

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



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## CELEBRATING YOU: OUR VOLUNTEERS!

(submitted by Alison Orme)

Did you know that 62.8 million people volunteered in the United States in 2014? That's 1 in 4 American adults! The economic impact is vast – 7.7 billion volunteer hours were clocked with an expertise valued at nearly \$173 billion. While not every one of these 62.8 million people volunteered with Literacy Nassau, we are convinced that we have the some of the most passionate and committed volunteers in our program. These volunteers are each of you who enthusiastically and tirelessly meet with your student(s) two hours a week in order to help them improve their English literacy. To learn more about one of our gifted tutors, please take a look at this month's Tutor Spotlight featuring Irene Meier on page 2.

We would also like to recognize several individuals who have been volunteers with us for more than 15 years: **Ellen Widlitz, Ligia Santos, Carol Young, Roselyn Botkin and David Caines.** We will be celebrating them

along with many others- both students and volunteers- at Literacy Nassau's Annual Recognition Night which will be held this year on Thursday, May 14th, 2015. Please see the Resource Corner on page 3 in this newsletter for more information as well as tips for Open Door, our annual anthology of student writing. Be sure to save the date for this celebration – you will not want to miss it!

This April is also National Volunteer Month so be sure to share what a rewarding experience being a volunteer Adult Literacy Tutor with Literacy Nassau is with your friends, family members and colleagues. If they are interested in joining us in our mission to improve adult literacy in Nassau County, just ask them to mention your name when they call. When they complete a Tutor Training Workshop, you'll receive a \$10 Amazon gift card from us!

Our thanks go out to each and every one of you who unselfishly devotes their time to making a difference. Your dedication and commitment are greatly appreciated not only by us, but more importantly by your student(s).

## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

People's United Community Foundation invests in programs and services that enhance the quality of life for residents, promote the economic development and well-being of neighborhoods and support the educational and developmental needs of youth. Our sincere thanks to People's United Community Foundation for their grant of \$2,500 in support of Literacy Nassau's Small Group Instruction Program. (Ocaria Silva, pictured center, received the check.)



## THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,  
 When I became a parent, I assumed that I would be busier than I was in my pre-baby days - but it's madness in my house now. The other day, my husband and I were home from work for 5 minutes when our kids had all but destroyed our kitchen by emptying out our tupperware cabinet before we had even gotten the chance to change out of our work clothes, when all of a sudden our 15-month old blew us a kiss. Some backstory here: we have been trying to teach her how to do this for weeks now. We were so excited we all started clapping for her, and she gave us the biggest smile - she was so proud of herself! My husband kissed me on the forehead amidst our chaos and whispered, "It's the little things." He's so right. This idea of celebrating "little wins" is witnessed each week at libraries across the county, as our students have little moments of comprehension and success. The light goes on, and they are so excited and proud! On May 14th, we will be celebrating those moments at our annual Recognition Night. Read on to find out more - and I hope you'll take time out of your busy schedule to join us!  *Karen*



My daughter, Julianne, smiling after learning how to blow a kiss to her Mommy and Daddy.



**ARE YOU A CERTIFIED TEACHER?**

As a learner-centered organization, we at Literacy Nassau are proud of the difference that each tutor is making in the life of their student. Whether it is teaching them survival English, helping them to learn to read or even improving their literacy, we are excited to come to work, knowing that you are out there doing good in your community and having a positive impact on an individual's life.

*Would you like to extend your impact?*

Please consider becoming a tutor in our Small Group Instruction program. Classes meet two times a week for twelve weeks, and all it takes is a short In-Service Training to get started.

Contact: Ocaria Silva at (516) 867.3580 x12 or [osilva@literacynassau.org](mailto:osilva@literacynassau.org) for details.

**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MANDY SHENKMAN**

My tutor, Kathy Zuar, matters to me and I matter to her. It is one of the most important feelings in life ~ to matter to someone.

I like that Kathy is delighted to see me as we arrive at Manhasset Library for my reading session. Her smile makes me feel welcomed and appreciated.

I have an intellectual disability and I know that just maintaining my reading ability is very necessary to live as independently and happily as possible.

Kathy will not have the reward of a rise in my reading level or be able to read a classic piece of literature with me. But, I can read the instructions on a medicine bottle. I can read a recipe and I can read the ingredients in a loaf of bread to avoid my soy allergy. I am able to go to work, read the directions of my daily tasks and make sure my pay stubs are correct. As a Grassroots Presenter for the NYS Self-Advocacy Association, I read stories about my life to other individuals with disabilities. I am able to find out the days and times of my favorite TV shows. I pay my bills on time because I can read them. I read the names of the candidates on the voting ballot. And I can write in my diary each night.

Kathy's reward for being my tutor can't be measured. She matters to me and that cannot be scored or tested.

Pictured: Mandy Shenkman (left) with her tutor, Kathy Zuar, at Recognition Night 2014.



**TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: IRENE MEIER**

(Submitted by Barbara Fody)

Tutoring comes from the heart. The interview for this feature had barely begun when Irene launched into a warm recollection of her first student. Irene and Martha began meeting in October 2006. Martha was committed to voting in the November 2007 election, but first she needed to become a U.S. citizen. Holding down 2 jobs, Martha and Irene met for English lessons during the 2 hour gap between jobs. In November 2007, Martha voted in her first American election. That marked the beginning of Irene's commitment to English Language Learners.

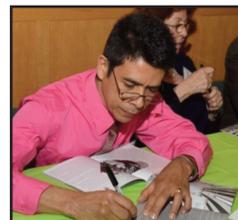
Since 2006, Irene has enthusiastically, tirelessly, and consistently worked with six English Language Learners and during a majority of that time Irene has worked with more than 1 student: 2 students in 2009-10, 3 students in 2011-12, and finally another 2 students from 2013 to the present. Coming from various language backgrounds- Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese-

the students maintain some of the best attendance records in the program. What better tribute to a tutor than when a student keeps in touch. Quiuxia recently contacted Irene to thank her for helping her acquire English skills which are so solid that Quiuxia does not have to attend supplementary English classes at St. John's University. With Irene's gentle yet firm guidance, Hector has progressed from a hesitant to a more confident speaker of English in addition to developing a passion for writing. In May 2012, Irene was recognized with the English Language Learner Tutor of the Year award during our Recognition Night festivities.

When I asked Irene for advice for both new and veteran tutors, she commented that the most appealing part of tutoring, in our non-homogenized program, is taking the time to learn about the student in order to locate and choose the most engaging material for the language lessons. Irene recounted a lively lesson on idioms where she and her students shared

laughter over the various comical interpretations of the impossible to translate expressions.

Irene also lives a life apart from Literacy Nassau! She is a graduate of Hunter College (she asked me not to reveal the date!) and a retired technical librarian and records administrator. Frustrated by the winter that will not end, Irene is an avid perennial gardener and cannot wait to bring her garden back to life with the explosion of color, shape, and texture of foliage. Ending the interview, Irene observed that she learns more from her students than they may learn from her. Our message to Irene and all of our tutors: never underestimate the profound impact you have on a student.



Irene's student, Hector, signing a copy of his story in Open Door at Recognition Night 2014.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to our newly trained tutors:

Feb. 6th – Hillside BLL  
Harriet Gibaldi  
Patricia Fulton  
Joanne DePaula  
Ann Cooney  
Kathryn St Juste  
Janine Fielman

Mar. 6th – Hillside ELL  
Mike Boland  
Naika Bellande  
Paula Marron

Mar. 7th – Freeport BLL  
Susan Braun  
Katelynn Finnegan  
Patricia Whitney

Feb. 7th – UUCSR ELL  
Colleen Woodell  
Blanche Tyrkko  
Angella Broderick  
Bev Kaplan  
Janet Geduldig  
Reed Toscano  
Sharon Hasler  
Adrienne Lorenzo  
Pooja Mohindra  
Sherry Jagels  
Jensy Vithayathil  
Marilyn Davis  
Sara Izquierdo  
Annette Beneditti  
Ed Garfinkel  
Susan Stilton Tobias  
Bianca Rivera  
Peter Stack

Congratulations to our newest U.S. Citizens:

Mohammed Sadiq  
Lucimar Gonzales  
Kyung Ja Lee

## (UN)SCRABBLE 2015: GETTING READY!

The preparation is underway for (un)Scrabble 2015!! The judges have been tirelessly practicing and the pressure is on the evening of the event. DID YOU KNOW that judges (pictured below, left) are challenged to accurately score each completed (un)Scrabble board in five minutes or less? We're also putting together raffle baskets - including a trip to Orlando, a South Beach trip, and a 4-day trip to Reno/Lake Tahoe! (un)Scrabble 2015 will be held on March 30th at 6pm at Chateau Briand in Carle Place. Tickets are still available if you would like to join us - visit our website ([www.literacynassau.org](http://www.literacynassau.org)) to purchase yours today!

JUST FOR FUN: How many Scrabble letter tiles do you think are used during the entire (un)SCRABBLE event? The first tutor who calls us at (516) 867.3580 x21 with the correct answer will be awarded a Starbucks gift card!



## LITERACY SPECIALISTS' CORNER: TIPS FOR OPEN DOOR

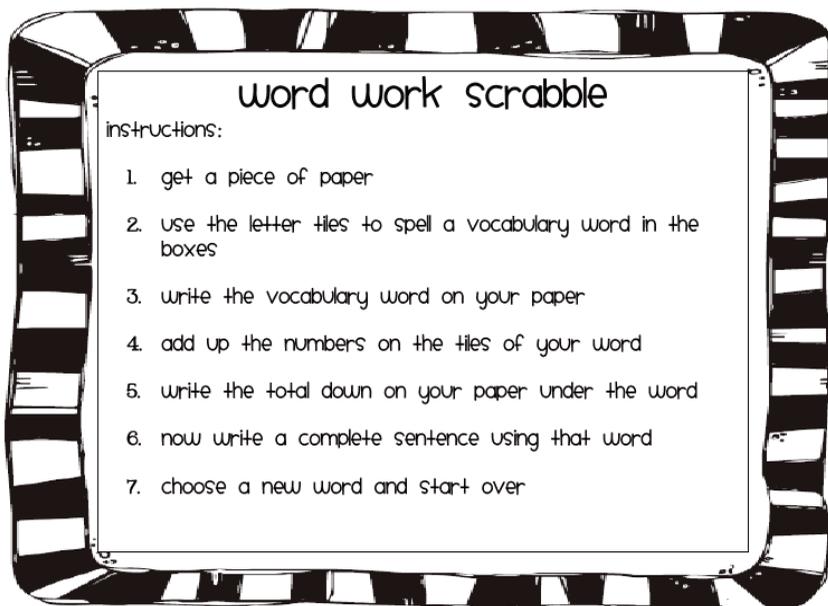
(submitted by Umama Pasha)

The end of winter is around the corner and that means we are closer to our Annual Recognition Night on May 14, 2015. Invitations will be sent out soon, and Open Door submissions are currently being accepted.

If you are a new tutor, chances are you may have heard of Open Door but may not know exactly what it is. Open Door is our annual published anthology of student pieces. It allows our students a creative outlet through writing- story, poem, or experience piece- photography and/or artwork. The majority of our students submit a written work, however, we also accept artwork and photography. We do ask students to add a caption or some thoughts about any artwork that they submit.

So what does this mean for you as a tutor? Here are some tips to think about when starting an Open Door piece with your student(s):

- Writing is a process so start as soon as possible: you cannot expect your student(s) and yourself to work on a piece of writing and complete it in one session. It takes time to brainstorm, formulate main ideas and create paragraphs which leads me to my next thought....
- Think carefully about your topic. Brainstorm with your student(s) topics that are engaging and personal that they want to share with others. For example: how they came to the United States, experiences in the United States (when they first arrived or if they traveled to a historic landmark), the impact of their tutoring sessions, how they have improved their English, interesting recipes to share, or experiences in their country. The topics can be endless! The type of writing can be diverse: poetry, prose, first person narration, or how-tos are all welcomed.
- The purpose of Open Door is to celebrate and highlight your student's journey and progress so it is important to incorporate your student's authentic voice. An authentic voice may not read as perfect grammar, so it is important to use your judgment when making corrections.
- If your student(s) work on the piece on their own, tell them not to use a translator! Translators will not accurately convey your student's message.
- If you are sending a writing submission, please try to send us a picture of you and your student(s). Pictures must be sent as a JPEG.
- All submissions and pictures must be sent digitally.
- Open Door writing submissions must be sent via word document (.doc) or cut and paste the submission into the body of an e-mail.
- Please send your submissions and pictures to your Literacy Specialist.
- Due date: April 24th, 2015.
- If you have additional questions, contact your Literacy Specialist. Have fun and happy tutoring!





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## STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Students at Literacy Nassau have 2 things in common: a desire to improve their literacy skills and the support of a tutor. Who can articulate the struggles and victories of a student better than his/her tutor? Here's a chance to offer your student the recognition he/she deserves.

Each year at Recognition Night, we honor both a BL and an ELL for their accomplishments. If you have worked with your student for at least a year, consider nominating him/her for Student of the Year. Monumental achievements are not necessary. Consider the following:

- Why is your student pursuing English?
- What obstacles does your student face in order to pursue tutoring?
- What is his/her attitude toward learning?
- How has his/her literacy improved?
- What goals has your student achieved?
- In what ways has tutoring affected your student's life?

Please submit your nomination by e-mail if possible. Write a few paragraphs explaining why your student deserves this honor. One caveat: your student needs to be able to attend Recognition Night on May 14, 2015! Nominations are due by April 24th.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

### English Language Teacher

*The Making of a Leader* is a one year program for children between the ages of 9 to 14. The project will consist of a one week intensive program during the summer. Lessons will be provided about creating a vision to serve as a compass for their lives, the importance of attitude, how to persist against the odds to achieve their vision, and emphasizing that success is not an accident. They will receive lessons on the importance of communication and interpersonal skills and will learn the basics of how the banking and finance system works.

#### **Position Description:**

Instruct children on the classic composition format and the five paragraph essay. Assign essays to students to read and teach them how to identify themes, point of view and other characteristics.

- Teach students about the structure and content of the English language including proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
- Plan, prepare and deliver instructional activities.
- Develop incentives to keep participants in class.
- Create positive educational climate for students to learn in.
- Practice the five paragraph essay.

**For more information:** Contact Yvenice A. Belgrave, Program Coordinator at the Community Connection Center in Freeport at 1(800) 963.2129. There may be a small stipend for the 2-week program for interested volunteers.

## WELCOME SUSAN!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Board member, Susan Santoro Bevilacqua! Susan has been a volunteer tutor with us since 2011. Along with her husband, Susan was recently awarded The Horace Hagedorn Outstanding Philanthropist Award by the Long Island Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Susan is a member of the Molloy College Board of Trustees and also volunteers her time at De La Salle School, Rockville Centre Education Foundation, Old Westbury Gardens and the RVC Community Fund where she has chaired gala fundraisers and luncheons. Susan is a graduate of St. John's University and St. John's Law School and lives in Rockville Centre with her husband, Marty, and has two sons, Matthew and Mark. Welcome Susan!



Susan Santoro Bevilacqua, co-owner of Oceanville Mason Supply, joins Literacy Nassau's Board of Directors.