



LITERACY MATTERS

JULY 2015

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



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LITERACY NASSAU'S FIRST ANNUAL TUTOR CONFERENCE: OCTOBER 17, 2015

(submitted by Barbara Fody)

Professional development for tutors has always been an integral part of the work we do here at Literacy Nassau. Our connections in the adult education and immigration fields have given us access to wonderful groups such as the Long Island Regional Adult Education Network, the New York Immigration Coalition, ProLiteracy America, and many others. However, for all of the professional development opportunities we are privy to (and can pass along to you, our tutors), very often the content is geared towards large classroom instruction and/or towards high level goals, including passing the high school equivalency exam or attaining post-secondary credentials. Recognizing the need for a day of dedicated professional development specifically geared toward our growing pool of tutors with their varied students, skills, and challenges, we are excited to share that Literacy Nassau will be hosting our first ever Tutor Conference on Saturday, October 17, 2015 at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.

Mark your calendar so you can join your fellow Literacy Nassau tutors for a full day of informative, enjoyable, hands-on workshops presented by Literacy Nassau staff and guest speakers. The day will begin with a catered, continental breakfast, followed by an introduction by our Executive Director, Karen Micciche. Self selected, 90 minute breakout sessions will be scheduled throughout the morning, and will be followed by a catered lunch with an address from a prominent keynote speaker.

The conference promises to be a great opportunity to meet with other tutors and share best practices while you expand your own tutoring knowledge and skills. We are currently planning out our workshop topics but are open to your suggestions. Please e-mail us at mail@literacynassau.org and put "Conference Topics" in the subject line to let us know what you would like to learn about.

Be sure to look for event details in upcoming newsletters, e-mails, and our web site and save the date for Saturday, October 17th as you won't want to miss out!

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Special thanks to our friends at Bethpage Federal Credit Union for their grant of \$13,000 for our Small Group Instruction program! BFCU's charitable giving program, Heart of Bethpage, partners with Long Island non-profits to make a difference in the areas of Housing, Economic and Community Development, Education, Pediatric Healthcare, Hunger Relief Programs and Culture. Their grant will support the expansion of our SGI program. Thanks BFCU!!



THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Everywhere you look, 'tis the season for graduation celebrations. It's awesome to witness the passage from one level of education to the next, and the young, hopeful faces so ready for whatever life throws at them. Those of you who attended our Recognition Night celebration got a taste of it just last month. Graduations give us a chance to reflect on where we started and on how much we've grown. Over the next few months, you will see us begin to shift our focus a bit more towards the very lowest level learners, those who are truly at the beginning of their literacy journey. These are the people at the heart of our mission; they have nowhere else to turn for literacy services. We will be revamping our Tutor Training Workshop this summer to include more strategies for low level learners and will be introducing some new programs to best serve that population. Join us by referring a friend to become a tutor or by taking on a second student yourself. The gift of your time can reap amazing rewards come this time next year!

Karen



The Literacy Specialists and I posing for a picture at Recognition Night 2015. A great time was had by all - see page 2 for details!





RECOGNITION NIGHT 2015: ACHIEVEMENTS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

Recognition Night was held on Thursday, May 14th at Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset. Set to the elegant piano stylings of one of our students, Rhee Lee, it was a wonderful celebration of both tutors and students. The evening kicked off with a moving rendition of Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "I Have a Dream" by one of the students in our Small Group Instruction (SGI) program, Yukang Chen. Along with the tutors and volunteers who were recognized during the evening for their achievements, our Executive Director, Karen Micciche, also took a moment to recognize the partnership between Literacy Nassau and the John and Janet Kornreich Foundation and honored the founders for their generous support of our organization. The highlight of the night was the presentation of student names as each student stood up to be recognized; nearly every third person in the room was standing, providing a moving visual for the impact that each of you through your efforts is having on improving adult literacy here in Nassau County. See below for some of the evening's best moments!



Pictured left: Rhee Lee on the piano. Pictured right: A group of students at the Author's Table.



Pictured right: John and Janet Kornreich pose with the Volunteer Anniversary Awardees.



Pictured left: Cindy poses with Mara Jacobowitz and Rebecca Figueras, BL Tutors of the Year!



Pictured left: SGI tutors with Ocaria. Pictured right: Digna & ONA Student of the Year, Maria Gonzalez!



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: MICHELE INGRASSIA HABER

After more than three decades as a journalist, I couldn't imagine a better place to volunteer than Literacy Nassau. After all, I care deeply about language and believe that few things are more important to success than being able to express yourself clearly and concisely.

But passion alone wasn't going to save me from my first student.

Chami, a brilliant Math PhD from South Korea, was as tongue-tied as she was talented. Though she was utterly determined, she spoke haltingly and rarely in complete sentences. At our first session in 2011, I pulled out my training bag of tricks: I began with the "Where to Start" assessment and watched her breeze through the markers like so many 1+1 equations. Within seconds, she identified objects, occupations, letters, sounds and vowels. She read the easy and difficult passages without missing a beat. Finally, I asked her to read a story on the front page of the business section of The New York Times.

No, I realized, this was not going to be your average ELL challenge. At first, I showered her with English exercises.

Every week, I'd bring in articles; work sheets; lists of idioms, and exercises on verb tenses – and then I'd cap it off with made-up essays where almost every word started with the tongue-twisting letter Z. But I quickly realized that 5 topics in 2 hours were over-dosing her – and me.

Then I remembered what I learned in my TTW: Start with what your student really needs help learning. In Chami's case, it was conversational English – how to explain to the mechanic what was wrong with her car, how to communicate with her daughters' teachers.

What else? Well, she was determined to get some of her Math papers published in an English language Math journal. I agreed, then realized my ineptitude in math might be an issue. Needless to say, there were some Keystone Kops moments where you couldn't tell who was the student and who was the teacher.

Mostly, though, our classes were about encouraging Chami to use English as much as possible – no easy feat as she lives in a Korean community, shops in Korean stores, goes to Korean doctors and

has only Korean friends. Ah, friends! Me: Chami, do you have a friend you speak to every day?

Chami: Yes, Helen. She's also enrolled in Literacy Nassau. And we talk on the phone for an hour every day.

Me: Great. How about you spend the first 15 minutes speaking English?

Not so fast.

The next week Chami reported that Helen refused; she was so unsure of her English skills that she wouldn't even speak English to a good friend. Which turned out to be one of the great ironies – and successes – of my Literacy Nassau tenure so far.

After Chami went back to Korea in 2012, I took on a conversation group. And Helen was the first student to sign up. Within months, the once-reluctant English-speaker blossomed into the group's chatterbox, ordering in English on a class trip to a restaurant, golfing with a group of strangers at Eisenhower Park or coaxing class-mates who were feeling reluctant about their own English skills. It was the simplest equation of all: Practice + Determination = Success.





STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: TOMOKO HIJIKATA AND MICHELLE LEE

Student Spotlight: This month, we are featuring two students from Michele Haber's ELL conversation group: Tomoko Hijikata, who has been in the U.S. since 2011, and Michelle Lee, who arrived in 2003.

TOMOKO HIJIKATA:

- 1) How did you go from Japan to Russia to the United States? *After I graduated from university, I got a scholarship to Moscow Pedagogical University. I was there for three years and then started working as a translator and announcer at the radio station. I met my husband in Russia – although he's from Japan – and when we decided to get married, his company decided to send us to New York.*
- 2) Which language was the trickiest to learn? *Russian is much more difficult than English. It has three genders (male, female, neutral) and six noun cases. On the other hand, English has a lot more combination words.*
- 3) Do you ever mix up the languages? *Yes! I think I have only one switch, so when I want to say something not in Japanese, the word I know in English or Russian comes up, and I think, Which one am I using?*
- 4) You've lived in three major cities. Which is the most exciting? *Moscow is the most exotic. It's not similar to any other city.*
- 5) What are your favorite places to explore in New York? *Museums, the ballet and the theater. Every year, we buy a lot of tickets and spend too much money on them!*

- 6) You have a delightful hobby – shadow-boxing, or delicate paper cutouts in a diorama box. How did you get started? *When I came to New York, I went to study English every day. After a few months, I got tired of doing the same thing over and over, and the wife of one of my husband's co-workers introduced me to it. My husband said, It's not for you, you're too clumsy. But I just loved it.*
- 7) What's your favorite America idiom? *"When in Rome..." There's a very similar proverb in Japanese and in Russian. I've lived in different cities, and it's true everywhere.*

MICHELLE LEE:

- 1) Why did you come to the US from South Korea? *I came to study cello at the Manhattan School of Music. I barely knew any English – I took a couple of tests and passed them, but I really couldn't speak. Luckily, if I had trouble, I had my cello to speak instead of me.*
- 2) How did you learn English? *My school forced me to take ESL at Columbia University. But the best reason to learn was survival.*
- 3) Did you survive? *Not well. At first, I lived in a dorm, and I usually just stayed in my room. Maybe if I had had a roommate I would have learned English faster.*
- 4) You felt isolated? *Definitely. I was scared to speak English, especially with native-speaking students. But then my attitude changed.*

- 5) Why did you come to Literacy Nassau? *After I had my two babies, I wanted to work – I work as a private cello teacher, but I wanted to teach at a public school, which means I need to speak English more fluently to get a job. It's still my goal, though I'm now more interested in early childhood education than cello. I started studying music when I was 10, and I think maybe it's enough.*
- 6) What do you like to do in New York? *There are so many places to explore, like the museums or zoos, which are fun places to have a fun time with my family.*
- 7) How do you know you're a New Yorker? *I feel more free than I did before. Sometimes, when I sit in a café, it's fun watching the people on the street move very fast.*
- 8) What's your favorite American holiday? *Christmas. I really like the presents and the tree-decorating with my kids, and Christmas makes me feel thankfulness for my friends and family. We have Christmas in Korea, but it's more of a celebration here.*
- 9) What's your favorite American expression? *"The early bird catches the worm." I'm definitely a morning person. I wish I could stay in bed until noon, but by 5 or 6 AM, my eyes are wide open.*



Right: Michelle Lee and Tomoko Hijikata.

PERUVIAN GREEN SPAGHETTI AND STEAK

The following is an excerpt from *Open Door 2015*, our student anthology of writing, submitted by student Laura Martinez.

This recipe is special because I remember when my mom made it. She cooked this recipe when I was a child and my family enjoyed eating this dish. She said to my brothers, sisters and me, "Come, I have a surprise!" When we asked her what the surprise is she said, "I made Green Spaghetti!" This is a moment in my family that is unforgettable.

Ingredients:

¼ cup finely chopped onion
4 cups spinach leaves
1 cup basil leaves
½ cup mozzarella cheese
1 large can evaporated milk
1 garlic clove
4 tablespoons canola oil
¼ cup pecans or almonds
1 lb. spaghetti
½ cup parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and Pepper

Instructions on how to cook:

- Cook the pasta in boiling salted water.
- In a blender put spinach leaves, basil, mozzarella cheese, garlic, pecans (optional), oil, milk and a little water.
- Heat oil in a large pot and add onion and pepper. Cook until brown. Add it to the green sauce.
- Add cooked pasta to the green sauce and salt to taste.
- Don't forget to add the parmesan cheese.

Barbecued Steak

Prepare a marinade of salt, black pepper, special red pepper, crushed garlic and vinegar. Marinate the steak for a few hours. Barbecue the steak on the grill. Serve with Green Spaghetti.





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RESOURCE CORNER: USING MUSIC TO MOTIVATE

(submitted by Kim Nau)

Music is a versatile tool to teach students a variety of language skills, including listening comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading comprehension, phonics, and grammar. Music can also be used to give students a glimpse into American culture.

Through a quick Google search, you can find a plethora of song lyrics. Some things to consider when choosing a song is: the clarity of the artist's voice, whether the song is an appropriate choice for your students, and your lesson objective.

Once I decide on an appropriate song, I give my students a copy of the lyrics and I read them aloud to model the correct pronunciation and rhythm of the song. Next, I have the students read the song aloud. During this time we discuss key vocabulary that can clarify understanding. Then, we listen to the song once and afterwards, I assign the students a task. For example: highlight the adjectives in the song. This gives them a reason to listen to the song again. I replay the song

and then we discuss the assigned task.

Another lesson is to modify the lyrics into a cloze (fill in the blank) activity by omitting words that relate to the grammar point you are targeting. The highlighter can be your student's best friend. Students can be given a copy of the lyrics and they can highlight a particular phonics or grammar skill. For example: they can highlight all of the past tense verbs found in the song. You can also have students cut-up the lyrics and then mix them up. Then, after listening to the song, they can sequence lyrics in the correct order. Many songs can also be used to teach idioms or colloquial language as well. If music motivates people to dance and sing, then I'm sure it can motivate your students to learn English!

HELP WANTED

OFFICE SUPPORT

We currently seek a volunteer to help us with telephones and light clerical work. Hours are flexible, between 9-4:30 weekdays only. Bilingual strongly preferred. Small, friendly office environment committed to helping families in Nassau County!

Your help can really make a difference.

For more information or to apply, please call us at (516) 867.3580.



SAVE THE DATE! LITERACY NASSAU'S ANNUAL WINE PAIRING DINNER WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2015. LOCATION TBD. TICKETS ARE \$95 PER PERSON. LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE OF LITERACY MATTERS!