer of 2016. Then, we will introduce a new Growing Your Business seminar in partnership with the SBDC in April and in the fall. The Growing Your Business seminar is important because a high percentage of immigrants already have established businesses, and now we will be equipped to handle topics that come up after your business is up and running.

In the new contract, we plan to continue hosting our many supplemental workshops, including topics such as nutrition, labor laws, healthcare, SNAP, and many more, but now they will be open to the general public. This will help us disseminate important information to as many Nassau residents as possible.

Perhaps most exciting is the introduction of a \$12,500 stipend to assist people with N-400 applications for citizenship. USCIS offers a fee waiver for these applications for folks who cannot afford to pay, but sometimes these fee waivers are denied if you live above 150% of the federal poverty line. The stipend will enable us to partner with Stanford University, who is preparing a lottery for immigrants living between 150-300% of the federal poverty line, to offer the opportunity to submit N-400 applications for free, saving each client \$680.

We are so proud to continue our work with ONA and look forward to keeping you posted on our progress.

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

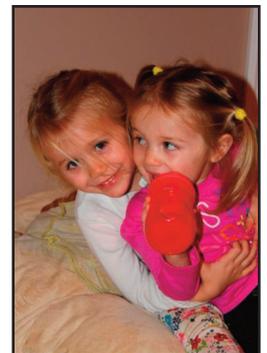
Hi Everyone,

Happy New Year! The presents have been unwrapped, we've eaten way more than necessary, and now we're all focused on the year to come. Who will I be in 2016? What will I change? These questions give rise to the resolutions we make which renew hope in our lives and offer us the opportunity to live up to our fullest potential.

As the mother of two young children (ages 3 and 2), I find myself shocked at how much can change in a year. When I consider that last year at this time, Julianne (my youngest) had a vocabulary of about 10 words, I am astonished to see how much she's grown. This reminds me of our students, many of whom I would imagine are marveling at their own growth as they reflect back on how much they've learned in 2015.

Just as there are so many looking back, we must also recognize those looking ahead. January is one of our biggest registration months of the year. New students flood our doors yearning for the possibility that this might be the year they learn English. We need tutors now more than ever, so if you haven't yet made your own resolutions, allow me to offer one up: May this be the year you tell all your friends about how they can change a life in just 2 hours a week.

☺ Karen



As my youngest turns 2, it's easy to reflect on how far she's come this past year... and just as easy to project what 2016's milestones will be.



IT'S TIME TO MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS!

(submitted by Barbara Fody)

A dozen people could be in a room and each person will have a different perspective on New Year resolutions. Consider the number of students and volunteers in our program and the viewpoints are multiplied endlessly. At this point, you may be thinking that this article is going to a preachy call to formalize resolutions between teachers and students. It is, and it isn't.

Learning a second language requires an investment beyond two hours with a tutor or several hours a week in small group instruction. The new year is an ideal time to nudge students toward independent and spontaneous use of English in public places or with English speaking family members. Some ideas for students to engage with English speakers can include the following, which can be scaled for the language level of the student. Don't forget to review survival phrases, such as "Please repeat" and "Please speak slowly."

- Say hello and comment on the weather ("nice weather") to a person in line
- Ask an employee in the library where the bathroom is or for directions to the bathroom
- Sign up for one of the many free programs offered in local libraries; some even offer light exercise!
- Go to an American supermarket and ask for a specific product
- Order food at an American diner or restaurant
- Go to the post office and buy stamps
- Tell someone in line that their coat "looks warm"
- Wish someone a "Happy New Year!"

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

(submitted by Alison Orme)

In order to streamline the on-boarding process for new volunteers, we introduced a new volunteer orientation workshop last November following the Newsday feature article, "The Need to Read." It was a great way for us to meet potential tutors moved by the emotional plea made in the article, present the numerous volunteer opportunities available, and for them to make an informed decision as to which program they would be best suited for before they committed to a six hour workshop. We've had tremendous feedback both from the volunteers and the Literacy Specialists following these orientations, and are excited to announce that this orientation will soon be released on DVD and on our website at www.LiteracyNassau.org!

So the team at Literacy Nassau is getting camera ready, rehearsing their lines and is ready to tell the World Wide Web what our programs are all about. Stay tuned and be sure to keep checking the website so you can check it out. The more you know about our programs, the more effectively you can share with others your enthusiasm and enjoyment in volunteering as an adult literacy tutor.



Pictured right, Karen explains the difference between Basic Learners and English Language Learners in front of a green screen. (Because we are not actors, many takes were needed!)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday to all of our tutors born in January! They are:

Melveta Anderson
 Gillian Archer
 Jonathan Baker
 Aaron Becker
 Dana Bergman
 Susan Braun
 Linda Burdi
 Connie Egelman
 Janice Emanuel
 Marleen Fenton
 Trudy Franco
 Janet Gordon
 Gladys Greene
 Jane Griffin
 Helene Harris
 Mara Jacobowitz
 Emma LaPrince
 Rose Lowe
 Roseann Martz
 Harriet Morosoff
 Audrey Peltz
 Debra Phanstiel
 Barbara Phillips
 Marion Polizzi
 Honey Prager
 Dorothy Royal
 Robin Schiffman



*Enjoy your special day!!
 Warmest regards,
 Your friends at
 Literacy Nassau*

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: RIYA JOHN

We'd like to congratulate one of our ONA students, Riya John. Riya just passed her New York State Board Dental Exam!! Her next step is to meet and complete her educational requirement which means some additional course work, and then she will be able to practice dentistry here in the U.S. Riya was a fully licensed and practicing dentist in India. Congratulations!

Tutor Networking Events!

We are excited to share that we will be organizing Panera Meetups in the following towns: **New Hyde Park, Merrick and Hicksville**. There will be no planned instruction; it's simply an opportunity to meet with other tutors in your area.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Candice Cantore at 867.3580 x25.

NEXT CHAPTER BOOK CLUB: CHAPTER TWO

(submitted by Kim Nau)

In October of this year, we first announced the launch of a new innovative reading program called Next Chapter Book Club in partnership with Ohio State University. The pilot launch was a success, and we currently have four book clubs up and running. One of these clubs is even being led by a current Basic Literacy student with Literacy Nassau who wanted to give back! In January, the goal is to start four more clubs in local bookstores, cafes, and libraries throughout Nassau and Suffolk counties with many more added in future months.

The book club members meet consistently for one hour weekly with their volunteer facilitators. They have been reading a wide range of genres and they have been doing activities, such as word searches and fun conversation games.

Below is an interview with Erica, one of the Syosset members of Literacy Nassau's Next Chapter Book Club. She is 31 years old and resides in a group home. She attends the club weekly with one other woman from her house.

Do you work? I work at a day program doing shopping.

What activities do you enjoy? I enjoy going places with the house and going food shopping. I also like going out on dates.

Do you like books? Yes. I like books about horses.

What book are you currently reading in your book club? I'm reading *Who Was Walt Disney?*

Has your reading improved since starting Next Chapter Book Clubs? Yes. I understand more when I read.

What do you like most about Next Chapter Book Clubs? Everything!

What do you like about working with your volunteer facilitators? I like reading and doing activities with them.

Have you made any new friends? Yes. I made friends with another girl in the club.

Where does your club meet? Do you like the location? Yes. I like that it meets in a restaurant.

What would you change about your book club? Nothing!

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: MSC INDUSTRIAL SUPPLY

(submitted by Alison Orme)

MSC Industrial Supply Corporation has been supporting non-profit organizations throughout its history. Their goal: "To make a positive contribution to the communities we live and work in by promoting MSC's unique culture of teamwork, delivering positive results, sharing and diversity; contributing to MSC's mission to be the best industrial distributor as measured by our associates, customers, owners and suppliers." In doing so, they carry on the legacy of giving back to the community established by their founder, Sidney Jacobson, almost 75 years ago. MSC has been a long-time supporter of Literacy Nassau and is the team to beat at UnScrabble in March! Thank you to MSC for their generous \$10,000 grant. (Pictured below: Erik Gershwind, CEO, and Alessandra Cavalluzzi, Community Relations Director, pose with our team.)



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: REBECCA FIGUERAS

(submitted by Alison Orme)

"I'm a whimsical writer."

So started my conversation with Rebecca Figueras, when I interviewed her for this month's newsletter. And indeed she must be, given the direction our conversation went. We crossed the border from New Mexico to Colorado and even had a stopover in the Middle East. Rebecca was born and raised on Long Island and at 25 years old is one of our younger tutors. In addition to being a fabulous BL tutor, she has accomplished a great deal in her life so far.

How did you first hear about Literacy Nassau?

Last summer, I was considering teaching as a career and decided to look for places where I could volunteer in teaching adults to read. I came across the Literacy Nassau website and wrote their name down. The next day, my mom saw a Literacy Nassau ad in the newspaper, cut it out and gave it to me. "Did you try this place?" she asked. I knew then that I needed to look into it further.

How has it been so far working with a basic literacy student?

I've been working with David for just over a year now. We meet in the Freeport Library. Since there is no private room, we need to find a quiet corner. He is a great reader. He reads worksheets and reviews sight words. He bought a children's dictionary and that helps him with letters and sounding out words. It's been incredible to see the growth he has experienced. He can be impatient, and he often looks only at how much farther he has to go. I have to encourage him and show him how far he has already come.

You're working and are now attending grad school while you're volunteering. How is that going?

Before I started volunteering at Literacy Nassau, I was working at Barnes & Noble and enjoyed it very much. As I started to dream about pursuing teaching as a career, I applied to grad school at Hofstra University where I am currently attending part-time to complete a dual Master's Degree in Special Education and Literacy. I also got a job as a teacher's assistant in a classroom for developmentally disabled students who are 13-15 years old. It has been such an incredibly rewarding experience, especially when I see that "light bulb go off" in a student's face. It's indescribable.

Tell me a little bit about some of your travel experiences.

After I finished my undergraduate degree, I lived in New Mexico for several months. It was an incredible experience which left me with a love for the western part of the country. I vividly remember my first drive from New Mexico to Colorado. New Mexico is all flatlands and tumbleweeds, then you cross the border into Colorado and the landscape is nothing but trees with bear crossing signs everywhere. It's a crazy sight. I also had the opportunity to study for six months in Jerusalem as part of my junior year abroad in high school. I was so fascinated by how much history was there. It was another incredible experience. One of my dreams is to move out to the west coast – specifically, the Pacific Northwest. But for now, I'm focusing on my students and finishing up my degree. There's always next year!!



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LITERACY NASSAU: OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

My goal is to develop a more balanced nutrition. Adding more fruits and healthier snacks to my everyday meals!

~ *Ocaria DiMango*

My resolution is to continue to go to the gym more and to be more organized.

~ *Candice Cantore*

My resolution is to improve my work-life balance. I often find myself bringing work home and not spending quality time with my family. This year, that changes!

~ *Digna Johnson*

In an effort to encourage my children to appreciate nature in every season, my New Year's resolution is to make it a point to go outside with my kids every day for at least 15 minutes to play – regardless of the weather.

~ *Karen Micciche*

My husband and I are making 2016 the year we start saving for an investment in our future.

~ *Cindy Cabrera*

I want to try to relax more and not stress about the things I can't control. I need to learn to let go. :-)

~ *Kim Nau*

My commute recently increased by 10 to 15 minutes, formerly a 5 minute commute (How can you not feel sorry for me?). My resolution: To get up 15 minutes earlier so I continue doing house chores before leaving for work. ~ *Barbara Fody*

I often forget to take care of myself, so in 2016, I want to be able to find 'me' time - to restart my yoga practice, take art classes or maybe get a massage!

~ *Umama Pasha*

My New Year's resolution is to be more courageous this year. I'm not sure what that looks like yet, but when I find out, you'll be the first to know!

~ *Alison Orme*

My resolution this year is to cook more at home, so my family will eat healthier and have quality time together.

~ *Rena Katz*