



LITERACY MATTERS

FEBRUARY 2017

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



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 Renae Katz, Bookkeeper
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 Umama Pasha, Program Director
 Ocaria DiMango, Program Director
 Digna Johnson, LN-OC Lead Teacher
 Cindy Cabrera, LN-OC Teacher/Lit. Spec.
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 Sara Izquierdo, Jr. Literacy Specialist
 Rebecca Figueras, Jr. Literacy Specialist

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TECH UPGRADES CALL FOR A SMOOTH START TO 2017

(submitted by Candice Cantore)

In today's world, technology is slowly becoming more of a staple of every aspect of life. Whether it's using Google to translate a word, or the Internet to help you find a lesson plan, or using iPads to show your learner or class an instructional video on a topic, or simply having your iPhone remind you to do something, technology is everywhere. It's been a huge help to us here at Literacy Nassau to make the work we do more efficient and organized. Being that technology is always changing, as users of technology, we adapt and respond - and ultimately, change along with it.

One change that we are making in 2017 is using the computer-based version of the Best Plus 2.0 test. This change will allow us to have a more accurate score of our learner's level of English so we can know exactly which program to place him/her in at registration. We will also be using laptops to conduct our student intake interviews and to fill out our individual student record form (ISRF). This will give us an electronic record of each student, in addition to a physical file.

Another change we are implementing is utilizing Google Docs which is a feature of Gmail that enables you to make and edit documents, while allowing others to do the same. For example, at registrations we have all of our class lists on a Google doc which allows

our staff to edit in real time which students are being placed in which classes, and to help make sure we are not overbooking a location. Another way we are using google docs is in our attendance for our Small Group Instruction classes. Since SGI tutors have more students, a great way for them to take and keep track of weekly attendance is to have them update a Google doc that they all have access to. This allows our Program Directors to spend less time focusing on gathering attendance data via phone calls and other forms of outreach, and gives the tutors a way to quickly and easily input their students' hours.

We are also using technology in our Orton Gillingham practicum. In order to attain the "associate" level of accreditation, Karen and Kim are studying under the tutelage of an Orton Gillingham Fellow, PK Sanieski. PK is based out of Learning House in Connecticut, but she lives all the way in Massachusetts. The only way she could possibly supervise our work is by conducting our observations using Skype and Facetime.

All of these technology changes will not only help to organize our work more, but keep us focused on our vast and ever-growing student body. We look forward to working with these changes and hope to make more improvements over the course of 2017. As author Arthur C. Clarke once said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is equivalent to magic."

THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

There comes a point in every adult life when you start to realize that your parent(s) need a little extra help. This recently happened to me when my mom went in for a routine root canal one morning a few months back and by that night, was hospitalized with pancreatitis. We both realized that she needed someone to act as a patient advocate for her. The information was coming at her too quickly to process it all.

It was an eye-opener for both of us, coming to this realization that from now on, I will have to be more involved in her medical affairs. It really hit her hard; asking for help as an adult is so humbling because before you make the ask, you first have to come to terms with the fact that you truly can't do something on your own.

That is why it is such a gift to be able to offer help to someone in need. It is like soul food, being able to provide information, support, or even just a presence to someone struggling. Tutors do that every day with our adult population. As brave as they have been to ask for help, your gift of time makes their success possible.

Karen



My daughter, Haley, dressed up in her scrubs (last year's Halloween costume) to help her grandma feel better during a recent stint in the hospital.





(UN)SCRABBLE IS COMING!

(submitted by Kim Nau)

It's that time of year when we start planning for our largest fundraiser, our 17th Annual (un)SCRABBLE Challenge. For those that may be a bit baffled when we say (un)SCRABBLE, in a nutshell, teams compete in short, timed rounds, and the team that forms the highest-scoring words from their Scrabble tiles in each round is the winner. It is called (un)SCRABBLE because the format is slightly different from the regular game – all of the tiles are exposed and the teams scramble to fill their boards.

Prior to the event, we have weekly meetings in our office with our fast-paced (un)SCRABBLE judges who have the important responsibility of scoring the SCRABBLE boards (in under 5 minutes) on the night of the event. At the event, it's exciting to see the many word combinations teams create as we run back and forth to the judge's room.

We have 26 raffle prizes at this event every year. Raffle baskets (from A to Z) are valued at over \$300 each and range in variety from vacations to spa packages to the latest technology devices. We are always seeking raffle prize donations, so if there are any prizes or services you can donate, please contact us.

This year, we are also excited to introduce a silent auction! Items will include sports memorabilia, special event packages, Broadway tickets, VIP tours and more!

You will be receiving your invitation in the mail shortly. We would love for our volunteers to experience the camaraderie of (un)SCRABBLE with us. No experience necessary! The \$100 ticket price includes food, beverages, dessert, and game-play. All proceeds from this event support Literacy Nassau's mission.

TUTOR SPOTLIGHT: KATHRYN ST. JUSTE

(submitted by Rebecca Figueras)

I recently had the pleasure of speaking to Kathryn, who has been a tutor with our Basic Literacy Program since 2015. Our conversations traveled from the realm and process of education, to bonding and working with animals, to her active lifestyle and participation in sport competitions. Kathryn leads a busy and lively life and invests herself fully in everything she sets her mind to.

How did you get started with Literacy Nassau and what is it like working with your basic literacy student?

I found out about Literacy Nassau through an article in Newsday and the moment I saw the ad that I knew it would be a program I was going to be interested and invested in. I was a special education teacher for 35 years and I worked within a co-teaching inclusive classroom. Teaching students to read is my calling, but I was in for a surprise! I didn't realize all the different levels and reading capabilities of the students in the program. When I first met with my student, I realized how much of the basics we needed to review. Abu and I meet as much as possible, usually twice a week at two libraries based around our schedules. We need to have constant repetition at the beginning of each week to make sure that he is fully understanding the sounds and words we are going over in class, instead of guessing. Abu is never discouraged and always willing to do whatever is needed to make sure he is improving his reading skills. We take on a lot of small projects and we will work together to ensure that Abu reaches his goals! Abu amazes me and inspires me as well. His first language is French and he speaks English fluently; but he also has taught himself some Spanish because it is necessary for his job. It motivated me to learn Spanish as well and we can further bond over our process of learning the details of a different language. The most amazing thing when working with people is when they apply what they have learned. My New Year's was spectacular because Abu sent me a text on New Year's Eve! We had only spoken over the phone before then, but now I know that we can start texting and practicing through technology.

Can you tell us about the work that you do with North Shore Animal League?

I work twice a week as well as a volunteer for North Shore Animal League. I work the cats and take care with *(continued on page 3)*

WHAT IS A BINGO BONUS ROUND?

(submitted by Ocaria DiMango)

The third and final round of (un)SCRABBLE every year is our Bingo Bonus Round. This is a winner-take-all round for an extra 250 points and a prize for every member of your (un)SCRABBLE team! Karen will ask a question, and the first team to create a game board with a correct answer will call out, "Bingo!" At that point, play will stop until Karen verifies the win. A sample board to illustrate how this works is shared in the photo below. The question was: Name ten Nassau County towns, and use the letter "M" as the center tile.

To try your hand at our unique game (and give yourself a really fun night out), join us on April 6th at Chateau Briand for (un)SCRABBLE!



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT, CONT'D.

finding the right family for a cat. It is a no-kill shelter so all cats stay until they are adopted out, which sometimes can take years. I work with socializing the cats and playing with them to make them a bit more comfortable around people. Just like when you work with people, an animal must feel that they can trust you to be relaxed around you. This process moves just as slowly and carefully as working with my student. At the same time, I talk with people who are interested in adopting the cats. It is critical to know what their lifestyles are like to ensure that a cat with the right personality can move into their homes and become a part of their family.

You spoke about how you like to keep active, what type of competitions do you partake in?

I have been playing Racquetball for years. It is a fast paced game that can be boring to watch, but so much fun to play! My partner and I have participated in the Long Island open multiple times. This past year we won the New Jersey State Doubles, which included all ages of competitors. Recently, we went down to Atlanta, GA, to play in the Senior's National Competition. We came in third place! We were pretty-evenly matched with the team that made second place, so if we go back next year, it will be something to work towards.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Herb Aldrich
Jodi Batan-Seegull
Ira Berkowitz
Linda Bleck
Suzie Gregorovius
Bob Hanna
Bernie Hirschhorn
Sylvia Jorisch
Delia King
Danielle Krause
Susan Laufer
Nicole Maas
Terri Mangum
Michael Mathis
Jessica Merkel
Doreen Pechman
Cathy Perini
Sandra Pesce
Joan Ratty
Naomi Robles
Pamela Shampam
Margaret Sherman
Ruth Stern
Mary-Rose Waldron
Steve Young



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

CONGRATULATIONS!

The following tutors recently completed a TTW. Congratulations!

Wynne Black	Alan Freeman	Suin Park
Nilsa Jorge	Catherine Shubert	Eva Triglia
Sandra Verbsky	Denise Hibbert	Karel Bott
Cheree Himmel	Michele Fielding	

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ONA TEACHER

(submitted by Digna Johnson)

A day in the life of an ONA teacher can be very rewarding and chaotic. I love teaching and learning new things. I get the privilege to teach students from all over the world, of different ages, and from different backgrounds. A typical day for me will depend on the group of students I have. For example, on day one of class I give each student a basic intake questionnaire, so that I can gain valuable knowledge about the student's reading and writing capabilities. At the beginning of each semester, I start out with a set of themes and a strategic plan for all of my Advanced ESOL classes, but once I informally assess my students, those plans can quickly change; my goal is to meet my students where they are!

It is only once a lesson makes sense to me and it becomes clear what I want my students to achieve that I can execute it with ease. My students play a key role in my planning because if it's not effective for them, then there will be no reward for either of us. Lesson planning is a projection into the future of what you want for your student's academic growth. NYSED teaching standards help me stay focused on students' overall opportunities. In a typical lesson, I will model the main objective for the day, while students observe, take notes, listen and follow along. Students work to complete interactive activities, often in pairs or groups. Students often need help from their peers, either for translation or to just needs to hear the instructions explained in other words or translated.

We typically spend a lot of time on pronunciation. I redirect students when they repeatedly mispronounce a word or words when they take part in a read-aloud. We also spend a lot of time on life skills, like how to write an excuse note to your child's teacher or to a supervisor. Every week, students use the Internet where I direct them to The Times in Plain English to seek out an interesting current event article. I show them how to analyze and pull out three main points; from there they learn new vocabulary words, practice grammar, and are tested for reading comprehension. We also play fun educational interactive games via mobile devices like kahoot it!

After teaching for 3 hours, twice a week at each site, I collect and check homework assignments. I do journal notebook checks, and sometimes I write special notes to myself to find additional reinforcement activities to help struggling students bridge the gap. I prep for the next class; I have to make certain I'm ready and prepared to teach.

There are chaotic days sometimes. Recently, I had to resolve a conflict between two male students who started out discussing a topic which lead to a hot debate about religion. I had to redirect the conversation to cool things down. Many times, I've had to stay after class and become a listener. Students share personal struggles about home and their jobs, and how these issues interfere with their learning.

But then there are days that are outstanding, like when I coach students for big job interviews or help them prepare for a citizenship interview which all ended with good news. I'm responsible for approximately 15-25 students in each class. I teach in New Hyde Park, Uniondale, and Hicksville in the morning, afternoon, and evening. One thing is certain: As an ONA teacher, no two days are ever the same!



187 Smith Street, Freeport, N.Y. 11520
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February In-Service Trainings - There's Still Space!

Register online at www.literacynassau.org/current-volunteers

Hands-on Pronunciation Tricks

(presented by Kim Nau)

Poor pronunciation affects students' spoken comprehensibility as well as their writing. This workshop will provide tutors with hands-on, multi-sensory techniques to help students increase their comprehensibility and develop the skills needed to create specific, complex sounds. **Tuesday, February 28, 2017, 1pm-3pm at Literacy Nassau**

Talk-A-Tivities (for SGI Tutors only)

(presented by Ocaria DiMango)

Sometimes conversation can be hard to come by, even when you find yourself in a group. We want students to use their language skills as much as possible so we'll try to implement activities that keep the students talking! In this workshop, we'll learn some new, fun and instructional activities we can implement into our lessons to give our students even more opportunities to practice their speaking skills. **Thursday, February 9, 2017, 1pm-3pm, Literacy Nassau**

ELL Tutor Roundtable

(presented by Cindy Cabrera and Sara Izquierdo)

This workshop offers the opportunity for tutors to share their experiences working with our 1:1 ELL students - techniques used, resources discovered and problems encountered are common themes. Tutor roundtables are a great way to problem solve within a group! **Tuesday, February 7, 2017, 2pm-4pm at the Jericho Public Library**

BL Tutor Roundtable

(presented by Umama Pasha and Rebecca Figueras)

This workshop offers informal discussion and sharing between tutors and staff about our BL students. We will discuss common issues and challenges, and will also introduce some new strategies based on Literacy New York's Basic Literacy Foundations course. **Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 12pm-2pm at Literacy Nassau**