



# LITERACY MATTERS

## MARCH 2020



**LITERACY**  
**N A S S A U**

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

### What You'll Find in this Issue:

SEPTA Meetings .....	2
OG Tutor Spotlight .....	2
VISTA Training .....	3
Resource Corner .....	3
(un)Scrabble 2020.....	4

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### (UN)SCRABBLE 2020: VIEW FROM THE JUDGE'S CHAMBER

*(submitted by Irv Miljoner, Board Member)*

Whether you are an avid Scrabble player, a veteran (un)Scrabble event attendee, a business person interested in an engaging networking event, a supporter of Literacy, a tutor reinforcing your commitment to Literacy, or anyone looking for a fast-paced and fun evening out for a good cause, please take note... (un)Scrabble is back! This is the signature event of the year for Literacy Nassau, the non-profit organization that makes literacy services accessible to disadvantaged populations of all ages by providing donation-based language-building programs.

I have the privilege and honor of having served as a Judge at the event for many years, and I will perform that public service once again this year at (un)Scrabble, on the night of March 31, 2020. Allow me to share a bit of my perspective as a Judge.

Although the evening is fast-paced and fun for all attending and competing, there's a lot more to it for the devoted staff and volunteers of Literacy Nassau, who you will see scurrying about and ensuring that things run smoothly all evening (despite how frenzied it may appear). As each round is played, you'll see the judges too, as we go around the room assisting the teams of players (and, yes, making

sure that no one is overzealous, e.g. checking Dictionary websites for 15-letter words, etc.). After each round, you won't see as much of the Judges, as the bunch of us (about 10 of us) will be sequestered in a back room, tabulating and double-checking the scores of the competing teams, and making sure they're posted accurately and on time as the teams anxiously await the scores and standings.

The (un)Scrabble game can get quite competitive, and folks are very serious about their scores, which is why we judges strive for accuracy. Championships, bragging rights, and undying admiration are at stake for the winning team. We understand that, so... like good baseball umpires, the goal of (un)Scrabble judges is to preserve the integrity of the game.

The greater goal and the bigger picture that night is our continuing commitment to the important Literacy Nassau mission. I first became involved with the organization some 20 years ago, when I saw how teaching adults how to read and write English made them employable. Being a U.S. Labor Department Director, it was natural for me to want to support these folks in this way. Indeed over the years, I've seen many students get jobs they wouldn't

*(continued on back page)*

### THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

For those of you who don't know, my kids go to the Waldorf School in Garden City. The school intentionally delays teaching academics to young children until they are (scientifically) developmentally ready, a philosophy I greatly support. So, while my older daughter Haley did not start formally learning to read and write until first grade, she learned a great many other skills that will help her in life. One of those skills is knitting.

You may wonder how knitting is a "life skill." It actually offers a myriad of benefits, from hand dexterity to fine motor skills to helping with impulse control by being a relaxing activity. But for Haley, it helps with self-esteem. She made herself a winter hat which she has been proudly wearing and most recently, she finished knitting a gnome. She is very talented for a seven-year old child, and the work with knitting lends itself to her cursive handwriting skills, which are also quite good. The takeaway is this: students of all ages thrive when they feel empowered.

*Karen* 😊



Pictured above, Haley proudly shows off her hat, and our new gnome (Fletcher) is driven home from school.





## **NORTH BELLMORE SEPTA MEETING**

(submitted by Kim Nau)

On January 16th, Karen Micciche was invited to speak on behalf of Literacy Nassau at the North Bellmore SEPTA meeting. Karen spoke to a packed house filled with teachers, parents, and school administrators.

Karen began the discussion by explaining the definition of dyslexia and how it is a spectrum disorder that can range from mild to severe so the tell-tale signs may not be obvious. She outlined the signs and symptoms that parents and teachers can look out for, such as: struggling to put thoughts into words, difficulty with rhyming words, messy handwriting, guessing at unfamiliar words, and many more. There are also many avoidance behaviors that children exhibit that teachers can take notice of, like: excessive chattiness to avoid reading, going to the restroom during a literacy-related task, or sitting quietly to “disappear” at their desk. Children with dyslexia often suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, and may also exhibit a fear of school among other stress-inducing emotions.

Karen also addressed how other states, like Connecticut and Massachusetts, are years ahead of New York state with their dyslexia legislation and teacher-training. Literacy Nassau is trying to get ahead of the game. We want to provide Long Island schools with viable options to serve students now before inevitable legislation comes down the pike and schools are in rush to figure out how to effectively serve the 20% of their students who have dyslexia.

The attendees at the meeting listened intently as Karen explained all that Literacy Nassau has to offer the community, such as donation-based Orton-Gillingham tutoring and in-school tutoring through subcontracts. During the meeting, many parents were nodding their heads in agreement and several expressed how it seemed like Karen was describing “their child”.

It is important for us to continue to build awareness about the work that we do so that children no longer have to suffer in silence. Children no longer have to pretend that they are reading during independent reading time. They no longer have to experience that pit in their stomach when they are asked to read aloud in class. They don’t have to feel anxious about their next book report. There are resources available. We can help.

Kim Nau has been invited to present at a Wantagh SEPTA meeting on March 10th at 7:30 pm at the Wantagh Middle School. The presentation will provide an overview of Literacy Nassau's programs, specifically our donation-based, Orton-Gillingham tutoring program for children with dyslexia. Dyslexia signs, symptoms, interventions and remediation will also be discussed.



## **TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: MARY BAUMGARTEN**

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

Mary is one of our Orton-Gillingham tutors in our tutoring center for children. She recently completed her 100-hour practicum and has applied to the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators for her associate level training certificate. We are very proud of her accomplishments and asked her some questions to get to know her better:

### ***Q: How did you get involved with Literacy Nassau?***

Volunteering to help others is something that I have always enjoyed. One summer when I was looking into volunteer opportunities, I came across Literacy Nassau’s website. As an elementary school teacher, I understand the essential role that reading plays in learning as well as how reading is ingrained in all areas of our lives. I was very impressed with the ways in which Literacy Nassau helps to foster literacy skills, so I decided to attend an orientation workshop, where I found out about the Orton-Gillingham training program. It seemed a perfect fit.

### ***Q: Describe some of your experiences as an OG tutor.***

Being an OG tutor has been a very positive and rewarding experience. I have had the opportunity to help my practicum student, a 5th grader, become a stronger, more confident reader. Throughout the course of our OG lessons he has been increasingly able to decode longer, more challenging words. This progress in his reading is an ongoing accomplishment that he can be proud of each and every day. I am so happy to be a part of it. I look forward to helping him grow even further!

### ***Q: What is the most interesting thing that you have learned in your OG training?***

My OG training has given me an increased understanding of dyslexia and what it means for students as well as the many multisensory strategies used to help people with dyslexia. These strategies have been the most interesting take away from my training because they are strategies that are effective not only for students with dyslexia, but for all students who are developing and strengthening their reading skills. I have found myself using OG strategies in my classroom to help all of my young students grow even further. They have become stronger, more confident readers as a result. The strategies that I have learned from my training have enhanced my teaching and I know they will continue to do so.

### ***Q: What would you advise a new OG tutor just starting out?***

Being an OG tutor takes a lot of time and effort. However, seeing your student progress makes it all worthwhile. My advice to a new tutor would therefore be to have patience and stick with it even when it feels a bit overwhelming. Remember that you are making a difference.

### ***Q: What do you like to do when you are not teaching?***

Besides teaching, I love spending time with my pets. I have two dogs and two cats. My dog, Mia, is a certified therapy dog. I like volunteering with Mia at the library where we participate in the Read to Dogs Program. We get to hear many great stories while helping children to build their confidence.



## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

We would like to offer a special thank you to **MSC Industrial Supply Company** for their donation of **\$15,000** and their invaluable support of **Literacy Nassau's** programs and events!



### RESOURCE CORNER: USA LEARNS

(submitted by Cindy Cabrera)

Learning English can be very intimidating to many of our students. New learners can often feel unsure of their language skills. There are some students who have low literacy skills in their first language and others who can study English for years but still fail to produce it. As tutors, it is our job to provide tools for our students to practice outside of their sessions as much as possible so our students can also actively engage in our communities.



USA Learns is an online platform that helps adults learn English. It's divided into three courses: beginner, intermediate, and reading at an intermediate level. This program provides educational videos, listening activities, and assignments based on each lesson taught. Students are able to build up their vocabulary and practice their reading, spelling and grammar skills thanks to the activities on the site.

What's great about this program is that it's available anytime. If a student is on a train or on their lunch break, they may practice their language skills. We have many students in our program who don't speak English at home, so this is another resource to help them practice. Best of all, it's free. I highly recommend that you introduce this into your groups so your students can practice English outside of your session. Please visit their website <https://www.usalearns.org/> to learn more.

### VISTA TRAINING IN NEW YORK CITY

(submitted by Jessica D'Aprile)

For the week of January 13th, I attended a VISTA training at New York Immigrant Coalition (NYIC) in the city. NYIC is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization that represents over 200 immigration and advocacy rights groups in NY, including Literacy Nassau. In the training, I learned a lot of beneficial information on capacity building in non-profit organizations. One specific focus of this training was in the area of grant writing, helping to build my skills in creating a successful and powerful proposal. Not only did it expand my knowledge in the area of capacity building, the training went into great detail of other practices of non-profit organizations. This training helped me to build my professional skills in the workplace, forged connections with peers, and thoroughly educated me on current immigration laws and policies. It gave me access to many resources for aid in non-profit growth, and to utilize when I need assistance or have questions. I also had the opportunity to go out into various communities in need and offer them details on the free services we can provide for them. This was rewarding because I got to experience hands-on the struggles that other people face on a daily basis, and how we are helping them. Although I learned a lot at this training, the most memorable part was meeting other VISTAs and being able to have them as support in the future. Meeting like-minded individuals with shared goals and values and learning about their experiences that lead up to their decisions to become VISTAs was fascinating and rewarding. I am looking forward to many more NYIC trainings!

### Warm Birthday Wishes to the Following Tutors!



- Tahara Anderson – Frank Annese – Alissa Belize
- Marilyn Benson – Joan Borruso – Kristen Brennan
- Harvey Caust – Alisa Clark – Claire Deroche – Linda Diamond
- Nancy Doyle – Eleanor Feingold – Alan Freeman
- Mary Greenfield – Linda Hanson – Carol Horvat
- Margaret Kemp – Craig Kennedy – Robert Lanzisera
- MaryLou Laurie – Maureen Lonergan – Mindy Mangot
- Harri Meyers – Joyce Mongitore – Deborah Monteko
- Carol Morris – Ronnie Packer – Aruna Paingankar
- Anne Picone – Lauren Quinn – Janice Raven – Jennifer Reedy
- Charlene Serenita – Sophia Shapiro – Mary Smith
- Vickie V.Y. Stanco – Gladys Stuart – Sara Beth Torns
- Peter Walsh – Christina Wrigley – Carolyn Zaremba





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### VIEW FROM THE JUDGE'S CHAMBER (CONT'D.)

otherwise have attained. I've also seen the literacy skills they achieve putting many of them who are recent immigrants on a path to desired citizenship, and otherwise significantly improving the quality of their day-to-day lives.

None know this better than the wonderful, selfless, trained volunteer tutors who you can look forward to meeting at (un)Scrabble night. It is a spectacular opportunity to network with countless volunteers who share a passion for helping the most vulnerable folks in our communities.

At (un)Scrabble, you'll truly be helping to literally change the world, in such a positive way, for thousands of people, one word (and even one Scrabble letter) at a time.

I "judge" that this will be a rewarding night for one and all who attend.

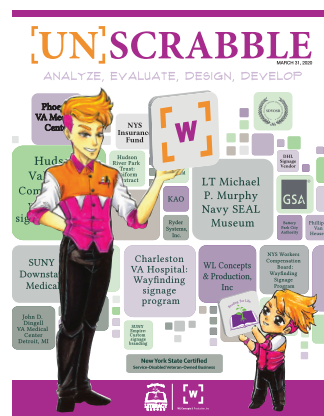


Above, Irv poses with three-time National Scrabble Champion Joe Edley (our chief judge!) at our (un)Scrabble event in 2018.

Please join us at:



**Tuesday, March 31st from 6:00 - 9:30pm  
at Chateau Briand in Carle Place**



**Registration is required. Go to:  
[www.literacynassau.org/un-scrabble-registration](http://www.literacynassau.org/un-scrabble-registration)  
or call us at (516) 867-3580**



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